

## A RAMBLE, &c.

### CHAPTER I.

#### VOYAGE TO MALTA.

“ Oh who can tell?—not thou, luxurious slave,  
 Whose soul would sicken o'er the heaving wave—  
 Nor thou, vain lord of wantonness and ease,  
 Whom slumbers soothe not, pleasures cannot please  
 Oh who can tell,—save he whose heart hath tried  
 And danced in triumph o'er the waters wide,—  
 Th' exulting sense, the pulse's maddening play,  
 That thrills the wanderer o'er the trackless way ? ”

*August 16, 1841.*—It has been justly said, that there are three distinct pleasures enjoyed by travellers of which those who constantly dwell within the narrow limits of their own homes can form no competent idea. They are the pleasures arising from anticipation, realization, and retrospection; all of which are in themselves separate sources of enjoyment to the observant mind. The first of these I had already cherished with the most enthusiastic visions of hope; and the realization of my expected gratification from the second, commenced, when bidding farewell to my home and friends for awhile, I embarked for Malta in the beautiful clipper schooner “*Prospero*.” The bustle and excitement of departure being over, I was anxious to leave St. Katharine's Docks without delay, that we might sail down the river, and float freely over the broad bosom of the sea.

But disappointments, like the clouds which mar an April sunshine, mingle themselves with our most pleasing moments; and thus it proved to me; for by an unavoidable tardiness caused by the brokers of the vessel, we were compelled to remain in our close quarters for one night, and part of the succeeding day. At

nine P.M. the noisy, thundering bell of the Docks sounded the hour of repose, when all lights are ordered to be put out, under a penalty of ten pounds. But this curfew of modern times did not prevent our burning a candle "on the sly," as the sailors term it; and covering the skylight with a tarpaulin, and locking the cabin-door, we sat very comfortably without molestation until ten o'clock. By-and-by, the custom-house officer came down, and after the old gentleman had fastened the doors, he stretched himself on the sofa immediately below my berth, and commenced snoring most famously, (as only a custom-house officer can,) until the same thundering bell proclaimed the hour of six on the following morning. My sleep was frequently broken by the nasal music of this gentleman of the "customs," which combined with many new and strange sounds, such as the dog's feet patting up and down the deck overhead; the distant "pulley hoy" of vessels going out by the night tide, and the gentle ripple and splash of the water just level with my head, filled my sleep with strange and singular nautical dreams. The morning was unusually warm, and the weather calm and settled. About one, P.M., we left St. Katharine's Docks, and were towed by a steam-tug down the river towards Gravesend, where we put the officer ashore. After passing this place, the river became much wider, and as the shades of evening gathered in, the low distant shores melted away in the twilight haze, and the numerous vessels scattered here and there looked like black specks on the surface of the quiet water. Before us was the Nore light, and to the left, the lights of Southend sparkled brightly in the distance; while on our right, the lamps of Sheerness, in the Isle of Sheppey, were equally visible. A few young porpoises, and a solitary sea-gull, gave token of our approach to the ocean, and about nine o'clock we cast anchor one mile to the westward of the Nore.

*Aug. 18.*—At five o'clock this morning we got under weigh. The atmosphere was hazy, and after we had passed the Reculvers, in sight on our starboard side, we were becalmed for several hours. The glassy waters around were smooth and placid as a lake, and at noon it was oppressively hot. On looking over the stern of the vessel, I observed numbers of medusæ rising through the water. After several attempts, I succeeded in catching one in a basket let down by a rope; and when I had made a coloured sketch of the creature, I again committed him to his watery home. I was not a little amused when the captain and sailors positively assured me that it was "only the strength and filth of the water;" and I could not persuade them that it was an organized and created being.

By-and-by the breeze again sprang up, and as we tacked about, Margate and the surrounding shores were frequently in sight. At seven o'clock we cast anchor in the Downs, and the wind blowing strongly from the south-west, gave us a pretty fair tossing. Here our pilot left us, by whom I sent letters ashore. The sky looked wild and stormy, but the stars shone brilliantly between the dark masses of cloud, and

our little vessel rose and fell on the surging water, as we lay moored off Deal for the night.

*Aug. 19.*—The morning rose bright and serene, and before I went upon deck we were passing the Straits of Dover. The white cliffs of the South Foreland presented a fine effect, with the morning sunshine upon them, and the picturesque town and castle of Dover were interesting objects from the water. The scene was still more enlivened by numerous vessels of all sizes lying scattered over the gently sparkling waves. The morning haze that hung like a veil over the south, prevented our seeing much of the French coast, but the heights of Calais were distinctly visible. About noon we were again nearly becalmed. The towns of Folkestone and Hythe, with Romney, and the entrance to its extensive marshes, successively presented themselves to our view. Towards dusk, we rounded that long promontory of shingle, Dungeness, nearly at the extremity of which is the well-known and conspicuous lighthouse. The waters were like a sheet of glass; the last gentle breeze had died away, and we lay motionless on the sea. The sails hung silently aloft, whilst above us shone down through the cloudless sky thousands of stars whose brilliancy, mingling with the bright lustre of one glorious planet upon the waters, gave additional loveliness and magnificence to the whole scene. The beauty of the night tempted me to linger on the deck till long after the last wild fowl had sailed past us on his flight to the marshes; and it was with reluctance that I exchanged the landscape of sea and starlight, for my close cabin quarters below.

*Aug. 20.*—At seven o'clock this evening, we had a brisk breeze; all sails are spread, we are now off the Isle of Wight, and I am only wishing for a pair of wings to enable me to revisit that delightful spot. I have watched its rugged cliffs until distance and the mists of evening shrouded them from my sight, and the flame of St. Catherine's lighthouse was the only spot discernible in the horizon.

*Aug. 21,* four, A. M.—The breeze during the night has increased, and it is now blowing violently against us with a heavy sea. I remained on deck all day, and securing myself with a rope to the lockers, weathered wind and waves. Notwithstanding several good duckings from the spray, I enjoyed the novelty of my situation, and preferred it greatly to lying in my bed-cabin. At two o'clock we passed Purbeck Island, and I had a fine view of that barren and rocky coast. At five o'clock we tacked out to run towards the French shore; but as the weather became more stormy we were driven back, and put in for shelter into the Portland Roads, where we cast anchor along with a little fleet of forty or fifty vessels, all weather-bound like ourselves.

*Aug. 22.*—We rode at anchor all night, and this morning I went on shore at Portland Island with some of the sailors, who took casks with them to obtain some fresh water. This remarkable promontory or bill, as it is called, is connected to the main

land by a ridge of sand several miles in length, forming an excellent shelter for vessels from the westerly gales. On reaching a small village on the western side of the rock, I got some letters conveyed to the post; and after exploring the barren place, and providing ourselves with some watercresses for tea, we returned on board, though even in this sheltered bay the waves were so rough that our boat was very nearly capsized. We dined off a fresh leg of mutton that we brought from London, and this will probably be the last fresh meat we shall taste until we arrive at Malta. Three, p. m.; as the wind appeared rather more favourable we set sail again; but before we had well got clear of the harbour, it blew with greater violence than ever. We had now to pass through the Race of Portland—a dangerous place—with the sea running very high and the waves standing up almost perpendicularly, resembling those pictures we occasionally meet with of Moses dividing the waters of the Red Sea. The captain desired Mrs. B. and myself to go below whilst we were passing through the Race, but before we could well do so the waves swept completely over us. At six o'clock we turned in to our berths, but not to sleep, for it soon blew a heavy gale which continued raging from seven until twelve o'clock, accompanied with torrents of rain. At midnight it suddenly fell a dead calm. During the storm the waves ran mountains high, and the wild confusion of the elements produced a sound like the tumult of a mighty mob. This dreadful discord was only broken at intervals by the shouts of the captain giving orders to the crew, and the noise and bustle of the sailors securing the sails and other moveables on the deck.

*Aug. 23.*—Early this morning the waves still rolled very high from last night's gale, and we have been out of sight of land all day until eight o'clock when we made Dartmouth. To-day I turned cook, and made some dumplings for our dinner, which we partook of upon the cabin floor. My dumplings were more fortunate than King Alfred's cakes, as they turned out very good, and the captain and mate did them ample justice.

*Aug. 24.*—Off Plymouth, in sight of the Eddystone lighthouse. To-day we took our departure from the Lizard, distant about twenty-five miles north. The main-sail, as it flapped in the wind, knocked the captain's hat overboard, and he is now looking very grand in an old "southwester." As a winding up, the Channel sent a mighty farewell wave, which swept all over the decks, and not one of us escaped without a good ducking.

*Aug. 25.*—We are now clear of the Channel, where we have been tossing about a whole week. Yesterday we bade adieu to the land, and to-day not a single sail has appeared in the horizon. The only objects are a few sea-gulls skimming over the waves. We dined on the cabin floor off a miserable fowl, very lean and boiled to atoms. I attribute its emaciated condition to melancholy, and sorrow at leaving its native land, and being shut up during the past week in the long boat. Even as I am

writing I hear dreadful screams on the deck, which assure me that a second unhappy creature is being sacrificed to our voracious appetites. As they pine so fast we are to dine upon them every day, till not one remains to tell its tale of woe! Half-past eleven, P. M.,—I had no sooner retired to my berth than the mate called me up again to see a shoal of porpoises playing around the vessel; they had a most curious and beautiful appearance, being quite luminous; their phosphorescent brightness was indeed so great that they resembled fishes of fire, as gliding along swiftly they left a shining track of light behind them. In the wake of the vessel thousands of bright sparkling animals were constantly in motion, lighting the curl of every wave.

The water in the Bay of Biscay is extremely clear and translucent, and of a deep blue colour. On looking over the stern of the vessel, I could frequently discern her keel, and clearly see the smallest objects that were many feet below the surface. The depth of water in the Bay has never been ascertained, and it is said to be fathomless. One of the sailors gravely assured me that it had no bottom at all, and extended quite through the globe to the other side, where it is known by the name of the Chinese Sea!

*Aug. 27.*—This morning was ushered in by a thick fog, through which the sun in vain endeavoured to penetrate. We are now approaching latitude 45°, where strong winds and doubtful weather so generally prevail that they have become proverbial amongst seamen. We are one hundred miles distant from Cape Finisterre, running on with all sails spread. Towards evening, the wind increased until seven o'clock, when it blew very strong, but fortunately in our favour, from the east, and we flew along over the waves instead of meeting them. The captain reefed the sails, and even then we ran at the rate of ten knots an hour. The waves were very magnificent, and on a much larger scale than in the Channel; they appeared sometimes as though they would overwhelm the vessel, when suddenly each mountainous billow sank as quietly as it rose, and was soon succeeded by another of equally terrific magnitude. As the wind blew the spray from their foamy crests, the sun shining through them formed myriads of small rainbows, which were as evanescent as they were beautiful. Whilst gazing with delight at these beautiful prismatic reflections, a tremendous wave came sweeping along the side of the vessel, and breaking directly over me wetted me thoroughly to the skin. Nor was this the only misfortune that befell me, for soon afterwards Mrs. B. and I went down to tea in the cabin below; we had no sooner poured it out than the vessel gave a heavy lurch, and precipitated tea-pot, cups and saucers, with all their scalding contents, into our laps. We were in this miserable condition when the captain came down, and added to our trouble by scolding us well for not having our tea as usual upon the floor.

*Aug. 28.*—We passed Cape Finisterre, the north-western extremity of Spain, during the night, though at a considerable distance. The morning is charming, it breathes of

a southern climate : the air is fresh, but so soft and warm as to render it quite luxurious. At nine o'clock the thermometer stood at  $87^{\circ}$  in the shade, and on deck the sun was quite scorching. We are now sailing in a southerly direction, about twenty-five miles from the coast of Spain ; and were it not for the haze, or "loom of the land," as the sailors term it, we should be able to see it quite plainly. In the morning a large shoal of porpoises played around the bows of the vessel. The harpoon was got out, and the mate at the first thrust plunged it up to the hilt in the body of one of them, which probably might measure about eight feet. Unfortunately the harpoon snapped in two with the struggles of the animal, and giving a tremendous leap out of the water, the poor creature darted down again like lightning through the water, bearing the barbed weapon deep within him, and for a considerable distance the waves were red with its gushing blood. All the other porpoises in the shoal followed it immediately, as the sailors said, to make a meal on their unhappy companion as soon as his dying struggles were over. During the day we saw several whales, at a short distance from the ship, spouting up water like a fountain, and blowing with a noise resembling that of an elephant. Four, P. M.—We are once more becalmed ; the Spanish coast is visible at a great distance, with a yellow haze resting upon it. Thousands of the most venomous little flies imaginable have entered the cabin, and are stinging us most cruelly. We have tried to kill them, but they are so uncommonly lively, and come in such numbers, that it is utterly impossible to get rid of them. The captain affirms that he can hear them swearing and growling at him because he will not let them have a chance of biting him. Our feet and hands are stung all over from their furious attacks. Mrs. B. has accounted for their appearance in a very philosophic manner. She supposes them to be the flies we brought from St. Katharine's Docks, who having just recovered from their sea-sickness, are come out with very keen appetites. The sunset this evening was peculiarly beautiful. From a cloudless sky of the purest blue the sun sank majestically in the west, bathed in a flood of the most vivid scarlet, gradually melting off into orange and yellow, till at last it produced that warm glow of atmosphere so much admired in the works of Claude Lorraine. The moon, too, was brighter and clearer than in more northerly climates, and being nearly at the full, it renders the evenings on deck very pleasant and delightful.

*Aug. 29.*—During the day the sea has been nearly a perfect calm and the air very hot. The evening brought no breeze, but the moon and the stars shone brightly, and only a few fleecy clouds stole almost imperceptibly along the sky. Several huge black fish rose within a few yards of the vessel, and made such a noise with their blowing, that the dog we had on board commenced barking at them, believing, no doubt, that they were nightly intruders come with dishonest intentions.

*Aug. 30.*—The early morning was hazy, but the sun soon burst out with an unusual degree of warmth, and not a breath of air fanned the sleeping surface of the waters ;

the thermometer stood at 82°. Whilst lying thus becalmed, three very large whales rose near us, blowing at a dreadful rate, and lying with their backs above the water. Towards evening the Farilhœns rocks appeared in sight, bearing s. s. e. They seem to rise perpendicularly out of the sea, not unlike the Bass rock, or Ailsa, in Scotland. The sailors term them the “haystacks,” which they greatly resemble. The Berlingas or Borlings, are several small barren islands lying south of the Farilhœns, about five miles from Cape Carboeyro on the main land. These we passed in the night, lat. 39° 26', long. 10° 4'.

*Aug. 31.*—We have been now a fortnight at sea, and if our progress is no quicker than it has hitherto been, we shall make a long and very tedious voyage. There appears no hope of our getting on; it is a dead calm, and the vessel sleeps upon the sheeted water; indeed the sultry state of the atmosphere makes crew and captain equally drowsy, and we long for a breeze to invigorate us. The coast of Portugal is in sight, but so hazy from the heat, that I can make but little of it, even with the aid of a telescope. I long to be on shore, tasting some of their delicious grapes, as the water we have on board is too lively to tempt us to drink it, however extreme our thirst may be; and would form a better subject for microscopic exhibition and wonder among the marvels of that marvellous place, the Polytechnic Institution.

I have been trying my fishing lines, but they have proved unsuccessful; the stormy petrels skim around the hooks, and dexterously carry off the bait, without being able to secure them. To add to the mortification, shoals of sardinias, pursued by a whole troop of albacore, have approached within a boat's length of the vessel. During the day, as we lay becalmed, the captain put off the jolly-boat, and three of the men went out to endeavour to catch some from among the numerous shoals of fish that were rising from the deep water in every direction around us. When the boat approached within less than one hundred yards of a fine troop of albacore in full play, they provokingly disappeared, and, to use the sailors' phrase, “made fools of them.” A second excursion for the same purpose proved equally unsuccessful, and the boat was hauled again on board in despair. We saw several sharks for the first time, and the sea-fowl and storm-birds became more numerous. It is a very interesting sight to watch the last-mentioned little birds, for ever on the wing, skimming swiftly over the surface of the water. They resemble a swallow, but are somewhat larger, and have a conspicuous white patch of feathers above the tail; sometimes they skim within a few inches of us, as they fly across the deck, but are so dexterous as never to be captured, even by the most expert hands. The sun shining upon the Portugal coast, rendered it rather more conspicuous; and in the afternoon we could discern the town of Ereceira, and on the summit of a high hill, the famous convent of Mafra, which is very conspicuous from the sea. Five, P.M.—A Portuguese fishing-boat has just passed us with four men and a boy in her.

As we observed them busily pulling up their lines, the captain thought that we might get a little fish, and called out to them, "Any pisco?" but the only thing they held up was a dog-fish; at this our captain shook his head, and muttered some words that savoured of the Portuguese, when they departed. Capo Rocca, or the rock of Lisbon, is in sight, bearing s.s.e., and distant about twelve miles; behind it the land suddenly rises up into a mountainous ridge, extending a considerable way to the eastward. The summit is very uneven, having on it a number of detached eminences; this is the mountain of Cintra, and beyond it is the city of Lisbon.

*Sept. 1.*—The morning was stormy, accompanied by rain and thunder; but it soon cleared off, and a steady breeze sprang up in our favour, and carried us along briskly. In the afternoon land appeared again in sight, and before six o'clock we rounded Cape St. Vincent, running at the rate of ten knots an hour. The sea is once more curled up into long sweeping waves, on whose snowy crests the full moon is shining with a flood of silvery light. The evenings begin to draw in very quickly, which is owing to the latitude we are in; the sun sets at half-past six, and in a few minutes night closes in, the duration of twilight being shorter than in England. Cape St. Vincent, the south-western extremity of the coast of Algarva, in Portugal, lies in north latitude  $37^{\circ} 3'$ , and on its summit stands a convent of Augustine friars. About twenty fathoms from the foot of the Cape stands a large isolated rock, and the intervening channel is wide enough for ships of heavy tonnage to pass through. In the distance rise the mountains of Monchique, which are visible at sea for twenty-five leagues.

*Sept. 2.*—Very hot weather, with a clear, cloudless sky of the purest azure. The thermometer in the shade is  $81^{\circ}$ . We have had a fresh breeze all day, which will carry us nearly to the coast of Africa, from which we are about sixty miles distant. The sunset was most gorgeous; it filled the western horizon with a wide atmosphere of golden light, shining against the deep indigo blue of the Atlantic ocean. The effect of the sun's refraction was remarkably beautiful; just as it seemed to touch the water its orb appeared elongated, and seemed drawn downwards in a cylindrical form into the sea. Ten, P.M.—The breeze has freshened, and the lights of Cadiz are in sight, bearing N.E.

*Sept. 3.* Two o'clock, A.M.—The thermometer in the cabin stands at  $83^{\circ}$ . This degree of heat effectually prevented my sleeping, so I arose and went upon deck. We were entering the Straits of Gibraltar, and by the light of the moon I could discern Cape Trafalgar on the European, and Cape Spartel on the African coast. The ruddy hues of morning soon began to appear streaking the eastern sky, and I was amply repaid for my vigils, not only by a beautiful sunrise, but by an excellent view of the coast on each side of the Strait, which is one of the boldest and most romantic I ever beheld. At first it broke upon me like a dream, and I could hardly



persuade myself that I was really, for the first time in my life, gazing upon the shores of Africa. The whole scene was bathed in the rosy light of morning. The Spanish hills, covered with vines and olive-trees ; the blue and crisped waters over which we were speeding, and the high and rugged mountains of Barbary with their lofty peaks glittering in the sunshine, formed altogether a panorama too strikingly grand and beautiful ever to be forgotten. The rock of Gibraltar stands at the eastern extremity of the Straits, and directly opposite to it, on the African side, is the town and fortress of Ceuta, the only remaining Spanish possession in the Moorish territories. These are the famous pillars of Hercules, the western gates of the world, according to the ancients. A little to the west of Ceuta, rises the lofty and singular mountain called Sierra Bullones, or Ape's Hill, with its summit wrapped in clouds. Vast numbers of monkeys are said to inhabit this spot, and there is a vulgar belief current among many that they cross and re-cross to the rock of Gibraltar opposite by a subterranean passage below the sea. To the right of Ceuta are the remains of Old Ceuta, probably Carthaginian. On the Spanish side, the town and lighthouse of Tarifa, the town of Algeçearas, and on the opposite extremity of the bay the rock and fortress of Gibraltar, rising abruptly to the height of 1400 feet above the level of the sea, are all objects worthy of notice. The wind continued to blow strongly from the westward ; we were soon carried through the Straits, and were sailing over the bosom of the Mediterranean at the rate of nine knots an hour.

*Sept. 4.*—This morning it is a calm, and the long swell from yesterday's breeze rocks us to and fro like a cradle on the subsiding waves. The thermometer at noon in the cabin was 100° ; and we have not a breath of air to fan the sultry atmosphere. Numerous dolphins have been playing around the vessel ; the sailors attract them with a spoon suspended by a line over the bows of the ship, which they move to and fro in the sun, to resemble the motion of the flying fish.

*Sept. 5.*—A number of fine bonitoes have accompanied the vessel all day, and a troop of flying-fishes have just risen from the water, skimming over the waves like little bladders blown along by the wind. I observed, also, a large fish jump out of the sea, and up rose another cloud of these timid little creatures, escaping from their voracious enemy into another element, till their little wings becoming dry they sank exhausted into their native brine. Quarter past six, P. M. ; the sun has just gone down over the African coast at Cape Tenez ; a few scattered clouds have caught the reflection of the glowing sky upon their fleecy forms, and are exhibiting the most fairy-like appearance imaginable, being tinted with a pure rose colour of exquisite brilliancy, whilst the wide western heavens are radiant in molten gold, and streaked with broad belts of vermilion cloud.

*Sept. 6.*—To-day we have seen large numbers of the Portuguese men-of-war, those small marine animals so frequently noticed by seamen in warm latitudes. They are of

a deep blue colour, and as they float upon the surface of the water they raise their thin transparent gauze-like sail, which catches the wind. I fished up several in a basket, and made drawings of them. I found it quite useless to attempt preserving them in alcohol, as it immediately changed their colour to a bright red, exactly in the same way as litmus paper, or any other vegetable blue is affected by being brought into contact with an acid. One of the sailors harpooned a bonito, which we cooked for our supper; but I did not relish it much, it was too oily and rank.

*Sept. 8.*—The Balearic Isles are in sight, but the wind continues directly opposed to us, and we are compelled to tack about in a zig-zag direction, so that we only gain twenty miles in every 100. The sea is running very high, and the sun shining brightly. Four, P.M.; the high mountains of Africa are again in sight, somewhere in the neighbourhood of Algiers; for a short time we thought we saw the city itself, with its white buildings, in the distance, but upon a nearer approach it proved to be nothing but sand-hills. The city of Algiers lies about ten miles to the east, and is hidden from our view by a projecting cape.

It was near sunset, and the deep indigo sea curled into a thousand snowy waves. A beach of yellow sand, backed by wild and picturesque rocks, sloped gradually down to the water's edge, beyond which the hills arose rapidly till the scene was flanked in by lofty mountains, so distant that they almost vanished in the warm hazy glow that overspread the African landscape. The herbage appeared small and scanty, and near to the water's edge there projected out a bold rock crowned with a ruined castle, whilst around it grew magnificent aloes with their lofty flower stalks rising to a great height; but I could detect no trace or vestige of any human beings in this glorious wilderness of nature. The French have carried their usurpation and arms into this devoted land, where Carthage once reared its hundred palaces, and where, in the middle ages, the Moorish hosts swept down from its mountains like some wild tumultuous sea, carrying their conquests into the very heart of Gaul. But now,

“Only the wandering Arab's tent  
Flaps in the desert blast.”

Lions and other wild beasts abound in these unfrequented recesses; and even the Arab himself is as fierce and untameable as they. After dark we have several times observed large fires on the hills, which we conjecture were made by some bivouac to keep out nightly intruders.

*Sept. 11.*—This morning it is a perfect calm, and very sultry; the thermometer in the shade being 85°, and the burning sun pours down its beams upon as blue a sea as ever garnished the brightest visions of fairyland. The water was so extremely clear that we resolved to try some experiments. We lowered a basin with a line into the sea, and at the depth of thirty-two fathoms it was distinctly visible. We next sank an empty bottle, strongly corked and sealed over; on being drawn up it was found