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SUTHERLAND is a County in which the prehistoric population probably far outnumbered current figures, for a count of the myriad hut circles, alone, would seem to substantiate the theory of the ambient temperature and weather of those days being considerably warmer and more clement than it is today, to be able to support so large an agricultural population. Progressively more modern houses do reflect both an increasing grasp of construction technique – and the need for the enhanced shelter and warmth, with the deteriorating weather pattern. The thirty or forty foot hut circles with their vulnerable high and relatively vast roofing areas readily gave way to the Viking inspired long houses with much lower and narrower roofs, built end on to the prevailing wind, or recessed into the hill sides for shelter, indicated active adaptation to an increasingly stormy climate. In their turn, the wall lengths – lacking the mechanical stability of the circle – demanded heavier and more solid construction, to be seen in the transition from the lighter, turf-walled building to the heavy dry-stone walled construction, as an inevitable response. There lacks archaeological evidence of any form of intermediary stage of architectural development between the Neolithic hut circle and the Viking long houses: an extremely long space of time. Initially, the lack of tools and technology for stone dressing rendered the early stone long houses a rather amorphous affair, with rounded ends from the lack of square cut blocks, and the need to utilise the stone more or less the way it was found: while the turf gave way to a hearting of smaller, rough, binding stones and clay as proofing to wind and weather. Windows, when they came, were small and wooden shuttered, as light was prized less than warmth, and glass panes were not yet available. Roofs were thatched with heather or other locally available material, pinned down with divots of turf, and roped to weighting stones to withstand the wind. A central hearth exhausted smoke through a central hole in the roof, and the pervading sootiness and grime may have given rise to the term “Black House”. Such housing was still occupied until within this century, in the remoter, and island regions, and Miss Grant, in her “Highland Folk Ways” (1961) has delineated such buildings and their evolution, delightfully, and from whence – as well as from elsewhere – the inspiration for the pen sketches has been derived.