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CHAPTER V.

DESCENDING the mountain, on which we had paused for a few minutes to feast our eyes and satisfy our curiosity, we arrived at a small hamlet, or rather a group of two or three hovels, as romantically situated as it is possible for the imagination of man to conceive. They stood at the further end of a sort of recess, formed by the hills, which are here broken into a circular valley, cut off, to all appearance, from the rest of the habitable world; behind them rose a towering crag, as perpendicular as the drop of a plummet, from the top of which a little rivulet came tumbling down, giving to the scene an appearance of the most delightful coolness, and amusing the ear with the unceasing roar of a waterfall. From the very face of the cliff, where there seemed to be scarcely soil enough to nourish a thistle, numerous shrubs and dwarf trees protruded themselves; whilst above it, and on every side of the area, the hills were covered with wood, interrupted now and then by the bald forehead of a blackened rock. In front of the hamlet again, there was an opening sufficient to admit the most delicious glimpse of the ocean; and through this the stream, after boiling for awhile in a little basin, which it has excavated for itself out of what resembles the foundation of the cliff, makes its way, brawling over a clear pebbly bottom, till it joins the sea.

This paragon of valleys burst upon us as such scenes, to be witnessed with advantage, ought to do, without the slightest warning or expectation. The road by which we approached it, being completely shut in with wood, and winding considerably to aid the descent, brought us out nearly at the gorge of the vale, so as to throw the hamlet, the cliff, and the waterfall into the background; and as the whole was of such extent as to be taken in at one glance, the effect was striking beyond anything of the kind I ever witnessed. It is but natural to suppose that we had no desire to hurry through such a glen as this; and needed not the additional motive which the weariness of our donkeys afforded, to persuade us to a temporary halt. Giving the animals, therefore, to the care of their owners, we dis-