

CHAPTER XI.

One gives another a cup of poison, but at the same time tells him it is a cordial, and so drinks it off and dies.

SOUTH.

Both wind and tide stay for this gentleman,
And I, to blame, have held him here too long.

SHAKESPEARE.

LOCHANDHU had hardly time to conceal himself in his disguise when a low tap was heard at the door, and Amherst observed him thrust his hand into his bosom and seize a pistol, the large brazen butt of which, being partially discovered by his movement, showed that it was no child's plaything, and, at the same time, he raised the fore-finger of his other hand to caution his companion to be silent. The bull dogs under the table growled;—the tap was repeated rather more audibly;—the dogs uttered a short bark;—the latch was then slowly lifted, and the door

half opened, and a man's head appeared. It was Antonio !

The ruffian's dark and malignant eyes peered cautiously around the interior of the cabin.—“ *Sangue del diavolo !*” said he, in a muttering tone, “ strangers here !—Hollo ! old Bellybags ! Why you are asleep, methinks !—Dost hear I say ? Silence those cursed curs of thine,—they ought to know me by this time.”

The dogs seemed to give assent to this remark, for no sooner did they recognize him, than they changed their bark into a whine, and began fawning upon him.

“ Hey !” said he, looking more stedfastly at Amherst, as if he now recognized him—“ Hah !—*Cospetto del miracolo !* What make you here, young man ?” added he, regarding him with increasing fierceness.

“ Why, master Antony,” replied the mumper, “ he was fitched here by them nincompoops, Sam, and Jem, because they thought he looked somewhat like a shark in the dark. But he's nought but an innocent whiting after all, and a jolly companion he is, never trust me an he bean't. He and that 'ere gemman have drank me their

cans, and tipt me their melodisome chaunts, till I werrily think they have half bamboozled me, for I were sound asleep when you comed in. But what, in the fiend's name, may ha' brought ye down at this here hour?"

"You old fool!" cried Antonio, "you're as drunk as the ocean! How came you to admit people of whom you know nothing? *Dannazione!* this young cockerel is no guest for you, let me tell you. Mr Oakenwold," said he, turning to Amherst, and addressing him in a stern voice, "I must know, Sir, what you do here?"

"What right have you to question me, ruffian?" demanded Amherst, rising, his blood boiling within him at the recollection of the atrocious act he had been guilty of in carrying off Miss Malcolm, aggravated by his present impudence. "Villain that you are, you shall account to me, and to the laws of the country, for the infamous crimes you are guilty of."

"What right have I to question you, did you say?" replied Antonio. "Why, no other than that of every one, who has his own safety to secure. You talk of my crimes—so you are aware of all, are ye? and you mean to revenge your-

self on me for the chace I gave you in Scotland, by turning informer here. *Fuoco del grand inferno!*” added he, making a step towards Amherst, “but you have chosen a pretty trade for a gentleman! *Siete Galantuomo davvero! Ma —.*”

He plucked a poinard from a concealed part of his cloak, in such a manner, that his movement was perfectly unseen by his victim, and was in the act of drawing his arm slowly behind him to plunge it into Amherst’s side, when the Highlander, who saw every thing, sprang over the table in the twinkling of an eye, and alighting just between them, as the glittering steel was closing on its aim by a powerful horizontal thrust, he received on the thick part of his thigh the wound intended for the heart of Amherst, whilst, at the same time, his whole weight descending upon Antonio, brought the assassin flat to the ground. Macgillivray immediately recovered himself, and drawing from his bosom the large pistol, the stock of which he had continued to grasp, he held the muzzle to the head of the prostrate Italian.

“Stir not,” said he, in a determined manner,

“stir not, Antonio ; at your peril, stir not, till you promise me to do no injury to Mr Oakenwold. His father saved my life. He has himself eaten the bread and salt, and drank of the cup of my hospitality, and I will sacrifice my life, rather than a hair of his head shall be touched !”

“ Lochandhu !! !” exclaimed the Italian, even more confounded by his appearance, than by the overthrow he had received from him—

“ Aye, Lochandhu !” replied Macgillivray, still standing over him in the same menacing attitude—“ Promise to make no farther attempt on Mr Oakenwold, and you shall be permitted to rise, for I would not willingly hurt you neither. On my part, I will answer for the honour of Mr Oakenwold. From him you have nothing to fear, while I am his warrant for your safety.”

Amherst readily declared that, as far as the present occasion went, he would pledge himself to keep the engagement Mr Macgillivray had just made for him ; he should not, however, hold himself bound to respect it farther, but, after the present night, should consider himself free to take measures at any time for the apprehension of Anto-

nio, that he might be brought to justice for carrying off a young lady from her friends in Scotland, and subjecting her to a cruel confinement.

“ Is that all you know against me ?” said Antonio, with much indifference of manner ; “ a *fico*, then, for your evidence ! and a *fico* for you now, though you knew the worst, since I saw the lugger lying off and on that shall land me safely in France before the day breaks. Then come let us be friends,” continued the villain, with a sneering laugh ; “ or, if you like not the word, let us be pot companions at least for half an hour, fellow-guests of mine host of the Saracen’s Head there.—Come, come, I promise to keep the truce—Lochandhu, the young fellow shall have no harm from me, *credemi vi dico !*”

Upon this assurance, Antonio was permitted to gather himself up, and Amherst now began to express his anxiety about the wound Lochandhu had so generously received in his defence. The poinard still remained in it, but the Highlander assured him that it was a mere scratch, and although, upon withdrawing the weapon, a pretty copious flow of blood appeared, it was discovered to have done little more than graze the skin, the limb

having been defended by the thick leather small clothes he generally wore, in which the blade had fixed itself. A handkerchief was bound round it to staunch the blood.

“ *Signore capo e corpo,*” cried Antonio, addressing the head of the house, “ have you nothing in your locker to stay a hungry man’s stomach?—I have had a tolerable scamper to-night, and could taste a bit of beef before my flask. I have half a cake here, which I brought with me, but I have no fancy for such kickshaws when I can get any thing that is more to my mind.”

“ Look into my larder,” said the mumper; “ you’ll find a round of corned beef there that will stand all your broadsides, an I mistake not.”

“ Then *corpo di me,* I’ll make this a present to Grappler and Growler,” cried Antonio, tossing the cake to the dogs, who instantly began to make an amicable attack upon it, whilst he proceeded to rummage in an old trunk for the round of beef the mumper had spoken of, and having found it, he cut some pretty large slices from it, and sat down at the table to satisfy his hunger.

After he had eat rapaciously, he pulled from his pocket a flask of wine.

“ Hah !” cried he, “ though I cared not for the eatable part of my travelling stock, *il bere non fa male*, I have no particular objections to the tipples ; ’tis Malmsey, if I mistake not, at least I think I should know the shape of the bottle ; but you shall all taste it, and judge for yourselves. Come,” said he, as he filled four large goblets that drained the flask dry ; “ come, and since two of us are just a going to cross the sea, let us have *buon viaggio*—But *cospetto del inferno* ! what is the matter with the dogs ?”

All eyes were now directed towards the animals, who were lying stretched upon their sides in strong convulsions, their tongues thrust out, their eyes and their jaws fixed, and a frothy saliva appearing from their mouths. Antonio rose hastily to examine them, and even tried to raise them up one after the other ; but after a few violent struggles, to the astonishment of all present, the creatures died. Scarcely a fourth part of the cake had been eaten by them.

“ There was poison in that cake,” said Antonio, “ mortal poison !—Drink not the wine !—doubtless it also is impregnated with death.”

“ How came you by it ?” demanded Lochan-

dhu in surprise. Antonio seemed to think for a moment. A desperate and fiend-like expression passed over his face, blackening his features from the operation of the inward storm that agitated him; his eyes glared, his teeth were heard to grind violently against each other—but he said nothing, until Lochandhu's question was repeated.

“Came by it!” replied he, “*Credemi*, I had it from one who meant me no good. It was intended that I should myself have been the victim of that deadly cake and this deadly draught, but the devil has been pleased to allow me to escape, and,” continued he, laughing horribly, “I trust he will help me to a glorious revenge. But come, come,” said he, dashing down with a sweep of his arm the four brimmers standing ranked up in a line before him, just as he had poured them out; “come, come!—let us think no more of this accident. Time wears!” cried he, seizing a large beaker that contained an ocean of punch, and, putting it to his head, began to drain its contents with a most capacious throat.

“Time does wear indeed,” said Lochandhu; “but was not that a swivel gun from the sea?—Hark!—a shout from the beach!—Again!—Nay,

then we have no time to lose; the lugger must be there, and we must be gone. Antonio!—*andiamo amico!*—We shall soon be beyond the reach of English law, which you, I imagine, have little less reason to fear than I have. Come along, I say.”

“ I go not with you, Lochandhu,” replied Antonio, gruffly; “ I cannot, on reflection, go to-night. I now remember I have some affairs to settle before I quit the British shore.”

“ Well, then,” replied Lochandhu, “ if you go not, I must. But, remember! no harm to Mr Oakenwold, or, by Heaven, I will return from the end of the world to make you suffer for it!—I must be gone. I have been too long loitering about to trust myself another moment here. I expect I shall meet you in France, Antonio,—in Paris, perhaps!”

“ Um!” said Antonio, doubtingly, “ we may! or—we may not—*Ma non importa!*—*Per adesso vi dono il buon viaggio.*”

Lochandhu hastily belted on his long sword, and buttoning his watch-coat, grasped his gold-headed cane, and hurriedly left the cabin. Amherst instantly started up and followed him. A

confused mingling of sounds came up from the beach below, and a long string of horses with bags and panniers, led by a number of determined-looking men, passed upwards through the ravine, and the men mounting, as each of them in succession reached the level ground at the summit, they scampered off in different directions.

As Lochandhu hurried down towards the shore, Amherst earnestly begged of him to tell what he knew of the lady to whom he was alluding at the moment they were interrupted by the unexpected entrance of Antonio. "I am interested in her, Mr Macgillivray," said he, "more than you can possibly be aware; indeed to a degree no human being can conceive. For Heaven's sake tell me what you know of her!"

"Young man," said Lochandhu, turning to him but for a moment, "her story is long—much too long for the few minutes now left me. For, see! there is the boat and the men,—and yonder dusky thing, rising upon the heaving billows of these wide waters, is the bark that waits to carry me; and, see! the storm is settling down, and the moon is clearing her way through the clouds, and the fair-weather sharks may now come afloat

after us if we tarry. But yet I will stop to satisfy you so far, and to tell you, that if you will but go hence directly to your father's, you may, as the newspaper advertisements sometimes have it, hear of something to your advantage. In short, there and there only, can your anxiety and curiosity be relieved. Forget not to tell your father that, outlaw as I am, I can never cease to remember that he once saved my life; and that there exists not a dog or cat of his for whom I would not willingly sacrifice it. And, now,—(coming, my brave lads!)—may you, Mr Oakenwold, enjoy all the happiness this world can bestow—and may I!—may I be forgotten for ever!!”

He snatched Amherst's hand before he was aware, and bestowing on it a short but hearty squeeze, struck himself violently on the forehead, and exclaiming, in half-choked words—“Farewell, my country!”—rushed on board the boat that was hauled close up on the beach. It was launched in an instant, amidst the roaring of the still mountainous sea, and was soon impelled beyond all reach of human voice or human eye,

leaving Amherst standing like a statue upon the shore.

He remained not long in this position, for, regaining his recollection, he hastily began to explore his way along the moonlight beach, the winds and waves lulling more and more as he advanced. But it seemed as if they had communicated a portion of their late agitation to his bosom, that had so long slept under a calm but unhealthy stagnation. A thousand hopes and fears, originating in the mysterious hint dropped by Lochandhu, now arose within him, and alternately displaced each other.

Amherst was encircling the margin of a little creek, when he beheld a figure standing on a fragment of rock, relieved against the clear sky. The place where it stood was near a salient angle of the cliff, where the full tide made the passage extremely narrow. Recollecting the suspicious characters who frequented the coast, he was staggered for a moment, but advancing with caution, he, to his infinite surprise, beheld *The Dwarfie Carline!*

“ Young man,” said she to him, as he approached, and stopped to regard her—“ young

man, I come not now to warn you of danger—I come the herald of glad tidings; joy awaits you; on the wings of the wind I come to tell you so.—Leave Dover to-morrow for Oakenwold without fail!—And now my errand is sped!”

She flew up an almost perpendicular part of the rock, by a crack in its front, and left Amherst astonished with her warning, and not the less so, that it agreed so well with what Lochandhu had hinted to him.

He hastened home, and having told his friend Cleaver of the strange adventures of the night, they agreed to set out for Oakenwold Manor next day.