

least twice that depth ; and in the course of the night our boat drifted from off the rocky ridge, the haunt of the herrings, to the deepest part of the valley, where scarce a herring is ever found. Our nets had, however, brought fish with them from the fishing-ground, sufficient in quantity to sink them to the bottom of the hollow ; and in raising them up,—a work of some little exertion,—we found them bedaubed with patches of a stinking, adhesive mud, that, where partially washed on the surface, seemed literally bristling over with minute fish-bones. The muddy bottom of the valley may be regarded as a sort of submarine burial-ground,—an extensive bone-bed in the forming. ‘What,’ we asked an intelligent old fisherman, ‘brings the fish here to die ? Have you observed bones here before ?’ ‘I have observed them often,’ he said : ‘we catch few herrings here ; but in winter and spring, when the cold draws the fish from off the shallows into deep water, we catch a great many haddocks and cod in it, and bring up on our lines large lumps of the foul bottom. In spring, when most of the small fish are sickly and out of season, and too weak to lie near the shore, where the water is rough and cold, they take shelter in the deep here in shoals ; and thousands of them, as the bones testify, die in the mud, not because they *come* to die in it, but just because their sickly season is also their dying season.’ And such seemed to be the true secret of the accumulation. The fish resorted to this place of shelter, not in order that they might die, but that they might live ; just as people go to poor-houses and hospitals with a similar intention, and yet die in them at times notwithstanding. And hence, I doubt not, in most instances those accumulations of fish-bones which men accustomed to the use of the trawl-net find in detached spots of bottom, when in other parts, not less frequented by fish in the milder seasons, not a single bone is to be found, and which have been described as dying places. The dying places,—the