

human family swept away by a disease unknown to our fathers. Virgil describes the fatal murrain that once depopulated the Alps, not more as a poet than as a historian. The shell-fish of the rivers of North America died in such vast abundance during a year of the present century, that the animals, washed out of their shells, lay rotting in masses beside the banks, infecting the very air. About the close of the last century, the haddock well nigh disappeared, for several seasons together, from the eastern coasts of Scotland; and it is related by Creech, that a Scotch shipmaster of the period sailed for several leagues on the coast of Norway, about the time the scarcity began, through a floating shoal of dead haddocks.* But the ravages of no such disease, however

* I have heard elderly fishermen of the Moray Frith state, in connection with what they used to term "the haddock dearth" of this period, that, for several weeks ere the fish entirely disappeared, they acquired an extremely disagreeable taste, as if they had been boiled in tobacco juice, and became unfit for the table. For the three following years they were extremely rare on the coast, and several years more elapsed ere they were caught in the usual abundance. The fact related by Creech, a very curious one, I subjoin in his own words; it occurs in his third *Letter to Sir John Sinclair*: "On Friday, the 4th December, 1789, the ship *Brothers*, Captain Stewart, arrived at Leith from Archangel, who reported that, on the coast of Lapland and Norway, he sailed many leagues through immense quantities of dead haddocks floating on the sea. He spoke several English ships, who reported the same fact. It is certain that haddocks, which was the fish in the greatest abundance in the Edinburgh market, have scarcely been seen there these three years. In February, 1790, three haddocks were brought to market, which, from their scarcity, sold for 7s. 6d."

The dead haddocks seen by the Leith shipmaster were floating by thousands; and most of their congeners among what fishermen term "the white fish," such as cod, ling, and whiting, also float when