

MEN AND MANNERS
IN AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

VOYAGE—NEW YORK.

ON the morning of the 16th of October, I embarked at Liverpool, on board of the American packet ship, New York, Captain Bennet, bound for the port of the same name. There were twenty-six passengers on board, and though the accommodations were excellent, the cabin, as might be expected, was somewhat disagreeably crowded. Our party consisted of about fifteen or sixteen Americans, some half-dozen countrymen of my own, two or three English, a Swiss, and a Frenchman.

Though the elements of this assemblage were heterogeneous enough, I have great pleasure in remembering that the most perfect harmony prevailed on board. To myself, the whole of my fellow-passengers were most obliging; and for some I contracted a regard, which led me to regret that the period of our arrival in port, was likely to bring with it a lasting cessation of our intercourse.

The miseries of a landsman on board of ship, have afforded frequent matter for pen and pencil. At *best*, a sea voyage is a confinement at once irksome and odious, in which the unfortunate prisoner is compelled for weeks, or months, to breathe the tainted atmosphere of a close and crowded cabin, and to sleep at night in a sort of box, about the size of a coffin for “the stout gentleman.” At *worst*, it involves a complication of the most nauseous evils that can afflict humanity,—an utter prostration of power, both bodily and mental,—a revulsion of the whole corporeal machinery, accompanied by a host of detestable diagnostics, which at once convert a well-dressed and well-favoured gentleman, into an

object of contempt to himself, and disgust to those around him.

Such are a few of the joys that await a landsman, whom evil stars have led to “go down to the sea in ships, and occupy his business in the great waters.” With regard to sailors, the case is different, but not much. Being seasoned vessels, they are, no doubt, exempt from some of those evils, and completely hardened to others, which are most revolting to a landsman. But their Pandora’s box can afford to lose a few miseries, and still retain a sufficient stock of all sizes, for any reasonable supply. It may be doubted, too, whether the most ardent sailor was ever so hallucinated by professional enthusiasm, as to pitch his Paradise—wherever he might place his Purgatory—afloat.

On board of the New York, however, I must say, that our sufferings were exclusively those arising from the elements of air and water. Her accommodations were admirable. Nothing had been neglected which could possibly contribute to the comfort of the passengers. In another respect, too, we were fortunate. Our commander had nothing about

him, of “the rude and boisterous captain of the sea.” In truth, Captain Bennet was not only an adept in all professional accomplishment, but, in other respects, a person of extensive information; and I confess, it was even with some degree of pride, that I learned he had received his nautical education in the British navy. Partaking of the strong sense we all entertained, of his unvarying solicitude for the comfort of his passengers, I am happy also to profess myself indebted to him, for much valuable information relative to the country I was about to visit.

Among the passengers were some whose eccentricities contributed materially to enliven the monotony of the voyage. The most prominent of these was a retired hair-dresser from Birmingham, innocent of all knowledge unconnected with the wig-block, who, having recently married a young wife, was proceeding, accompanied by his fair rib, with the romantic intention of establishing themselves in “some pretty box,” in the back-woods of America. As for the lady, she was good-looking, but, being somewhat gratuitously solicitous to barb the arrows of her charms, her chief occupation during the voy-

age, consisted in adorning her countenance with such variety of wigs of different colours, as unquestionably did excite the marvel, if not the admiration, of the passengers. The billing and cooing of this interesting couple, however, though sanctioned by the laws of Hymen, became at length so public and obtrusive, as, in the opinion of the other ladies, to demand repression; and a request was consequently made, that they would be so obliging for the future, as to reserve their mutual demonstrations of attachment, for the privacy of their own cabin.

Among the passengers too, was Master Burke, better known by the title of the Irish Roscius, who was about to cross the Atlantic with his father and a French music-master, to display his talents on a new field. Though not much given to admire those youthful prodigies, who, for a season or two, are puffed into notice, and then quietly lapse into very ordinary men, I think there can be no question that young Burke is a very wonderful boy. Barely eleven years old, he was already an accomplished and scientific musician, played the violin with first-rate taste and execution, and in his impersonations

of character, displayed a versatility of power, and a perception of the deeper springs of human action, almost incredible in one so young. But independently of all this, he became, by his amiable and obliging disposition, an universal favourite on board; and when the conclusion of our voyage brought with it a general separation, I am certain the boy carried with him the best wishes of us all, that he might escape injury or contamination in that perilous profession, to which his talents had been thus early devoted.

We sailed from Liverpool about one o'clock, and in little more than an hour, were clear of the Mersey. On the morning following we were opposite the Tuskar rocks, and a run of two days brought us fairly out into the Atlantic. Then bidding farewell to the bold headlands of the Irish coast, with a flowing sheet we plunged forward into the vast wilderness of waters, which lay foaming before us, and around.

For the first week, all the chances were in our favour. The wind, though generally light, was fair, and the New York—celebrated as a fast sailer—with all canvass set, ran down the distance gallantly.

ARRIVAL OFF SANDY HOOK.

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But, on the seventh day, our good fortune was at an end. The wind came on boisterous and adverse, and our progress for the next fortnight was comparatively small. Many of the party became affected with sea-sickness, and the hopes, to which our early good fortune had given rise, of a rapid passage, were—as other dearer hopes have been by us all,—slowly, but unwillingly, relinquished.

We were yet some five hundred miles to the eastward of the banks of Newfoundland, when, on the 23d day, our spirits were again gladdened by a fair wind. Then it was that the New York gave unquestionable proof that her high character was not unmerited. In the six following days we ran down fifteen hundred miles, and the evening of the twenty-eighth day, found us off Sandy Hook, which forms the entrance to the Bay of New York.

Our misfortunes, however, were not yet at an end. When within a few hours' sail of port, our progress was arrested for four days, by a dense fog. Four more disagreeable days, I never passed. Sun, moon, stars, earth, and ocean, lay hid in impenetrable vapour, and it was only by the constant use of the

lead, that the ship could move in safety. The air we breathed seemed changed into a heavier element; we felt like men suddenly smitten with blindness, and it almost seemed, as if the time of chaos had come again, when darkness lay brooding on the face of the deep. The effect of this weather on the spirits of us all, was very remarkable. Even the most jovial of the party became gloomy and morose. Conversation languished, and the mutual benevolence with which we had hitherto regarded each other, had evidently sustained a diminution.

At length, when our patience, hourly sinking, had nearly reached zero, a favourable change took place. About noon on the 17th of November, the mist suddenly rolled upward like a curtain, and with joyful eyes we beheld the coast of New Jersey outstretched before us. Towards evening, we received a pilot, and were visited by several boats employed by the proprietors of the New York newspapers, to procure the earliest intelligence from vessels in the offing. The avidity for news of all kinds, displayed both by these visitors and the American passengers, was rather amusing.

ENTER THE BAY OF NEW YORK.

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Numerous questions were interchanged, relative to politics and dry goods, shipping and shippers, freights and failures, corn, cotton, constitutions, and commissions. Though in this sort of traffic, as in all others, there was value given on both sides, yet it struck me, that a sincere desire to oblige was generally apparent. Every one seemed happy to enter on the most prolix details for the benefit of his neighbour; and the frequent repetition of the same question, appeared by no means to be attended with the usual consequences on the patience of the person addressed. I certainly could detect nothing of that dogged, and almost sullen brevity, with which, I take it, the communications of Englishmen, in similar circumstances, would have been marked. No one seemed to grudge the trouble necessary to convey a complete comprehension of facts or opinions to the mind of his neighbour, nor to circumscribe his communications, within the limits necessary to secure the gratification of his own curiosity.

We passed Sandy Hook in the night, and, on coming on deck in the morning, were greeted with

one of the most beautiful prospects I had ever beheld. We were then passing the Narrows; Long Island on one side, Staten Island on the other, a finely undulating country, hills covered with wood, agreeably interspersed with villas and cottages, and New York on its island, with its vast forest of shipping, looming in the distance.

Such are some of the more prominent features of the scene, by which our eyes were first gladdened, on entering the American waters. A more glorious morning never shone from the heavens. All around was bathed in a flood of sunshine, which seemed brighter when contrasted with the weather under which we had so recently suffered.

I am not aware, that there is any thing very fine in the appearance of New York, when seen from the bay, but, taken in conjunction with the surrounding scenery, it certainly forms a pleasing feature in the landscape. The city stands on the southern extremity of York Island, and enlarging in latitude as it recedes from the apex of a triangle, stretches along the shores of the Hudson and East Rivers, far as the eye can reach. On the right are the heights of