

The herrings, though then in their prime, are by no means so abundant as afterwards.

About the end of August they collect from every part round the Island, towards the north point of Douglas Bay; and here, with increasing success, the fishery continues till the middle of September; when the equinoctial gales usually intimidate the fishermen, and dissipate the herrings.

The boats seldom exceed eight tons, are built with much dexterity, sail swiftly, and are easily commanded. When new they cost, including the nets, upwards of seventy or eighty guineas; but they seldom are the sole property of the fishermen. The produce of every night is divided into nine shares. Two belong to the owners of the boat; one to the proprietors of the nets; and the residue to the six fishermen. Two of these are generally seamen; and the rest, at the beginning of the fishery, come from the interior parts of the country; to which, on its close, they return supremely contented, if they have procured herrings, and the women, in their absence, cultivated potatoes, barely adequate to the maintenance of the family till next fishery. Few of the fishermen are acquainted with the anxiety attending the possession of riches. The greater part of their gains is consumed during the fishery in feasting or ebriety; and the remainder is usually consigned to quiet some importunate creditor.

Upwards of four hundred boats\* compose the Manks fleet. An admiral and vice-admiral are annually elected: to the former of whom government allows 5*l.* and to the other 3*l.* for the season. Their boats are distinguished by a small flag at the top-mast, and their province is to conduct the fleet to the herring-ground.† The boats sail with the evening and return with the morning tide. On leaving the harbour, each fisherman uncovers his head, and appears for a few moments engaged in devotion: but this, I presume, is more a relic of customary superstition, than an expression of real piety. Under the cloud of night they shoot their nets, which are buoyed up by inflated bags of dog-skin, dried in the sun and smeared over with tar. The herrings are caught by the gills; and in such abundance, that part of the nets must be frequently cut away. Many of the boats return laden with fifty, and some with seventy meazes.‡ This, while it continues, occasions a very rapid influx of money into the country; a successful night's fishing being frequently estimated at 3000*l.* and sometimes amounting to 5000*l.*

Among the herrings are caught great quantities of dog-fish, called by the Manks gabboch, which prey upon the herrings, and from their strength and voracity prove very destructive to the nets. They furnish the natives with oil, and when dried resemble ling; but are seldom used, except by the poorest of the inhabitants.

I have already mentioned some of the superstitions of this country; but these were in general innocent fancies. An error of that nature however prevails during the fishery, which proves highly injurious to the interests of the island. Superstition, that foe to commerce, operating on the native indolence of the Manks, influences them to sacrifice at her shrine every Saturday and Sunday evening, during the herring season; the fishermen being of opinion that the sale of the fish caught on the one evening, and the sailing of the boats on the other, would equally profane the sabbath.

Did this regard to the sabbath proceed from a just veneration of the awful injunction of Him, who is so profusely conferring on them the blessings of the sea, it would be

\* In this number are not included the smacks, brigs, &c. belonging to the island.

† During the fishery there is a penalty of 5*l.* for every gull which is killed; these birds being supposed constantly to attend the herrings.

‡ A meaze of herrings is five hundred.