

## CHAPTER II.

He said, and wept; then spread his sails before  
The winds ———

DRYDEN.

IT was towards evening before O'Gollochar returned. His face betrayed a somewhat mixed expression, making it more difficult to interpret than usual. It might have escaped Amherst altogether, had not the thought that his servant came from Eaglesholme, made him instinctively put some questions to him.

“ Well, Cornelius,” said he, with a serious air, and a half suppressed sigh, “ how have you settled *your* love affair !” laying the emphasis in spite of himself upon the pronoun.

The Irishman was full of his information, and only wanted to be tapped by one leading question.

“ In troth, and sure enough she is to be Mrs

O'Gollochar," said he; "but then it won't be just yet awhile, bekease your honour sees as how she is a good soort of a kind-hearted little soul, and faith, though she be a Frenchwoman, it would bother an Irishwoman's self to be kinder. And so you see, your honour, she made me sensible, that she awes as much duty to her Lady as I do to your honour,—and so not a budge will she budge from her at the present time, bekease she says that her Lady is in sore grief, and sad affliction, that would be enough to kill the merriest cow in Kilkenny, and that it would be barbarious to lave her till she plucks up her spirits a bit;—so I couldn't say nay to that, as your honour knows. I couldn't ask the poor thing to desart her mistress in her misfortunes. Och, and maybe, says I to her, it 'il all come round about yet.—'Troth,' says she, 'Corney, (only she didn't spake such good English as I am doing,) and the not a prospect of that I seen at all,' says she, 'at the present time, anyway,' says she; 'so we must e'en bide a turn,' says she, 'till we see how things fall out.—But,' says she, 'as sure as the Bog of Allan is in Ireland, I'll be yours, and not a body else's.' Wid that I kisses her,

and outs with a lily-white tester, and breaks it into two bits, and swears to each other, and are, for a matter of that, as good as married. So I parted from her with some ado, and she is to write to me at Oakenwold, and to tell me all about herself and her mistress, poor soul !”

Amherst’s heart bled afresh. His misery, indeed, became so acute, that it drove him almost distracted. His servant had hardly left him, when he suddenly took the wild determination of going to Eaglesholme, in the hope of seeing her.

Without covering his head, slipshod, and in dishabille as he was, he ran, or rather flew towards the castle, with his mind so occupied, that he felt not he touched the earth, and noticed not the objects he passed, until its drawbridge rang beneath his hasty tread. He pulled the chain of the great bell. The old Swiss came,—but he no sooner perceived who gave the summons, than with his thick lips firmly pressed together, he shook his huge head solemnly and sternly, and then, with the most imperturbable gravity, slowly and silently retreated round the angle of the wall into his lodge. Amherst rang furiously a second time, but he was altogether unattended to.

Not a step was heard within the walls. He surveyed the buildings all over, but not a human being was visible. His wounded heart sank within him. His extravagant attempt had been like the unnatural effort, sometimes made in the last hours of life, and the failure of his energy was great in proportion to the magnitude of the previous exertion. His strange figure now struck him for the first time. Filled with shame, and with a soul subdued almost unto death, and a head throbbing with a thousand antagonist emotions, he turned away from a gate which had so often opened to admit him to happiness—that gate, which he felt enclosed all that could ever give him joy,—nay, all in which he could ever feel interest on earth, but which was now for ever shut against him. To attempt to describe his sufferings would be impossible. In a state of delirium, he rushed towards Sanderson Mains, and regained his chamber without having been missed.

Next day, at Cleaver's entreaty, he summoned resolution enough to go down stairs to thank Sir Alisander and Lady Sanderson for all their kindness, and to participate in their last hospitable meal previous to his departure. He, indeed,

could hardly on this occasion be said to partake of it. But Cleaver did ample justice to it for both. He made the grand tour of all the good things, taking an affectionate leave of such of them as were dainties peculiar to Scotland, and, like a lover who returns to bid farewell again and again, each parting salutation being kinder and more prolonged than the last—

“When to say farewell, he finds so sweet a sorrow,  
That he could say farewell until to-morrow.”

He stole another, and another morsel, till, unable to do more, he besought Mr Brouster to remove the temptation from him, if he had any regard for his life, declaring that he had laid in a sufficient store for the whole voyage.

“I have given orders,” said Sir Alisander, “that your sea-stock shall be attended to, and I have particularly directed some of those things you liked to be put on board your yacht; and you must allow us to send you, now and then, some of our Scottish rarities, as occasional remembrances of the very agreeable friendship accident has enabled us to form with you.” Mr Oakenwold, I have had much less of your excellent company than I could have wished. But I trust

you will not forget Scotland, and that you and your friend will soon return, to make the inmates of Sanderson Mains again happy in your society."

But I shall wave all description of the warm parting of Cleaver, and the distress of mind Amherst experienced in being compelled to bear up, and to rid himself of that abstraction, which must have given him an appearance of coldness of manner, had he not made an effort to struggle against it. Suffice it to say, that the regrets on both sides were many, and that the dejection Amherst betrayed, from the more powerful though secret cause, passed very well off in conjunction with the "God bless you, my dear Sir,—I shall never forget your kindness and hospitality;"—"May you enjoy every happiness, my dear Lady!" that (with a round drop in each eye) accompanied Cleaver's last hearty shake of the hand.

The gentlemen got on board, and as they were standing round the headland, they observed a waving of handkerchiefs from a group of people on the summit of it. By the aid of his glass, Cleaver discovered, to his surprise, that Sir Alexander, though in general little disposed to move, had actually had himself and his Lady transported

thither, in order to have the pleasure of wafting to them, in that manner, a last adieu. The honest sailor's heart filled again. He called to his lads to stand to their guns, and to give a royal salute, a piece of service honest Jack Markham performed with the greatest alacrity and pleasure. They scudded along, with a fine breeze, and the group of figures on the headland, and then the bold rock itself, and all its grand accompanying features, melted into distance, and, like the passing events of human life, they dissolved as perfectly away from the visual orb as if they had never existed as realities before it. How often, alas ! does it happen, that even the very image of those kind beings, who have been thus left behind, vanishes with the substantial form of the land that holds them ! But theirs were not hearts of such materials as to allow grateful remembrances to be thus transient. There was, indeed, one individual beneath those fleecy clouds hanging over the misty mountains, from which they were so fast retreating, whose form and face was ever present to the mind of Amherst. With her he held such intercourse as two kindred souls will hold with each other, however distant, or however divided they

may be in body ; and this rendered him quite unfit for every other species of converse. Cleaver had judgment enough to perceive that it would have been cruel, as well as vain, to harass him by attempts to break in upon his thoughts. Besides, his whole mind was engaged in the navigation of his little vessel, so Amherst was left to the undisturbed possession of himself during the voyage, which was prosperous, and devoid of all adventure.

The old Admiral was so rejoiced to behold his son again, that for a time he quite forgot to upbraid him for the decided step he had taken, in quitting Oakenwold Manor.

After his first parental embraces were over, however, and Aunt Margery had pressed forward to have her share, and was in the act of loading her nephew with every possible term of endearment, in her shrill and piping treble, Sir Cable's deep grumbling thorough bass was heard to come rolling in, like the growl of the approaching storm, becoming louder and louder, until it broke articulately forth.

“ Why, Ammy, my fine fellow, it was but a scurvy trick you and the old porpus Cleaver

served me after all, to slip your cable and go to sea, without giving your father and Admiral a signal of your intentions; above all, you, who both of you knew me so well. Why, zounds, Sir, what did you take me for? Did you suppose that I would not have listened to reason? You know very well that I am always disposed to lend an ear to sound argument, and to do what is fair and proper, when things are put in their true light. Then to be away in another country for so long a time, without so much as a scrape of a pen to let me know whether you were dead or alive, or to inquire for your old father! Why, Sir, I have been cursedly ill, Sir!—very ill, indeed, with the infernal gout,—all owing to your having ruffled my temper, too!—though, Heaven knows, I never get into a passion!—that is, except when I have very good cause! I swear I had a great mind to have married Miss Delasaux myself!”

“Dear me,” exclaimed Miss Margery, “dear me, brother Cable, that would have been a strange match!”

“Strange, you old goose! and what would have been strange about it?—Sure as old men as

I am have married,—aye, and have had large families too !”

“ Very true, brother Cable,—and to be sure, she is a fine, sensible, clever, sweet disposed girl, Miss Delassaux, and a great admirer of canary birds, for so she told me, the very last time she saw mine. Miss Oakenwold, says she to me——”

“ Pshaw ! damn it, Madge, never mind what she said !—You’re an old fool I tell ye !—Miss Delassaux is artful enough, I dare say, but as to sense, I don’t believe she has an ounce of it in her whole composition, after what I have heard of the manner in which she has ruined her fortune by her fooleries and gewgaws. And then as to sweet temper !—report belies her confoundedly, if she be not a very devil under the mask of an angel. Now, to tell you the truth, Amherst,” said he, turning again to his son, “ we have escaped a coral reef in steering clear of that same syren. Her singing, and her guitaring, and her soft looks, and long eye-lashes, might have made a hole in my heart, old and tough as it is ; but I have heard such accounts of her extravagance, as well as of her violent temper, (a fault, by the

bye, I particularly abominate, the more, perhaps, because it is one I never give way to myself, and, consequently, have less excuse for in others,) that you were not gone a fortnight, till I firmly resolved in my own mind, that you should have nothing to do with her. But heyday ! what's the matter with you, lad ? —you don't seem well, —surely you don't begin to regret that the match is broken off ?—though, zounds ! nothing is more likely, such is the perverse disposition of youth. But I don't care.—Remember I have said it, Sir, and I will be obeyed.—You shall never match with that damned Italianized piece of folly, if there were ne'er a woman in England besides,—so don't pretend to say you will,—I won't be made a fool of, I tell ye !—so don't put me in a passion !”——

And saying so, (though one foot still wore the large gouty shoe, and he was yet very lame,) he put his crutches under his arm, and with an alacrity he had not displayed since we last had occasion to notice him, he stumped backwards and forwards on his quarter-deck, fuming and fretting, and, at the same time, grinning and wincing with each new twinge of the gout, till, exhausted

by pain and passion together, he sank again into his easy chair.

Amherst, with whom a bodily disease, arising in a great measure from his mental sufferings, had been daily increasing during the voyage, and which the fatigue of his ride from Dover had brought to a speedy crisis, had really felt a faintness come upon him at the time his father had remarked it. He seized the moment of the Admiral's silence to explain this circumstance to him, and to assure him, that, so far from feeling distressed by the intelligence he had just conveyed to him, he was truly rejoiced to find that his father was at last aware of Miss Delassaux's character.

His indisposition rapidly increasing, he was compelled to entreat his father's indulgence, and to declare that he felt it necessary to retire to his apartment to endeavour to check it by taking a little repose.

Miss Margery was alarmed. "Take some of my dill-water, dear Ammy!" said she; "I'll fetch it in a moment—or some of my decoction of vervain, comfrey, and cardamums—nothing so good for keeping off faintness; or I'll get you"——

"Damn your dill-water and your comfrey and

cardamums !” exclaimed the Admiral in much alarm ; “ if he is really ill we must send for a physician.—Here, Cuddy ! John ! Thomas ! where are ye all ?” and ringing the bell like fury, the servants came running in, one by one in succession, from different parts of the old mansion, and each in his turn was dispatched a different way for medical assistance.

Amherst did all he could to prevent this, assuring his father that his illness was probably nothing more than the effects of the sea voyage, their passage from Scotland having been rough though speedy.

“ Impossible !” exclaimed Sir Cable, interrupting him. “ Utterly impossible, I tell ye. What ! you the son of a man who has lived, I may say, fifty years at sea ! Pshaw, nonsense ! I never had a squeamish minute at sea in my life. I took to the water from my very nest like a young wild duck—you sea sick ! you may as well talk of a young Newfoundland whelp being sea sick. I tell ye sea sickness is not in the breed. But do, my dear boy, go to bed, for you do look confoundedly ill, that’s certain. And, Margery, d’ye hear, send Mrs Glass to give the lad a warm cordial

drink, and none of your damned dill or ditch-water, d'ye hear !”

The Admiral, amidst all his violence, began at last to be really shocked by his son's appearance, which had not at first struck him so forcibly. His impatience of temper, that induced him to send express for medical advice, was most fortunate on this occasion, for it probably saved Amherst's life. A low nervous fever came on, with which he struggled many days. During great part of the time his recovery was considered by the physicians as very doubtful. Aunt Margery could do nothing but go about from room to room wringing her hands, and uttering most incoherent ejaculations of distress and apprehension. The Admiral was in the utmost misery. He forgot the gout altogether, and, with his chair placed by his son's bedside, he watched over him with the most painful anxiety. Every moment he looked cautiously within the curtains, and when his eyes rested on the emaciated face and sunken eyeballs of his son, who, for a great part of the time, was unconscious of his father's presence, the old man would fall back in his chair in an agony of grief, which all his affected heroism of character could not disguise,

and, hiding his face with his hands, would give way to feelings too violent to be suppressed.

How eagerly would he endeavour to read the fate of his son in the eyes of his medical attendants, at each successive visit they paid him, their hopes, but much more frequently their fears, being reflected from his countenance as if from a faithful mirror.—Often was he heard to curse Brokenhurst-Hall, its inhabitants, and his own folly, for having been the cause of the sudden step his son had taken in leaving home, and exposing himself, as he believed, to some accidental contagion.

At length the disease fortunately gave way, and hope began to dawn. The difficulty now was to keep the Admiral's growing joy somewhat within bounds, to prevent any injury to the patient in his weak state. The medical men had enough to do to accomplish this; but we must now leave them to their task, that we may bring forward the history of some of the other personages of our story.