

## CHAPTER VI.

The less we know as to things that can be done, the less sceptical are we as to things that cannot. — COLTON.

ABOUT five years after the establishment of the linen trade, Mr. Forsyth became a shipowner; and as he had made it a rule never to provide himself from other countries with what could be produced by the workmen of his own, his first vessel, a fine large sloop, was built at Fortrose. There had been ship-builders established at Cromarty at a much earlier period. Among the designations attached to names, which we find in the older records of the place, there is none of more frequent occurrence than that of ship-carpenter. There are curious stories, too, connected with ship-launches, which serve to mark the remote period at which these must have occurred. An occasion of this kind, at a time when the knowledge of mechanics was more imperfect and much less general than at present, was always one of great uncertainty. Accidents were continually occurring; and superstition found room to mingle her mysterious horrors with the doubts and fears with which it was naturally attended. Witches and the Evil Eye were peculiarly dreaded by the carpenter on the day of a launch; and it is said of one of the early Cromarty launches that, the vessel having stopped short in the middle of her course, the master-carpenter was so irritated with a reputed witch among the spectators, to whom he attributed