

simple, when you come to understand it; yet containing a little strangeness, and some wonder, here and there, and apt to move good people's grief at the wrongs we do one another. Great part of it fell under mine own eyes, for a period of a score of years, or something thereabout. My memory still is pretty good; but if I contradict myself, or seem to sweep beyond my reach, or in any way to meddle with things which I had better have let alone, as a humble man and a Christian, I pray you to lay the main fault thereof on the badness of the times, and the rest of it on my neighbors. For I have been a roving man, and may have gathered much of evil from contact with my fellow-men, although by nature meant for good. In this I take some blame to myself; for if I had polished my virtue well, the evil could not have stuck to it. Nevertheless, I am, on the whole, pretty well satisfied with myself; hoping to be of such quality as the Lord prefers to those perfect wonders with whom he has no trouble at all, and therefore no enjoyment.

But sometimes, taking up a book, I am pestered with a troop of doubts; not only about my want of skill, and language, and experience, but chiefly because I never have been a man of consummate innocence, excellence, and high wisdom, such

as all these writers are, if we go by their own opinions.

Now, when I plead among my neighbors, at the mouth of the old well, all the above, my sad shortcomings, and my own strong sense of them (which perhaps is somewhat over-strong), they only pat me on the back, and smile at one another, and make a sort of coughing noise, according to my bashfulness. And then, if I look pleased (which for my life I cannot help doing), they wink, as it were, at one another, and speak up like this:—

"Now, Davy, you know better. You think yourself at least as good as any one of us, Davy, and likely far above us all. Therefore, Davy the fisherman, out with all you have to say, without any French palaver. You have a way of telling things so that we can see them."

With this, and with that, and most of all with hinting about a Frenchman, they put me on my mettle, so that I sit upon the side-stones of the old-well gallery (which are something like the companion-rail of a fore-and-after), and gather them around me, with the householders put foremost, according to their income, and the children listening between their legs; and thus I begin, but never end, the tale I now begin to you, and perhaps shall never end it.

CHAPTER II.—HUNGER DRIVES HIM A-FISHING.

In the summer of the year 1782, I David Llewellyn, of Newton-Nottage, fisherman and old sailor, was in very great distress and trouble, more than I like to tell you. My dear wife (a faithful partner for eight-and-twenty years, in spite of a very quick temper) was lately gone to a better world; and I missed her tongue and her sharp look-out at almost every corner. Also my son (as fine a seaman as ever went aloft), after helping Lord Rodney to his great victory over Grass the Frenchman, had been lost in a prize-ship called the *Tonner*, of 54 guns and 500 Crappos, which sank with all hands on her way home to Spithead, under Admiral Graves. His young wife (who had been sent to us to see to, with his blessing) no sooner heard of this sad affair as in the *Gazette* reported, and his pay that week stopped on her, but she fell into

untimely travail, and was dead ere morning. So I buried my wife and daughter-in-law, and lost all chance to bury my son, between two Bridgend market-days.

Now this is not very much, of course, compared with the troubles some people have. But I had not been used to this sort of thing, except in case of a mess-mate; and so I was greatly broken down, and found my eyes so weak of a morning, that I was ashamed to be seen out of doors.

The only one now to keep a stir or sound of life in my little cottage, which faces to the churchyard, was my orphan grandchild "Bunny," daughter of my son just drowned, and his only child that we knew of. Bunny was a rare strong lass, five years old about then, I think; a stout and hearty-feeding child, able to chew every bit of her victuals, and mounting a