

CHAPTER X.

That pale, that white-faced shore,
 Whose foot spurns back the ocean's roaring tides,
 And coops from other lands her islanders.

SHAKESPEARE.

Life is all a variorum,
 We regard not how it goes,
 Let them cant about decorum
 Who have characters to lose.

Here's to budgets, bags, and wallets,
 Here's to all the wandering train!
 Here's our ragged brats and callets!
 One and all cry out, Amen!

The Jolly Beggars.

RETURN we now to Amherst, whom we left in a convalescent, but very weak state of health.

He had no sooner recovered, than, by the advice of his physicians, he went down to the coast for the benefit of the sea air, and took up his abode with his friend Cleaver, who, better aware of the nature of his malady than any of the

learned sons of Esculapius, did all in his power to divert his mind from brooding over its secret sorrows. He thus gave fair play to the exertions nature and youth made in his friend's favour, whose health of body, at least, was soon re-established, though his mind's disease remained.

His greatest pleasure now was to wander along the beach lining the base of those bold cliffs defending the southern coast of England, which frown defiance alike upon the anger of the waves, and the impotence of the continental fogs of Britain. The wild roar of the infuriated breakers, or the low murmur of the more gentle waves, as they insinuated themselves slowly among the large loose rounded pebbles, were equally lulling to his misery.

It happened that, on the very evening in which the interruption of Miss Delassaux's marriage took place, Amherst was indulging in one of these his solitary rambles. He had extended it rather farther along the shore than ordinary, having been carried unconsciously onwards by the musing fit he had fallen into, that permitted him not to remark the unusual darkness of the sky, where large heavy masses of an inky hue came rolling on, giving

warning of an increasing storm. At length he was awakened from his walking dream by the sudden burst of the tempestuous blast, breaking, as it were, from the sailing clouds, with a fury irresistible as it was instantaneous ; and he wheeled round to retrace his steps as speedily as possible. His slow mode of advance, that, to an observer, might have had the appearance of the caution of a spy, and his guilty-like retreat, that was in reality owing to no other cause than a desire to turn his back on the storm, excited the alarm of three men who were at that moment skulking behind a mass of fallen rock, near the mouth of a natural ravine. Mistaking him for some one reconnoitring their actions with hostile intentions, they rushed upon him, and overpowering him before he was aware, bound his hands, stopped his mouth, blindfolded him, and forced him to ascend the ravine. Unarmed and weak as he was, Amherst was altogether unfit as well as unprepared for resistance. He believed that he was in the hands of robbers ; but he had become so careless as to what might befall him, that he moved passively up the ascent in the grasp of his conductors, who led him to a hovel perched on the summit of the cliff, con-

structed of planks, and covered with the inverted hull of a large boat, under which he entered with apathetical submission.

He was no sooner within the door-way, than he was released from his bonds, and the bandage they had tied over his eyes having been removed, he was enabled to observe the persons and things within the curious apartment he had been so strangely introduced into. He now perceived that the sailor-looking men who had seized him had taken post at the door behind him, as if to prevent all chance of his escape, and the pistols and other arms they exhibited, sufficiently warned him that it was necessary to act with prudence.

The hovel was small, and stuffed in every corner with strange looking pieces of furniture, all of them old, most of them very antique in their form, and many of them of foreign manufacture, and wearing the appearance of having made many a voyage. At one side was a large fire-place, built up with fragments of flint from the chalky cliffs, in which was piled a huge heap of burning billets, and a deal table of rude workmanship, plentifully covered with eatables, liquors, bottles, tall beakers, rummers, and Dutch tobacco-pipes, extended it-

self down the middle of the place. On one side sat a rather bulky man, like a foreign pilot, with a great, rough, seaman's watch-coat on, and his head ensconced in a huge brown wig, covered by a broad brimmed hat, which, with his black whiskers, mustachios, and a three weeks' beard, almost hid his face.

As to the other figure, if that might be called a figure which appeared at the upper end of the table, it was difficult to tell by the light of the single candle dimly illuminating the place, whether it was that of a man or of a sea-monster. It was elevated, or rather nestled in an arm-chair, amongst coarse, greasy checked cushions, and it presented the shocking spectacle of a body and head, without legs or arms, for what remains of limbs there were, appeared to be little more than stumps of half a foot long. The deficiency of the body in these respects, was amply compensated by the enormous bulk of the head, that nourished a profusion of black horse-like hair, hanging around the shoulders like the tails of a whole troop of heavy cavalry. The trunk, all upwards to the neck, seemed to be clothed in a sort of close made garment of checked stuff, the hue, material, and shape of it, being so

much like the surrounding cushions, that the enormous head appeared to be poised upon the top of a perpendicularly-placed bolster of enormous magnitude, and when put in motion, it seemed as if about to roll down upon the table. The broad face was of a red so furiously intense, that the whole tide of blood, once nourishing the extremities, seemed to have settled there. With one stump this monster supported a long Dutch clay pipe, with the bole resting on the table, whilst, with the other end of it in his mouth, he half enveloped himself in a cloud of smoke of his own raising.

This extraordinary object so much engaged the attention of Amherst on his entrance, that he had little leisure to look at the other personage we have mentioned.

On an old piece of canvas placed on the floor, at a little distance from the foot of the chair on which this animated head was propt, lay two savage looking bull-dogs, with squint eyes. They growled, and appeared disposed to fly at Amherst, until chid into quietness by the deeper growl of their master's voice, that sounded as if it came from the interior of an empty tun.

In another corner, not far from the dogs, lay a ragged little tarry-looking boy, fast asleep on some straw, covered by an old piece of sail-cloth.

Such were the inmates of this frail and whimsical cabin, against the sides of which the storm beat, as if it would have blown it away. The entrance of the stranger excited almost as much astonishment in them, as filled him at finding himself so suddenly brought there. The atmosphere of tobacco smoke was gradually allowed to clear away, from what might well have been called the head of the table. One enormous goggle eye, for there was but one, glared at Amherst, from the full moon of the face, with a look that seemed to demand some explanation of this intrusion upon their joviality.

“ Sam,” said he, rather sternly to one of the men, and the sound was like that of the deepest notes of a double bass, “ Sam ! what gemman is this here you have brought to spend the evening with us ?” and then, in an under voice, as the man moved nearer to him for the purpose of explanation—“ He is none of the kites of the coast here I’m sure—never see’d un before in my life !”

“ Mayhap not, Master Bellybags,” replied Sam; “ mayhap he be not none of un, and it may be an he had, I should hardly have ventured un here, and might ha’ bundled un into the sea, to save further trouble. But though no kite, as I knows on, he had a woundy suspicious look, and we catched un watching behind a rock, just an’ ’twere a very cat. And considering the job we have on hand, ’twas no time to stand shilly-shally, and allow him to take leg bail, and blow the speaking-trumpet on us. So we e’en brought un up here, that you might judge on un yourself.”

The head again turned towards Amherst, and the enormous eye fixed itself upon him for a few moments, and then with an inconceivable degree of adroitness, the monstrous trunk began to wriggle itself forward, and the right stump catching up a long can of grog, by pressing it against the breast, he poised it with wonderful precision within his arm-pit, and turning his head and it towards each other, he brought his mouth and the beaker into awkward, but very satisfactory contact; the other stump being employed beneath, as a lever to raise it gradually, as the li-

quor ebbed away. In this position the can remained for some time, not altogether for the purpose of prolonging the draught, but rather to afford time, for more effectually scanning the countenance of the young man, who was the subject of his inquiry.

“ Pshaw !” said he, at length, in a sort of half whisper, as he withdrew his mouth from the exhausted vessel, and turned it towards the ear of the man whom he questioned—“ I wish ye mayn’t ha’ done us some ugly turn here, Sam, wi’ your cursed haste. I see nought about the lad as is suspicious as you call it. You should not ha’ been so risky, without some werry strong cause. Now, ye ha’ brought un here, what a fiend shall we do wi’ un ? An we were to let un go now, our game would be up, for an he should blow on us, we should all be rooted out, neck and crop. Then as for any other way of disposing on un, ’twere as well not to do such a thing, unless when we cannot do without it. But, stay, I mun question un a bit, and, d’ye hear, look sharply to the door, for happen what may, he must not budge hence till the *Sans-pareille* is off. But, mark me,” added he with a wink,

“ mark me, how I shall sand his eyes, and gammon him.”

Then raising his voice so as to address Amherst, and throwing a sort of horrid smile into his broad ogre-looking face—

“ Young man,” said he, “ or mayhap I should call you young gemman,—but I am not much up to manners,—there must be some mistake here—your name bea’n’t John Larkins, be it ?”

“ No !” said Amherst, with cool dignity. “ I am no such person ; but I should be glad to be informed why I have been thus seized, and brought hither in so rude a manner ?”

The monster affected to burst into an uncontrollable fit of laughter, that shook the whole of the crazy tenement, and which he seemed with difficulty to subdue. Then appearing, at length, to gather the command of words—

“ A most whimsical blunder, ha ! ha ! ha ! a most ridiculous accident ! truly absurd ! trust me, young gemman, ’twas nought else than a joke on a neighbour of mine, and Sam has hit on the wrong person, that’s all. But, come, let us make some amends, Sam ; come, bear a hand, for I can’t, ye know,—bear a hand, I tell ye, and

trundle in that 'ere box, and let the gemman have a seat, and summat to drink, in this our castle of the cliffs, you understand.—You must know, Sir, that though I am nought now but poor Bellybags the mumper, without legs or arms, as jogs as far as the edge of the great road every morning, in this here chair drawn by them 'ere bull-dogs, with young Tarry-breeches yonder as my coachman, to beg a few pence, and to take the air, I have seed some service in my day, when I were all right and tight as to fins and pins, and could hop about the decks like a dancing-master. I were then a gay one, d'ye see. But thoff I be now a hulk, I ha' still gotten a shot in the locker. A can, ye rogue, Tarry," cried he, to the boy, who jumped up at his loud summons; "a can for the gemman on the box, d'ye hear. You'll take a drop of grog to wet your whistle, Sir, since chance has brought you here? and a pipe, Sir, won't ye? The 'bacco is real good weed. We can sing ye some rare chaunts, and tell ye some merry tales; and let me tell ye, our music will be more pleasanter than that 'ere howling wind, and battering rain, and this cabin better than the beach, just at this

moment, though mayhap not quite so good as the house that you may be customed to !”

These words issued from the cavernous lips of this gigantic head, with an air of so much good nature, and there was something so much like adventure in the affair, that Amherst felt very much inclined to accept of this strange invitation, in support of which inclination, the elements without were urging very loud arguments. But reflecting that his absence might occasion uneasiness to his friend Cleaver, he resolved to make the best of his way homewards, in spite of the storm, and he accordingly signified his intention in the civilest terms he could use.

The mumper seemed to be considerably perplexed, as Amherst was making his reply, and just as he was preparing to leave the cabin, the bulky man in the pilot's coat, and brown wig, who seemed hitherto to have endeavoured to conceal himself by slouching his hat, and leaning backward against the wall, suddenly started up, and calling to the two men who were stationed at the door—“ Let him not pass at your peril, my masters ! I must have more speech of him

ere he goes," he discovered to the wondering eyes of Amherst the features of—Lochandhu!!!

“ Macgillivray!” exclaimed Amherst with an astonishment which, as his action and expression sufficiently testified, had nothing feigned in it. “ Lochandhu here!—Good Heavens! when did you arrive in England? and what has brought you hither?—to meet you in such a place too!”

Thus far he was hurried by the recollection of the Highlander's hospitality; but other images crowding upon his mind, he paused, and a sudden chill, not of fear, but of horror, came over him, as he called to mind the desperate associates with whom he too certainly knew that Lochandhu was leagued in his own country, and as he now looked around him on those with whom he found him consorting in England.

Lochandhu gazed anxiously upon him in silence for some moments with a scrutinizing eye, as if he would have dived into his very soul.

“ No!” said he at length, “ it is impossible—I cannot be mistaken, your surprise is too natural to be that of an actor; besides, I have formerly seen too much honour in you to believe that you could ever bring yourself to betray the man whose

bread you had eaten, and whose cup you had drank."

"Betray you!" cried Amherst, in the accents of increased surprise; "until this moment that you discovered yourself, I believed that you were still among your native forests and mountains."

"'Tis well," said Lochandhu, after a short pause; "but even were it otherwise, I have sufficient security for my safety at present, since you can remain here until the French lugger arrives that is to bear me hence, an outcast exile from my country; she need not tarry long now, and perhaps even at this moment she waits the signal-light—Jem, let it appear!"

The sailor whom he addressed began immediately to add some billets of dry wood to the fire, intermingled with pieces of pitched wreck timber, and it soon blazed up with great violence; after which, with the assistance of the other man, he moved the table a little out of the way, and, opening a slipping pannel in the side of the cabin, next to the sea and opposite to the fire, he disclosed a large aperture in the planks of the wall, of a triangular form, the base of the triangle being uppermost, so that the bright gleam of the fire being

seen through it, must of necessity have produced to those at sea a luminous object of that very remarkable figure, running no risk of being confounded with any ordinary light.

The storm was louder than ever. "Surely," said Amherst, "you do not mean to go to sea in such a night as this. It blows a perfect hurricane, and methinks I even feel the salt mist coming through that hole, as it rises from the spray lashed up by the furious waves dashing in mountains against the beach below."

"Let it blow!" said Lochandhu, with a calm smile; "I have faced as bad before; besides, I question whether the lads who are now tossed on the heaving bosom of yon angry ocean, and are about to carry Cæsar and his fortunes, would have ventured hither, had they not spied all this turmoil a-brewing. But sit down, Mr Oakenwold, and take some refreshment; we may yet have an hour or two to wait for these dolphins of the waves, who are to carry me presently to France. Sit down, I beseech you, and let me have all your news. What, I pray you, became of you after the hasty retreat you made from the glen?—and, by the way too, how came you to decamp so

abruptly, and in a manner so little like what I had reason to expect from a gentleman? Be not offended, I beg of you, at this question, nor scruple to speak plainly to me, for I had my suspicions against Sandy on this head, and it would be some satisfaction, at least, for me, before I leave England, to know whether these suspicions were really just or not. I, too, may perhaps give you some light in matters of which you little think me aware, and which may be of some interest to you." Having said this, Lochandhu was silent, and waited his reply with an air of extreme curiosity.

It was some time before Amherst could satisfy himself that he was right in holding amicable converse with a man whom he had reason to believe a robber and a murderer, and who was apparently even an outlaw. The recollection, however, that he must himself have been murdered, but for the interference of this very man, who had for weeks given him all the protection, as well as all the hospitality due to a guest, left him little inclination to give voluntary information against him, even if it had been in his power. He therefore yielded to his desire of gaining intelligence that might elucidate some of those mysteries which sur-

rounded him while in Scotland, and, sitting quietly down, and beginning his narrative, he gave the whole secret circumstances of it to Lochandhu at full length. Nor had he any other auditors: for the boy Tarry had retired to his lair; the mumper, overcome by the soporific effects of his deep draughts, had closed his one eye in slumber, immediately after a long and last powerful embrace bestowed upon the can of brandy punch; and the three sailors were dispatched by Lochandhu to patrol the beach, and to watch at the bottom of the ravine for the signal from the expected lugger, and to guard the place where the landing was to be effected.

Then it was that their conversation became most interesting to both, and hours passed away without their being sensible of the lapse of time.

When Amherst told Lochandhu of what he had overheard in the hut, of the plot laid against his life, the attempts made to get information from his servant, and the *ruse de guerre* he had been compelled to adopt in consequence of it, and how much the necessity of his manœuvre had been proved from the circumstance of Alexander Macgillivray, the miller, and the rest of the party,

having so readily become dupes to his stratagem, Lochandhu seemed to devour his words.

“ Ah, scoundrel that he was !” cried he, with apparent bitterness of heart, “ I always said he was a wolf,—a brutal hyæna, whom there was no humanizing,—a savage, who never could be made to understand that delicate distinction, which honourably secures protection and hospitality to the guest who seeks our hearth, whilst it gives a fair licence to carry on a petty warfare, necessity driving us, against the mere herd of mankind, or those who, coming not thus within the range of our affections, may be fairly treated as foes. By Heavens ! I pity the rascal the less, since I know that what I so long suspected was in reality true, I mean that he continued to carry on his nefarious plots to the wreck of my reputation, notwithstanding all the injunctions I laid on him to the contrary. By my faith, he would have made but short work with you and the Irishman in Glenmore !—But poor fellow !” said the hardy Highlander, with a tear in his eye, which he could but ill conceal, “ he is gone to his account,—he and the miller were hanged at Inverness, Mr Oakenwold,—and what is more,—

an it had not been that the warrant was entrusted to a very worthy man, who, after taking and handcuffing them, turned to me and said, ‘As for you, Sir, you are a gentlemen, I would advise you to make your escape as fast as you can,’ I should have made the topmost ribbon of the knot that dangled from the tree on the Gallow Hill. Trust me, I did not neglect the gentleman’s advice!—I did not let the grass grow at my heels,—for next night I eat a beef-steak at the lodge of Niddry coal-pits, to the south of Edinburgh. And so I soon reached this neighbourhood, where I have been loitering about in different disguises, and in different places known to myself, receiving shelter from some who have known me before. But you have said little about the partner of your flight, Mr Oakenwold?” said Lochandhu, stopping abruptly to watch the effect of his question.

Amherst had, indeed, given but a slight sketch of the share he had in the escape of Miss Malcolm, indeed, he had introduced no more of this into his narrative than was absolutely necessary to illustrate the other parts of it, and he had endeavoured to allude to her, without permitting it to appear that he had any thing more than an

ordinary interest in her. Lochandhu paused for a few moments for his reply, but seeing that Amherst hesitated, "Well, well, Mr Oakenwold," said he, "be assured I have no desire to dive into your secrets, particularly at a time like this,—nor, indeed, was my question dictated by curiosity. I could tell you something of that lady.—But hark!—did I not hear the sound of steps? I must resume my disguise," and so saying, he hastily wrapped himself up as he was when Amherst entered the cabin.