

A RECOLLECTION OF BERMUDA.

BY DUDLEY COSTELLO, ESQ.

"Bermuda's wall'd with rocks, who does not know?"

SUCH is Waller's apostrophe!—and yet I believe the Bermudas are less known now than they were even in his time. In the reign of Charles the First, and during the Commonwealth, Bermuda was a rising colony, and subsequently afforded shelter to numberless refugees, who, from political and religious motives, were compelled to abandon the shores of their native country; in consequence, these remote islands "toto orbis peritus," became familiar to many, who, grateful for the asylum afforded them, and pleased with the mildness of the climate and beauty of the scenery, celebrated their praises on their return to England, and obtained for them a fame which was increased by the poetry of Waller and Andrew Marvell. But since that period, colonisation has extended so widely, and the value of other possessions has been so much increased, that the Bermudas have become as things forgotten, save only to a few naval and military wanderers whose destiny has led them to sojourn for a season "where the rocks of coral grow." As it was my lot to dwell for some time on these shores, I will endeavour to recal some of the most pleasing recollections, if such still linger in my memory! I can scarcely forget the impression made upon me when first I saw them, after a short but stormy passage from Nova Scotia. It was a little before noon when first we made the land, and descried a remarkable conical hill at the south-western extremity of the main island, commonly termed *wreck-hill*,—a designation which it bears from no forgotten event, but unhappily from a cause of too frequent occurrence. The wind being light we coasted slowly along the shore, distant about a mile, but separated by a formidable surf and rocky barrier, which prevented a nearer approach. We could plainly distinguish the characteristics of the country we were about to visit, and the prospect appeared not uninviting. The immediate vicinity of the coast seemed bare and unproductive, but at a short distance inland the woods of cedar stretched in a broad extent of perpetual verdure, the breeze from the land wafted their aromatic perfume, and here and there "some elfin mansion sparkled thro' the shade," giving a graceful and fairy character to the scene. We had so little wind,

that it was evening before we had coasted the whole of the southern shore; but just at sunset, we received a pilot on board, though it was too late to avail ourselves of his services in bringing in the ship that evening, an event which was necessarily deferred till the next day. To landsmen, the exchange from ship-board to terra-firma is always desirable, and a party of us resolved to land that evening in the boat which brought our sable Palinurus. These pilots, by the way, are peculiar to the islands. They are generally free blacks, steady, and of good character, and are admirably adapted for the profession they follow. Their powers of vision are extraordinary, and their mode of conducting a vessel into harbour among the reefs and "narrows" is, to a stranger, not only interesting, but astonishing. Perched in the bows of the ship, like a supplementary figure-head, they sit with their eyes fixed on the water, piercing into the profound depths, and detecting the smallest rocks beneath, which are neither few nor far between. Occasionally they open their oracular jaws, and in their peculiar phraseology utter their commands: "Port a little,"—"Teddy!"—"Tarboard!"—"Teddy!"—"Mind your helm, massa!"—"Keep her away!" and so on, until the dangerous navigation is over; the crew preserving the strictest silence, and the helmsman promptly obedient to the pilot's voice, where a moment's delay in executing his orders would be fraught with danger, the vessel being frequently obliged to tack in narrow channels, with little more than twice her own length to sail in. The 'Mudian pilots are justly celebrated for their skill, and accidents rarely happen through *their* negligence.

When we quitted the transport we were about six miles from a small harbour, [towards which we made our way with four stout rowers, our sail being useless. In a short time the moon rose in full and unclouded lustre, her rays

"Leaving that beautiful which still was so,
And making that which was not;"

and although I was in little mood to enjoy the approaching change of station, having so recently left behind friends such as we meet but *once* in life's chequered path, I could not but admire the extreme loveliness of the

scenery. The deep, clear sky above, the frowning rocks of the many small islands through which we threaded our way—the hoarse murmur of the waves as they dashed in ceaseless fury in the echoing caves which line these shores—the gleams of fire that sparkled round our track, and flew in showers, like fire-flies, from the boatmen's oars—the dark shadows of the cedars, and the brilliant hue of the numerous white cottages which are embosomed amidst them, all combined to form an enchanting but most delusive picture.

After a three hours' pull we entered the harbour of St. George, where the principal military station is situated, and although it was near midnight, the dusky sons of labour had not yet given over the evening's festivity. As we neared the town an occasional light gleaming from a cottage, the sound of a flute or violin, and not unfrequently the loud explosion of African mirth, gave token of the celebration of more than one "*dignity hop*," a species of Almack's to which we did not long remain strangers. At length we landed in the market square of St. George's, and trod on the sandy soil of Bermuda; all *within* the town was still, and no sign was there of hotel with open doors to receive the wayfarer as we had been accustomed to in Europe: a caravanserai did, however, exist, but in a remote quarter; and as we pursued our route between high walls crowned with prickly pears, and through lanes ankle deep in sand, and saw the bright moonlight shining on low white fantastic dwellings with large dark verandahs, and contrasted the naked papaw and feathery palmetto with the foliage of our own clime—as we looked at our black guide and moved noiselessly along in the still midnight, it required little stretch of imagination to conjure up the memory of that Egyptian city of the silent, where all is said to have been turned to stone. At length we reached our hotel, and were welcomed by a "dark ladye," who speedily prepared to give us evidences of the Bermudian cuisine; and having resolutely declined the acquaintance of a *whale cutlet*^{*}, a *plat* of ducks and onions,

* The flesh of the young whale is considered very choice eating in Bermuda; I tried it afterwards and liked it, but then it was stewed in claret; the practice of eating whale is merely a taste of our ancestors revived. Vide the old romance of Havelok:—

"Grim was fishere swithe god,
And mickle couthe on the flod;
Mani god fish ther inne he tok,
Bothe with neth, and with hok;
He took the sturgiun and the *qu'al*,
And the *turbut* and *lux* withal,
He took the *seal* and the *hivel*,
He spedde oft swithe well."

an arrow-root pudding, and some other of the standing dishes of the islands, which did not attract us by their titles, we contented ourselves with a broiled angel-fish, a *rifacimento* of stewed turtle-fins, some sweet potatoes, a bottle or two of good claret, and a stiff tumbler of real Jamaica, just tinged with the green-tea flavour, and then to bed—but not to sleep—though the night-mare indigestion was *not* the cause, but a host of *such* musquitoes, whom in my ignorance I *enclosed* in the net which ought to have *excluded* them.

The traveller who visits Bermuda, not "on compulsion," but at liberty to remain *only* as long as he pleases, can scarcely fail to be gratified with his sojourn, especially if his visit occur during the winter months, when the temperature of the climate is delightful, the average height of the thermometer being about 60° of Fahrenheit in the shade, and northerly winds generally prevailing. Such a temperature does not preclude exercise, and boating, the chief amusement of the islanders, can then be enjoyed "*en plein jour*." Nothing can exceed the beauty of the 'Mudian craft in fair weather or foul; they can take advantage of the slightest zephyr, or gallantly ride out the stiffest gale, and with their long slender mast and pointed sail they glide among the reefs like spirits of the deep, free and uncontrolled. While sailing among the fairy isles which gem the numerous harbours and creeks, as we lie idly stretched along the deck, following the wheeling flight of the tropic-bird, with his long solitary plume and shrill melancholy cry, we can fully appreciate the Italian's "*dolce far niente*," or, if a spirit of enterprise be awake, we steer to some well-known bay and hunt for corals and sea-fans amid the clear depths of the blue waters, and sometimes surprise the sleeping turtle, or scatter a whole armada of the Nautilus tribe.

Among the principal natural beauties of Bermuda are the extensive caves, which well repay the labours of a descent into their deep recesses. I will describe one of the most remarkable which we visited on one occasion, in an excursion to another celebrated spot. We moored our boat in a mangrove bay, close by, and entered a close thicket of sage-bush and cedar, ascending a very broken path for about a quarter of a mile, till we reached an open green road, at the further extremity of which the cave was situated. The entrance to the "*drear abode*" is almost hidden from the view by thickets of orange and pomegranate shrubs, passion-flower, convolvulus and

various other creepers which flourish in these secluded spots. So smiling an exterior of so dark a cavern, might tempt us to exclaim with Byron at the sight of Acheron:—

“Pluto, if this be hell I look upon,
Close fam'd Elysium's gates, my soul shall seek for none.”

This sentiment was, however, of short duration, being quickly dispelled by the sombre aspect of the cavern when its precincts were fairly entered. For a short distance, the descent was gradual, and comparatively easy; but after proceeding about twenty yards, we came to a halt, and turned round to gaze once more upon the light of day, before we kindled our torches and tapers, and prepared to plunge into the Cimmerian gloom. The view from this spot was very beautiful; the dark overhanging masses of blackened rock frowning in threatening might above us, the light and glittering stalactites which hung in all directions from the vault—the path we had just descended illumined by one solitary ray of sunshine, where the trees had left an avenue, and in the distance nothing visible but the clear blue sky, formed a subject better calculated for a picture than my poor description is able to convey. After indulging for a few moments in contemplating this scene, we turned to explore the further recesses of the cave, which presented an aspect truly terrific, if not altogether impracticable. So much did the gloomy appearance influence one of the party, that he at once declared he should be quite satisfied with what he had already seen, and our description of the remainder, if ever we returned to tell the story; he therefore determined on remaining outside; and his example operated on another member, whose zeal for subterranean adventure was somewhat damped by his comrade's obstination; he also declined further research. Our number being thus reduced, after fruitlessly employing expostulation and ridicule to induce the seceders to accompany us, we commenced our descent, while their warning voices fell fainter on our ears as we separated different ways. We regretted at first not having brought a rope to assist our steps, the more so, as there was a pillar at the brink of the declivity admirably calculated for the purpose of making it fast. However, this was no time for regret or deliberation; and our guide setting the example, continued to make his way *perpendicularly* down, about four yards; I followed, but not being aware of the proper projecting points, slid rapidly down to the landing-place after the manner

of the mules in the Pyrenees, or certain merry-making damsels in Greenwich Park, thereby extinguishing my light, and nearly overturning the guide. The suddenness of my transit occasioned a pause on the part of the rest, who saw me and my taper vanish together, yet being reassured by my voice from below that all was right, and that it was nothing more than a “*facilis descensus Averni*,” another wight prepared for the experiment *à la Beaujeu*. He being of weightier metal than I, came down with increased momentum, and unfortunately not being able to right himself, performed an evolution to his left flank down another slippery but less precipitous descent about three yards further, but in a different position from his former attitude, his head, inverting the ordinary course, of progression, being the first to reach the bottom. We were rather alarmed at this event, not knowing how far he might have fallen, and were glad to hear, as soon as he had removed his legs, that except a slight scarification of knuckles and proboscis, and the loss of his waxen conductor, he had sustained no other damage. The peculiarity of these avalanches, and the possibility of their having a less fortunate result, induced the remainder to look out for an easier path; and as we had regained our lights below, we were able to assist their endeavours, and in a short time they all succeeded in joining us. Having reassembled, we now proceeded carefully with all our implements, torches, baskets, and hammers, over a broken declivity for about thirty or forty yards, and were now completely beyond the “skiey influences,” except the liability of having our torches extinguished by the moisture from the numerous stalactites over head. The path was from this cause extremely slippery, and reminded me of Sheridan's remark on Coleridge's tragedy, “drip—drip—drip—there's nothing here but dripping!” We came at length, like the knights errant of old, to where three roads presented themselves for our choice, all equally uninviting; we pursued the central one, and in a short time began to reap the fruits of our labour. Imagine a spacious vault of lofty arch, the roof of which was entirely covered with the most beautiful specimens of stalactite, white

“— As the icicle
That's curd'd by the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Dian's temple.”

Some, just formed, with a glittering point, the tremulous drop in the act of separating to form the corresponding stalagmite below;

others, slender and polished as the most perfect shafts in a gothic screen, and in the centre of the vault an immense pillar, eight or nine yards in circumference, formed of separate concretions, and all uniting at the summit and the base to form one splendid whole. The effect, when the cavern was illuminated by setting fire to the dried branches of the palmetto tops, which we had brought with us for the purpose, and the light of our wax candles, placed as far as the arm could reach in the interstices of the hurmon's pillar, was most magnificent, as much from the natural beauty of the cave itself as from the contrast afforded by the red and fitful gleams of light upon our dark and discoloured dresses; and not the least prominent object in the group was our sable guide, with his shining eyes and teeth. I could not help reverting to the recollections of my early days, and the memories of Aladdin, of Ali Baba, and of Captain Rolando, came thick and fast upon me; our object, too, somewhat assimilated to theirs, as spoliation was one of the chief features. However, the injury we inflicted, by breaking off specimens of stalactite, was only partial, as by far the most beautiful were beyond the reach of destruction; and even where they were assailable, it is some consolation to know that they are constantly being renewed by perpetual filtration. The old woman at the cottage where we procured our light, complained of these "dissecti membra," as affecting, not her classical, but her culinary associations, for the water which falls from the stalactites forms in many places small pools of the clearest and purest nature; indeed they are often her only resource in this land of tanks, where there is not a single running stream, and only one or two fresh springs throughout its whole extent; the said difficulty of procuring the water was much greater since the gentlemen had taken to "*splorfication*" and broken off her "*waterspouts*."

Leaving the vault, we advanced a considerable distance, along what in courtesy may be termed a path, but which was very dimly traced on the face of a slope of very abrupt declivity,—and the slightest inattention in footing would inevitably have caused instant precipitation over its smooth surface into a gulf of salt water which yawned beneath, and of which the depth must have been great, to judge by the hollow ringing sound which ensued when a fragment of rock was hurled in. Of course the reverberation was greater here than elsewhere, but still the water was evidently deep, although invisible; its level being far beyond the in-

fluence of our torches to illumine. We continued this infelicitous approach until we arrived at some beautiful columns, in the middle of which was an aperture, only sufficiently wide to admit the passage of one at a time, and into which all of us peeped separately before we would determine upon going on. But as we were by this time tolerably inured to subterranean dangers, and, like landmen a week at sea, had got our "*sea-legs*," on we went. When once we had passed through this window, we had a perfect barrier between us and the upper air, and were now entered into the more immediate precincts of "tearless Pluto's dreary reign,"—dark, gloomy, and immeasurably profound; before us nothing but a black expanse which our torches could not enlighten, and beneath

"*Nisendus ater flumine languido Cocytus errans;*"

and in which, by the bye, on our return, I narrowly escaped immersion. Finding our efforts to throw light on the subject unavailing, with our torches only, we set fire to a blue light which we had in reserve, and by this means were enabled to proceed, continually descending until we reached the bed of the stream; and here again we lingered long to enjoy the extreme beauty of the cavern, which was much heightened by the colour of the light beaming in glittering splendour upon every object. It resembled some elaborately wrought crypt or chancel in the variety of the concretions, which were shaped as particularly and as beautifully as the delicate tracery and fretwork of the sculptured alabaster in a well-preserved specimen of gothic art. This was the most interesting part of the cavern, and I scarcely cared to proceed further, that the impression might not be effaced. But we did nevertheless penetrate to the extremest point, where we remained not long, being warned by our diminished tapers to retrace our steps; hastily filling our basket with the finest specimens of spar that we could select,—"*sugar-candy*," as the black-fellow called it,—we reversed our former labours and began to *ascend*, an operation which we found much easier than our downward progress. But although our return was easier, an accident occurred which was within an ace of verifying the predictions of our croaking friends who had refused to join us. The path leading up to the window was more slippery here than any where else, and we ascended very cautiously in single file. Some of the party being much in advance, had made good their landing-place, and were amusing themselves by breaking off specimens of the stalac-

tite with their hammers. One of their number, an unlucky wight, without thinking of the probable consequence, set to work with a ponderous hammer, with an energy that might have rivalled that of the Iceland god Thor, upon one of the largest masses within his reach. He succeeded in detaching a weighty fragment, which, however, eluded his grasp, and descended *en ricochet*, thundering down the declivity. Two of us, like Peter Pindar's pilgrim, were labouring up the steep, and with difficulty securing our footing on the slimy rock;—I was the foremost, and all unconscious of the work of danger going on in the battery above, happened fortunately to turn my head aside at the very moment the projectile was put in motion; it passed by me with rapidity, just grazing my temple, and in its next bound struck my fellow-labourer beneath me on the ankle, and, pursuing its impetuous course, plunged at length with sullen plash into the gloomy wave. He immediately cried out for quarter, and the enemy ceased firing, although they knew not the risk we had run; for had I not moved when I did, the weight of the stone striking me on the head would have stunned me at the least, and I was so situated that in losing my hold I must unavoidably have fallen on my friend below, the impetus of which he could not have resisted, and "we three loggerheads" would have performed a very agreeable race to the bottom, wherever that might have been situated. Fortunately, nothing of this kind *did* occur, and we escaped with only a bruised ankle on the part of my friend, and the expenditure of various anathemas, both loud and deep,—by both of us, at such incautious folly. We now, like Thalaba,

"Retrod the windings of the rock"

in good earnest, and at length descried the light of day shedding a faint blue ray, like vapour, without the cave. It gradually grew stronger as we approached; and when we reached the entrance, we were so dazzled by the bright sun that we looked like a nest of disturbed owls, blinking and hooting at the sudden exposure of a flaming torch in some deserted ruin. When we became familiar with the daylight, we rejoiced not a little at our safe return with only the slight inconveniences we had encountered. Our first necessary act was to descend to the shore and take a bath, which soon restored our wonted appearance, and recruited our strength and spirits. We then, with thoughts divided between poetry and hunger, set out for the spot where we intended to dine—a chosen place of re-

sort beneath the shade of the calabash tree which bears the name of the poet Moore, and is the shrine of Bermudian pilgrimage. We made our way through a tangled thicket of coffee plants and guava bushes, and through groves of cedar and palmetto, disturbing only the quick-eyed lizard on our path, or scaring the scarlet Virginian nightingale or dusky mocking-bird, till we reached that part of the shore called Walsingham, the scene of Moore's youthful reveries, where the friendly calabash spreads his overshadowing arms. Under the repose of this tree, tradition, for in few years events become traditional, told us that the bard was wont to recline and muse upon his beloved Nea—his "*Nea Tugavins*,"—but who never became his: she afterwards married a very worthy man, who still lives, though she, alas! has long since passed into a better world. The sun had now so long quitted his meridian height, that when we arrived at the calabash the whole area was completely shaded; indeed no spot could have been better chosen for a marooning party than this: it forms an amphitheatre of oblong shape, on one side sheltered by high rocks, which are decked with a profusion of creepers, and, on the remaining sides completely shut in by an almost impenetrable thicket, where the palmetto and the tamarind were conspicuous, and where, above all,

"His arms the everlasting aloes threw."

At one extremity of the thick elastic green-sward (called crab-grass) rises "*the tree*," and at the base of a rock close beside, a clear pool of salt water ebbs and flows with the external tide. In this small natural basin were to be seen numbers of that most beautiful fish called the angel-fish, worthy of the name from their brilliancy of hue; they also equally gratify another sense when dressed; and much as we admired their brilliant appearance in the water, we should have had no objection to their being transferred to our table. However, contenting ourselves with the good which the gods had provided us, we set to work with appetites considerably heightened by the exercise we had taken, and our subsequent bath, which latter is a better appetiser than Kitchiner's zest, or any other recorded in the Almanac des Gourmands. When, to use Iachimo's phrase, we had "heaved to head" sufficient viands, we proceeded to the more serious business of the meeting, and many were the ruby and moon-coloured libations, or to speak "like a man of this world," bumpers of claret and pale sherry, which we poured forth in honour of the

bard, whom I then regretted I knew only in the spirit, whose wit at the festive board is as much the subject of delighted admiration, as his lays in lady's bower are the theme of every tongue. Under the influence of the purple vintage, and inspired by the hallowed recollection of divine poesy, the dullest began to show fire, and following the Horatian precept,

"Qui musas amat impares,
Ternoster cyathos attonintes petet
Vates,"—

we sang and quaffed, and quaffed and sang, till the calabashes danced before our eyes, and

many goodly trees arose, the unsubstantial¹ duplicates of the real one above us, and much did we multiply our own number by the second sight which rosy wine, your only seer, supernaturally inspires. But as in time the intellectual faculty "began to pale its ineffectual ray," as our voices ceased to chime, without any great regard to unison, though to much individual satisfaction; and as we perceived that our flasks were waxing claretless, we retained so much discretion as to effect an orderly embarkation, and pulling merrily home, we stole to bed to dream "of antres vast and deserts idle." D. C.

EXTRACTS, TRANSLATED LITERALLY, FROM A LETTER,

Dated January 28th, 1834.

ADDRESSED BY RETSCH TO A FRIEND IN LONDON.

I HAVE NOW a favour to ask of you, which I trust to your kindness to excuse.

I have heard from many quarters, and also read, that notwithstanding the abundant applause with which your nation has honoured my productions, it has incidentally been objected to me, that in the representation of costume, more particularly in my Hamlet, I have not followed the truth. Now I am very far indeed from thinking myself faultless; neither am I unduly sensitive to just censure, but on the contrary, I accept and adopt every sort of instruction with thankfulness; yet, in the present instance, I fancy I can adduce something in justification of my having acted thus and not otherwise; and this justification is in some measure due to myself. Wherefore I most earnestly beg of you to exert your good offices to communicate the substance of the following remarks, through the medium of some periodical work of established reputation, to your countrymen.

Although I am convinced that, for many kinds of study, London often affords better, more numerous, and more authentic means and resources than smaller towns, for which reason points of doubt and difficulty are more easy of solution there; I believe, notwithstanding, that I may venture to maintain that even in London an artist, who undertakes to represent the Hamlet of Shakspeare, will not and cannot follow the authorities implicitly, if he would avoid sinning against Shakspeare. My reasons are these:—

As I am accustomed to pay particular attention to costume, and have made the best use in my power of the not unimportant means which the Dresden Library affords,

credit will perhaps be given me for knowing something of the costume of the eleventh century, in which the Danish king Hamlet flourished; but as Shakspeare, in his genial poetical freedom, has placed his Hamlet, not in the real historical eleventh century, but in the sixteenth, which I shall be able to show presently in few words, it became necessary to follow the poet in this same freedom of his.

In proof of this opinion, it is to be observed, first, that Shakspeare makes Hamlet a student at the University of Wittemberg, where no university existed until the beginning of the sixteenth century; secondly, all peculiarities of costume which occur in the play, as shoe-strings, stockings, hats, &c. equally betoken this time.

If, therefore, I had departed from Shakspeare in this respect, it would have been an offence on my part against the poet, since I should have represented the historical instead of the poetical Hamlet, and this would have been as presumptuous and absurd as if an artist, in copying a picture by Titian, Paul Veronese, Raphael, or Albert Durer (all of whom, particularly in the inferior figures, often introduce the costume of their own times into their paintings) should take upon himself to correct their anachronisms and cloke their figures over.

Since then I, in my outlines, aim at nothing more than to translate (as it were) an original into another language, it is my duty, in so doing, to unite truth and conscientiousness with poetical freedom, so far as they can be united without injuring the originality of the representation, and to give the poem *as it is*.