

Retrospect of Western Travel

Harriet Martineau

1838

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The Voyage.

“When the sun dawn’d, gay and glad,
We set the sail and plied the oar ;
But when the night-wind blew like breath,
For joy of one day’s voyage more,
We sang together on the wide sea,
Like men at peace on a peaceful shore ;
Each sail was loosed to the wind so free,
The helm made sure by the twilight star,
And in a sleep as calm as death
We the voyagers from afar
Lay stretched.”

Paracelsus, Part iv.

THE packet-ship in which my passage was taken, the *United States*, Captain Nathan Holdrege, was to have sailed from Liverpool on Friday, the 8th of August, 1834, at eleven o’clock. At half past ten my fellow-traveller and I, with our friends, were on the way to the dock, in some doubt about our departure, from the wind being directly against us, when we met a gentleman interested in the sailing of the vessel, who told us that we might turn back, as the captain had given up all hope of getting out of port that day. This was uncomfortable news enough. We had bidden farewell to many friends, half the pain of parting was over, and there was little pleasure in having it all to go through again.

We resolved to proceed to the dock, to put our luggage on board, and see for ourselves the true state of affairs. It was not very agreeable. The deck was encumbered with water-casks and chests ; the captain was fidgeting about, giving his orders in a voice rather less placid than ordinary ; a great number of inquiring persons, who had come down to see us off, had to be told that we were not going to-day, and why ; and several of the American passengers were on the spot, looking very melancholy. They had entered the 8th in their journals as the day of sailing, brought down their portmanteaus, paid their bills at the hotel, and taken leave of Boots and chambermaid. Here they were left with four-and-twenty dreary and expensive hours upon their hands, and who knew how many more than four-and-twenty ? One declared that the wind appeared as if it had set in against us, and he should not be surprised if it was a week before we sailed. Their fate was so truly mournful, that I was ashamed of feeling any discomfiture on my own account, domesticated as I was in the nearest and dearest of homes next to my own. Our disconsolate acquaintance among the passengers were invited to dispose of their evening with us ; and we returned to tell the children, and everybody whom we met, that we were not gone, and wherefore. Of course, we presently recollected several reasons why it was well that we had another day. There were two letters which it was highly desirable I should write from Liverpool rather than from New-York ; and the children had never before found leisure to show me the cupboards and shelves where they kept their playthings ; so that, if the wind had been fair, I should actually have gone away without seeing them.

We sauntered all the afternoon in the Zoological Gardens, and, as we returned, caught each other looking up at every weathercock we passed. In the evening our visitors dropped in, each ready with a speculation as to how the wind would be to-morrow.

On the morrow the weathercock told no better news ; and a note was on the breakfast-table which informed us that there was no chance of our sailing that day. I was now really sorry. It was Saturday ; and I feared my host would write no sermon if I remained to keep his house-hold in an unsettled state. Our seadresses, too, would not serve for a Sunday in Liverpool, and our books and work were all on board with our wardrobes. The tidings were therefore welcome which were brought early in the forenoon, that the captain had engaged a steamboat to tow us out to sea. By eleven o'clock the carriage of a friend was at the door, with bouquets of flowers, and baskets of grapes and other acid refreshments, which it was thought might be welcome at sea.

“ Have you *no* misgivings ?” asked an intimate, before whose imagination the Western World now rose tremendous in its magnitude. “ Have you no misgivings now ?” I had none, and it was well. If I had had such as would have made me draw back in the last moment, what a world of good should I have foregone ! Not only what knowledge, but what a store of imagery ! What intense and varied enjoyment ! and, above all, what friendships ! When I now look back upon what I have gained, and at how small an expense of peril and inconvenience, I cannot but regard my setting foot on board ship as one of the most fortunate acts of my life.

When we arrived at the dock we found there was really to be no further delay. The knots of friends, the crowds of gazers were gathering ; the steamer was hissing and puffing in the river, and the song of the sailors was heard, as they were warping our ship out of the dock. In a few minutes we and the other passengers were requested to step on board. I first carried my flowers down to my state-room, intending to hide them there till we should be out of sight of land, when an apparition of fresh flowers upon deck might be more than commonly welcome. I then took my station by a window of the roundhouse, whence I could see all that passed on shore without being much seen. Thence I could observe my brother and sisters speaking to each other, and pointing out things which I could easily interpret. It occurred to me that I could send them one more token, by means of the little waves which rolled away from the sides of our ship, and washed the pier on which the crowd was standing. I threw out a rose at a moment when I caught a watchful eye ; and I saw it borne, after many vagaries, directly under their feet. Suddenly I missed them from the spot where they were standing, and supposed they were quite tired (as they well might have been), and had gone home. But it was not so. They had withdrawn only in order to secure front places at the extreme end of the pier, whence they might watch us yet longer than from their former station. There they stood, as long as we could distinguish any forms from among the crowd. Then three cheers were exchanged between the crew and the shore, and the passengers strained their eyes no more.

The greater number then went below to make arrangements in their staterooms ; and afterward ensued the ceremony of introducing the company to each other on deck.

Our number was twenty-three, six of whom formed the party to which I belonged ; or, rather, so it seemed to ourselves before we went on board. The distinction was afterward forgotten, for the company assembled was, with two or three exceptions, so exceedingly agreeable and so wonderfully congenial, considering how accidentally we were brought together, that we mingled completely as one party. We had among us a Prussian physician ; a New-England divine ; a Boston merchant, with his sprightly and showy young wife ; a high-spirited young South Carolinian, fresh from a German university ; a newly-married couple, whose station was not exactly discoverable while on board, but who opened a public-house

soon after their arrival in New-York ; a Scotch major, whose peculiarities made him the butt of the young men ; an elderly widow lady ; two amiable young ladies ; and a Scotch lady, “ of no particular age,” but of very particular placidity and good-humour ; and a youth out of Yorkshire, who was leaving his parents’ roof for the first time alone, and who was destined never to return to it. The number was made up by English and American merchants ; young men so accustomed to pass between Liverpool and New-York, that the voyage was little more to them than an expedition to Primrose Hill is to a cockney.

The cold dinner and drinking of healths customary on the day of sailing succeeded. Then there was the library to look over, and trial to be made of a seat on the rail, whence we could see the dim shores as we glided smoothly along in the wake of the steamer. By the time it was dusk the latter had performed her engagement. We saw the payment handed over, and the shaking of hands of the two captains, and then she disengaged herself from us, and began ploughing her way to the north coast of Ireland. We felt very helpless when she was gone, the little wind there was being unfavourable. There was so little, however, as to allow us novices a night of sound sleep at the outset.

On Sunday we crept along in almost a calm, having a glimpse of the dim outline of the Isle of Man in the morning, and being still in sight of Holyhead in the evening. To me it was a day of luxury ; for, jaded as I had been with business and novelty, there was no circumstance of the voyage that I valued so highly as the impossibility of receiving letters or news for three weeks or a month. The gliding on thus in a calm, with time to think and be still, was all that I wanted ; but the Americans, who had home on the horizon before them, and longed to be at rest there, looked grave on this inauspicious beginning of their transit. On Monday, however, they felt, from another cause, a good deal worse. The wind had freshened, but I believe nobody cared which way or how fast it blew us. The only meal at which I was not present was that of Monday’s dinner. I can testify to the breakfast and tea being quiet and sad enough, with a sprinkling of languid passengers at table, and a knowledge of how wretched all the rest were in their rooms.

On Tuesday began my experience of the pleasures of the sea. The wind had freshened to a strong breeze, which had so rocked us in our births that I rose miserably ill. I was strongly persuaded of the necessity of exertion in seasickness, of having fresh air, and of getting out of the way of the sights and sounds of the cabin ; and I therefore persevered in dressing and going up to the deck. There was the captain, with only one passenger to talk with, and heartily glad at the prospect of another being convalescent. He seated me on the rail, where I kept my eyes away from the helpless invalids who were strewed about the deck, and in half an hour I was quite well. We were careering along in most exhilarating style. The wind was so strong as to put the wearing a bonnet out of the question. I had happily been furnished with a sort of cap, which no lady should go to sea without ; a black silk cap, well wadded. With the head thus defended, and a large warm cloak, a lady may abide almost any weather, and avoid the *désagremens* and unwholesomeness of the cabin. My eye was never weary of watching the dashing and boiling of the dark green waves, from the gray horizon to the ship’s side ; and I know of no motion so gladsome as that of riding the high billows in a brisk breeze. The captain pointed out to me the first of the monsters of the deep that I ever saw ; a large blackfish, tumbling about joyously by itself in the stormy sea, now throwing its thick body forward in ungainly gambols, and now rearing its forked tail perpendicularly as it prepared to dive.

My flowers did not disappoint my expectations. They were still quite fresh on the Wednesday, when, as we were out of sight of land, I carried them up to the deck, and gave

each passenger one, that being precisely my supply. I never saw flowers give so much pleasure before, except in cases of long confinement from illness. Truly they were very like a message from home.

In two or three days more all but two ladies and one gentleman had settled themselves into the routine of sea life. It was very desirable that they should do so, as on the 15th we were still little more than three hundred miles from Liverpool. It would have been dismal to add idleness and unsettledness to the discouragement caused by such a beginning of our voyage. Our mode of life was very simple and quiet ; to me, very delightful. I enjoyed it so much that I delayed beginning my letters home till we had been a week at sea, lest I should write some extravagance which I should afterward have to qualify or retract. None of my subsequent experience, however, has altered my feeling that a voyage is the most pleasant pastime I have ever known.

The passengers showed themselves upon deck some time between seven and nine in the morning. Each one either made his way to the binnacle to see for himself what course we were upon, or learned the important intelligence from some obliging individual who held the fact at the general service. We all asked the captain at first, but soon discontinued the practice when we found that favourable answers were likely to be rare, and how it must vex him to tell us every morning that we were scarcely getting on at all.

After a brisk morning's walk upon deck, no one was sorry to hear the breakfast-bell. Breakfast was the most cheerful meal of the day. If ever there was any news to tell, it was then. The early risers could sometimes speak to the sluggards of a big fish, of a passing sail, of a frolic among the sailors. I was asked once by a passenger, in a tone whose laziness cannot be conveyed on paper, " What, did ye see the whale this mornin' ?"

" No. It came at four o'clock, when I was asleep ; but the captain promises to have me called next time, whatever the hour may be."

" What, d'ye want to see a whale ?"

" Yes, very much."

" Well, but I dare say you have seen a pictur' o' one."

It was not apparent to him that this was not an equally good thing.

After breakfast, the gentlemen who kept journals produced their writing-cases in the cabin. The ladies sat in sunny or shaded places on deck, netting, making table-mats, or reading, or mounted the railing to talk or look abroad. I had a task to do, which is a thing that should be avoided on board ship. I had a long article to write ; and nothing else would I do, on fine mornings, till it was finished. It is disagreeable writing in the cabin, with people flitting all about one. It is unwholesome writing in one's stateroom in the month of August. The deck is the only place. The first care, after breakfast, of my clerical friend the New-Englander, was to find me a corner where the wind would not blow my paper about, where the sun would not dazzle me, and where I might be quiet ; and then he took his seat behind the roundhouse, with a row of children from the steerage before him to do their lessons. I wondered at first how he would teach them without books, slates, or any other visible implements of instruction ; but when I saw him get a potato, and cut it into two and four parts, to show the children what halves and quarters were, I was assured he would prosper with them. And so he did. They

went to school to excellent purpose ; and I dare say they will send back grateful thoughts all through their lives upon the kind gentleman who attended to them on the voyage.

For some time I was daily baffled in my purpose of writing by the observation of persons who seemed not only entirely ignorant of the process of composition, but very anxious to learn it. Not only did the children from the steerage spy from behind chests and casks, and peep over my shoulder, but the inquirer about the whale was wont to place himself directly in front of me, with his arms akimbo, and his eyes fixed on the point of my pen. Somebody gave him a hint at last, and I was left in peace. By two o'clock, when the deck began to fill again after luncheon, my head and eyes had had enough of writing, and I joyfully mounted the rail. If I wanted to watch the sea undisturbed, I held a Shakspeare in my hand. If I carried no book, somebody came to talk. What fleets of Portuguese men-of-war did we see at those hours ! I hardly know whether these little mariners of the deep are most beautiful when gliding, rich in their violet hues, along the calm sunny surface of the summer sea, or when they are tossed about like toys by rough dark waves. One day, when I was exclaiming on their beauty, a young lady, industriously working at her table-mats, observed that it was very odd that she had crossed this ocean three times, and had never seen a Portuguese man-of-war. I concluded that she had never looked for them, and asked the favour of her to stand by my side for one half hour. She did so, and saw three. I strongly suspect that those who complain of the monotony of the ocean do not use their eyes as they do on land. It seems to be the custom at sea to sit on deck, looking abroad only when the sun is setting, or the moon rising, or when there is a sail to be speculated upon. Some of the most beautiful sights I caught were when no one else was looking down quite into the deep, the only way to see most of the creatures that live there. One day I was startled, while thus gazing, with an excessive radiance, like an expanse of brilliant rainbow, far down in the sunny deep under our bows. My exclamation brought one witness to behold, as I did, the distinct form of a dolphin come out of the light. It was a family of dolphins, the only ones that were seen on the voyage. Many a flying fish darted from the crest of one wave into another. Many a minuet did Mother Carey's chickens trip, with their slender web-feet, on the momentary calm left between two billows. Many a shining visitor came up from the lowest deep to exchange glances and be gone. I soon found it was in vain to call people to look. These sights are too transient to be caught otherwise than by watching. When a shoal of porpoises came to race with the ship, every one on board was up on the rail to see ; and an exhilarating sight it is, when the ship is going before the wind in a rough sea, and the porpoises dart visibly through the midst of a billow, and pitch, and rise, and cross each other's path, swiftly and orderly, without ever relaxing their speed, till they are tired of play. It is impossible to help having a favourite among the shoal, and watching him with an interest and admiration which, upon consideration, are really ridiculous.

The most generally interesting sight, perhaps, was a sail ; and we were never a day without seeing one or more. Sometimes three or four seemed to be peeping at us from the horizon. Sometimes our ship and another were nearing each other almost all day. Once or twice I was startled with a sudden apparition of one close at hand, with all her sails set, black in a streak of moonlight, when I went up to bid the sea good-night. One morning early I found the deck in a bustle, from a ship having made signals of distress. " A ship in distress !" everybody began shouting. " A ship in distress !" cried I to the ladies in the cabin, one of whom came up muffled in a cloak, and another with her nightcap under her bonnet, rather than miss the romance of the scene. The hearts of the novices were all ready to bleed ; the faces of the gentlemen began to wear, in anticipation, an expression of manly compassion, as we hung out our colours, shortened sail (one of the first times we had been going right on our course), and wore round, while all the people of both ships gathered on the decks, and the captains brandished their trumpets. She was French, and her distress was that she had lost her longitude !

Our good captain, very angry at the loss of time from such a cause, said they ought to have lost their heads with it, shouted out the longitude, and turned into our course again. The ladies went back to finish their toilet in an ordinary mood of sensibility, and the French went on their way, we may conclude, rejoicing.

A distant sail was one day decided to be a merchant ship from the south of France, to everybody's apparent satisfaction but mine. I had a strong persuasion that she was not French, but felt how presumptuous it would be to say so. I watched her, however ; and, at the end of three hours, directed the captain's attention again to her. He snatched his glass, and the next moment electrified us all by the vehemence of his directions to the helmsman and others of the crew. It was a rival packet-ship, the Montreal, which had left Portsmouth four days before we sailed. We were in for a race, which lasted three days, after which we lost sight of our rival, till she reached New-York after us. Our captain left the dinner-table three times this first day of the race, and was excessively anxious throughout. It was very exciting to us all. We concluded, after fair trial, that she beat in a light wind and we in a strong one. Some weeks after our landing I fell in with two passengers from the Montreal, who described the counterpart of the scene we had beheld as having taken place on board their ship. There had been the same start of surprise on the part of their captain, who had also left the dinner-table three times ; the same excitement among the passengers ; and the same conclusion as to the respective sailing merits of the two vessels. From four to six we were dining. Some of us felt it rather annoying to be so long at table ; but it is a custom established on board these packets, for the sake, I believe, of those who happen to find the day too long. Such persons need compassion, and their happier companions can afford to sacrifice something to their ease ; so no one objects openly to devoting two of the best hours of the day to dinner and dessert. The rush up to the deck, however, when they are over, shows what the taste of the majority is. One afternoon the ladies were called down again, and found in their cabin a surprise at least as agreeable as my flowers. A dessert of pines and grapes had been sent in by a gentleman who found that a friend had put a basket of choice fruits on board for his use, but who preferred favouring the ladies with them. He was sent for to preside at the table he had thus spread, and was not a little rallied by his brother passengers on his privileges. These things seem trifles on paper, but they yield no trifling amusement on a voyage. Our afternoons were delightful ; for the greater number of the forty-two days that we were at sea, the sun set visibly, with more or less lustre, and all eyes were watching his decline. There was an unusual quietness on board just about sunset. All the cabin passengers were collected on one side, except any two or three who might be in the rigging. The steerage passengers were to be seen looking out at the same sight, and probably engaged as we were in pointing out some particular bar of reddened cloud, or snowy mountain of vapours, or the crimson or golden light spattered on the swelling sides of the billows as they heaved sunward. Then came the last moment of expectation, even to the rising on tiptoe, as if that would enable us to see a spark more of the sun ; and then the revival of talk, and the bustle of pairing off to walk. This was the hour for walking the deck ; and, till near teatime, almost the whole company might be seen parading like a school. I never grew very fond of walking on a heaving floor, on which you have to turn at the end of every thirty paces or so ; but it is a duty to walk on board ship, and it is best to do it at this hour, and in full and cheerful company.

After tea the cabin was busy with whist and chess parties, readers, and laughers and talkers. On damp and moonless evenings I joined a whist party ; but my delight was the deck at this time, when I had it all to myself, or when I could at least sit alone in the stern. I know no greater luxury than sitting alone in the stern on fine nights, when there is no one within hearing but the helmsman, and sights of beauty meet the eye wherever it turns. Behind, the light from the binnacle alone gleams upon the deck ; dim, shifting lights and shadows mark out the full sails against the sky, and stars look down between. The young moon drops

silently into the sea afar. In our wake is a long train of pale fire, perpetually renewed as we hiss through the dark waves.

On such a quiet night, how startling is a voice from the deck, or a shout of laughter from the cabin ! More than once, when I heard the voices of children and the barking of a dog from the steerage, I wholly forgot for the moment that I was at sea, and, looking up, was struck breathless at the sight of the dim, gray, limitless expanse. Never, however, did I see the march of the night so beautiful over hill, dale, wood, or plain, as over the boundless sea, roofed with its complete arch. The inexpressible silence, the undimmed lustre, the steady, visible motion of the sky, make the night what it can nowhere be on land, unless in the midst of the Great Desert or on a high mountain-top. It is not the clear still nights alone that are beautiful. Nothing can be more chilling to the imagination than the idea of fog, yet I have seen exquisite sights in a night fog ; not in a pervading, durable mist, but in such a fog as is common at sea, thick and driving, with spaces through which the moon may shine down, making clusters of silvery islands on every side. This was an entirely new appearance to me, and the white archipelago was a spectacle of great beauty. Then, again, the action of the ship in a strong night-breeze is fine, cutting her steady way through the seething water, and dashing them from her sides so uniformly and strongly, that for half a mile on either hand the sea is as a white marble floor gemmed with stars ; just like a child's idea of " the pavement of the heavenly courts." Such are the hours when all that one has ever known or thought that is beautiful comes back softly and mysteriously ; snatches of old songs, all one's first loves in poetry and in the phantasmagoria of nature. No sleep is sweeter than that into which one sinks in such a mood, when one's spirit drops anchor amid the turbulence of the outward world, and the very power of the elements seems to shed stillness into the soul.

There must be many a set-off against such hours, however, or the whole world would be rushing to sea. There would be parties to the Azores as there now are to Rome, and people would be doubling the Capes as they now cross the Simplon. There are disagreeable hours and days at sea ; whole days, when the ship rolls so as to stop employment in the cabin, and the rain pours down so as to prevent any weary passenger from putting out his head upon deck ; when the captain is to be seen outside in his seacoat, with the water streaming from nose, chin, hat, and every projection of his costume ; when every one's limbs are aching with keeping himself from tumbling over his neighbour ; when the tea and coffee are cold, and all that is liquid is spilled, and everything solid thrown out of its place. The best thing to be done, on such days is to sit in the roundhouse, each one well wedged in between two, the balustrade in front, and the wall behind ; all as loquacious as possible, talking all manner of sense or nonsense that may occur ; those who can joke, joking ; those who can sing, singing ; those who know any new games, teaching them. This is better than the only other thing that can be done, lying in one's heaving berth ; better, not only because it is more sociable, but because there is a fairer chance of appetite and sleep after the exercise of laughing (be the laughter about anything or nothing) than after a day of uncomfortable listlessness.

A calm is a much less disagreeable affair, though it is not common to say so. A dead calm affords a fine opportunity to the gentlemen for writing and reading, and to the ladies for the repairs of the wardrobe. Sewing, which I think a pleasant employment everywhere else, is trying to the head at sea ; and many omissions and commissions may be observed in the matter of costume, which the parties would be ashamed of on land. The difference after a calm is remarkable : the cap-borders are spruce ; the bonnets wear a new air ; the gloves are whole ; the married gentlemen appear with complete sets of buttons and rectified stocks. The worst quality of a calm is that it tries tempers a little too far. If there be an infirmity of temper, it is sure to come out then. At such a time there is much playing of shuffleboard upon deck, and the matches do not always end harmoniously. " You touched mine with your foot."

“ I did not, I declare.” “ Now, don’t say so,” &c., &c. “ You are eight.” “ No, we are ten.” “ I can show you you are only eight.” “ Well, if you can’t count any better than that,” and so on. After three days of calm there may be heard a subdued tone of scolding from the whist party at the top of the table, and a stray oath from some checkmated person lower down ; and while the ladies are brushing their hair in their cabin, certain items of information are apt to be given of how Mr. A. looked when the lady’s partner turned up trumps, and how shockingly Mr. B. pushed past Mr. C. in going up the cabin to dinner. The first breath of favourable wind, however, usually blows all these offences away, and tempers turn into their right course with the ship.

I had heard so much at home of the annoyances on board ship, that I made a list of them at the time for the consolation of my friends at home, who were, I suspected, bestowing more compassion upon me than I had any title to. I find them noted down as follows :—

Next to the sickness, an annoyance scarcely to be exaggerated while it lasts, there is, first, the damp clammy feel of everything you touch. Remedy, to wear gloves constantly, and clothes which are too bad to be spoiled. In this latter device nearly the whole company were so accomplished that it was hard to say who excelled.

Next, want of room. The remedy for this is a tight, orderly putting away of everything ; for which there is plenty of time.

Thirdly, the candles flare, and look untidy from running down twice as fast as they burn. Remedy, to go out of the way of them ; to the stern, for instance, where there are far better lights to be seen.

Fourthly, the seats and beds are all as hard as boards : a grievance where one cannot always walk when one’s limbs want resting with exercise. Remedy, patience. Perhaps air-cushions may be better still.

Fifthly, warning is given to be careful in the use of water. Remedy, to bathe in seawater, and drink cider at dinner.

Sixthly, the cider is apt to get low. Remedy, take to soda-water, ale, hock, or claret.

Seventhly, the scraping of the deck sets one’s teeth on edge. For this I know of no remedy but patience ; for the deck must be scraped.

Eighthly, the rattling, stamping, and clattering overhead when the sails are shifted in the night. Remedy, to go to sleep again.

Ninthly, sour bread. Remedy, to eat biscuit instead.

Tenthly, getting sunburnt. Remedy, not to look in the glass.

These are all that I can allow from my own experience. Some people talk of danger, but I do not believe there is more than in travelling on land. Some have called a ship a prison so often, that the saying seems to have become current. But, in my idea, the evils of a prison are the being coerced by another person’s will ; the being disgraced ; the being excluded from the face of nature ; and the being debarred from society, employment, and exercise. None of these objections apply to a ship as a residence. As for the one point of resemblance, the being unable to walk a mile or more out and back again, of how many persons is this the voluntary

choice, who were never either in a prison or a ship ? I would never take the responsibility of recommending any elderly, or nervous, or untravelled persons to put themselves into a place which will not keep still, nor anything in it, for a month or six weeks, and from which they cannot get out ; but I cannot think the confinement, by itself, anything to be much complained of.

A bad captain must be the worst of annoyances, to judge by contrast from the comfort we enjoyed under the government of an exceedingly good one. We had all great faith in Captain Holdrege as an excellent sailor ; and we enjoyed daily and hourly proofs of his kindness of heart, and desire to make everybody about him happy. It was amazing with what patience he bore the teazings of some who were perpetually wanting to know things that he could not possibly tell them ; when we should be at New-York, and so forth. The gentleman who unconsciously supplied the most merriment to the party waylaid the captain one busy morning ; one of the first when there had been anything for the captain to do, and he was in such a bustle that nobody else dreamed of speaking to him.

“ Captain,” said the gentleman, “ I want to speak to you.”

“ Another time, sir, if you please. I am in a hurry now.”

“ But, captain, I want to speak to you very much.”

“ Speak, then, sir, and be quick, if you please.”

“ Captain, I am very glad you have a cow on board, because of the milk.”

“ Hum,” said the captain, and went on with his business.

One Sunday morning, when we were on “ the Banks,” this gentleman came to me with a doleful face, to tell me that he thought we should have been at New-York to-day. I found that he had actually expected this up to the night before, because he had been told, previous to sailing, that we should probably spend our fourth Sunday at New-York. It was proposed to tell him that we should probably be in the Pacific by the next morning, to see whether he would believe it ; but I believe the experiment was not ventured upon. Some of the passengers, talking one day at dinner of percussion caps, asked him whether they were used in a regiment of which he had frequently spoken. He replied that he did not know, as he had not inquired much into the costume of the army.

By the 23d of August we were only about one hundred and twenty miles N. W. of the Azores. On the 1st of September, when our thoughts wandered homeward to the sportsmen all abroad in the stubble, to the readers of monthly periodicals in which we were interested, and to our families, who were doubtless fancying us on the point of landing, we were not far from where we were a week ago. We had had beautiful weather, but every variety of westerly wind with it. The passengers began to flag. The novels were all read ; the ladies’ work was all done ; and shuffleboard and chess will not do for ever. The captain began to send up an occasional whet of cherry bounce to the ladies before dinner. For my own part, I was finishing my writing, and finding my first leisure for books ; and I found myself forgetting New-York, and losing sight of all I expected to see beyond it, in the pleasures of the sea. We were now scarcely half way. The turning point of the voyage came the next day in the shape of a storm.

Before I went on board I had said that I should like to behold a storm as fierce as we could escape from without fatal damage. Some passenger repeated this wish of mine (very common

in persons going to sea for the first time) in the hearing of the mate, who told the sailors ; who, accordingly, were overheard saying one afternoon that I had better come on deck, and see what I should see. My clerical friend took the hint, and called me hastily, to observe the crew make ready for a squall. I ran up, and perceived the black line advancing over the water from the horizon, the remarkable indication of a coming squall. The sailors were running up the shrouds to get the sails in. The second mate was aloft, in the post of danger, his long hair streaming in the wind, while with us below all was calm. The sails were got in just in time. The captain did not come down to dinner. Orders were given to “splice the main-brace ;” for the crew had been handling the ropes since four in the morning. I saw them come for their grog, and then wait for what might happen next. By sunset the sky was tremendous ; the sea rising, the wind moaning and whistling strangely. When I staggered to the stern, to bid the sea good-night, according to custom, the waters were splendidly luminous. Floods of blue fire were dashed abroad from our bows, and beyond, the whole expanse sparkled as with diamonds.

All night the noises would have banished sleep if we could have lain quiet. There was a roar of wind ; the waves dashed against the sides of the ship as if they were bursting in ; water poured into our cabin, though the skylight was fastened down. A heavy fall was now and then heard from the other cabin ; some passenger heaved out of his berth. After five hours I could hold in no longer, and a tremendous lurch tossed me out upon the floor, where I alighted upon my thimble and scissors, the ottoman I was working (and which, I had felt confident, was far enough off), my clothes, books, and the empty water-bottle. All these things were lying in a wet heap. I traversed the ladies’ cabin to explore, holding by whatever was fastened to the floor. The only dry place in which I could lie down was under the table, and standing was out of the question ; so I brought a blanket and pillow, laid down with a firm hold of the leg of the table, and got an hour’s welcome sleep, by which time the storm was enough to have wakened the dead. The state of our cabin was intolerable ; the crashing of glass, the complaining voices of the sick ladies, the creaking and straining of the ship ; and, above all, the want of air, while the winds were roaring over head. I saw no necessity for bearing all this ; so, sick as I was, I put my clothes on, swathed myself in one cloak, and carried up another, wherewith to lash myself to something on deck.

There, all was so glorious that I immediately stumbled down again to implore the other ladies to come up and be refreshed ; but no one would listen to me. They were too ill. I got the captain’s leave to fasten myself to the post of the binnacle, promising to give no trouble, and there I saw the whole of the never-to-be-forgotten scene.

We were lying in the trough of the sea, and the rolling was tremendous. The captain wished to wear round, and put out a sail, which, though quite new, was instantly split to ribands, so that we had to make ourselves contented where we were. The scene was perfectly unlike what I had imagined. The sea was no more like water than it was like land or sky. When I had heard of the ocean running mountains high, I thought it a mere hyperbolic expression. But here the scene was of huge wandering mountains—wandering as if to find a resting-place—with dreary leaden vales between. The sky seemed narrowed to a mere slip overhead, and a long-drawn extent of leaden waters seemed to measure a thousand miles ; and these were crested by most exquisite shades of blue and green where the foam was about to break. The heavens seemed rocking their masses of torn clouds, keeping time with the billows to the solemn music of the winds ; the most swelling and mournful music I ever listened to. The delight of the hour I shall not forget ; it was the only new scene I had ever beheld that I had totally and unsuspectingly failed to imagine.

It was impossible to remain longer than noon, unless we meant to be drowned. When two or three gentlemen had been almost washed off, and the ship had been once nearly half her length under water, it was time to go below, sad as the necessity was. The gale gradually abated. In the afternoon the ladies obtained leave to have their skylight opened, their cabin mopped, and the carpets taken up and carried away to dry.

The sailors got the mate to inquire how I liked the storm. If I was not satisfied now, I never should be. I was satisfied, and most thankful. The only thing that surprised me much was, that there was so little terrific about it. I was not aware till the next day, when the captain was found to have set it down a hurricane in the logbook, how serious a storm it was. The vessel is so obviously buoyant, that it appears impossible to overwhelm her ; and we were a thousand miles from any rocks. In the excitement of such an hour, one feels that one would as soon go down in those magnificent waters as die any other death ; but there was nothing present which impressed me with the idea of danger but the terrors of two of the passengers. Of the poor ladies I can give no account ; but one gentleman pulled his travelling-cap forward over his eyes, clasped his hands on his knees, and sat visibly shaking in a corner of the round house, looking shrunk to half his size. The fears of another I regarded with more respect, because he tried hard to hide them. He followed me throughout, talking in an artist-like style about the tints, and the hues, and many other things that were to be noted, but not talked about at the moment. If he succeeded in covering up his fears from himself, one may well excuse the bad taste of the means employed. My clerical friend did better. He was on the watch for others and for himself. In high exhilaration, he helped everybody, saw everything, and will, to the end of his days, I will answer for it, forget nothing of that glorious time.

After the storm we met with few delays. A calm of nine hours enabled the crew to repair all damage sustained ; the rest of the time we were making progress, though it was sometimes very slow. We went south of “ the Banks,” and so missed something besides the fogs ; our hoped-for treat of fresh cod, and the spectacle of the fishermen’s boats. Hereabout the dog in the steerage smelt land, and stood snuffing, with his paws on the rail. A wild pigeon flew on board, too, supposed to be from Newfoundland ; and the air was sensibly colder, as it becomes on approaching the shore. The lottery with which the gentlemen had amused themselves became now very interesting. It consisted of ten tickets, at a sovereign each, answering to the ten days during which it had been thought probable that we should land. The two earliest were now sold for a shilling and eighteenpence ; and the captain gave five pounds for the last, which bore date the 11th. This seemed to indicate the captain’s expectation that our progress would still be slow ; but we were scarcely more likely to land on the 11th than on the 4th or 5th.

A passenger beckoned the captain out of the cabin one evening about this time, and asked him to look down into the hold, where a tallow candle, with a long wick, was seen leaning over the side of a candlestick, which was standing on a heap of loose cotton ! Such are the perils that careless sailors will expose themselves and others to. The captain took care to impress his crew with his opinion on the matter.

I believe a regular piece of amusement on board these packet-ships is emptying the letter-bags out on the deck. A fine morning is chosen for this ; and to a person who sits on the rail it affords a pretty picture. The ladies draw their chairs round the immense heap of letters ; the gentlemen lie at length, and scarcely an epistle escapes comment. A shout of mirth bursts forth now and then at some singular name or mode of address ; commonly at some Irish epistle, addressed to an emigrant in some out-of-the-way place, which there is scarcely room to insert, though the direction runs from corner to corner over the whole square.

About this time a pedler, who was among the steerage passengers, appeared on deck with his wares. His pretence was, that some of his silk handkerchiefs and gloves had got slightly spotted at sea, and that he was not so anxious as before to carry them to New-York. However this might be, the merchant showed himself a shrewd man. He saw that the pleasure of shopping, after being for some weeks out of sight of land, would open to him the purse of many a passenger. It was most amusing to see the eagerness of both gentlemen and ladies, and their pleasure in purchases which they would have disdained on shore. For the next two or three days the company was spruce in damaged handkerchiefs, and ribands, and mildewed gloves, rending in all directions ; while the pedler escaped duties, and stepped ashore with a heavy purse and light pack.

On the 15th we were still between five and six hundred miles from our port. A sheep had jumped overboard, and so cheated us of some of our mutton. The vegetables were getting very dry. It was found best not to look into the dishes of dried fruits which formed our dessert. All was done that care and cookery could do ; but who could have anticipated such a length of voyage ? Open declarations of ennui began to be made by not a few ; and I was almost afraid to own, in answer to questions, that I was not tired of the sea ; but I could not honestly say that I was. The gentlemen began to spar at table about the comparative merits of England and America ; the Prussian could not find English in which to bemoan himself sufficiently, and shrugged. The cider, ale, soda-water, and claret were all gone, and we were taking to porter, which must needs soon come to an end. Some show of preparation to land was this day made, and a lively bustle ensued on the first hint from the captain. He went round to take down the names of the passengers at length, in order to their being reported on arrival. The ages had to be affixed to the names ; and as the captain could not ask the ladies for their ages, he committed it to the gentlemen to decide upon each. The ladies, who were quilling, trimming, and sorting their things in their own cabin, could not conceive the meaning of the shouts of laughter which came from the top of the gentlemen's table, till the young Carolinian came and told what the fun was. The standing joke is to make the young ladies many years too old, and the old ladies ridiculously young ; and this was done now, the ladies considering the affair no business of theirs.

One lady, who had frequently crossed, told me that ten years before she had been set down as forty ; she stood now as twenty-four.

On the 17th we were surrounded with weed, and Mother Carey's chickens began to disappear. Soundings were this day taken, and I was called to see and touch the first American soil, the thimbleful deposited on the lead. The next day, Thursday, the wind continuing fair, we were within one hundred miles of our port, and all was liveliness and bustle.

The American divine was requested by all the passengers to propose, after dinner, the health of Captain and Mrs. Holdrege, using the opportunity to express our hearty thanks to the captain for the whole of his conduct towards us. The captain rose to speak in acknowledgment of the toast, but was so taken by surprise with his lady's name being hailed with our good wishes, that after two words of thanks he shot out of the cabin, every one understanding the cause of his brevity. In the evening we were told that we should see land on rising in the morning ; and some of us requested to be called at five.

At five, on the morning of the 19th, I started up, and at the foot of the companion-way was stopped by the Scotch lady, who told me I might go back again, as we were becalmed, and I might see the shore just as well two hours hence. This was being a little too cool about such a matter. I saw the dim shore ; a long line of the New-Jersey coast, with distinguishable trees and white houses. By breakfast-time our eyes were painfully strained, as only one could have

the glass at a time, and I did not like to snatch it from those who were enjoying the pleasure of recognising familiar objects ; tracing the first features of home. I was taken by surprise by my own emotions. All that I had heard of the Pilgrim Fathers, of the old colonial days, of the great men of the Revolution, and of the busy, prosperous succeeding days, stirred up my mind while I looked upon the sunny reach of land on the horizon. All the morning I sat dreaming, interrupted now and then by the smiling but tearful young mother, who expected tidings of her child before the day was over ; or by others, who had less cause for being deeply moved, who came to describe to me the pleasures of Long Branch (the bathing-place in view), or to speculate on how long this tedious calm would last. All the morning I sat on the rail, or played sister Anne to the ladies below, when once the wind had freshened, and we glided slowly along towards Sandy Hook. “ Now I see a large white house.” “ Now I see Neversink. Come up and see Neversink !” “ Now I see a flock of sheep on the side of a hill ; and now a fisherman standing beside his boat,” and so forth.

What were the ladies below for ? They were dressing for the shore. The gentlemen, too, vanished from the deck, one by one, and reappeared in glossy hats, coats with the creases of the portmanteau upon them, and the first really black shoes and boots we had seen for weeks. The quizzing which was properly due to the discarded sea-garments was now bestowed on this spruce costume ; and every gentleman had to encounter a laugh as he issued from the companion-way. We agreed to snatch our meals as we pleased this day. No one was to remain at table longer than he liked. Everything looked joyous. The passengers were in the most amiable mood : we were in sight of a score of ships crossing the bar at Sandy Hook ; the last company of porpoises was sport-ing alongside, and shoals of glittering white fish rippled the water. The captain was fidgety, however. Those vessels crossing the bar might be rival packet-ships, and no pilot was yet to be seen. “ Here he is !” cried a dozen voices at once ; and an elegant little affair of a boat was seen approaching. A curious-looking old gentleman swung himself up, and seemed likely to be torn in pieces by the ravenous inquirers for news. He thrust an armful of newspapers among us, and beckoned the captain to the stern, where the two remained in a grave consultation for a few minutes, when the captain called one of the lady passengers aside to ask her a question. What the pilot wanted to know was, whether George Thomson, the abolition missionary, was on board. He was to have been, but was not. The pilot declared that this was well, as he could not have been landed without the certainty of being destroyed within a week, the abolition riots in New-York having taken place just before. What the captain wanted to learn of the lady passenger was, what my opinions on slavery were, in order to know whether he might safely land me. She told him that I was an abolitionist in principle ; but that she believed I went to America to learn and not to teach. So the good captain nodded, and said nothing to me on the subject.

Next arrived a boat from the newspaper office of the Courier and Enquirer, whose agent would not hear of dinner or any other delay, but shouldered his bag of news, got the list of our names, and was off. The American passengers, all by this time good friends of mine, came to show me, with much mirth, paragraphs in the newspapers the pilot had brought, exhorting their readers not to chew tobacco or praise themselves in my presence, under penalty of being reported of in London for these national foibles.

After dinner we were off Sandy Hook, and the hills of New-Jersey, Long Island, and Staten Island were growing purple in the cloudy sunset, when a small shabby steamboat was seen emerging from the Narrows. Oh, the speculations and breathless suspense as to whether she was coming to us ! In a few minutes there remained no further doubt. Then there was a rush to the side, and one of the young ladies saw through her tears her two brothers, and other passengers other relations showing themselves on the bows of the steamer. They presently boarded us, we strangers having all retired to the other side. I never liked introductions better

than those which followed. With broad smiles my passenger friends came up, saying, "I have the great pleasure of introducing to you my brother." "I am sure you will be glad to hear that my family are all well." These are occasions when sympathy is very sweet, and when it is always ready.

Then was heard the captain's loudest voice, crying, "All who wish to go up to the city to-night get ready directly." We had all previously agreed how much better it was that we should spend this night on board, as the harbour would be seen to much more advantage by the morning light ; but we forgot all this in a moment, and nobody dreamed of being left behind. Our little bundles were made up in a trice, and we left our ship. The crew and steerage passengers assembled on deck, and gave us three parting cheers, which might be heard all over the harbour. Our gentlemen returned them, and our hearts yearned towards our beautiful ship, as she sat dark upon the evening waters, with all her sails majestically spread. "Does she not look well now?" "Does she not show herself beautifully now?" exclaimed one and another, in the hearing of the gratified captain.

The light was failing as we entered the Narrows. The captain and several other friends pointed out to me every headland, bay, and fortification as we passed. We were detained a long while at the quarantine ground. The doctor was three miles off, and nearly an hour elapsed before the great news reached him that we were all quite well, and we were therefore allowed to proceed. It now rained heavily, and we were obliged to crowd into the small cabin of the poorest steamer in the bay. There, by the light of one dim and dirty lamp, was the question first asked me, in joke, which has since been repeated in so many moods, "How do you like America?" The weather cleared up in another half hour. We stood in the dark on the wet deck, watching the yellow lights and shadowy buildings of the shore we were rapidly nearing, till we felt the expected shock, and jumped upon the wharf amid the warm welcomes of many friends, who, in their own joy at alighting on their native shore, did not forget to make it at once a home to us strangers.

This was at eight in the evening of the 19th of September, 1834, after a long but agreeable voyage of forty-two days.

Retrospect of Western travel (1838)

Author : Martineau, Harriet, 1802-1876

Volume : 1

Subject : United States — Description and travel

Publisher : London : Saunders

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : Robarts — University of Toronto

Collection : robarts ; toronto

<http://www.archive.org/details/retrospectofwest01martuoft>

Edited and uploaded to www.aughty.org

August 8 2011