

The Alien Boy

By Mrs. Mary Robinson

'Twas on a Mountain, near the Western Main
An ALIEN dwelt. A solitary Hut
Built on a jutting crag, o'erhung with weeds,
Mark'd the poor Exile's home. Full ten long yearn fire
The melancholy wretch had liv'd unseen
By all, save HENRY, a lov'd, little Son
The partner of his sorrows. On the day
When Persecution, in the sainted guise
Of Liberty, spread wide its venom'd pow'r,
The brave, Saint HUBERT, fled his Lordly home,
And, with his baby Son, the mountain sought.
Resolv'd to cherish in his bleeding breast
The secret of his birth, Ah! birth too high
For his now humbled state, from infancy
He taught him, labour's task: He bade him cheer
The dreary day of cold adversity
By patience and by toil. The Summer morn
Shone on the pillow of his rushy bed;
The noontide, sultry hour, he fearless past
On the shagg'd eminence while the young Kid
Skipp'd, to the cadence of his minstrelsy.

At night young HENRY trimm'd the faggot
While oft, Saint HUBERT, wove the ample net
To snare the finny victim. Oft they sang
And talk'd, while sullenly the waves would sound
Dashing the sandy shore. Saint HUBERT'S eyes
Would swim in tears of fondness, mix'd with joy,
When he observ'd the op'ning harvest rich
Of promis'd intellect, which HENRY'S soul,
Whate'er the subject of their talk, display'd.

Oft, the bold Youth, in question intricate,
Would seek to know the story of his birth;
Oft ask, who bore him: and with curious skill
Enquire, why he, and only one beside,
Peopled the desert mountain? Still his Sire
Was slow of answer, and, in words obscure,
Varied the conversation. Still the mind
Of HENRY ponder'd; for, in their lone hut,
A daily journal would Saint HUBERT make

Of his long banishment: and sometimes speak
Of Friends forsaken, Kindred, massacred;—
Proud mansions, rich domains, and joyous scenes
For ever faded,—lost!

One winter time,
'Twas on the Eve of Christmas, the shrill blast
Swept o'er the stormy main. The boiling foam
Rose to an altitude so fierce and strong
That their low hovel totter'd. Oft they stole
To the rock's margin, and with fearful eyes
Mark'd the vex'd deep, as the slow rising moon
Gleam'd on the world of waters. 'Twas a scene
Would make a Stoic shudder! For, amid
The wavy mountains they beheld, *alone*,
A LITTLE BOAT, now scarcely visible;
And now not seen at all; or, like a buoy,
Bounding, and buffeting, to reach the shore!

Now the full Moon, in crimson lustre shone
Upon the outstretch'd Ocean. The black clouds
Flew swiftly on, the wild blast following,
And, as they flew, dimming the angry main
With shadows horrible! Still, the small boat
Struggled amid the waves, a sombre speck
Upon the wide domain of howling Death!
Saint HUBERT sigh'd! while HENRY'S speaking eye
Alternately the stormy scene survey'd
And his low hovel's safety. So past on
The hour of midnight,—and, since first they knew
The solitary scene, no midnight hour
E'er seem'd so long and weary

While they stood,
Their hands fast link'd together, and their eyes
Fix'd on the troublous Ocean, suddenly
The breakers, bounding on the rocky shore,
Left the small wreck; and crawling on the side
Of the rude crag,—a HUMAN FORM was seen!
And now he climb'd the foam-wash'd precipice,
And now the slip'ry weeds gave way, while he
Descended to the sands: The moon rose high—
The wild blast paus'd, and the poor shipwreck'd Man
Look'd round aghast, when on the frowning steep
He marked the lonely exiles. Now he call'd
But he was feeble, and his voice was lost
Amid the din of mingling sounds that rose
From the wild scene of clamour.

Down the steep
Saint HUBERT hurried, boldly venturous,
Catching the slimy weeds, from point to point,
And unappall'd by peril. At the foot
Of the rude rock, the fainting mariner
Seiz'd on his outstretch'd arm; impatient, wild,
With transport exquisite! But ere they heard
The blest exchange of sounds articulate,
A furious billow, rolling on the steep,
Engulph'd them in Oblivion!

On the rock
Young HENRY stood; with palpitating heart,
And fear-struct, e'en to madness! Now he call'd,
Louder and louder, as the shrill blast blew;
But, mid the elemental strife of sounds,
No human voice gave answer! The clear moon
No longer quiver'd on the curling main,
But, mist-encircled, shed a blunted light,
Enough to shew all things that mov'd around,
Dreadful, but indistinctly! The black weeds
Wav'd, as the night-blast swept them; and along
The rocky shore the breakers, sounding low
Seem'd like the whisp'ring of a million souls
Beneath the green-deep mourning.

Four long hours
The loin Boy listen'd! four long tedious hours
Pass'd wearily away, when, in the East
The grey beam coldly glimmer'd. All alone
Young HENRY stood aghast: his Eye wide fix'd
While his dark locks, uplifted by the storm
Uncover'd met its fury. On his cheek
Despair sate terrible! For, mid the
Of poverty and toil, he had not known,
Till then, the horror-giving cheerless hour
Of TOTAL SOLITUDE

He spoke—he groan'd,
But no responsive voice, no kindred tone
Broke the dread pause: For now the storm had ceas'd,
And the bright Sun-beams glitter'd on the breast
Of the green placid Ocean. To his Hut
The lorn Boy hasten'd; there the rushy couch,
The pillow still indented, met his gaze
And fix'd his eye in madness.—From that hour
A maniac wild, the Alien Boy has been;
His garb with sea-weeds fring'd, and his wan cheek
The tablet of his mind, disorder'd, chang'd,

Fading, and worn with care. And if, by chance,
A Sea-beat wand'rer from the outstretch'd main
Views the lone Exile, and with gen'rous zeal
Hastes to the sandy beach, he suddenly
Darts 'mid the cavern'd cliffs, and leaves pursuit
To track him, where no footsteps but his own,
Have e'er been known to venture! **YET HE LIVES**
A melancholy proof that Man may bear
All the rude storms of Fate, and still suspire
By the wide world forgotten!