

the mouth of the firth, where the tides are not so strong, their anchor within a little time broke, and they behoved to go to sea.

In a storm, especially if it blow from south-east (which, they say, in the firth causeth the greatest sea) and the tide be running in the wind's eye, the roaring and swelling waves are very terrible, and mount so high, that they could wash, not only the deck, but the sails and topmasts of the biggest ships.

The house of Mey, formerly mentioned, is a myth, sign, or mark, much observed by sailors in their passing through this firth between Caithness and Stroma; for they carefully fix their eyes upon the lums, or chimney-heads, of this house, which if they lose sight of, then they are too near Caithness, and so ready to run upon sand-backs, but if they get also sight of the house, then they are too near Stroma, and so may split upon the rocks which lie off the south end of Stroma.

Hence we see, "They who go down to the sea in ships, and do business in the great waters, these see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the depths; that he is a God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders; he causeth the wind to blow, and the sea to flow, at his pleasure; bounding the impetuous tides with the rocks and sand, saying, Hitherto shall ye come, and no further, and here shall your proud waves be stayed; which, though they roar, yet shall they not prevail." His goodness and power putting a restraint upon them; his wisdom and counsel directing their turning and returning, for his own glorious ends. Glory to his name!

CHAP. XI.—*Concerning Caithness, and what we found to be most remarkable there.*

MY discourse upon Orkney and Zetland being extended beyond what either was intended or expected, I shall therefore study to be the briefer upon Caithness, as likewise seeing it is supposable that it may be better known than any of the former, it being upon the same continent with us. What then is to be said thereupon, I shall dispatch and sum up in this one chapter.

Caithness is the northernmost province or shire in Scotland, having Pightland-firth whereby it is divided from Orkney on the north, the entrance to Murray-firth on the east, Sutherland and Strathnaver on the south, and the Deucaledonian Ocean on the west. It is from that high hill called the Ord of Caithness, toward the south, whereby it is divided from Sutherland, to Dungsby-head, about thirty miles long, and from Thurso on the west side, to Wick on the east side of the country, twelve miles broad.

As we were much in the dark about the etymology of Orkney and Zetland, so no less are we here in that of Caithness; upon which Blaw, in his Geography, giveth us this notandum: "That many names of places are something strange, whose original seem to be neither Scottish, Irish, Danish, or Norwegian, but unknown, uncertain, and most ancient: such as Orbister, Loyibster, Robaster, Trumbuster, and innumerable others, Cæterum not multa locorum nomina peregrinum quid sapere, quorum origo neque Scoticum, Hibernicum, Danicum, aut Norvegicum quid referant, sed ignotæ, incertæ, et vetussumæ originis videntur, qualia sunt Orbister, Loyibster, Robaster, Trumbuster, et innumera alia." And seeing such examples of names which are of an unknown original, as are given by the historian, do all end in ster, I would add, that most of the names of places in this country do end in ster or star, and go; as between twenty and thirty in ster or star, and about twenty in go, as my informer, who had been for some time in the country, did reckon them. Of old, Sutherland, saith the same geographer, was called Catey, and its inhabitants Cateigh, and so likewise was Caithness and Strathnaver; and in the Irish,