

Crossing the Atlantic 1836

Four years in Great Britain.

Calvin Colton

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Feelings on leaving one's country—The Lightning-cloud at Night on the Ocean—Style of Packet-ships—William IV. and George Washington—Character of Passengers—An Irishman going to America for Gold—Ship's Letter-bag, and an Incident—A Sermon, and Conscience—Remarkable Celestial Phenomena—A Funeral at Sea—The Shipboy asleep on the Mast—A Wreck—Arrival.

ON Tuesday, the 9th of August, 1831, we put to sea from New-York, with a favourable wind, in the packet-ship *Silas Richards*, for Liverpool. The pilot, having kept the helm till we had passed the limit of his jurisdiction, promised us, as he dropped down the side of the vessel into his boat, a passage of twenty-three days, bade us good-by in fine spirits, exhilarating ours, and bore away for another job.

The first night we found ourselves in a dead calm, drifting with the tide on the Long Island shore. A slight breeze, however, sprung up in season to save us the necessity of throwing out an anchor, and we dropped all traces of land beneath the horizon before the break of day. Let those who have left their native shores for the first time judge of the thoughts and feelings of some of us, being of that number, as we rose to behold naught but heaven and the sea, and to think of our rapidly-changing geographical relations. From that moment, the wide expanse of waters, the blue arch above, clouds, winds, perhaps a tempest, stars, and an occasional sail, were destined for many days to be our only familiar objects.

On the 12th, between two and four in the morning, as I walked the deck for I often rose to enjoy the night at sea I had the pleasure of witnessing one of the finest exhibitions of the lightning-cloud which I ever beheld, without the anxiety of expecting its approach. It rested in distant and solemn repose over the Gulf Stream, as the wind bore us along in a parallel line with that mysterious current ; and there played off its splendours of blazing fire in the quickest and most lively succession all along the eastern horizon, as if to please the stars and me, and welcome in the coming day. Had the same cloud displayed itself in the west, I should have suffered apprehension ; but being advised of the fitful and stormy regions impending over the Gulf Stream, and feeling the steady and majestic march of our ship under a cool and refreshing breeze from the northwest, I had nothing to fear, and every thing appropriate to enjoy, by such a vision. It was the first scene of the kind, under like circumstances, that I had ever witnessed indescribably grand, and differing from similar exhibitions on land, not only by the more incessant and more earnest coruscations, but especially by their red and angry hues. In the midst of this demonstration, the fiery car of day came rushing in, side by side, on the left of his rival, and there seemed an actual contest between these powers of nature the first occupant to retain its dominion, and the intruder to gain his rightful ascendancy. Nor was it doubtful. Before the steady and increasing blaze of the latter, the darting fires of the cloud grew pale and feeble, gradually relaxed their ardour, and were at length immersed and quenched in the sea. I observed on this occasion, as on others, that the twilight of the ocean is much more attractive principally, perhaps, as being more ardent than the twilight of the land.

New-York and Liverpool packets, as all know who have sailed in them, are very commodious and perfect things of the kind. No expense is spared in their building, in the finishing of the cabins, in their furniture or provisions. Every new ship put upon the line is in some sort

and particulars an improvement on every former one. Some of them are indeed superb enough to make a passenger proud, though sick, at sea. The tables, too, are most sumptuously supplied, though they may not, perhaps, in all cases, and in every item, be served to the taste of a London or Paris gourmand. The sea, however, is often a more offensive medicine to these nice and fastidious appetites. "What care these roarers for the name of king?" As little do they seek to please the palate.

The *Silas Richards* was a ship of excellent proof, though not the most elegant on the line in the workmanship and furniture of her cabins. But her captain (Holdridge) is a public favourite, and well deserving such esteem for his good temper, his kindness, and his professional skill. It is amusing and interesting to observe the sympathy of a sailor with his ship. "Well, captain," said I, one pleasant day, as he sat in a chair on the quarter-deck, and was apparently absorbed in watching the steady and majestic careering of his vessel before a fine breeze, "a penny for your thoughts." "She all but talks," said he; "she does every thing I bid her." The captain, however, was then making his last voyage in the *Silas Richards*. A new ship was in building for him at New-Bedford, Massachusetts, which, he said, was to be called *William IV*. Her name, however, is the *George Washington*, in which I returned to New-York. The captain informed me, that when *William IV*. behaved badly in a time during the pending of the Reform Bill, it was resolved that he should not have the honour intended; and *Washington*, who had plucked the brightest jewel from his father's crown, superseded the son in the christening of one of the finest ships that sail on the ocean. *Washington* was consistent: he might have been a king; but he would not tarnish his reputation.

Our cabin-passengers were fifteen, all civil, and seeking to please throughout the voyage,—an enviable privilege, if I may trust the accounts I have received from persons who have had little but annoyance and vexation in crossing the Atlantic, in consequence of bad tempers, viciously-disposed characters, profane swearers, and gamblers, on board. The close and intimate contact of a ship's cabin renders civility and other expressions of good-breeding and habitual kindness indispensable to comfort. To be imprisoned in such a place with vile persons, for the time necessary to cross a wide ocean, is a great calamity. I have the pleasure to say, I do not recollect a single violation of that law of politeness, which was defined to me in early life, and which I shall never forget—"a wakeful regard to the feelings of others in the intercourse of life." The presence of four ladies of exemplary manners was itself sufficient to impose restraint and decorum on any collection of gentlemen, although such influence was quite unnecessary to secure the object.

We had a Philadelphia merchant, his wife, and wife's sister; an English lady, resident in America, returning to visit her mother and family connexions in Yorkshire, with a charming little boy; the captain's excellent lady; a civil Scotch merchant, who had spent many years in South America, and seen enough of the rough-and-tumble of life to appreciate the advantages of civility; a sprig of English nobility, as was understood, who was prudent enough to say little, whatever might have been his thoughts; a cross-eyed flute-blower, of London, who occasionally entertained us with the melodies of his instrument; a young commercial agent, of Bristol, companion of my state-room, with whom I never quarrelled; a hypochondriac, of London, who scarcely left his berth during the passage; and some other persons, whose characteristics were quite agreeable, but not particularly important to be specified. We breakfasted, lunched, dined, and *tea-ed* (as the English say) in good fellowship, and very regularly; seldom having a cup of coffee, or bowl of soup, or platter of roast-beef or fowl, or any other dish, fall into our lap by a sudden lurch of the ship. The dead-lights were not fastened in for once, though for want of it we had a dash or two of the sea into the stern windows.

Of the steerage-passengers there were some forty to fifty, most of whom were disappointed and homesick English and Irish emigrants, returning from America, to love their

native country better than they did before, and to be satisfied to lay their bones in it. There was one of these poor fellows, an Irishman, who attracted much attention, and excited no little interest in the ship, on account of the simple story he told of his motives in going to America, and of the result. It is too instructive to be omitted. He said he went to New-York to dig for gold in *Gold-street*, where he had understood there was a great plenty. He declared that he went to the place, and tried a long time with his spade and pickaxe—but found no gold ! So thoroughly, however, was he possessed of the impression, under the influence of which he had gone to America, that he got the notion in his head, after our ship had sailed, that he had made a mistake in the street, and had been digging in the wrong place ! “ And will you go back again ?” he was asked. He was not sure whether he would ; but he thought he should advise his brothers to go ! This, I think, may be set down for faith with a witness. He was perfectly grave, and seemed as honest as any other man that ever came from Ireland. Notwithstanding all the disappointments of our English, Irish, and Scotch friends, who have come to seek their fortunes among us, and notwithstanding all the discouraging reports that have gone back, the faith of the first impression seems to stick by them ; and they will at least advise their brothers to go.

One of the most interesting features of present civilization is the secure and rapid transmission of letters by post over the same country, and more especially in passing the boundary between one nation and another, where, if we please to imagine so, no law exists, and where, it might moreover be supposed at first sight, improper meddling and depredation might be committed with impunity. But a second consideration will suggest to us, that nations in amity, and having commercial intercourse, find urgent reasons of public and private interest to maintain a mutual and rigid international jurisdiction to protect the lines of a frontier and the highway of the seas. Every vessel that sails on the ocean is made responsible somewhere ; and the letter-bag of a ship is ordinarily as secure in passing from continent to continent, as the mail from London to Liverpool, or from New-York to Philadelphia. I have been in England four years, have maintained a weekly correspondence with America, and yet I have never known a letter in which I was interested to fail of the most speedy arrival. I have conversed with many commercial and public men in regard to this point, whose foreign correspondence has been of long continuance, and very extensive, as well as important ; but I never heard of a disappointment from this cause. I once had a letter from Cincinnati, Ohio, addressed to me at No. 9 Amelia-place, London, which might almost as well have been directed to No. 9 Amelia-place among the stars ; and yet it found me out the third day after its arrival in the metropolis, having been sent by the twopenny post, as appeared by the marks thereon, to nearly every part and suburb of that immense city.

The master of every packet-ship between the ports of the United States and those of Great Britain, and I believe of every other vessel that floats upon the high seas, is in fact, or at least in the construction of law, a sworn postoffice agent of the nation to which he owes allegiance. [1] The American packets from New-York to London and Liverpool, respectively, carry probably the largest mails of any ships in the world—nearly all the correspondence between the two countries passing through their letter-bags. In the ship *George Washington*, on my return to New-York, the letters were counted, and the number exceeded 3000. The parcels, or small packets, are of great bulk, filling several large bags.

After our ship had been at sea some three or four days, the weather being pleasant, the captain opened the letter-bags in the round-house, to discharge his duty as postmaster in sorting the letters and parcels for consignment on his arrival in port. He turned upon the floor about a cartload of parcels, and some bushels of letters a striking index of the amount of correspondence between the United States and Great Britain, when it is considered that, besides all the merchant-ships, there is a Liverpool packet *from* and *to* New-York once a week, and one every two weeks between London and New-York—all and each sustaining their own proportionate share in this transportation.

Suppose, then, that while the captain is sorting the packages and letters, he allows it not improper to amuse the passengers sitting and standing round, by reading to them the remarkable superscriptions and directions as they happen to turn up ; among which are to be found not a few genuine Irish bulls from the sons of the Emerald Isle in America to their friends at home, as well as many other comical things. By-and-by a letter turns up, the seal of which, impressed in wax, reads thus : “ *Mizpah, Gen. xxxi. 49.*” “ This is for you to expound,” said the captain, turning pleasantly to me. Not being able on the instant to recite the passage without book by which, I suppose, I lost some credit I ran below, and returning with the Bible open at the place, read, “ *Mizpah : the Lord watch between me and thee, when we are absent one from another.*” “ Beautiful !” said one. “ Beautiful !” responded another. “ A gem ! a gem !” exclaimed a third. “ A gem !” all responded. And surely, the brightest, most precious gem of all, was to find in such a place and circle these prompt and full-souled expressions of sympathy on the announcement of this sentiment of religion and Christian piety. There were, indeed, powerful tendencies to such sympathy in the circumstances of us all. For who present, whether going to or from his home, did not feel himself separated from those he loved y and loved most dear ? And who, with a wide and fitful ocean before him, tossing on its heaving bosom, would not feel his dependance, and, looking back or forward to home and friends, lift up his aspirations to that high Providence who sits enthroned in heaven, and rules the land and sea r and breathe to him the sweet and holy prayer—“ The Lord watch between me and *mine*, while we are absent one front another ! ?”

And whose was the hand that fixed this stamp of piety on this winged messenger of love — of love that grows more ardent and more holy, as it is distant and long away from its object ? The first postmark was *Quebec*, and directed to a quartermaster of the army in London. Was it, then, from a wife to a husband ? or from a sister to a brother ? or what was the relation ? The chirographic style made this question dubious, and it remained unsettled ; and of course left more scope for the play of imagination, and the agreeable waste of much conjecture. But the incident itself, and the conversation exhausted upon it, furnished all the colloquists of the occasion with a text of frequent reference, and I hope imprinted on their hearts more indel- ibly a very practical and an ennobling sentiment of piety.

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its fragrance on the desert air.”

This flower diffused its fragrance far and wide ;
This gem is borne along on ocean’s *tide*,
And sheds its best effulgence to the eye,
As swift on wings of love it passes by.

On Sunday, August 14th, while sitting at breakfast in the morning, a gentleman much esteemed, and of prominent influence in the cabin, addressed himself to another gentleman, a clergyman, at table, and said, “ Sir, we have been several days aboard, and this is the Sabbath, and a pleasant day. I have consulted our fellow-passengers, and I believe I express their common sentiment in requesting from you to-day the favour of a sermon, if agreeable to yourself ;” at the same time turning to the captain and to the company for an expression of their assent, which was immediately and unanimously rendered. The service was therefore instantly concluded on, notice published through the ship, and the bell rung at half past ten o’clock. The place of assembly was the round-house, with its windows and doors thrown open, so that those who could not get in could hear from without. The number of souls on board, including cabin-passengers, steerage-passengers, and crew, was about seventy. It was gratifying to observe how easy such a service can be arranged, and with what decorum it can

be sustained, even on board a packet-ship. It was still more interesting to see the feeling manifested in view of religious truths, in such circumstances.

As the preacher of this day hung over the stern of the ship towards the going down of the sun, and was meditating alone on that grand object, now about to plunge in the ocean, and observing also that ever-attractive scene, the wake of the ship, as she dashes onward through the foaming deep, leaving a momentary trace of bubbling and whirling eddies, breaking the mountain-wave, and seeming to rebuke its march and to enforce a pause in its career—as if to express astonishment at the temerity of such an intruder, and at the violence done to the rights of the sea. In this thoughtful mood, one of the cabin-passengers, a young man, approached him, begging pardon for interrupting his meditations, and began to say, “ that he owed an apology in his own behalf, and that he was suffering an injustice in the preacher’s estimation.”

“ I pray you, sir,” said the preacher, “ explain yourself.”

He still went on, regardless of this demand, and added, much to the surprise of the clergyman, “ I bought those books at an auction-room. They were struck off to me in one parcel the night before I left New-York. I was ignorant of what they were.”

“ What books ?” interrupted the clergyman.

“ I intend to destroy them,” continued the young gentleman ; “ and I should suffer injustice if I allowed you to suppose that I had not been better educated, or that I can relish such vile trash.”

It turned out, after the parties in this colloquy had come to a more perfect understanding, that the books in question were of an infidel and otherwise base character. On the second or third day of the voyage, while overhauling and sorting his luggage in presence of the clergyman, the young gentleman had civilly offered him the use of any of his books that might please him—of which he had availed himself. As it happened, however, the clergyman’s hand had not lighted on the bad books. To explain this dialogue, it had also happened that the clergyman, in his sermon of that day, had taken occasion to make some remarks on the absurdities of infidelity, and the necessarily vicious state of the moral affections that could relish it. The young man felt mortified—abased—supposing himself to be directly aimed at in these remarks ; and took the opportunity, as above, to vindicate himself. “ Conscience needs no accuser.” It was, however, a mutually pleasant interview. The clergyman permitted the young gentleman to remain under the conviction he had so deeply felt, that the lecture was intended expressly for him : first, because it seemed to operate so well ; next, because the young man would not have believed him, if he had disclosed all the truth ; or, if he had believed, being of a lively turn, he would have laughed outright, and probably failed to profit by it.

As we came up from dinner on Sabbath, the 14th, “ Look at the sun !”—“ Look at the sun !” was the instantaneous exclamation of numerous voices, every one lifting up hands with amazement and turning pale with apprehension. The day had been perfectly clear ; not a cloud in the heavens ! nor was there one at this moment. Neither had there been, nor was there now, any fog ; no mist ; no floating shadow of any of the suspended vapours ; but all the region above, even down to the horizon, was entirely vacant of these ordinary phenomena. And yet there was a darkness ! Nature herself—all nature was eclipsed ! The sun presented his dark purple disk to our eye so darkened as almost to unveil the stars. All looked alternately at the sun, and then at each other, with a wondering, inquisitive, and fear-stricken gaze, seeming to say, “ What ! what doth this portend ?” It was impossible not to feel that Nature was out of her healthful condition—diseased—in distress in pain and agony. So deep was the

obscurity over the face of the sun, that the eye could gaze upon it steadily without blinking. The dark spots which have often been observed upon his disk were distinctly visible to the naked eye ; and one dark, gloomy, evil-boding shade mantled the entire vault above and around, as if the day of final doom were about to break upon creation !

We, who had been unused to the sea, asked the captain if these appearances were common. He answered, with evident seriousness, that he had never seen the like. It was strange to the oldest sailor—to every one on board. It was now about five o'clock P. M., as near as I recollect. The cabin-passengers had all been below for two or three hours. The mate on duty informed us that these unusual symptoms began to appear some two hours before, and had been gradually increasing. The face of every one looked serious, as if about to be summoned to his last account.

The wind carried us pleasantly onward, as the sun declined and disappeared under the same general appearances ; the dark spots upon his disk being visible to the last, without a single ray of his wonted effulgence to inflict pain upon the fixed and open eye.

The moon was nearly at her full, and came forth under the same mantle which had covered the sun in the day. But over her face the veil was blue, and most dismally dark. The stars laboured to shine, and could scarcely peep out. The night was even more gloomy than the day—as all its lights seemed just ready to be extinguished.

Monday, the 15th, was very much the same, more especially in the afternoon ; when, for a while, so far as I remember, it was even darker than the day before. And so again on Monday night ; and it was not till the third or fourth day that the heavens began to wear their natural appearances.

I have since incidentally learned by American papers that the same phenomena, at the same time, were exhibited over all the American seas, and nearly, or quite, over the continent. I think that we were on the Banks of Newfoundland, or in the neighbourhood.

It will be remembered, that the terrible West India hurricanes happened at this time, when Barbadoes was nearly made desolate. I have not the date of these calamities ; but they occurred either on one of these days, or immediately afterward. The phenomena were owing no doubt to the state of the atmosphere ; and it was natural to expect that nature, thus wrapped, and apparently constrained and distressed, would obtain relief by some violent effort. It is only remarkable that the violence was not more extensive, and more commensurate in its effects with the wide-spread suffering in the elements above us, than seemed to be experienced. The least that we expected was a share in such a consequence ; but it did not overtake us.

On Sabbath morning, August 21st, the ship's bell rang at nine o'clock for a funeral, of which the passengers and crew had been previously apprized. The morning was pleasant, and the ship under easy sail. The corpse, being that of a tall man, having been suitably wrapped in a sack, was lashed to a plank so tightly as to develop the entire contour or profile of the human form, from head to foot, as it rested on supports a little superior to the railing of the ship, with feet towards the sea, ready to be plunged into the deep, after the appropriate rites of religion should be performed. All assembled on deck in presence of the dead, with heads uncovered ; the clergyman read a portion of the Scriptures, spoke a few words on the occasion, and offered a prayer to Heaven; immediately after which, the captain beckoned with his hand, and the body was caused to slide gently over the side of the vessel ; and down it went into the sea, sending back to our ears the noise of a plunge, which, in the circumstances, seemed all funereal—a sound which, me-thinks, all who heard must hear a long, long time—a sound not to be forgotten. All stood motionless for a moment, in silence contemplat-

ing the scene, as if bound to the spectacle by thoughts higher than the earth and the sea. Then, one by one, each moved away to his post of duty or to his place of retirement. But the noise of that plunge, four years since, even now rings in my ears ; I hear it when my thoughts turn that way—I cannot cease to hear it. To be buried in the ocean !—to sink down and lie on the bottom of the mighty deep, till “ the sea” shall be bidden to “ deliver up the dead that are in it !” Nature shrinks, though religion may whisper, ’tis all the same. Who would not prefer, if it might be the will of Heaven, to lie down with his kindred, where he might be wept by his friends ?

The man we buried was one of the steerage-passengers, an Irishman, about forty years old, who came on board far gone with consumption, and friendless, hoping once more to see his native land and those he had left behind. The common influence of a sea voyage, in aggravating the tendencies and hastening the termination of this insidious complaint, anticipated all his calculations, and imposed on us the solemn and affecting office of consigning his body to the ocean’s bed, till the morning of the resurrection. A funeral at sea has in it a peculiar solemnity. The body of this man was dropped upon a bank, in the middle of the Atlantic, the name of which I forget, and of the existence of which I was not before apprized. These banks in the ocean, like those of Newfoundland, are always indicated by the colour of the water—it being rather turbid, and wanting the appropriate blue of the deep salt sea. As the body was weighed down by stone in a sack at the feet, and being deposited over such a bank, it soon found a place of rest, and in a few hours we had left it far behind.

At eleven o’clock this day there was again public worship on the deck of the ship, as on the previous Sabbath.

On Saturday, the 27th, we found ourselves becalmed in St. George’s Channel, off Kinsale, in sight of land. But in the evening the wind sprung up, and by the help of tide we made rapid flight towards Liverpool. As if the bard of Avon had been a prophet, and we destined to certify the truth of his record by finding history in poetry, it is a curious fact that, at twelve at night, our shipboy Jack, about fifteen years of age, who had shown all the agility of a monkey during the voyage, in going aloft and running about the rigging, having been perched on the main-topsail yard to keep watch for a light, *actually fell asleep* in that high place, nearly opposite the mouth of the river associated with the poet’s name, as having been honoured by his birth upon its banks. The sea had risen, and the ship rolled and pitched, enough to demand wakefulness in those on duty.

“ Jack, do you see the light ?” said the watch. Jack made no answer. The call was repeated, and with increased earnestness, a second and a third time ; but Jack was still silent ! The sailors sprang aloft, and found him snoring aloud, as an accompaniment of the winds !

“ Sleep ! gentle sleep !
Wilt thou upon a high and giddy mast
Seal up the shipboy’s eyes, and rock his brains
In cradle of the rude imperious surge—
And in the visitation of the winds,
Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
With deafening clamours in the slippery clouds,
That, with the hurly, death itself awakes ?
Canst thou, O partial sleep, give thy repose
To the wet seaboy in an hour so rude ;
And in the calmest and most stillest night,
With all appliances and means to boot,
Deny it to a king ?”

Sabbath morning, the 28th, at sunrise, we nearly brushed the naked and rocky bluffs of Holyhead, shooting by them like a vision of enchantment, on the wings of a stiff north-west breeze ; seeming to turn a corner there, as was indeed the fact, buffeting with lusty endeavour a mad and foaming tide, as it rushed from the northern to the southern seas between England and Ireland. And every mile we gained in such a conflict laid before the eye some new aspects of rock, and shore, and landscape, and hill and mountain profile. Nothing can be more beautiful, or bolder and more formidable, than the front of Holyhead. Then came the Skerry rocks, one group of which is like a range of battlements, the central one resembling a church, and the light-house perched upon it, a steeple in perfection ; then the opening harbour of Holyhead, and its beautiful little town ; then the highly-cultivated hills and plains of Anglesea, with numberless fields of grain, just cut and gathered into heaps, and resting for the Sabbath before it was gathered in ; the hedges, distinctly defining every separate enclosure, greater and smaller, regular and irregular ; the lanes of access ; the little white cottages and more imposing farmhouses ; the windmills ; small villages and hamlets here and there ; churches ; now a copse of wood, and now another ; and beyond this checkered vision the irregular and fantastic profiles of mountains, the loftier points merged in the clouds ;—all, land and sea, lighted up with one of the brightest mornings that ever shone, and the entire and variegated scene rapidly changing appearances, as we were borne along the sixty miles from Holyhead to Liverpool. The day before, as we lay in St. George's Channel, we saw, but indistinctly, through the mist and smoke, and low in the distant horizon, some of the elevated portions of the Emerald Isle. But this morning, the shores, plains, hills, and mountains of England and Wales burst upon us in their loveliest features, and under the hues imparted by the brightest sun, after a shoreless vision of eighteen days. We often sailed so near the shore as to be able to trace with the naked eye the fissures and crude prominences of the rocks.

A little from Holyhead we took a pilot. And then the news ! what news ? Great events were expected from the new Parliament and from Poland. But Poland and Parliament were soon lost sight of, in the announcement of the mournful wreck of the Rothsay Castle, which went to pieces some ten days before, at twelve o'clock at night, directly in sight of where we were then sailing, and about ninety souls of one hundred were supposed to have perished ! Nothing of the kind, since the destruction of the Albion, had produced so great a sensation. And there was a peculiar aggravation attending the wreck of the Rothsay Castle which can never be healed. We bow in submission to the awful providence of God, when his hand is single and alone in afflicting us ; but when the recklessness of man is seen to have bereaved us of our friends and dear ones, and in the most awful manner, the heart will bleed, and bleed while memory lasts, and never be comforted. And so will it be in the present instance. That ruthless pushing of opposition in the running of stagecoaches and steamers, which rages equally in England and in the United States, is burdened with no small share of the responsibility of this never-to-be-forgotten calamity. And, more aggravating still, that fiend, and fitter tenant of a darker world, the unpitying soul of brutal intoxication, comes in here to perfect the anguish of the recollections of that dreadful night. To lie upon the ocean, lashed to fury by the pitiless and maddened winds of heaven, under the guidance of the most accomplished and best-directed skill of man, in the best craft, is terrible enough. But to be obliged to ask mercy of a drunkard in that hour—to beseech him to do his duty, and he shall growl, and curse, and refuse to act—O ! who can depict the anxieties of the innocent souls that lie at his feet ! When I think of this, I thank God, and I love and respect the man who guided our bark across the Atlantic, not only for his personal virtues and nautical skill, but that he had reduced his whole crew to a total abstinence from ardent spirits, and resolved never to allow its use again.

We came to anchor in the Mersey, before Liverpool, at two o'clock P. M., just nineteen days from port to port ; and found lodgings in town before four o'clock.

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Excursion in Ireland.

A narrow escape—Dunluce Castle—Giant's Causeway—A Husband's tears—Dublin.

THE wheels of the steamer in which I had taken passage from Glasgow to Londonderry had not stopped, before I was darting down the river in the Queen Adelaide, retracing forty miles of the same track I had just made. The wind had been blowing hard ever since 12 o'clock, and the sea had got to be very rough. Instead of landing at Port Rush, however, as another gentleman was to land at Port Stewart, a little further west, and understanding that I could probably accomplish my object in visiting the Giant's Causeway easier by stopping there, I consented to go ashore with him, not dreaming of the peril that awaited us.

The usual signal being given, a boat appeared off the harbour to receive us, and came alongside about half a mile from land. Those who know any thing of the contact of a small boat and a ship in a heavy swell, while the ship is lying to, need not be told of the difficulty of passing from one to the other. Every swell dashed her against the side of the vessel, and threatened to break or swamp her. We succeeded, however, in getting down by the iron ladder, which was thrown over for the purpose there being four men to manage the boat, and we two making six. While receiving our luggage, a heavy swell brought the rim of the boat under the end of the ladder, and dipped and filled it as quick as one could fill a teacup in a tub of water. My companion and myself sprung for the ladder, and both of us caught hold of its lower rungs by our hands. The four men, as was quite natural, attached themselves to our legs, the vessel every instant changing its position by the motion of the sea. For the moment, it seemed inevitable that we must all go down together. By a merciful Providence, however, the boat was not entirely filled, and a rope still connected it with the deck of the vessel. The captain and crew of the steamer being prompt, drew upon the rope, and instantly dropped several buckets to the men below, ordering them to bale out the water. The men, seeing the boat did not go down, obeyed the order, and soon changed the aspects of the case. The boat was speedily lightened, and in a few moments principally cleared of water, our luggage in the meantime afloat, all except my portmanteau—which, most fortunately for me, as it contained my most valuable articles, and those most susceptible of injury by wet, was still upon deck. The danger came so suddenly, and was over so quick, that for myself I hardly had time for a second thought. Why we did not all go down, was as much a wonder as a mercy. If the boat had sunk, as might ordinarily be expected in such a case, the probable result is too obvious ; and the only reason why it did not is ascribed to the fact, that we were able to relieve it by hanging upon the ladder suspended from the side of the vessel. We finally got safe ashore—ourselves and luggage drenched in the sea.

The excitement of such an occurrence, when once the danger is past, I felt to be very useful. To have been brought, in an unexpected moment, to the very verge of the eternal world that one is obliged to feel that he has been there, and that the merciful hand of God has been stretched out to rescue him from the abyss—stirs up all the susceptibilities of the soul, and opens the deep fountains of its feelings, as nothing else can do. I hope never to forget, and always to be thankful for. such a preservation.

In execution of my plan to see the Causeway that day, and take the mail in the evening for Belfast, I proceeded directly in a car to Colerain, four miles, whence, having put on dry clothes, and ordered my wet luggage to be dried, it being early in the day, I hastened off in the same conveyance for the Giant's Causeway, ten miles from Colerain.

“ Will you go by Dunluce Castle ?” said my driver.

“ No, I am tired of castles.”

“ It is only one mile farther ; and everybody thinks it very worth seeing.”

“ Well, let us see it, then.”

The ruins of Dunluce Castle are situated on a rocky promontory, jutting into the sea about three miles west of the Causeway, and elevated perhaps 200 feet above the water. The fortress itself, when in keeping, could be approached only by a drawbridge. The ruins themselves are rather picturesque—but more remarkable on account of the peculiar character of the place. The sea almost entirely surrounds its base, and comes dashing and foaming in over a rocky bed, as if it would wear away the eternal hills. From the west windows of the castle the shore of the sea, stretching for a mile or more, is a precipitous white cliff, exhibiting the most fantastic shapes that can be imagined, as formed by the action of the sea. Larger and smaller columns may be seen all along, standing in the water, and supporting the ends of magnificent arches, of the same material, whose other supports are merged in the cliff. I saw one arch about a mile distant, exactly after the pattern of the heaviest stone bridge—and others which reminded me of the heavy Saxon architecture of Durham Cathedral.

I had heard of a cave under this castle, and to my utter amazement I found a subterranean passage admitting to and from the sea, giving access to the ocean from the castle, entirely independent of the mainland. An army could march through it, to embark or re-embark, with all necessary ammunition—with artillery even. And the doubt is—whether it was made by the hand of man or of God. If by the former, the task must have been immense. It passes directly under the centre of the fortress, making a channel for the sea, which at flood tide will float boats half the way in. It has an irregular arched roof, and is generally, after one has got into it, thirty feet high and twenty feet broad. As I entered alone, not anticipating such a scene, and received the salutation of the mighty waters, which came rushing, and murmuring, and bellowing into that deep and dark cavern—it was awful.

And yet all this was play ; it was like the soft music of the Eolian harp, compared to a like exhibition, to which I was introduced an hour afterward in the vicinity of the Giant’s Causeway. The most remarkable cave of all, which can be approached only by water, I was compelled to deny myself the gratification of seeing, on account of the heavy sea which made on the shore. But there was yet one 466 feet long, measured from its mouth to its extremity—and a large part of the way forty feet to the point of the arch, and about thirty feet across—running nearly in a direct line, and sunk so low as to receive high water almost to the further end. This cave is accessible on foot through another one, meeting it nearly at right angles, about 300 yards from its mouth, and being a little higher, so as to exclude the sea. Conducted by my guide through this access—sufficiently difficult and dark—I came to the margin of that awful, never-to-be-forgotten scene. Had the ocean been calm, it would have been a solemn, dismal region. From the point we occupied might be seen 150 feet of the cave on our right, ascending gradually, and coming to a point ; and 300 feet on our left, opening on nothing but a troubled sea. Every few minutes a swell came rolling in, that would fill up the mouth of the cave, leaving us in total darkness, and rushing forward with most impetuous fury, as if ten thousand times more mad for its confinement—and it seemed impossible to escape it. The next moment it all lay in fleecy whiteness at our feet, shrinking back in haste and modesty, as if asking pardon for such intrusion. No sooner had this retired than another came, and anon another, and so in perpetual succession. Most of my readers may know how wave follows wave on the shore after a storm. So into this dark subterranean cell the agitated ocean from without unceasingly threw the fragments of his lofty heavings, as if in spite for the obstacles of the high and rock-bound shore, that came in his way. From the position we occupied, although we could see out, yet the somewhat sinuous line of the cave and the irregularity of the arch confined our vision below the horizon, and veiled entirely from the

eye the tumult of the sea. Buried 200 feet beneath the surface of the earth, with a massive mountain of rock impending over our heads, and looking out through an aperture of 300 feet in length upon the ocean collecting its forces, heaping up its waves, and rushing in upon us, as if resolved by a single throw to shut us in for ever—was a scene, the sublimity and the awful grandeur of which cannot be easily imagined. The tremendous rush of the waters, thrown in by the tossings of the deep without, and the startling bellowing which preceded their thundering passage—the momentary darkness which the approach of every wave produced, by occupying the mouth of the cave—were enough, as I need not say, to awe the spirit of the beholder, and extort from him irresistible exclamations of astonishment and wonder. One of my guides had brought a pistol to be discharged in the cave, as is common, to entertain visitors with the singular and astounding effect of its impulses on an atmosphere pent up in the bowels of the earth. I have no doubt that in an ordinary time the report would have been remarkable, and even tremendous in its reverberations. But on this particular occasion it was like the mockery of man's inventions in the face of the artillery of the last day, so feeble was the sound in comparison with the tremendous roar of the waters. The pent-up air seemed in agony to be let loose from the distressful constraint under which it laboured, by the narrow limits of the vault above, and the pressure of the sea coming in from without—and the concussion rushed by our ears to find vent through the passage by which we came.

I am informed, that the proprietor of this shore once planted a small piece of artillery in this spot, and caused it to be let off in the face of a coming swell of the ocean ; and that the man who served on the occasion was deprived of his hearing by the violence of the concussion. Well for him that these high crags did not bow themselves in their strength for the punishment of such presumption.

After this, which I came not to see, and never thought to see, what is the Giant's Causeway? It is something notwithstanding—it is even a wonder—and still more wonderful, as it suggests the probability, and produces a very thorough conviction, that it holds a submarine connexion with Staffa, one hundred miles distant on the western coast of Scotland. Staffa and the Giant's Causeway exhibit in all respects the same geological phenomena—and we cannot resist the conviction, from the relations and aspects of the two wonders, that they are parts of one stupendous whole, and that the finny tribes of the sea, as they sport themselves between Ireland and Scotland, are privileged with a nearer access to that which man must for ever and in vain covet to see : a very honeycomb of rocks, paving the foundations of the ocean, and showing to the eye of man only little bits of their extreme points and justled ends, but concealing their more perfect and substantial forms under the ever-rolling sea.

The Giant's Causeway and Fingal's Cave are the same thing—the same, I mean, in *material* and in geological structure. The caves in the neighbourhood of the Giant's Causeway are not to be found among the basaltic columns, as at Staffa. In this particular the caves of Staffa are perhaps more interesting. But the Giant's Causeway, as a whole, in connexion with its adjunct circumstances, I should think, might justly be esteemed a greater wonder of the two.

The remarkable phenomenon in either case is simply this : That immense masses (*regions*, they might be called) of basalt have received erect columnar formations, varying in the number of their sides from *three* to *nine*—the more prevalent forms being the *pentagon* and *hexagon*. The structure of the honeycomb, supposing it to be solid, and its elongated forms erect, is a very fair representation of this *crystallized* basalt. For, although the substance is opaque, it has yet assumed distinct and proper forms of crystallization. These packed columns differ from the honeycomb in wanting exact proportions of sides and angles, in the relations of those of the same column to each other, and of those of one column to those of its neighbours. But each side of every column, whatever may be its proportion to another, or to all other sides of the same column, makes a corresponding side to a neighbour

—so that no space is left in the entire mass, which is not occupied by the columnar formation, any more than in a honeycomb. Yet are there no two adjoining columns of equal sides and equal angles—and probably no two in the vast assemblage corresponding in this particular. It is possible, indeed, that accident has made such an agreement—but I presume it has never been ascertained. Suppose a circle to be run in the remotest angles of each column, I should judge, that their diameters would range from nine inches to eighteen—the average perhaps twelve—or midway between these extremes. In this estimate of their relative and average size I speak particularly of the results of my cursory observations, without instruments, of the principal cluster of about 30,000, whose ends are exposed on the margin of the sea, and which seem to have been abruptly broken off at different elevations, so that one may walk over them, up and down, as by stairs, extending one way 725 feet from the cliff, till they dip in the sea and are lost—and in breadth about half this extent. The sides and angles are perfectly rectilinear, so far as they are exposed, and by presumption universally. And the contact of the whole mass is so intimate, side to side and angle to angle, that not the smallest opening is anywhere discoverable, not even for the admission of water, and probably not of air. Yet the junction is not hermetical—but so far as chymical union is concerned, it is a perfect disjunction. They may all be taken down in perfect form. And what is remarkable, every column has a joint in every ten or twelve inches, composed of a convex and concave surface, perfectly fitted, yet chymically disjunct. The application of a little force, by a sharpened iron bar, would break them up into blocks with the greatest facility. Multitudes of these fragments, thus disturbed, lie scattered over the surface of this interesting and marvellous structure. Notices have been set up by the proprietor, cautioning all visitors against committing any more ravages of this kind. As we descend from the main cliff, or high bank, towards the sea on the tops of these columns compacted in a solid mass, yet each demonstrating its distinct forms by its separate head, being broken off at a different elevation each from every other, they become more and more interesting, till they sink into the ocean, and make us covet earnestly to follow them there.

The position of these columns is generally supposed to be erect, or perpendicular. But this is not always the case. Every undisturbed cluster, or bed of them, however, agrees, in this : that all of the same mass, if they vary at all, vary equally in their angle of inclination from the erect position—and that is ordinarily slight, though observable to the eye. They are seen all along for miles lodged in the precipitous face of this shore, composing one of its principal features. One stratum is often seen above another with an unorganized stratum of heterogeneous rock intervening. There is one headland, or promontory, presenting an extended range of perpendicular basaltic columns, sixty feet high—another fifty feet—and others all degrees inferior. What is the length of the columns composing the principal, and what is emphatically called, the Causeway, and which appears most perfectly organized, it is impossible to say, as only the upper extremities are generally visible. Except in one place, they present a precipitous side of thirty feet. While the face of this shore offers to the eye every here and there the most perfect ranges of this columnar basalt, there are also interspersed irregular piles, sufficient to leave the impression of the stupendous ruins of one of nature's palaces. In one place there is a cluster of insulated columns, lifting up their heads, some thirty, some forty feet high, on the point of a promontory, which it is said were taken in the night, by a part of the Spanish Armada, to be the chimney-tops of Dunluce Castle, and were fiercely battered by their cannon, and not a few of them demolished. I stood upon this promontory, looking down upon these insulated columns—and really they seemed to have as much of the forms of the handiwork of man, as many of the ruins of ancient castles to be found in the British Islands. This whole region seems to be disposed to columnar formations. I saw a distinct and magnificent range in the side of a rocky eminence some two or three miles from the shore.

I only record such impressions, as a run and a jump over these remarkable phenomena left behind. And when I say that I had travelled 250 miles by sea, and 50 by land, in two thirds of

48 hours, in perils on the deep, and in perils among beggars, I may perhaps be excused for the slender and superficial information I am able to give of what I saw in the meantime.

Whoever purposes to visit the Giant's Causeway, if he wishes to enjoy tranquillity in contemplating the scenes-around and before him, and retire under the best impressions of what he shall have seen, let him fill his pockets with sixpences and shillings, and be prepared to rain a shower of them on the hordes of beggars that will be sure to flock around him. Or else, being in the same manner furnished in his pocket, let him say to them all, as they come in his way, Now this is the only condition on which I will give you any thing—that you keep entirely away from me until I return. Alas ! what meanness of spirit and baseness of conduct does the beggary of a community beget.

In passing in the mailcoach from Colerain to Belfast, I found myself in company with a lady and her maid. There was every thing to interest in her person, mind, and manners, with a single exception : I suspected, and was convinced, that she was under the excitement of some intoxicating drug. It was a singular coincidence, after having been the subject of these mingled and conflicting emotions of respect and diffidence towards a lady of such interesting qualities and commanding powers, that I should have a seat at church with her and her husband the next day in the same pew ; and that I should have occasion to observe the expressions of anxiety on the countenance of the husband, as he occasionally cast an affectionate and benevolent glance towards his wife. His eye began to swim ; and finding that he could not suppress his emotions, he took his hat and left the church. The reader's conjectures in this case are as good as mine ; I only state the facts.

Dublin.

The best picture of Dublin is Cook's royal map, on the margins of which are exhibited the Custom-house, Postoffice, Castle, Four Courts, Trinity College, St. George's Church, Blue Coat Hospital, Castle Chapel and Tower, Royal Exchange, exterior and interior of the Metropolitan Chapel, Corn Exchange, Stamp-office, New Theatre Royal, Holmes' Hotel, College of Surgeons, Royal Dublin Society House, King's Inns, Lying-in Hospital and Rotunda, Linen Hall, St. Patrick's Cathedral, Nelson's Pillar, and the Wellington Testimonial—enclosing a draught of the city, embracing a circle whose diameter is two and a half miles. If one has been somewhat acquainted with large cities, this map of Dublin will leave an impression upon the mind more flattering than an actual survey of the city itself, as is often the influence of pictures. Yet Dublin is a great city, and not without many features of magnificence. The bank is its proudest public edifice. The Custom-house is especially attractive, and well exposed in all its parts. Trinity College is a very extensive pile of buildings, of heavy masonry, sombre features, and for its purposes a proud national monument. The Four Courts is a grand and imposing structure. The Postoffice is not much inferior to the new Post-office of London—the latter built in the reign of George the IV., characteristic of every thing done under his command, not calculated to lighten the burdens of the people. The plan of the metropolitan chapel was for a grand affair, but the poverty of the Catholic church in Ireland affords little promise at present of its being finished. Nelson's Pillar in Sackville-street, in the heart of the city, and the Wellington-Testimonial, erected in Phenix Park, were at least expensive, and are thought worthy of the names which they commemorate. Dublin must not be compared either with London or Edinburgh. It must be looked at by itself, and then it will afford materials of much interest and worthy of observation. It is crowded with public edifices, not enumerated above, of various classes, especially of a benevolent and philanthropic character. Its principal and only spacious and grand street is Sackville, in which is the postoffice, itself being the great centre of fashionable resort. Dublin lies low on the river Anna, which divides it in the middle, running from west to east in a channel, which, like the Thames in London, admits shipping nearly to the heart of the town ; but unlike the Thames in one important particular, its banks through the entire city being confined and walled by the

best masonry, always clean and wholesome, fit for the most agreeable promenades, and showing all along some of the best parts of the town ; whereas the Thames, in all its length through the metropolis of England, is excessively muddy and offensive at low water, and its bosom above London bridge, that is, above the harbour for shipping, always covered with coal-barges and other unsightly craft, with a world of lumber ; its margins being approached by little else than coal-wagons and such like vehicles of burden, so that no one is tempted to loiter even upon the bridges to look upon the river, but naturally turns away his eye, and hastens across, intent upon his errand, and desirous of finding more agreeable things to look at. The Thames is an unseemly vision, and the channel of all the filth of that immense metropolis. But the Anna of Dublin is as beautiful as her name, a little channel indeed, but well dressed and comely. And the bridges, thrown across all along from the head of Eden Quay at convenient distances, up to the King's bridge near the park, are generally fine specimens of that kind of architecture.

The harbour of Dublin is not good, and is difficult of access in bad weather. To supply this defect, and to commemorate the visit of George IV. to Ireland, a new town, called Kingstown, in honour of the royal favour vouchsafed in the decree which gave it being, has been commenced on the south of Dublin harbour, six miles from the city, and is now in a rapid state of advancement. An artificial harbour of immense expense is in building at that place by government, and nearly enclosed—enough to be in use ; and those steam-packets, which have need to ply independent of tides, are accustomed to enter and go out at Kingstown. On the south of Dublin, some three or four miles, running east and west, is a beautiful range of hills.

Dublin and Ireland seem to be crammed with beggars. Rags, filth, and misery are more conspicuous than any thing else, at least more remarkable, as they are everywhere and at all times to be seen, and cannot fail deeply to impress the feelings of a sensitive mind.

Next in rank to the army of beggars, and to keep them in order—and like the beggars to be seen in all places—are the king's troops, which have made Ireland a land of beggars, and which will keep it so while the occasion of their presence, to enforce the collection of tithes, shall be considered a suitable and sufficient warrant.

[1] No vessel of Great Britain is called a *packet* except it belongs to the king, or is especially chartered for the transportation of the mail. This name indicates its character in this particular as much as the *royal mailcoach* on the land.

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