



THE CRAB-CATCHER CAUGHT.

## CRAB CATCHING.

THERE is a kind of eatable crab which is a native of Britain, and exists along our coasts in such numbers, that it may be caught almost anywhere during the favourable season, and is sold even to the inhabitants of inland towns at a low price. This species, known to naturalists as *cancer pagurus*, is considered to be the type. Its colour above is a reddish brown, the legs rather more red, the claws deep black, and beneath whitish. The finest specimens are usually to be found on rocky coasts, and furnish more delicious meat than any other variety. The crab, like the lobster, casts its shell at various stages of its growth, and is speedily supplied with a new one; and, in the event of the loss of a limb by accident, another grows in its place. The tendency which all shell-fish exhibit to adhere to anything which will afford them a resting place, was illustrated by a crab which was caught off the English coast some few years ago, and was com-

pletely covered with large oysters, having also one or two polypes adhering to the shell. Some of the oysters were of six years' growth; and although the crab must have sustained its oppressive neighbours for that period, it seemed perfectly healthy. Many species of crabs exist in addition to the British variety, but they are nearly all natives of the American coasts. An interesting account of some of these species appeared in No. 36 of the ILLUSTRATED FAMILY PAPER.

The crab is easily caught; so easily, that you have only to poke a stick at him, and, if he can lay hold of it, he will cling tight enough to enable you to pull him out of the water. At the sea-side, it is common to see the children of fishermen searching in the pools and crevices of the rocks, at low water, for any small fish that may have been left by the tide. In some localities many cuttle-fish are thrown up on the shore, and, after a few days' exposure to the air, the flesh comes away from the bone, which is used for pounce, tooth-powder, and other pur-

poses. Crabs, however, are the principal game of the young fishermen, although those they usually catch are too small to be sent to market, and are available only for home consumption.

Our engraving represents an incident which has followed one of these excursions. Two fisher boys have returned home with a well-stored basket, and are examining its contents, when one of them, incautiously taking up a crab, discovers that the lively crustacean can lay hold of a finger just as well as a stick. The strength of these creatures is such, that, in the case of a large one, this might be a very unpleasant predicament; but, in this instance, he is able painfully to disengage his fingers, whilst his brother looks on with a quiet smile of amusement, which is very ludicrous, and the sister is equally amused. The artist has faithfully delineated some of the characteristics of a fisherman's dwelling, and the whole forms a very pleasing picture of humble life.

What the little fisher-children do for food, other children are glad, when they have the opportunity, to do for pleasure. Place one or two children on the sea-shore, and leave them to themselves, and in a few minutes you will find them dabbling in the pools of water, poking at crabs, pulling up mussels, disturbing star-fish, as though fishing had been their proper occupation. If a parent or a friend be near at hand, he may teach his young companions a useful lesson. He may point out how even the smallest crab has been endowed by the Creator with an instinct which tells it of the presence of danger, and induces it to bury itself in the sand when alarmed. If there are any shrimps on the shore, he may find a more striking exhibition of his instinct, and may show how a shrimp, frisking about in the sand, will, at the approach of danger, lie down utterly motionless, so that you would suppose it to be dead. A shrimp, under such circumstances, has been known to allow itself to be touched and turned over without exhibiting any sign of life, and it was only when taken up in the hand that it suddenly abandoned the deception, and sprang away out of reach. There

are few things better calculated at once to amuse and instruct children than a ramble on the sea-shore, with an agreeable companion, who can point out to his little hearers some of the wonders which lie out-spread before them.

The life of a fisherman is usually spoken of as one of hardship and peril; and so, in a certain sense, it is. Yet those who pursue it evince little desire to change their lot; for there is an excitement which sweetens the danger, and intervals of repose which compensate the toil. The nature of their occupation, depending, as it does, upon the winds and tides, affords to fishermen a good deal of leisure, and, although their earnings are sometimes large, it is to be regretted that, under the most favourable circumstances, they evince little desire to educate their children, to improve the character of their dwellings, or to use any of the other means that may be within their reach to elevate themselves in the social scale. Uncertain gains frequently tend to induce improvidence.