

IX.

M'CULLOCH THE MECHANICIAN.

CHAPTER I.

Anything may become nature to man; the rare thing is to find a nature that is truly natural. — ANON.

IN the "Scots Magazine" for May 1789, there is a report by Captain Philip d'Auvergne, of the *Narcissus* frigate, on the practical utility of Kenneth M'Culloch's sea-compasses. The captain, after an eighteen months' trial of their merits, compared with those of all the other kinds in use at the time, describes them as immensely superior, and earnestly recommends to the admiralty their general introduction into the navy. In passing, on one occasion, through the Race of Alderney in the winter of 1787, there broke out a frightful storm; and so violent was the opposition of the wind and tide, that while his vessel was sailing at the rate of eleven miles on the surface, she was making scarce any headway by the land. The sea rose tremendously, at once short, high, and irregular; and the motions of the vessel were so fearfully abrupt and violent that scarce a seaman aboard could stand on deck. At a time so critical, when none of the compasses supplied from his majesty's