

death confused and overpowered them. Whatever they meant, they went on digging.

"Some damned sailor under there," cried Evan, losing patience; "little mustard-spoons of sand. Can't you throw it faster? Fine young fellows, three of them, in the hole their own ship made, last March tide, it must have been. Let us see this batch come. They always seem to have spent their wages before they learn to drown themselves."

He laughed and laid his gun aside, and asked me for tobacco, and, trying to be sober, sang "The rising of the lark." I, for my part, shrunk away, and my flesh crawled over me.

"Work away, my lads, work away. You are all of a mind to warm yourselves. Let me know when you have done. And all you find belongs to me. I can sit and see it out, and make a list of everything. Ear-rings, gold, and foreign pieces, and the trinkets they have worn. Out with them! I know them all. Fools! what use of skulking? You are on soft stuff, I see. Have out every one of them."

So they did; and laid before him, in the order of their birth, the carcasses of his five sons. Evan first, his eldest born; Thomas next, and Rees, and Hopkins, and then (with the sign of death still in him) Jenkin, newly turned fifteen.

CHAPTER XII.—HOW TO SELL FISH.

What I had seen that night upset me more than I like to dwell upon. But with all my fish on hand, I was forced to make the best of it. For a down-hearted man will turn meat, as we say, and much more, fish, to a farthing's-worth. And though my heart was sore and heavy for my ancient sweetheart Moxy, and for little Bardie in the thick of such disasters; that could be no excuse to me for wasting good fish—or at least pretty good—and losing thoroughly good money.

Here were the mullet, with less of shine than I always recommend and honestly wish them to possess; here were the prawns, with a look of paleness, and almost of languishing, such as they are bound to avoid until money paid and counted; and most of all, here were lawful bass, of very great size and substance, inclined to do themselves more justice in the scales than on the dish.

I saw that this would never answer to my present high repute. Concerning questions afterwards, and people being hard upon me, out of thoughtless ignorance, that was none of my affair. The whole of that would go, of course, upon the weather and sudden changes, such as never were known before. And if good religious people would not so be satisfied with the will of Providence to have their fish as fish are made, against them I had another reason, which never fails to satisfy.

The "burning tide," as they called it (through which poor Bardie first appeared), had been heard of far inland, and with one consent pronounced to be the result of the devil improperly flipping his tail while bathing. Although the weather had been so hot, this rumor was beyond my belief; nevertheless I saw my way, if any old customer should happen, when it came to his dinner-time, to be at all discontented (which no man with a fine appetite and a wholesome nose should indulge in)—I saw my way to sell him more, upon the following basket-day, by saying what good people said, and how much I myself had seen of it.

With these reflections I roused my spirits, and resolved to let no good fish be lost, though it took all the week to sell them. For, in spite of the laws laid down in the books (for young married women, and so forth), there is scarcely any other thing upon which both men and women may be led astray so pleasantly as why to buy fish, and when to buy fish, and what fish to buy.

Therefore I started in good spirits on the Monday morning, carrying with me news enough to sell three times the weight I bore, although it was breaking my back almost. Good fish it was, and deserved all the praise that ever I could bestow on it, for keeping so well in such shocking weather; and so I sprinkled a little salt in some of the delicate places,