

CHAPTER IV.

“Strange marble stones, here larger and there less,
And of full various forms, which still increase
In height and bulk by a continual drop,
Which upon each distilling from the top,
And falling still exactly on the crown,
There break themselves to mists, which, trickling down,
Crust into stone, and (but with leisure) swell
The sides, and still advance the miracle.”

CHARLES COTTON.

It is low water in the Frith of Cromarty during stream tides, between six and seven o'clock in the evening; and my Uncle Sandy, in returning from his work at the close of the day, used not unfrequently, when, according to the phrase of the place, “there was a tide in the water,” to strike down the hill-side, and spend a quiet hour in the ebb. I delighted to accompany him on these occasions. There are Professors of Natural History that know less of living nature than was known by Uncle Sandy; and I deemed it no small matter to have all the various productions of the sea with which he was acquainted pointed out to me in these walks, and to be put in possession of his many curious anecdotes regarding them.

He was a skilful crab and lobster fisher, and knew every hole and crannie, along several miles of rocky shore, in which the creatures were accustomed to shelter, with not a few of their own peculiarities of character. Contrary to the view taken by some of our naturalists, such as Agassiz, who held