

The Western World

Alexander Mackay

1846

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A Winter Passage of The Atlantic.

Departure from Liverpool.—First Meal on Board, and its revelations.—Reappearance of Passengers.—Congress of Nations.—Characters on board and their different Occupations.—A Specimen of “Nature’s Own.”—Amusements.—The Smoking Room.—The Log.—A Storm.—A Nor’easter.—A New Impediment.—Arrival at Halifax.—Question of Peace or War—Arrival at Boston.

It was not the brightest of mornings—that of the 4th of January, 1846—when I embarked for the *New World* on board the royal mail steamship *Hibernia*. The wind was in the west, and came cold and fitful. The sky, though not wholly overcast, was loaded with clouds, which came up in majestic procession before the breeze ; now piled one upon the other, in gorgeous confusion—now broken into fragments, ragged and straggling. It was not altogether what might be called a stormy day, but was certainly not such as a landsman would choose for taking to sea.

The moment of departure was an exciting one. The captain, trumpet in hand, took his station on the larboard paddle-box, and every man was ordered to his post. Almost any species of occupation for the mind is, at such a moment, a source of relief ; and I sought it in watching for the first revolution of the wheels ; but so smoothly and noiselessly did the ponderous engines apply themselves to their work, that it was not until I saw the water receding in foam from behind her, that I was aware that the stately ship had started on her voyage. About two hours afterwards the pilot left us. This was like snapping the last tie which bound us to home, and it was not until he waved us adieu that we *felt* our departure. The engines were stopped, to enable him to descend into his little boat, and when they resumed their work, it was not to stop again until they placed the noble ship that bore them safely alongside the quay at Halifax. Night was far advanced ere I went below. The last object ashore, on which my eye rested, was the light on Holyhead which was then dipping into the channel astern of us, When I got on deck next morning, not a headland was visible on any side. Ireland lay on our right, but the line of our horizon was far above her loftiest peak ; behind us was the spacious entrance to the Channel, and before us lay the broad Atlantic, foaming and turbulent.

I do not envy the man who could look, for the first time, on such a scene without emotion. It must be confessed, however, that to enjoy it, particularly on the first day after leaving port, a strong stomach is as essential a requisite as a well-constituted mind. In the former qualification, the majority of my fellow-passengers were deplorably deficient, nor were they long in developing their defects.

When it is tolerably rough, the first meal on board is the great test of the seagoing qualities of those who have the courage to sit down to it. When we first sat down to dinner, we made a snug little party of 107, of which number only two were ladies. The soup was scarcely on the table, when the gentleman on my right grasped his hat convulsively, and with livid visage hurried from the saloon, in which piece of significant pantomime he was soon imitated by several others. Some for a while struggled manfully against the agony ; but at the sight of

fish, paled and fled ; others retained possession of their self-command, until sauces and condiments loomed upon their already half-jaundiced eyes. Despite the tortures which they suffered, it was ludicrous to see the half-fright with which some regarded what was placed before them, and the irresolution with which others set about disposing of what was handed them. Some, who would not have trembled at a shark, quailed before a piece of cod-fish ; and others who, if necessary, would have manfully faced a mad bull, whitened at a sweetbread. The sea makes of some men what conscience is said to make of us all. Before the third course was over, scarcely one-third of the company remained at table. A lively sea had made speedy and sad havoc amongst the keenest appetites ; and strong brave men were already stretched in dozens on their backs, puling like children.

Of those who braved out the dinner, scarcely one half ventured at tea-time to come to table ; whilst next morning, at breakfast, I was one of nine only who sat down to coffee and hot rolls. The rest had disappeared I could not tell whither. And how deserted now the crowded quarter-deck of yesterday ! It was scarcely possible to avoid the conviction that we had touched overnight at some port, and landed most of our passengers. In the course of the afternoon a few stragglers made their appearance, emerging from the penetralia of the vessel, with sunken cheek, pallid countenance, wandering eye and uncertain step, some of whom ventured to climb to the quarter-deck, whilst others looked wistfully, first at the sky, which seemed reeling overhead, and then at the water, which was leaping and tumbling around them, the sight of which soon gave rise to unmistakable spasms, which made them hurry back again to their berths.

It was several days afterwards ere the original company, with a few exceptions, re-assembled at dinner. Every morning during the first week, as one after another was added to the convalescent list, I encountered new faces on deck, as strange to me as if their owners had been taken aboard overnight. It was curious to witness how assiduous they were, as soon as they regained their legs, in their devotions to fresh air, shunning the very entrance to the saloon, and, for some days, drinking weak tea and taking highly spiced soups in an *al fresco* fashion on deck. No sooner had all reappeared of whom there was any hope, than I found that we had on board the materials for a very respectable congress of nations. We had Englishmen, Scotchmen, and Irishmen, on the passenger list ; Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans, Frenchmen and Germans, with a brace of Russians, and a solitary Armenian. We had also a black cook on board. Shem, Ham, and Japhet, were all represented. It was pleasant to observe the peaceable demeanour of so many “ natural enemies ” to each other. It almost seemed as if such a thing as national antipathy had never found even a lurking-place in any of their bosoms. Amongst such an assemblage, it was but natural to look for a great variety of habit and character. But few read ; the great majority walked about all day ; some played at whist from morning till night, others at backgammon, and others again at chess. There was a young Englishman who passed amongst his fellow-passengers as chess mad. He constantly talked of the game when he was not playing it ; was always playing it when he could beat up an antagonist ; and dreamt of it, as he assured me, when he was neither talking of nor playing it. It was his boast, on reaching our journey’s end, that he had played 157 games during the voyage, at the rate of eight a day. Most people on board ship disclose their peculiarities. One of my fellow-passengers was constantly indulging in the insane hope, that some homeward-bound ship would come alongside and take him back to Liverpool ; being utterly unable, up to the last moment of the voyage, to explain to himself what could have induced him to leave England. Another soon became notorious for his unceasing complaints of cold in his ears, the cure for which lay in “ another cap,” which he had in his trunk, to which it was his declared intention every morning to resort, but which never made its appearance. Such as affected a knowledge of seamanship, were generally found in the neighbourhood of the compass. Some spent most of their time in all but bodily contact with the funnel, courting its warmth, and smoking nearly as much as it did. Some lived on soups, others entirely on vegetables ; some

ate next to nothing, and others were constantly eating. There was a good deal of wine consumed too, many blaming the “briny particles,” which they were sure were afloat in the air, for their oft-recurring thirst. I must not overlook one very extraordinary character, who soon became the lion of the company. He was a young man from Alabama, about twenty years of age, and was returning to America after a brief visit to some of his relations in Scotland. He was one of the most perfect specimens of “nature’s own,” that it was ever my good fortune to witness. He had escaped wild from the prairies to visit Scotland, having never before seen any phase of life, but such as it exhibits on a southern plantation. Nor had his brief contact with civilized life effected any discernible transformation in his character. He used to walk the deck with an “Arkansas toothpick” in his hand, a frightful looking knife, with a pointed blade seven inches long, with which he occasionally whittled, then cleaned his nails, and then varied his amusement by carving his teeth with it. One day he approached the ladies who were on deck, shut his knife with a tremendous click, and asked them why the deck of the steamer was like a pan of new milk? Being unable to discover any reason for this hypothetical resemblance, he informed them, snorting at the same time, in tones which would have done no discredit to a hyena, that it was “because it strengthened our calves;” alluding to the muscular energy required in order to keep one’s feet when the ship is tumbling about. One evening, after most of the company had retired to their berths, a couple of Frenchmen remained sipping wine at one of the tables in the lower saloon. Our Alabama friend sat opposite to them and listened to their conversation, which was carried on in French, of which he understood enough to divine the drift of what they were saying. They were consoling each other at the time for some imaginary evil by abusing England.

“Sir,” said the exasperated Alabamian, after they had finished, to the more loquacious of the two, “why don’t you speak English?”

“I can’t,” said the Frenchman, superciliously, and with a strong accent, “it sticks in my throat.”

“It didn’t stick in your throats though, at Waterloo, when you cried quarter, did it?” retorted the Alabamian, laughing derisively, until he aroused every sleeper in the ship. The Frenchman’s “imperial” bristled with rage, but he deemed it prudent to make no reply, retiring soon afterwards with his companion.

Amongst those most delighted with the retort, was a Cornishman, who remained until nearly all had retired, and treated the fiery southerner to sundry potations of brandy and water. Thus occupied, they sat up till one o’clock, by which time they had exhausted the water, although some brandy still remained. The steward being in bed, an additional supply could only be had by the connivance of some of the watch. The Alabamian volunteered to procure it, the Cornishman handing him a shilling to give the man for his trouble.

In a few minutes he returned, having replenished the empty jug, and laughing immoderately, as if he had perpetrated a good joke.

“Cute as he thought himself, I’ve done him slick,” said he.

“What!” asked the Cornishman, “haven’t you given the man the shilling?”

“No, to be sure,” said he, laughing again. “But I showed it to him,”—and he tossed it towards his companion, as if he thought him quite at liberty to put it into his pocket again.

It was, in fact, a Yankee trick. On asking the man for the water, he had, without saying any thing, shown him the shilling, the sight of which so quickened the energies of the poor tar,

that he soon returned with the *quid pro quo*. No sooner, however, had the Alabamian got the water, than he coolly walked down to the cabin, repudiating his implied contract, and leaving the sailor in a state of stupor at his petty rascality and impudence. The Cornishman laughed at the trick, but obliged him nevertheless to seek the man out and give him his promised reward.

A sea voyage is, generally speaking, monotonous enough. Any incident, however trifling, goes some length to relieve its tedium. A ship in sight is an event which occasions an excitement that would appear ludicrous to people ashore. But on the dreary solitudes of the ocean, you hail such a sight as you would, after long absence, the appearance of a valued friend. It breaks in upon the sense of loneliness, which oppresses the voyager. From the moment of her appearance, until she slowly recedes from you, as the eternal circle of your horizon rises above her, she is an object of intense interest to all. You wonder what and whom she carries, where she has been, and whither she is going, and which of you will first touch the busy world again, from which you are now separated by the heaving billows. It was also a frequent amusement to us to watch the ludicrous gambollings of the porpoises, as they crossed our track in long and regular processions ; and when they approached very near, how eagerly would we all crowd to the ship's side to witness their pantomime in the water! A real whale was too important a personage to cheapen his visits by their frequency. But how we watched the monster, when he did appear ! and to what exclamations did he not give rise from old and young, as he "blew his nose," as the Alabamian termed blowing a column of water high into the air. In the absence of other occupation, I occasionally found amusement in watching the "multitudinous sea," as its restless billows leaped and foamed around me ; and could sometimes fancy, as they surged, and rolled, and curled before the blast, that they were endowed with consciousness, and nodded to me, as they passed, in token of recognition.

Day after day passed wearily on, each scarcely marked by any distinctive feature from that which preceded or followed it. There was little to vary the routine of our duties or our pastimes. The breakfasts were all alike, as were also the dinners, with the exception that, towards the end of the voyage, singing was introduced, at the latter meal, with the dessert, when there was something awful as well as romantic in hearing the chorus of a hundred voices added to the howling of the blast and the splashing of the waves.

The smoking room was a temporary erection on the main deck, a little in advance of the saloon, and so built as to enclose the capstan. There, in bad weather, the open deck being otherwise preferred, such as chose to regale themselves with tobacco, assembled shortly after dinner. It might have accommodated five and twenty comfortably ; but when it was wet and stormy, I have seen double that number crammed into it, when the state of its atmosphere may well be conceived from the simultaneous exhalation of fifty cigars. Here the song was again raised, negro melodies and political pasquinades, a great proportion of the passengers being Americans, being most in favour, and thus an hour or two were frequently cheerily spent. The over-crowded enclosure sometimes presented a very curious spectacle. As we were not always vouchsafed the luxury of a lamp, but for the light of the consuming tobacco we should sometimes have been in total darkness. Familiar voices were heard, when familiar faces were scarcely discernible—the fitful ruddy glare of the cigars ever and anon bringing them momentarily out, with Rembrandt effect, from the darkness ; the whole scene looking as wild and unnatural as the phantasmagoria of a troubled dream. And all this in the middle of the Atlantic, with the stout ship that bore us tumbling about, like a reeling drunkard, through the darkness ; with the heavy wind, laden with rain, beating against her in angry gusts, and moaning through her sunken rigging, and with sea after sea sent in shivers over her deck, and falling heavily around us. Yet the jest, the laugh, the song, and the smoking went on within, apparently with as much indifference on the part of these present, as if waving corn fields and smiling meadows had surrounded them.

The turning point of each day, as to interest as well as to time, was noon, when the observations were taken. How anxiously did we all await the moment when the result of the last twenty-four hours' sailing would be posted up for general inspection in the cabin! Then would arise a series of daily congratulations or murmurings, according to the result. No passenger can reconcile himself at sea to any thing short of two hundred miles a day ; and on our reckoning, one day, showing a run of only eighty miles, a state of feeling pervaded the saloon, which, but for the opportune appearance of a good dinner, might have ripened into mutiny. Some, by a process of reasoning, intelligible only to themselves, came to the conclusion, that we might as well have been standing still ; some blamed the ship, others the captain ; but nobody thought of blaming the weather. There were a few who bitterly inveighed against their own luck ; whilst our Yankee friends consoled themselves with predictions of what the American boats would do, should most of them burst in the attempt. But, after all, what weathercocks are men ! Next day we had a splendid run—250 miles—and what ship was ever in such favour as the *Hibernia* then ? The wind, which had scarcely veered a point since we left Liverpool, gradually increased, until, at length, on the ninth day out, we were driven about on the wings of a hurricane.

A storm at sea ! It is a sight witnessed never to be forgotten. The warring of the elements may be imposing upon land, but it is truly terrible at sea. Trees may be torn up by the roots, and stately mansions may be levelled by the blast ; but the strong, solid earth is unmoved whilst the hurricane sweeps on in its path. But when the winds and waters meet, how different the result ! It is on no impassive surface that the tempest then expends its fury, but on a sensitive element, which reflects its slightest frown, and trembles at its gentlest breath. When one sees the sky serene and peaceful above, and the ocean lying calm as a sleeping child below, it is difficult to realize the extent to which all this beautiful quiescence of nature may be disturbed. But convulsion is bred in the lap of tranquillity. Even in its calmest moods, the Atlantic is never wholly at rest ; its surface may be as smooth as glass, but its mighty volume is ever heaving and undulating, as if disturbing forces were at work below. Thus it will sometimes continue for days, glancing in the sunlight like a waving mirror. A change from this state of rest is generally heralded by slight puffs of wind, which here and there darken the surface of the water, as the breath tarnishes the polished steel. As the wind becomes stronger and steadier, the whole scene undergoes a transformation : first the ripple, then the wave, and finally the raging tempest. I have known a few hours suffice to produce this change, obscuring the blue sky with drifting clouds, and lashing the quiet sea into billowy uproar.

About ten in the morning of the ninth day, it was blowing a half gale with us ; the sea running very high, and the ship labouring heavily. By noon it had increased to a hurricane ; and, as far as the eye could reach, the ocean presented but one mass of drifting foam. Sea and sky seemed literally to commingle ; the sky poured down its deluge, and the waves shot up their spray. The aspect of the ocean, at such a time, is scarcely to be depicted. On all hands its surging waters leap in angry tumult around you. As they swell and curl and break, and the white foam rushes down their dark leaden sides, the waves roar and hiss, as do the breakers on the beach ; and loaded as the air then is with vapour and rain, an indistinctness is thrown over the whole scene, which adds greatly to its terrors. The good ship stood her trial right well. Now she quivered on the lop of a huge wave, from which she plunged, burying her prow deep in the trough, and beating back the resisting water in foam from her stalwart shoulders ; she then recovered herself to meet the coming billow, up whose steep sides she would bravely climb, and plunge again to breast another. Thus she laboured for four and twenty hours, sometimes standing, as it were, on her prow, and at others lying almost on her beam-ends. Now and then, despite the most cautious steering, the baffled waves would strike her with a force, which made her quiver again from stem to stern ; but she generally revenged herself by sending the assailant billows, in clouds of spray, high up amongst the rigging, whence they would descend in drenching showers over her whole length. All this time the

engines kept steadily at their work, the tempest impeding, but not wholly interrupting her progress. About noon next day the wind greatly moderated, and by 6 P. M. had fallen below a half gale. The sea rapidly fell, and with this change came a period of inexpressible relief, the crew seeking repose after their exertions, and the very ship seeming to sleep after her heavy travail and fatigue.

As we crossed the eastern edge of the great bank, the sky cleared, and the temperature fell, but there came no change in the direction of the steady adverse wind, which now blew fresh, bearing the sharp frost upon its wings, from the icy coasts of Labrador and Newfoundland. For three days afterwards, it was intensely cold and intensely bright, the ocean glittering under the brilliant sunlight like a mass of moving diamonds. On approaching the coast of Nova Scotia, the temperature moderated, the wind veering round to the north-east. On Sunday morning, the 14th day out, we were within sixty miles of Halifax, and, of course, looked forward to making port that afternoon. But the horizon behind us rapidly thickened and darkened, and a few flakes of snow which eddied in the air gave unmistakable token that a storm was in our wake. Half an hour afterwards, we were lying to, under bare poles, in the midst of a raging north-easter, which whirled the snow in blinding masses about the ship. There was no alternative left us but to keep her in deep water, which was effected by means of constant soundings, which sometimes showed a depth of forty fathoms, and, at other times, of three hundred—enough to convince us that we were in rather a dangerous neighbourhood. The wind continued to blow with unabated fury, and the snow to fall in undiminished quantities, for fifteen hours, during which it was impossible to see more than half a ship's length a-head. About midnight, there came a change, but only in the shape of a new impediment. The wind suddenly chopped round again to the north-west ; the heavy clouds, flying from its icy breath, were speedily rolled away like a curtain ; as if by magic, the whole heavens were at once displayed, and the bright stars twinkled cheerily down upon us from a sky of the deepest blue. We immediately resumed our course, but in half an hour's time were compelled once more to lie to. A dense vapour, which rose from the surface of the water like steam from a boiling cauldron, soon became so impervious to the sight, as to prevent us from seeing, even in daylight, beyond twenty yards from the ship's side. In addition to the detention caused us by the snow storm, the second impediment kept us, for thirty-six hours longer, to our soundings. The cold, all this time, was most intense. I once ventured on deck, just as the lead was heaved ; and as the men were drawing in the cord again, I made bold to take hold of it with my naked hand—it was as if I had grasped a bar of red-hot iron. The mist which enveloped us congealed and fell in tiny flakes on the deck ; and this, added to the spray which, whenever it broke over us, froze as soon as it touched the ship, soon overlapped deck, paddle-boxes, rigging, and every prominent object on board, except the hot funnel, with a thick coating of ice, of which we must have carried with us nearly a hundred tons into Halifax. On the morning of the sixteenth day, the mist disappeared, and such as chose to face the cold were on deck, eagerly looking out for land. I was in the saloon about ten o'clock, when the cry of land was shouted overhead. I rushed upon deck, and there, directly a-head of us, lay the coast of Nova Scotia, like a stranded iceberg. We hit it about twenty miles above the entrance to the deep and well-sheltered bay of Halifax, long before entering which we could discern the position of this town by the thin cloud of bluish-looking smoke, which rose from its wooden fires. The wharves were crowded, and we were greeted with cheers on our arrival. Every thing around was such as to remind the Englishman that he had passed to a new hemisphere. The deep snow, the wooden wharves and houses, the furs in which the people were clad, the enormous piles of cord-wood upon the shore, and the merry jingling of the sleigh-bells, afforded undeniable proof, if such were wanting, that we were far from home. We went ashore in parties, and made merry for the evening. Our relations with the United States, which were then rather critical, I found to be the chief subject of interest, and the chief topic of conversation.

“ I hope we’ll have war,” said a young man, a native Nova Scotian, who stood near me at the bar of the principal hotel.

“ Why so ?” I inquired.

“ Won’t the prizes come in here, if we have ?” was the reply, given with an emphasis which showed that the speaker was in earnest and enjoyed the prospect. “ ’Tis an ill wind that blows nobody good,” is a proverb of universal recognition. Let earth and ocean be deluged with blood, let continent be arrayed against continent, and peace and plenty give way to wholesale misery and crime, some would be sure to fatten on the general calamity ; and there were few in Halifax who would not have welcomed war, with all its horrors, because it would have brought prizes into their harbour.

When we crossed the Bay of Fundy next day, it was as calm as a summer lake, although there are times when no sea on earth can assume an angrier mood. On the following morning, we had a stiff breeze off the land, which retarded our progress. Towards evening the wind fell, but was succeeded by another fog, which compelled us to lie to again for nearly twelve hours more, in sight of some of the lights which lead into the harbour of Boston. It was ten o’clock next day ere the steamer reached the dock ; and glad enough were we all to land, after a tempestuous passage of nineteen days’ duration.

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The Capital of New England.

The Harbour and approaches to the City—Classic Ground.—Appearance of Boston from the Bay.—Custom House Officers.—Entrance into the City.—The United States Hotel, and its Dependencies, Texas and Oregon.—Stroll through the City.—The Commercial Quarter.—Variety of Craft at the Quays.—Steamers—Wholesale Quarter.—Retail Quarters.—The common.—The State House.—The Fashionable Quarter.—Washington street.—Pedestrians.—Mount Auburn.

Cold was the morning, crisp was the air, and bright was the sky, when we entered the harbour of Boston. There was scarcely a breath of wind stirring, but the waters of the spacious bay that fronts the town were slightly agitated by the uneasy swell which came rolling in from the Atlantic ; the force of which was broken by the screen of islands protecting the entrance to the harbour, the sky was without a cloud ; and the numerous masses of floating ice with which the deep blue water was speckled, looked like so many ornaments of frosted silver on a basis of steel. Some of the islands are fortified, one very strongly so, its sides being artificially sloped down to the water’s edge, so as to remove every impediment to the free range of its guns. Numerous vessels, of all sizes and rigs, floated lazily on the bay, conspicuous amongst which was the frigate Cumberland, which has since played a not unimportant part in the Mexican war.

The deck was covered with a slight sprinkling of snow, which creaked beneath our feet, as we paced rapidly to and fro for warmth. It was an interesting moment, and I kept above, notwithstanding the cold. Around me were the spots in which some of the most important episodes in the history of the New World were enacted ; localities held classic by every American. Here was first planted the germ of the greatest colonial fabric that ever existed, and here was first struck the blow which revolutionized it into independent nationality. It was here that imperial Britain received her first and her rudest shock, which in its issues, wrested a continent from her grasp. Here first settled the stern and sturdy champions of that religious liberty, which they themselves so grossly outraged as soon as they had the power. I was afloat

on the very waters into which was hurled the obnoxious, because taxed, tea, and in the midst of the very echoes which reverberated to the first cry of the revolution. No Englishman can look upon such a scene and escape, even if he would, the memories of the past. Its mementos are every where around him. Here are the memorials of a past race ; there floats the emblem of a new power ; whilst, side by side with the relics of colonial times, stand the issues and the trophies of independence. There is every thing to connect the past in mournful interest with the present and the future. English names are plentiful around you, and many objects within view have an English look about them.

Yet, when the Englishman steps ashore, it is on a foreign, though a friendly land.

As seen from the bay, there is no city in the Union which has a more imposing appearance than Boston. It seems to envelop, from its apex to its base, a conical hill, which rises from the water with a slight acclivity ; the successive terraces in which it mounts to the summit, being crowned by the spacious dome of the “ State House,” the seat of the legislature of Massachusetts. In addition to being thus ornamental to the city, this prominent object is highly useful to the mariner, the gilded cone at its top being discernible at sea long before any surrounding object becomes visible. At its base the town appears girdled with a frame-work of masts, sustaining a network of rigging. To give life to the scene, steamers are plying constantly to and fro, connecting the city with its different suburbs. That great shapeless mass, just seen a little to the right in the distance, looming up over every thing in its vicinity, is the obelisk erected on Bunker’s Hill to commemorate a battle, which if not exactly won by the Americans, was the first irretrievable step taken by them in a long, eventful, and ultimately successful struggle. Hundreds of the “ tall chimneys” in our manufacturing districts have quite as imposing an appearance as has Bunker’s Hill monument. The small villages which are scattered about in every direction, glistening in the morning sunlight, are so many suburbs of the city, with which it is connected by long wooden bridges, with the exception of the insular suburbs of East Boston, where we land, and with which, being separated from the town by a branch of the harbour, the communication is maintained by steam ferry-boats.

Landed at length — and if the reader will accompany me, we will take a stroll together through the town.

It is early, but the custom-house officers are at their posts. They do not look very promising, but we pass without difficulty or delay ; the examination being more nominal than otherwise. I afterwards found that civility and courtesy were uniformly extended by the federal officers, both to strangers and natives landing in the country—a pleasing contrast to the wanton and unmannerly conduct which is sometimes pursued in our own ports, particularly in Liverpool, where custom-house officials too frequently conduct themselves as if vulgarity and insolence constituted the chief qualifications for office.

Carriages now convey us, baggage and all, to the ferry-boat ; which, in its turn, conveys us, carriages, baggage and all, in less than five minutes, to the city. Our first object is to search for an hotel, and refresh ourselves with a thorough ablution and a comfortable meal on land. Passing the Tremont House, which is full, we draw up at the United States Hotel, an enormous pile of red brick, perforated by, I am afraid to say, how many rows of windows having a large wing on one side called Texas, and one in process of completion, on the other, to be called Oregon. The next addition made will, doubtless, be California. We are ushered up a marble staircase into a spacious hall, the floor of which looks like a gigantic chequer-board, being composed of alternate squares of black and white marble, looking exceedingly elegant, but, during this season of the year, being both very cold and very slippery. We apply for rooms at the bar, which, in the usual sense of the term, is no bar, but the counting-house of the establishment, in which a clerk, elaborately caparisoned, sits enthroned, at a considerable

elevation, before a desk, which in point of cost and construction would be a piece of extravagance in a Bank parlour. The walls around him are literally covered with bells, each having beneath it the number of the room to which it corresponds, and they count by hundreds. My flesh creeps at the bare contemplation of the possibility of their being all rung at once.

We dine comfortably in a private room, to gain which we have to thread countless lobbies, lying at all conceivable angles to each other. How a warm meal finds its way such a distance from a fixed kitchen, is a mystery to us. But notwithstanding the appalling difficulties obviously in the way,—for it is brought all the way from Texas to Oregon,—it is as speedily as it is well served. So, now that we have dined, for a stroll through the town,—and let us first inspect its commercial quarter.

Although Boston is almost entirely surrounded by water, you perceive that the real harbour is not very extensive. Some of the wharves are built of wood, others are securely faced with stone, the latter presenting a very substantial appearance. The depth of the water enables vessels of all sizes, devices, and rigging, to commingle, as it were, with the houses and warehouses that line the shore, some of the slips running short distances into the land, and being flanked by piles of massive and durable buildings, exclusively set apart for commercial purposes. Here is a slip devoted apparently to the exclusive use and occupation of European packets ; large placards, attached to the shrouds, announcing their destinations and times of sailing. Here we are now in front of the coasting craft; and an extraordinary medley do they present. What a variety of rig and build ; and how unfit some of the smaller ones appear for the dangerous navigation of the American coast ! Having grown a little familiar with them, you can almost tell, from their appearance, between what points they trade. That substantial looking schooner which you see scudding before a gentle land breeze, will be off Cape Cod to-night, in her intricate and circuitous voyage to New York. That prim-looking brig, with her masts so tall and tapering, her spars so trim, her rigging so regular, her sham port-holes so very white, and her hull of so shiny a black, will, as soon as she clears—and she is already loaded—be off for the Delaware, and be moored, in a few days, in front of the Quaker city. The cluster of less elegant-looking craft, which lie a little beyond her, are, as their placards inform us, “ direct for Charleston,” for “ Mobile,” or for “ New Orleans ;” that is to say, as direct as baffling winds and the gulf stream will admit of. But what have we here ? A whole slip full of small fry, packed as closely together as herring boats at a fishing station, and their slender masts standing as thick as bulrushes in a swamp. There can be no mistake about them, their rig and rakish contour bespeaking them for the Chesapeake. They are, in fact, the far-famed Baltimore clippers ; and “ For Baltimore direct,” say most of them. You may well stare, but that extraordinary naval abortion, which you are now contemplating, is a veritable steamer. True it seems to be built of Bristol board ; but, in these matters, such is the taste here. It is for Newport, Rhode Island, and has to ply along one of the stormiest of coasts. The huge upper deck, stretched, from end to end, on such slender posts, looks as if it would flutter before the slightest breeze, like the canvass spread over a peripatetic menagerie. It seems, in fact, to be neither more nor less than a huge compound of scantlings and white paint, with a touch of black at some of the seams. Put a match to it, and off goes the inflammable monster like gun-cotton. Its engines are good as compared with those on the Mississippi, though they would cut but a sorry figure on a stormy night off the Isle of Man. As the steam hisses through the escape-pipe, the whole mass tumbles like a very jelly. Yet, notwithstanding all this, you have before you one of the strongest class of American steamers. You have yet to witness those constructed for the navigation of the inland waters. But let me not anticipate your surprise.

Along the wharves there is every appearance of great activity ; and, thickly strewn around you, are all the insignia of an extensive commerce. Raw cotton in countless bales ; piles of manufactured goods for the South American and Chinese markets ; whole acres covered

with parallel rows of clean white barrels, some of them well-nigh bursting with flour, others full of salt : hogsheads of sugar, and others of leaking molasses : stacks of leather and pyramids of marble blocks ; bags of coffee, chests of tea, and bulging orange boxes, are discernible on every hand. By each pile is a clerk, busily noting all that may be added to, or subtracted from it ; dealers, wholesale and retail, masters and men, consignors and consignees, and light and heavy porters, are bustling about ; the apparent confusion being heightened by the drays, some of which are rattling empty, and others crawling heavily laden, over the hard granite.

Leaving the water-side, you enter some short crooked streets of warehouses, almost as dark and dingy as Tooley-street, or Thames-street. Most of them are fire-proof, and seem to be mailed in iron shutters. Passing them, we come to the Irish quarter, which, as usual, having no attractions, but the reverse, we may as well retrace our steps a little, and make for the heart of the town.

You are surprised to find, in a country like this, with so much spare land, and so many symmetrical towns built upon it, the streets of one of its finest capitals so straitened and devious. But this is easily accounted for. In the first place the foundations of Boston were laid ere the old irregular system of building had been departed from ; and in the next, although there is land enough around it, the precise ground which the city occupies is of rather limited dimensions. It consists of an irregular peninsula, with a very uneven surface, the strip of ground called “ the neck,” joining it to the main land. This peninsula, to which the city proper is confined, is covered with houses, and the city now relieves itself from the pressure of population by means of the many small towns and villages, which are scattered like so many colonies over the mainland and islands around it.

“ A fine town is this Baltimore !” said I, one day, to a New Englander with whom I was conversing in the capital of Maryland ; “ it is a pity that Boston is not as spacious in its accommodations and as regular in its plan.”

“ What we want in Boston,” said he, “ is *territory* to build on. If we were as flush of it as they are here, we would make them sing small in the city way, that’s a fact.”

It must be confessed, to the credit of the corporation of Boston, that they are doing all in their power to diminish the vocal performances of other communities in this respect ; many of the more crowded thoroughfares having recently been both widened and straightened.

As might be expected, as you recede from the water-side, the business of the town assumes more of a retail character. As you advance towards the centre, you come in contact with its different markets and with its banking, civic, and other public establishments. Faneuil Market is inferior in size, but superior in architecture and internal arrangements, to that of Liverpool. Immediately beyond, is the very focus of the retail business of the town. The shops are large, having, in general, a wider frontage than with us. They are gorged with goods, so much so as literally to ooze out at doors and windows ; and what a gaudy flaunting show they make ! Piled in tempting masses on the hard brick pavement, you are ready to stumble over goods at every step you take, whilst from the upper windows stream whole pieces of flaring calicos and gaudy ribbons ; the whole impressing one with the idea that business was making a holiday of it, and had donned, for the occasion, its most showy habiliments. A winding and irregular street now leads us up a rather steep ascent, in climbing which, we find ourselves in front of old Faneuil Hall. There is no building in America held in such reverence as this. It is held sacred from the Atlantic to the Pacific, from the Lakes to the Gulf, as “ the cradle of liberty,” and the place in which the tocsin of the revolution was first sounded. It is large, but, in an architectural point of view, unworthy of notice, its historic

associations constituting its chief attraction. We now advance up State-street, a fine business street, but neither so spacious nor imposing as Tremont Row, into which it leads. Passing the Tremont House, we emerge upon the "Common," a large open space, about seventy acres in extent, in the upper part of the town. For this miniature park the Bostonians are indebted to the munificence of a private individual, who devised it to the corporation, on condition of its being left perpetually open for the health and recreation of the citizens. On a commanding site on one side of this common, and overlooking the whole town, the circumjacent suburbs, and a vast stretch of sea and land beyond, stands the State House, with its classic colonnade, surmounted by the dome already alluded to. In the large hall, as you enter it, is a statue of Washington, from the chisel of Chantrey, the chief features of the interior being the two chambers of the legislature. The House of Representatives is a large square room, capable of accommodating about 400 persons, scantily ornate, and looking as cold and comfortless as a country meeting-house. The Senate Chamber is a smaller apartment, and somewhat more attractive in its appearance. Its chief ornament, and placed over the door, opposite the speaker's chair, is an old drum, captured in one of the earlier battles of the Revolution. It is placed there as an incitement to American youth, and as a terror to all British drummers. It is not beaten that I am aware of, in the senate, but it by no means follows therefrom that hollow sounds are alien to that body.

In the more immediate vicinity of the Common is the fashionable quarter of Boston. The terraces, which line it on either side, consist of spacious mansions built in the main of brick and granite ; the hall doors being approached by granite or marble steps, and the window-sills and capping being frequently composed of marble.

Almost every house is garnished by Venetian blinds outside the windows, the green colour of which contrasts pleasingly with the red brick, sometimes painted of a deeper red, with white pencillings at the joinings, which impart to the whole a light, airy, and elegant appearance. Every thing about these comfortable-looking dwellings is scrupulously clean ; indeed, generally speaking, the credit of great cleanliness is due to Boston as a whole, being admirably situated with respect to drainage, and its opportunities, in this respect, not having been neglected. But having glanced at their town, it is now time to take a passing peep at the Bostonians themselves. Let us then to Washington street—the Regent-street of Boston—as it is now the hour for promenade. You had better, however, put up your cigar case, for smoking is not allowed in the streets. You may chew until you expectorate yourself away, and may poison your dwelling with smoke to your heart's content, but a whiff in the open air is a luxury not to be enjoyed in Boston under a penalty of five dollars.

This is Washington-street, as varying in width, and as irregular in its architecture, as the Strand. The shops on either side make a goodly display of rich, tempting, and ornamental wares ; the pavement is spacious, and covered with pedestrians who pass on, without looking to the right or to the left, or linger, as their fancy may dictate, by the "Dry Goods Store," the "Hardware Store," the "Book Store," the "Grocery Store," the "Hat Store," or the "Shoe Store,"—for they are all "Stores," without a single shop amongst them. Let no Englishman insinuate to any American that he keeps a shop—that would be a grade too low for a free and enlightened citizen to stoop to. In all this flitting crowd, you can scarcely point to a single individual who is not well dressed. The Americans cannot afford to be niggard of broad-cloth, for there is no nation on earth in which the coat goes so far to make the man. Fustian (not moral) is little known in America. Canvass-back ducks they have in abundance, but no canvass-backed people. The countenances of those we pass bespeak a very general diffusion of intelligence, an intellectuality of expression being, as I afterwards discovered, more common to the Bostonians than to the inhabitants of any other city in the Union. The ladies form a very fair proportion of the throng. They are generally of the middle height, well rounded, of a good carriage, with features as pleasing as their complexions are florid. The

bracing air of the sea-board, however, is fatal to many of them, groups of consumptive patients having annually to fly from New England into the interior.

They are not shy, and yet, at the same time, are not bold ; discarding in their promenades the affected prudery with which they are so generally charged, and acting, as they pass, as if they saw no reason why a daughter of Adam should not look upon a son of Eve.

A view of Boston would be incomplete without an allusion, however brief, to Mount Auburn, its chief cemetery. Although not situated within the precincts of the town, a more appropriate spot for the purposes to which it is consecrated, can scarcely be conceived than this. It is very extensive, its surface being beautifully varied by gentle undulations, the sides of some of which are already clustered with tombs. Well-kept walks and avenues are laid out through it in every direction, skirted in the summer time with the richest foliage, the principal avenues taking their respective names from the trees which predominate on either side. Here and there, too, you come upon a small still pond, fringed with shrubbery, and reposing, as it were, in a state of funereal seclusion. If any thing is calculated to deprive death of its terrors, it is thus preparing a sweet resting-place for the dead. How different from our foul, fetid, and over-crowded burying-places in the heart of London, which make the grave hideous to the imagination! But in Boston, as in Paris, they have taken these things under municipal control, not permitting the clergy, as with us, to turn to pecuniary account even the last debt of nature. The great objection to the *coup d'œil* of Mount Auburn is, that there is too much sameness in its monuments. Many are exceedingly elegant, but there can be traced amongst them a similitude which soon palls upon one. In this respect it falls short of the Parisian cemeteries, but in none other, for if it has not the artificial adornments, it is certainly not bedaubed with the frippery of Pere-la-Chaise.

But the ramble becomes wearisome, and as I have to start soon by train for New York, it is time to return to our hotel.

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