

CHAPTER VIII.

Wonder not to see his soul extend
The bounds, and seek some other self—a friend.

DRYDEN.

The wretched sire beheld aghast,
With Wilfrid all his projects past.
All turned and centered on his son,
On Wilfrid all—and he was gone.

ROKEBY.

AMHERST rode on insensibly, ruminating on past events, until finding himself not far from Dover, he thought of taking that opportunity of visiting his old friend Cleaver, who resided under the cliffs, in a cottage roofed with the hulls of small craft, turned upside down, covering a variety of odd-looking little apartments, branching out, and germinating uncouthly in divers directions. Finding that the captain had gone down to the harbour, to superintend some little

alterations in his pleasure yacht, he desired his horse to be put up in the stable, and sallied forth in search of him.

Having made his way on board, he found Cleaver with his coat off, an apron on, and his arms bare, busily employed in assisting a blacksmith, who was fitting up a new cooking apparatus in the fore-castle. There seemed to be a difference of opinion between him and the black-faced artist.

“ I tell you, Vulcan, you know nothing about it; this here should be fastened with a screw and nut, and that there should have a hook and eye, and a chain—’twill never do else; but you are all so damn’d obstinate and self-opinionated, that ——”

Here he was interrupted by Amherst, who gave him a friendly tap on the shoulder.

“ Ah! Amherst, my boy! where the deuce have you dropped from? I’m rejoiced to see you;” and the honest sailor shook him heartily by the hand. “ I’m making such an alteration here—an invention of my own too; but I can’t get these lubbers to work to my mind. This fellow has been a week at this job already, and I’ll

be bound he won't finish it in a fortnight more. But, come, I'll leave the rascal to himself for the present, so just let me wash my hands, and we'll go to my shop, and have something to eat, for there's nothing here—the jolly Dasher is not victualled.”

As they walked together towards the cabin, (for such was the name Cleaver had bestowed upon his cottage,) Amherst confided his distresses to the warm-hearted seaman.

“ Why, he is a proper Turk, to be sure,” said the Captain, after hearing him out, “ to think of marrying you against your will, and to a girl, too, whom nobody in the country can bear. I don't like these Delassaux women no more than other people do; they are proud, overbearing, cold, and cunning. It is said, too, that their extravagance has thrown them into difficulties, of which, I have no doubt, they hope to rid themselves, by getting hold of you. Depend upon it, they have been throwing their nets round the old porpoise, with the hope of catching his calf. But, damn it, we'll disappoint them. I know the old boy well. Get out of his way for a while. He'll be in a passion enough to raise a hurricane in the

channel ; but a week or two's absence will bring him round, and then he will give the world to get you back again, and will be all contrition."

Amherst approved much of his friend's advice ; but he could not devise any mode of withdrawing himself, so as to make his father lose scent of him, and to ensure a perfect concealment. He expressed his difficulty to Cleaver.

" If my new cooking stove," replied he, " had only been finished, I might have given you a trip in the Dasher. But to go to sea almost without the means of making a stew or a fry ——"

The idea immediately struck Amherst as excellent. He pressed the Captain eagerly on the subject, and soon prevailed. " It's very well with you, young man," said Cleaver ; " I dare say, you don't care a snap of a finger what you eat ; I was once so myself—salt junk and maggoty biscuits were a feast to me. But now that there is no necessity for subjecting myself to such fare, I am rather more delicate in my feeding. Besides, I should have been glad to have tried the effect of my new invention. But, come, we must e'en sail as we are. So, go home quietly, prepare every thing, and return here when all

hands at Oakenwold have gone to roost. I'll just step into the town, and get Tom Phillips, my steward, to make some provision for the voyage, and we'll be off for Scotland before daylight."

Amherst shook Cleaver warmly by the hand, and thanking him cordially for this extreme proof of his friendship, he hastened to mount his horse. By hard riding he got back to Oakenwold Manor to dinner; and, by good luck, he was saved from any unpleasant conversation with his father that evening, by the presence of one or two accidental guests.

Whilst Amherst was hastily dressing for dinner, he gave all necessary directions for his departure to Cornelius O'Gollochar, whom he had taken into his service, as a reward for his excellent conduct in the case of the poor Morleys. He retired early to his apartment, and had the satisfaction to find every thing arranged in the most masterly manner. His trunks had been already dispatched, without observation, by a hired cart to Dover, and a pair of hack saddle horses were in waiting for master and man, at a small alehouse, about three miles distant. They

remained until they heard the last servant creep sleepily to bed, and then, without noise, stepped down stairs, and left the house, O'Collochar hastening on before to prepare, whilst his master followed at leisure.

The moon was up, and shone forth in great splendour, but was obscured, at intervals, by large opaque clouds floating heavily across the sky. The narrow path, through the fields and inclosures Amherst pursued, led him, for some part of the way, along the high wall inclosing the extensive grounds of Brokenhurst-Hall. The sight of it brought many recollections to his mind, and, as he passed a little door, he remembered how often he had found it unlocked, purposely, as he now verily believed, to admit him, during his rambles, into a walk leading to a shrubbery, where he had so frequently met Miss Delassaux, by accident, as it then appeared to him.

The path he pursued having led him to the summit of a gently elevated hillock, he was enabled to have a view over the wall into the park. The moon, at the moment, happened to emerge from beneath a dark cloud, and by its light he

descried two figures walking slowly, and apparently in deep conference. The moonlight was brightly reflected from the dewy gravel of the walk, and their forms and long shadows were boldly relieved from it, whilst the high bordering shrubbery threw occasional dark masses across their way. One of them, who seemed to be a woman, had much the figure and height of Lady Deborah Delassaux. He felt convinced it could be no one but her, and yet he could not conceive it possible that she should be walking in the park at so late an hour, and in a night that was rather too chilly and raw, to warrant the supposition of her doing so for mere pleasure. He was seized with an irresistible desire to satisfy his doubts, as well as to discover who it was whom she thus made the companion of an almost midnight promenade, at so great a distance from the house. He retraced his steps to the little door, and finding it opportunely open, he yielded to a momentary impulse, and hastily entering, he concealed himself among the evergreens close to the walk along which the figures must pass. He had no sooner done so, than he became sensible that he had been guilty of an unwarrant-

able breach of propriety, but they were already too near for him to recede.

From the tone of their voices and their gestures, he immediately discovered, as they advanced, that the female, who was indeed Lady Deborah, appeared to be expostulating with the man who accompanied her. The conversation, though here for the most part translated, was chiefly in Italian, and the first words that became intelligible were those of Lady Deborah concluding a sentence.

“ What I have advanced is perfectly true,” said she; “ but, I trust, *mio caro Antonio*, I need not waste time in assuring you, that your services at Naples never can be forgotten by me. I think I have already proved, by what I have repeatedly done for you, that I am not ungrateful, and if you will only have patience ——”

“ Patience !” exclaimed Antonio, rudely interrupting her in a fretful and passionate manner, “ why do you always preach patience to me ? I think I have had patience enough ; *San Genaro* himself could not have had more. You have, to be sure, given me some hundreds, perhaps some thousands ; but what is all that to

the mountain of debt you owe me? I must have money *per Baccho!* or Lorenzo cannot go on, and then all my schemes, and all my hopes, are at an end.—I must have money, *ti dico*, I must have money. *Pazienza!*—*per Dio! che non sono arsinaccio-io—il denaro vi dico! il denaro!*”

“Well, well,” replied the lady in a subdued tone, “be quiet, I beseech you. You shall have money in abundance. But you are reasonable, Antonio, and you are yourself aware how difficult it is for me to command it. Expensive as she is in the indulgence of every folly that strikes her, she has the heart of a miser towards the wants of others, and even I am refused what is in reality my own. She cannot understand how I have bestowed the large sums I have already received from her, and you know very well, my good Antonio, that I dare not tell her they have gone to you. Even those sums I gave you so lately, which you so well merited, and which I gave with so much satisfaction to myself,—even those sums, I say, I should not have had it in my power to bestow, had I not demanded them in advance, as the price of my assistance in forwarding her views upon that fickle fool, young Oakenwold, to whose paternal estates

she looks for the payment of the large debts she has incurred by her silly buildings and absurd decorations, and her love for trinkets and tinsel, and her fondness for show and glitter, not to mention her insatiable passion for play. But she will probably soon want my assistance again, and then you know, *mio caro Antonio* ——” Here the words began to be lost by the distance.

Amherst stood for some moments in fixed astonishment. The deep plot laid against him, or rather against his father's wide domains, was now sufficiently apparent. The estates of Miss De-lassaux were insufficient to supply her unbounded extravagance; she had incurred large debts, and a marriage with him was to be the means of paying these off. The accidental circumstances of her unfeeling treatment of Mrs Morley in his presence had let in a ray of light that showed her character in a sufficiently unfavourable point of view; but what was all he then learnt compared to that which he had just heard from the lips of her own aunt?—and what a wretch did that aunt herself appear!

A chill tremour shook him, and he hastily quitted his concealment to regain the path. As

he again wound over the knoll, he threw his eyes back, and espied the figures still walking in deep conference. The subdued and earnest attitude of Lady Deborah, and the boisterous and overbearing action of the Italian, again struck him. What services could these be, or what those obligations, which gave a low-born foreign servant so perfect a control over a woman of Lady Deborah's rank, and of that lofty and unbending spirit she so uniformly displayed to the world? And what were those debts which seemed, from the conversation he had just overheard, to be absolutely unextinguishable, however largely administered to?

By the time he reached the little alehouse, he found O'Gollochar waiting for him with the horses. They mounted directly, and rode with so much expedition, that they reached Dover in time to embark on board the yacht, to sail, and be far out of sight before day-break.

Before coming down stairs in the morning, Sir Cable had prepared himself for a tough and determined combat with his son on the subject of their late dispute, and had especially resolved to insist on the young gentleman being

of the party to Brokenhurst-Hall. He generally found Amherst reading within the deep walls of the great window when he entered the breakfast-room.

Before turning the handle of the door upon this occasion, he made up his mouth and eye, and assumed as invincible a look as he could, in order to be proof against those affectionate smiles with which Amherst usually met him. He hemmed and opened the door, and advanced boldly, but he was a good deal surprised, and somewhat chagrined, to find that there was no one in the room.

“Pshaw!” said he, “where the devil is he?” Miss Margery came in, breakfast was prepared, and the great bell rung as usual—but no Amherst.

Without saying a word to his sister, the Admiral pulled the bell with considerable violence, and dispatched a servant to see if his son was in his own apartment. He was not there, and the bed and bedclothes were undisturbed. Cornelius O’Gollochar had not been seen that morning, and, upon further examination, several articles of Amherst’s baggage were also missing. The Admi-

ral's rage was excessive, and showed itself in a thousand extravagancies.

“ The rascal has gone off to college again ; but I'll have him back with a flea in his ear. Here, saddle two horses—and, do you hear, Tom Cuddy ? get my long boots, and prepare yourself for a journey—I'll ride after the scoundrel to the end of the world !”

“ Why, to tell your Honour the truth,” said Tom, coolly turning the quid in his mouth, “ I am no great hand at piloting a horse, and no more is your Honour, if I may make bold to say so. Besides, your last fit of the gout has rather waterlogged ye a bit, so, d'ye see, I think we'd better send some lighter vessels after the chace.”

Tom was the Admiral's oracle, and although he did not always listen to him, yet he was the only person to whom he ever listened.

During the argument that ensued between them, a brace of horses, ready saddled, were brought to the door. Sir Cable, who was quarter-decking it, happened to throw a glance out of the window at the two pampered steeds, champ-ing their bits, and capering and caracolling so fu-

riously, that the grooms who led them out could hardly hold them, and the fellows were chuckling and winking to each other at the very idea of the rare horsemanship they expected to see immediately exhibited. The very sight of the animals staggered him; the justice of what Tom had said came powerfully home; and he finally determined to take his advice, and send one of his grooms to Oxford, who was forthwith dispatched accordingly.

Several days were thus lost by the messenger having gone on a wrong scent. But when he returned without having learned any intelligence of Amherst, a hot search and inquiry round the country was immediately set on foot; but all to no purpose. At length, it was accidentally discovered that the young gentleman had been last seen at Dover; and, upon further inquiry, it was found that Captain Cleaver had sailed in his yacht about that time, and that Amherst had been seen in his company the day before he sailed.

The old Admiral would have pursued them upon his own element with all his heart and soul, had he only known which way to steer. But no

one knew positively whither they had directed their course, although it was supposed that they had gone towards the coast of France. Pursuit under such circumstances was perfectly hopeless, though it required a considerable portion of Tom Cuddy's cool phlegmatic rhetoric to convince Sir Cable that it was so.

It is almost needless to say that the Admiral was so discomposed by Amherst's flight, that he was not equal to the party at Brokenhurst-Hall. A violent fit of the gout, probably brought on by the fever he had thrown himself into, nailed him to his chair. The pain of his malady did not improve his humour, and his time was spent, for a week or two, in a perpetual turmoil of temper, vented sometimes against his afflicted foot, and sometimes against those who were about him. But Amherst was the person against whom the full flood of his wrath was poured out. Tom Cuddy's marine philosophy was put to as severe a trial as it had ever suffered. But it continued invincible, though it was remarked that he expended nearly double his usual allowance of pigtail on the occasion.

As for poor Miss Margery, who was inwardly

much afflicted at the sudden and very unaccountable disappearance of her nephew, the Admiral's violence did not allow her to get out a single word but " Dear me, brother Cable !" which she uttered an hundred times a day for above a fortnight.