

## AND GAZETTE.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23, 1807.

## THE WELCH COTTAGE.

WE took shelter at a most miserable looking hut, at the side of the beach, and accepted the protection it afforded, with as entire good will as if it had been an eastern palace. My horse was obliged to crawl into a kind of out-house, where a swine-driver and his pigs had the instant before taken refuge; and while I was reconciling my steed to this society, a Jew pedler and his pack, and another traveller with his dogs, crowded. Necessity, as Shakspeare says, brings one acquainted with strange company.

A being, scarcely human in appearance, invited me to enter the hut. I entered. Its inhabitants—how shall I describe them? Fancy something which assembles the extremes of filth, penury, health and felicity; personify these among men, women and children; give to each of them forms and features, which confer a sort of grace and beauty on the household of the barber of Barmouth, by comparison. Put all this filth, penury, health, and felicity into motion; and having formed a groupe, imagine that you see it unshod, unstockinged, uncapped, and nearly unpunctuated and unbreeched. Young and old were busied in counting the finest and freshest herrings I ever saw, that instant brought in from the fishing-boat.

The father of the family, to whom the boat belonged, declared he never had so prosperous a voyage, and though he was almost blown away, he would hazard twice as much danger for such another drag. "Look! what a size they are of; and how they shine, my boys and girls! Faith, they seemed plaguily afraid of the hurricane, and came in shoals to the nets, as if they took shelter in them; little thinking, poor fools! that this was a jump from the water to the fire! And, now I talk of that—here, put half a dozen of them into the pan, for I am deuced hungry; and mayhap, this gentleman may be so too; and if so be that he is, he shall be as welcome to a fresh herring and a brown biscuit as myself. What say you, my heart of oak," continued he, clapping me as familiarly on the shoulder as if I had been his messmate; and, indeed, treating me as hospitably as if I had been so, and we had both escaped from a wreck to his cabin. Perceiving my dripping situation, he said,—"Come, shipmate, doff your jacket; put on this rug; come to anchor in that corner; warm your shivering timbers with a drop of this dear creature, which will make a dead fish speak like an orator.—There, another swig!—Don't be afraid of it! One more. And now you will do, while your rigging and canvass are drying."

All this time, mine host of the hovel stood in his sea-drenched apparel! on my reminding him of which, he cried out, smilingly—"Ah! you are a fresh-water sailor; I perceive, and would take a deal of seasoning before you were good for any thing; but, for me, all winds and weathers are alike to old Jack, while I can get good fish abroad, and good flesh at home—so fry away Molly, for the wet has made me as hungry as a shark; and, though I have drank like a whale, I shall now eat like a lion—and I hope you will do the same, messmate."

By this time, mine hostess set before us our dish of herrings; which, with oatmeal-cakes, potatoes and buttermilk, furnished one of the heartiest dinners I ever ate: after which the sailor made me partake of a can of sip; sing a song about the dangers and hardships of the sea-faring life; and made me take notice, that he was the happy father of a cabin full of children; and that, if it pleased God, to send him a dozen such pieces of good fortune every year, for a dozen of seasons, he should be able, as he was willing, to procure a snug birth for every one—"And mean-time, Master, we will have another sip of grog, and drink success to the herring fishery."

Our regale was soon interrupted by the sudden exclamations from without doors,—"She is lost! she is lost! she can't weather it!—she must go to the bottom! There is not water enough for her to come in, and the wind blows like the devil in her teeth!—She's sinking! the next sea will finish her!" All the cottagers ran to the beach, which was within a few paces. I followed instinctively. The hurricane was again renewed, the seas ran mountain-high, and a small coasting vessel was struggling with them. In a few minutes the strand was covered with spectators, but not idle ones. The whole of the villagers hurried to give assistance. Among the crowd, I discovered both the pig-driver and the pedler, whose situation I had began to relate to my kind-hearted host: but the most assiduous of the whole multitude, was a young woman, who, while the tears ran down her cheeks, was amidst the first to leap into a small boat, which had been anchored on the beach, and in which the master of our cottage, and three others, resolved to trust themselves, to offer such assistance as was in their power.

The wind did not abate of its fury, but shifted a few points more in shore; this, perhaps, in a vessel of greater burden, might have been fatal; but was, in

some sort, favourable to the bark in distress. She had, by tacking, gained a station parallel to a part of the harbour, where she might run on shore; which she did, at length, without much damage; and the only thing now to be apprehended, was the loss of the boat that had gone out to her succour. The people on board the vessel were almost instantly on land; and one of them being shewn the boat, and told, at the same time, that she went out to the relief of the crew, was among the most active to throw out a rope, and try to return the favour intended him in kind. The same circumstance, however, which brought in the vessel, presently befriended the boat; who, venturing to set her sail, was, after a few desperate rolls, impelled over the billows, and driven, as it were, headlong on shore; but not before the sailor, who had been handing out a rope, perceived the female in the boat, on which he threw himself to the ground, in the eagerness of catching her in his arms. You already feel they were lovers. They were more. The bands of matrimony had united them the week before. The very fishing-boat which was driven on shore, was the mutual property of the two fathers, who had agreed to give up each his share, to their son and daughter, as their wedding portion; two of the men in the little skiff were the fathers: the profits of the herring season were to be the children's fortune. How thin are the bounds that separate the extremes of happiness from the excesses of misery!

The former, however, were now realized: the vessel brought in a good freight, the fathers were saved, and the children were happy. They all resided, and were, indeed, natives of the village; but mine host, whose house was nearest to the place of landing, and had a heart sufficiently expanded to fill a palace with people that stood in need of hospitality, insisted, that as soon as the Little Sally and Jack, which it seems was the name of the fishing-boat, could be left for half an hour, they should pass it with him: this being agreed to, all hands went to work upon the Little Sally and Jack; and, if I had not been apprehensive that my ignorance in what was to be done would rather have confused than assisted, my poor aid should not have been withheld.

Matters being put to rights, and less mischief done than might have been expected, the company set off for the hut of my generous host, who took a hand of each of the married lovers, walking between them, and told them, he hoped, as they had so well escaped Davy's Locker this time, they would tumble in a hammock together these 50 years. A fresh supply of fish was immediately put into the pan; my landlord swearing a terrible oath on this occasion, for there was a strict friendship between him and the parties preserved, the old saying should be verified, as to their swimming thrice; accordingly for their second ocean, it was determined that the bowl, which, some years before, had commemorated an escape from a shipwreck in his own fortune, should now be filled to the brim, to celebrate the success of the Little Sally and Jack. I was pressed to stay and take my share, on pain of being deemed too proud to be happy among poor people; and on observing that my steed all this time was in a state which reproached me for faring so sumptuously, he started up, declaring, that, though he could not ride, he loved a horse next to a man, and that if mine would put up with a mess of bran, instead of hay, and a draught of good ale, instead of water, he should be as welcome as his own soul. I took him at his word, and staid to witness and join in the festivities, till there was just enough of the evening left to reach Abdereft with. I would have offered a small token of acknowledgment for what I had received, but that I saw a tremendous frown gathering on the brow of my host, and an oath quivering on his lip, which frightened me from my design, and made me only take his hand, with an assurance, that I would never pass his house without stopping to see if all was well on board, and how the herring fishery succeeded. This so pleased him, that he made the bowl go round to my health, and wishing another gale of wind would blow me into his hovel, as often as I should come along side of it, then led out my horse, held my stirrup while I mounted, and huzza'd me in three hearty cheers, till I was out of sight.

## EXTRACT.

WELL did an ingenious writer say of solitude, that in it "the mind gains strength and learns to lean upon herself; in the world it seeks or accepts a few treacherous supports;—the feigned compassion of one—the flattery of a second—the civilities of a third—the friendship of a fourth; they all deceive, and bring the mind back to retirement, reflection, and books!" But though they read so many excellent maxims of wisdom, and their judgments are so fully convinced of the lasting advantages of true philosophy; how frail, how forgetful, how much under the influence of the passions, are men of superior accomplishments found! But they are living monuments to teach us wisdom by their weakness!