

THE FIRST STAGE.

Charles Marshall was the youngest son of a homely, frugal, and industrious family. He received his education at the parish school, and as he grew up his boyish pursuits gave sufficient indication of the bent of his mind. He loved to paddle about in a small boat on the river, or mount the rigging of some one or other of the vessels which might be lying in the harbour, and when at thirteen years of age he was apprenticed to Mr. John Williams—at that time a Baltic trader—he was placed in a situation congenial to his wishes. When about twenty years of age his father purchased for him a small schooner—the *Janet*—and in the capacity of master, the attention and activity he had displayed during his minority, were even more strikingly manifested. He now thought of sailing in life, and in a small place, where each one knows his neighbour, it was not, perhaps, a difficult task for him to meet with a friend of kindred spirit. With Mary Graham, the only daughter of a draper in the village, he had long been on familiar terms. They had been play-mates at school, and the little friendships then interchanged, ripened into love.

Mary was a blithe, comely, gentle creature, and contrasted not a little with the bold off-hand disposition of the sailor, yet she judged prudently when she said, "a rough and even uncouth manner may conceal a warm and generous heart." With no small degree of complacency therefore she looked forward to that auspicious day which was to seal their union. All arrangements completed, the day at length arrived, and in the midst of mirth and jollity Charles Marshall led to their new abode the object of his affections.

Marriages here were, at that time, managed differently to what they are in the present day. Now, so soon as the ceremony has been performed the married couple start off on an excursion to the Trosachs, or if it be in summer, perhaps to the Island of Arran, to climb the lofty Goatfell, from whose serrated summit may be seen the heights of Cumberland, the hills of Ireland, and the heath clad mountains of Scotland; but, at that time, when a marriage was to be celebrated a party of fiddlers, engaged for the occasion, accompanied the bridegroom and his friends to the house of the bride. When the ceremony was performed the whole company marched off in regular procession to the new abode—sometimes as many as thirty couples, all on foot; with the fiddlers leading the van. The way from the bride's house was generally lined by all the inhabitants who could creep or walk to see the procession. The firing of guns and pistols, drowned at times the music, and at every other house the whole procession stopped to receive in a little whiskey, or home brewed ale, a token of the respect and the good wishes of the inmates of that dwelling. In this way, amidst shouting and cannonading and fiddling did the party move on, and sometimes with difficulty reached the house for the reception of the young couple. This done, however, the utmost hilarity crowned the festal scene. After a hearty supper, the staple of which was "beef and greens," the floor was cleared, and the company commenced to dance Scotch reels, and Strathspeys, and country dances. The duty devolving upon the "best man" was to see the toddy-bowl duly replenished; and you might see this worthy, sit for hours together with a long, twisted, whalebone-shanked, silver tipped taddle in his hand, stirring in the large Petersburg bowl; and ever and anon testing the flavour of the smoking beverage. This scene of things lasted generally during three days; but the good old marriage custom has disappeared with the old worthies by whom it was cherished; and should the sound of a violin be heard now at any such convivial meeting, it falls upon the ear with a less vibrating tone. Not only have the Robertsons of Dunblane, and the Blackwoods of Dollar,* yielded the contest to a new race of musicians, but their old heart-stirring strains, the

"Miller O'Drone," and "Tulloch Gorum" have given place to slippant measures that grandmother declares are not worth a "Sang O'Wallace."

Such was the kind of conviviality in which Charles Marshall was ushered into married life. I will not follow them through the minute details of their history, nor attempt to describe the joy which was felt when the birth of a son was announced, nor endeavour to portray the exhilarated feelings which successive events of a similar character produced. Our course is onwards. We have to deal with that family in a state of maturity. Suffice it to say that five rosy children—four boys and a girl—in due time surrounded the happy fireside.

The grandfather and grandmother, who had witnessed with feelings of devoutest gratitude, the earliest and happiest days of their youngest son and his family, were laid in their narrow bed, in a good old age, ere yet their grandchildren had begun to signalize themselves on the theatre of the world. Happily for them, the blossom of the almond tree was not blasted, nor their mellow years rendered miserable by the sorrowful succession of tragedies which shortly ensued. Mr. Marshall still pursued his calling with activity, and fortune smiled on his efforts. His voyages were frequently very remunerative; and on each renewed return, his family, happy in the innocent artlessness of youth, vied with each other for a share in his affection. The three eldest, Alexander, Charles and Joseph, seemed to partake very much of the disposition and spirit of their father. Surrounded by seafaring associations, they were all determined to be sailors, and were educated accordingly. Their mother, mild and ever indulgent, did not, perhaps, so restrain their impetuous spirits as their own well being required. Mr. Marshall was seldom at home more than three or four days at a time, and when he did arrive a jubilee was proclaimed, so that the sons—greatly to the acceleration of their future misery—were allowed to romp and rollick at will, and, one after another, all went to sea. Jane, the fourth child, was a bland and amiable creature. Her full soft blue eyes beamed with sweetest affection, while her beautiful auburn ringlets gave a lustrous effect to her appearance, and the cheerful gentleness of her manner, endeared her to all with whom she was acquainted.

THE SECOND STAGE.

"Honour and fame from no condition rise,
As 't is your part, there all the honour lies."

In the first stage we travelled over a period of forty-five years, and some of the characters to whom we were introduced are mingled with the associations and history of the past. Alexander Marshall has now attained his majority, and as a "set off" in life his father has purchased for him a fine brig, called the *Myrtle*. This vessel was tastefully fitted up, and supplied with everything calculated to make him comfortable; but the prosecution of his history gives painful evidence that his moral nature was not sufficiently fortified to enable him to withstand the temptations by which he became surrounded. You find an exact counterpart to his future career, in that of many a noble minded youth who, beaming with fondly cherished hopes, and ardent with the brightest anticipations—leaves the quiet and sequestered hamlet in which his juvenile years have passed, to mix in the bustling activity of some large town or city. In this new sphere, freed alike from the restraints and the example of those who, watched with pious solicitude over his ripening years, he is lured by seductive blandishments to the dark retreats of the temples of vice, and imperceptibly receding, at length finally falls a victim to the subtle, though fatal fascinations. How many youths, alas! have thus swerved from the pure and holy principles by which their lives were regulated beneath the humble paternal roof. The chrysalis bursting from its filmy encasement, conscious of a new power floats high in air, or flits from flower to flower to sip their varied sweets; so these unhappy youths, having once entered the "pleasant valley," cast aside the fair mantle of religion,

which sat loosely on them; and bidding defiance to what they now consider childish prejudices, and superstitious bugbears, they float about in the false idea of emancipation. But as a tower whose foundations have been sapped, suddenly falls prostrate in the dust, so they, with minds depraved, passions inflamed, natural vigour abated, souls paralyzed, and dead to the calls of reason, are dashed from the sorry eminence to which an enslaving sensuality had raised them, and they sink into a premature grave, leaving their friends to mourn in silent sadness their untimely end.

But to return to the unfortunate Alexander. He soon gave striking evidence that he was out of his natural sphere. In the capacity of a captain he lost that impulse to duty which the presence of a superior authority afforded. Without moral or physical restraint he became haughty and domineering; and at sea, where every trifling occurrence is easily construed into mutiny, and punished as such, the seamen were afraid to test in any way his irritable temper, so that there was no sociality on board. Thus shut up within himself, as it were, the only companion he had was one which has blasted the hopes of many of Scotland's bravest mariners. He became familiar with the brandy bottle. Ah! little did his father think when he was so careful to fit up in Alexander's stateroom, a place for what he emphatically termed "the knowledge cask," that all the knowledge it would ever impart to his son would be a knowledge only of evil. By daily indulgence, however, a habit was formed which

"When once rooted
Few ha'e pith the root to pou."

One blustering night in the month of November, on his homeward voyage from the Baltic to the North of Ireland, with a cargo of hemp, they neared that dangerous headland in the north of Scotland, appropriately named "Cape Wrath," where the waters which sweep round Dunnet Head, meet with the swell of the Atlantic and form the "Minch," between the Western Isles and the main land. About half past eleven o'clock they were off the Cape, when a squall peculiar to that place sprang up. It was the Captain's watch on deck. He was below in a half intoxicated soporific state. The young man keeping a "look out" was inexperienced in Cape weather, and ere the call was given—"all hands on deck," "shorten sail"—the *Myrtle* was on her beam ends. Hurry and confusion now prevailed; and after considerable exertion the masts were cut away, and the vessel again righted. The gale kept up most furiously, and was accompanied with a cold drenching rain; they were driven under lee of Rona, a little island about sixty miles from the Cape, where they lay till jury masts were erected, and then they proceeded to Stromness, the chief port in the Orkney Islands. Here they were obliged to winter, during which time the *Myrtle* was again put in order. About the end of February they again entered the Minch, and were nearly abreast of Stromness when it began to blow fresh. The *Myrtle* still kept on her course; but the gale increased so that the mate urged his captain to run back to Stromness, where there was a good roadstead. As usual, he was deaf to all suggestions, and kept on till it seemed dangerous to hold out longer. They were at this time off Long Island, South Uist, and the Captain attempted to make a port which seemed to offer shelter. They therefore "stood in," and just as they had got under the island of Benbecula, the Captain ran below to discover by the chart whether there was depth of water, or what kind of place it was, when the wind came sweeping round the back of the island and drove them to the opposite side. Had he been upon deck at this moment when the sails began to droop all might yet have been safe, but ignorant of the place, he had gone below, and before he reached the deck, the *Myrtle* was dashing against a rocky ledge in Loch Skipport; opposite to the island already named. Here she lay grinding until with the assistance of some Highland fishermen a hauser was got out, and she was warped up to the end of the cove, where they lay twelve

* Two families of famed musicians, almost constantly employed in this way.