

sail through the Firth of Clyde, and up along the west coast to the lovely bay of Stornoway; or you may go in the three months of May, June, and July, from Aberdeen, by Wick and the Pentland Firth; or you may cross in an hour or two from Ullapool on the opposite coast of Ross. Once in Stornoway a two hours' drive will bring you to Uig, and in some cozy spot in any of the straths of Uig you may come upon a shealing such as we shall now describe.

You will observe on the face of the rising ground along a stream, a group of little conical booths, which at first you scarcely distinguish from the ground beside them, for they are coated with turf, and the turf is green with longish grass. In fact, it is this grass that catches the eye, for it seems a greener spot than the rest of the hill-face. As you draw nearer you perceive that it is a cluster of little houses, and that they are built of undressed stones, and rise in a gradually contracting circle till the apex is a little round hole that may be covered with a stone or left open, as may be convenient. They are exactly in the shape of a bell or a beehive; every succeeding layer of stones being so placed as to overlap the preceding one towards the inside. It is the architecture of the stone age, the most primitive style of masonry we know of, precisely that which was practised in the very ancient days when men had no metal tools. A small hole, three feet high and two wide, is left at the bottom for a door, through which the inhabitants creep on all fours. Entering, you find that, like the Swiss *chalet*, they contain no furniture. The bed—"the crouching-place," as they call it in their own Gaelic—is a little narrow hole built in the thickness of the wall. There is neither table nor chair, the only furnishing being a shelf for milk-dishes or cheese. The room is about six feet in diameter at the floor, and a little more than six feet in height in the middle. A grown-up person can scarcely stand upright in it. Sometimes all the little huts are joined on to one another, and intercommunicate inside by what we suppose must be called doors, and then the village may be said to be a single house of many little mansions, a kind of irregular mound with many minaret tops on it, and suites of holes in the interior where the several families burrow. But this is not common. For the most part every hut stands alone, and every room is a separate hut, or what is perhaps the most usual custom, every family has two huts, a living-room and a milk-room, and these are joined together and made to intercommunicate inside by a low doorway which, on account of the thickness of the two walls here joining, you creep through as you might creep through a drain.

The huts of the Highland shealing are not always built of stone. Even in the Lews some of them are built of turf, and the bed is sometimes not a low recess in the walls, but a part of the floor covered with straw or heather. Sometimes the beehive huts are interspersed with oblong ones. It was so Pennant found them in the Island of Jura, and he gives us both a description of them and a drawing done by himself on the spot. He makes the following entry:

"Land on a bank covered with *healigs*, the habitations of some peasants who tend the herds of milk cows. These formed a grotesque group. Some were oblong, many conic, and so low that entrance is forbidden without creeping through the little opening, which has no other door than a faggot of birch twigs

placed there occasionally. They are constructed of branches of trees covered with sods; the furniture, a bed of heath placed on a bank of sod, two blankets and a rug, some dairy vessels; and above, certain pendant shelves made of basket work to hold the cheese, the produce of the summer. In one of the little conic huts I spied a little infant asleep under the protection of a faithful dog."

Now we must not suppose the people who live in these houses to be a degraded or even illiterate part of our population. Far from it. They are just the ordinary farmers of the country, the representatives of the old *douce gudemen* and *gudewives* of Scotland, and they share in our moral civilization in a degree by no means beneath the average. If you visit them on a Sunday you will find them reading their Bibles, or the Gaelic translation of Bunyan, or of some of the old divinity of Scotland; and if you enter into conversation with them you will perceive that their faculties have been considerably exercised on many points of metaphysical and experimental theology. They know their Bible and their catechism in a way that will surprise the Southron, for they are very close in the attendance at church, and the minister goes round the various farms once a year and catechises young and old publicly on what are called the fundamentals of the faith. This is their only culture but it is an important one, and between it and the exercise of intelligence that is evoked in the ordinary pursuit of their daily calling, their minds have probably undergone a better development than most of the working classes of this country. Adam Smith had a very strong opinion that, taking him all in all, the ploughman was a much more intelligent man than the artisan of the towns. Of course he was not so quick and sharp in manner, because he lived more alone, but his business brought him for hours every day in contact with a much greater variety of things and ideas than any artisan's did, and he had to be always exerting a certain amount of thought and judgment. What ideas could you expect to find in a man who was engaged for eight or nine hours every day of his life in nothing but pointing pins? There is certainly some force in this opinion of Smith's, and let these Lewis crofters get the benefit of it. Their winter houses are not a great advance upon their bee-hive habitations; they, too, are void of window and chimney, and are very low in the roof: the walls are made of turf, lined outside and inside with undressed stones, and as the roof does not overlap them, the water simply falls into them and they are always damp. The beds are built in the thickness of the wall, and the byre is in the centre and is only cleaned out once a year. These "black houses"—as they are locally called to distinguish them from the stone and lime houses which an improving proprietor is gradually substituting for them—are poor enough dwelling-places in all conscience, yet their inhabitants may compare favourably with any similar section of the community in all the essentials of civilization.

They are, like the Swiss herdsmen, a self governing community. They live in a village together, and they hold all the pasture in common as joint tenants. Formerly their arable used to be held in common too, and cultivated on the *runrig* or common-fields system; but now every tenant has his own separate bit of land, and the only part of the old village farm which they