

CHAPTER II.

A SUMMER sunrise among the grand old heath-clad hills of Scotland—is there any sight in nature to be compared to it? Certainly not—to us—the Children of the Mist!

The silence that precedes the dawn is not to be experienced at any other hour. The whole air is charged with an expectancy that is almost painful in its sweetness. The peaceful glen, guarded by titanic sentinels, sleeps like a child that is tired with the frolics of the day. From the tops of the surrounding hills faint gleams of light, so faint as to be almost shadowy, spread upwards in the great blue dome—they are the ghostly heralds of the Lord of Day. As the eye seeks to follow them, and to trace their form, they seem to vanish, as if absorbed in the effulgence that extends far and wide around the chariot of the Sun, rolling upwards from the glorious East. The silence is broken; the spellbound earth awakes from its dreamy sleep; nature makes known her resurrection in a thousand ways. The green of moss and grass and fern and fir tree becomes at once instinct with life; the bloom of the heather and the gorse clothe the braeside and the glen with a royal mantle of purple and gold.

To young Alistair Leslie, such a sunrise, in the late summer of 1745, was a never-to-be-forgotten sight. He had but a short time before returned from his last Arts' session at Marischal College, in Aberdeen, having obtained his master's degree. He loved his books, but he loved the book of nature best of all. City life had little charm for him, save as it afforded him opportunities for making an acquaintance with men and books, denied him in the simpler life of the country. His father and