

MISCELLANEOUS.

FISHING ON THE GRAND BANK.

On crossing the banks of Newfoundland, the ship was hove to, for the purpose of sounding; and the quarter-master having tied a baited hook to the deep-sea lead, a noble cod was drawn to the surface, from the depth of ninety fathoms. Upon this hint, the captain, very considerably, agreed to lie by for an hour or two; and some fifty lines being put over, the decks were soon covered, fore and aft, with such a display of fish as Billingsgate has rarely witnessed.

People who know nothing of a sea life fancy that fish is not a rarity with us; but there is nothing of which we taste so little; so that the greatest treat by far, when we come into port, is a dish of fresh soles or mackerel; and even the commonest fish that swims is looked upon as a treasure. It is only in soundings that any are to be met with; for, in the open and bottomless ocean, we meet nothing but whales, porpoises, dolphins, sharks, bonitas and flying fish.

I never could conceive, or form a probable conjecture, how it is that some persons manage to catch fish, and others none. It is easy to understand, that in angling, a certain degree of skill, or choice of situation, may determine the probable amount of success. But when a line is let down to the depth of eighty or a hundred fathoms, or even to twenty or thirty feet, quite out of sight, what has skill to do there? And yet, in a ship, on the banks of Newfoundland, or in a boat on the Thrumcap shoals in Halifax harbor, I have seen one man hauling in cods or haddocks as fast as he could bait his hooks; while others, similarly circumstanced in all apparent respects, might fret and fidget for half a day without getting more than a nibble.

There can be no doubt, of course, that intellectual power must be in operation at one end of the line, otherwise no fish will come to the other; but the puzzle is, by what mysterious process can human intelligence manage to find its way, like electricity, down the line to the bottom of the sea? I have often asked successful fishermen what they did to make the fish bite; but they could seldom give any available answer.— Sometimes they said it depended on the bait. "Well, then," I have answered, "let me take yours and do you take mine." But in two minutes after we had changed places, my companion was pulling in his fish as fast before, while not a twitch was given to my new line, though just before, the fish appeared to be jostling one another for the honour of my friends' hook, to the total neglect of that which had been mine, now in high vogue amongst them.

There is some trick or slight of hand, I suppose, by which a certain kind of motion is given to the bait, so as to assimilate it to

that of the worms which the fishes most affect in their ordinary researches for food.— But, probably, this art is no more to be taught by description, or to be learned without the drudgery of practice, than the dexterity with which an artist represents nature, or a dancer performs pirouettes. Uninstructed persons, therefore, who, like myself, lose patience because they cannot catch fish at the first cast of the line, had better turn their attention to something else.

Almost the only one I ever caught was during my first voyage across the Atlantic, when, after my line had been down a whole weary hour, I drew it up in despair. It felt so light, that I imagined the line must have been accidentally broken; but presently, and greatly to my astonishment, I beheld a huge cod float to the top, swollen to twice the usual dimensions by the expansion of its sound, as the air-bag is called, which lies along the back-bone. At the depth of eighty or ninety fathoms, this singular apparatus is compressed by the enormous addition of fifteen or sixteen atmospheres. But when the air is relieved of this weight, by approaching the surface, the strength of the muscles proves inadequate to retain it in its condensed form; and its consequent expansion not only kills the fish, but bursts it open as completely as if it had been blown up with gunpowder.

SCENES IN GRECE.

NO. II.

"I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

MAT. XIV. 85.

In England, even in almost every village there is an inn, or some lodging place, to which travellers resort; but not so in some foreign countries. In Egypt if you do not carry your provisions, you may have to live on the water of the Nile, and sleep in a boat or on the sand. In the Ionian Isles of late only, inns or locandas as they are called, have been established in the towns; but if you travel into the interior of these islands, you must be indebted to the hospitality of the villagers, or to the convents.— Travellers generally endeavour to reach one of these convents at night, to repose themselves after the journey of the day.

I left the town of Zante on a Thursday afternoon, taking books for distribution; and after going some miles on the sea-coast, as the night came on, I ascended a steep hill, where I found a lodging at the convent of St. John. The Superior was absent, but a Priest gave me and my companions a hearty reception, prepared supper, entered into conversation on religious subjects, and welcomed our arrival. Here I found, on inquiry, there were twelve Monks and Priests resident. Their occupations were different.— Some took care of the sheep on the mountains; others cultivated the ground. One Monk I found very old, having a long

white beard, who had been here fifty-five years; and another poor, aged, and blind Priest, who performed part of the service in the church. The next morning, at four o'clock, he groped his way to the picture of the Virgin Mary, to kiss it at the close of the service; which is generally done. Travelling further the next day, we came to the convent of St. Spiridotes, where the Priest was an intelligent man. On inquiring whether they had the holy Scriptures, a copy of the New Testament, printed by the British and Foreign Bible Society, was produced, which bore marks of being well read; as pieces of paper were put in to mark particular passages. Passing then the villages, we came to the convent of St. Andrea, beautifully situate amidst trees, near the sea.— The object of curiosity here, is an echo of a peculiar kind, produced by the surrounding hills. The sound of the voice rebounds very distinctly. Here I found a few Monks occupied as were those at St. John. Leaving St. Andrea, we came to St. George, another convent by the sea, with trees around; and here remained for the night. The Priest was very kind. Here we found a very excellent library on ecclesiastical subjects; the works of the Fathers, and other valuable writings. The next day we passed to another convent, called Anoforitra, where was a fair. In a small chapel, in which the Monks are buried, there were twelve skulls piled up in a kind of recess, carefully preserved. If some of the zealous advocates of phrenology were here, who judge of men's understandings and tempers by the bones of the skull, they would find fine scope for their talents or imagination.

How much it is to be regretted, that these institutions are sometimes so much abused! To these convents there is access only by roads over the mountains, in which are narrow passes, so that no carriage can approach them. The houses are built in good situations, with fine air, good water, and comfortable rooms well furnished. When accommodated in them, I was reminded of the sentence, "I was a stranger, and ye took me in;" and I felt thankful for the kindness of the Priests and Monks, though I could not appreciate of their seclusion from the world. I thought of the hymn so often sung in England,—

"Not in the tombs we pine to dwell,
Not in the dark monastic cell,
By rows and grates confined;
Freely to all ourselves we give,
Constrain'd, by Jesu's love, to live
The servants of mankind."

RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY.—The Anniversary meeting of this Society appointed to take place last night, is postponed until Thursday the 19th inst.—Chair to be taken at 7 o'clock, P. M.

Feb. 13.