

“ WE DROP ALONGSIDE A MAJESTIC SHIP ” (p. 214).

OFF TO AMERICA: A LIVERPOOL SKETCH.



“ **T** HE tender starts from the Prince's Landing-Stage for the steamer at 2 p.m. prompt.”

Such is the announcement made over the breakfast-table at the North-Western Hotel. “Queenie,” I notice, makes a very indifferent breakfast this morning. She is only leaving the old

country for a six months' pleasure-trip, and has the most devoted of *compagnons de voyage*; yet the day of departure is one of mental excitement to this innocent, sensitive, emotional girl. The coffee-room is pretty full of travelling Americans, and their devotion to chop and steak, and ham and chicken, quite atones for any deficiency of appetite we may be showing over the matutinal meal. I think, too, that these thin and sallown people seem to stare somewhat rudely at the fresh young English girl, whose bright blue eyes are this morning a trifle sad and thoughtful, and whose face has a flush of excitement that adds to its beauty. In the hall of the hotel everything seems uneasy and unsettled. There is such a rushing of porters, and tramping with luggage, and confusion of orders, and such Alpine elevations of baggage are being piled together for conveyance to

the great steamer. A study of baggage—boxes, bags, portmanteaus, cases, and chests; bulky trunks of bullock-hide, much bestrapped and worn at the corners, and with quite a literature of labels posted on them—Chicago, New York, Liverpool, St. Pancras, Charing Cross, Dover, Paris, Geneva, Riga, Rotterdam, Hamburg, Nice, Venice, Milan, Madrid, Seville, Frankfort, Biarritz, are among the names that the paste-brushes of railway porters all over Christendom have stuck on this luggage. What do these trunks enshrine, I wonder? Spoil from the Palace of the Trocadéro, *bric-à-brac* from the shops of Dresden, carvings from Zurich, photographs from Venice, Maltese lace, ladies' wardrobes—much too voluminous—gentlemen's “clawhammer” coats, and incredible hotel bills?

Outside is the heavy façade of St. George's Hall, the first public building of any pretensions that the American sees on his arrival on the soil of the Britisher, and the last he beholds on his departure; so that the monotonous mass of dingy masonry is left lithographed on the brain when other mental pictures of English architecture have lost their colour and contour. “Queenie” picks up a daily paper, and the first item her eye lights upon is the weather-chart. The *New York Herald* has considerably sent her a storm, which is at present on its way across the Atlantic. Why don't the Yankees keep their bad weather to themselves, and not export it to us, who have too much meteorological misery already? I indulge in a very artificial laugh, and declare that there is as much danger to be met with in an ordinary walk from the North-Western Hotel to the Mersey as there is in crossing the billowy Atlantic, and proceed to quote purely imaginary and utterly impossible statistics about the prodigious preponderance of casualties on the railway between Euston and Lime Street, com-

pared with the mishaps that attend the great liners between Liverpool and New York. I refer quite contemptuously to the 3,000 miles of howling ocean as "the herring pond." The Atlantic is only "the ferry." I allude to New York as "over the way."

A walk to the shipping office of the _____ Company, to make quite certain of the particular location and adjacency of certain berths. How unsympathetic and absorbed the streets are! The great work-away city witnesses too many arrivals and departures to be interested at all in the matter. Familiarity has bred indifference. When, just before two o'clock, we stand on the deck of the dirty tender that is to run us down the river to where the steamer lies moored, the busy landing-stage shows the same stony indifference, the same stolid apathy. Crowded ferry steamers are arriving and departing; the riverside is full of life and motion; but everybody is too much intent upon his own particular business, his own private schemes, to spare a thought for the destinies of others. The sailing of a great mail-steamer for New York is now as commonplace an event as the departure of the Great Northern mail for old York, and excites about the same amount of interest. In many instances the last good-bye has been said the day before, and where the sad word has yet to be uttered, it will be when the tender is alongside the towering ship lying at anchor midway in the Mersey.

It is now on the stroke of two, and the deck of the tender is full of passengers. Another tender, lying alongside, is laden far below the water-line with the luggage that whilom blocked the portals of the "North-Western" and the "Adelphi." Just as we are starting, a one-armed commissionaire, whose breast is silvered with medals, comes on board with a telegram; and he is just leaving the boat when a man in a shabby dust-coat, with something of the cut of the low comedian in his face, steps on the paddle-box, scrutinises each face, and then quietly walks up to a young fellow, so many feet of Ulster, who is standing pretty close to the sooty smoke-stack, and gazing abstractedly at the Birkenhead shore. The low comedian says something very calmly, and introduces to Ulster's notice a document of legal blue, which you might swear is headed: "Her Majesty Victoria, by the Grace of God, to wit." There is an imploring note of interrogation in the young man's eye as he turns to his interlocutor, and a nervous twitching of the mouth, and then he and the low comedian leave the tender together. The episode is scarcely understood on board, for that bag wants looking after, and was that parcel forgotten, or has it been stowed away with "passengers' luggage not required during the voyage"? A greater buzz of excitement would have prevailed had it been generally known that the man with the dust-coat and low-comedy face was Spibey, from Scotland Yard, and the two yards of young Ulster was "wanted" to balance some cash-books in the vicinity of Bishopsgate Street Without.

There is a sprinkling of notable people on board. This line of steamers is a favourite service with the intellectual world. Then there is a tourist troupe of

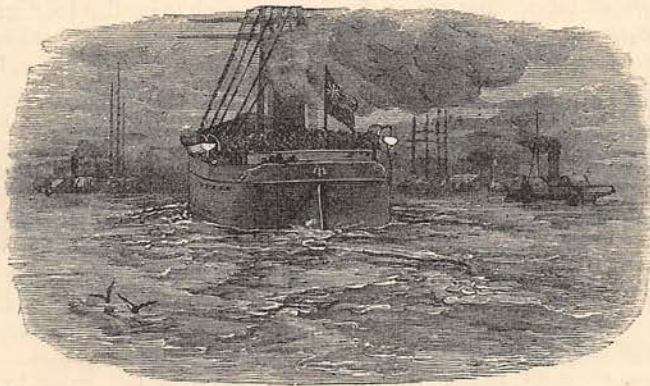
Americans returning home from "Yurrupe;" Messrs. Chicago and Boston chawing exaggerated cigars; Mr., Mrs., and the Misses Brooklyn comparing Liverpool with Paris: but we are not allowed time to analyse the *personnel* of the human freight before we drop alongside a majestic ship lying in the middle of the tawny tide. Her beautiful lines are a commanding object far and near; her great black hull, relieved by the bright white of the deck cabins, standing out like a fort from the water; and her four tall, tapering masts, and tracery of yards and spar and rigging, sketched against the pearly grey of the sky. The Union Jack unfurls its brave ensign over the helm, the Stars and Stripes float at the bows, and at the top of the foremost mast flutters the pennon of her line. This is the steamer—a poem in naval architecture, a floating picture. In another minute we are on board. "Queenie's" friends introduce me to the genial captain, who, with the stewards, and doctor, and urbane officials in gold-laced uniform, await the arrival of the passengers as they crowd up the gangway to this pleasant Johnsonian prison. The book-keeper brings round the letters and newspapers that have been addressed to the vessel, and some of the passengers have correspondence enough to occupy them all through the voyage.

A hurried inspection of the great ship: the marvellous mechanism of the steering apparatus, working by steam-power from the engines; the wonderful oscillating cylinders of the engines themselves, shining in their steely brightness like burnished silver; the fog-horn near the one broad, black funnel, whose hoarse hooting will disturb poor "Queenie" as she dreams of her far-away English home, while the vessel forges through the fogs off Newfoundland; the library, where Will Shakespeare, in a handsome coat, stretches out his hand to the traveller, and other authors, in jackets the worse for wear, give one a cordial greeting, and the best of all good company bid you sit down by their side, their welcome guests; the saloon, whose crimson and gold is a miracle of floating furniture; and then—in vivid contrast with all the luxuries and refinements—the Steerage. The steerage passengers came on board at ten this morning, and curious eyes are not to behold the pathos of the parting of the emigrants who are leaving certain starvation at home for problematical starvation abroad. They are on deck, most of them, anxious to take their last long lingering look on England, home, and beauty—represented by the low-lying shipping basins, forested with masts—before quitting them, perhaps, for ever. They gaze, too, with reproachful eyes on the prosperous saloon passengers on the poop. Aboard ship is the place where you would least expect to see the distinctions of social caste: aboard ship is just where you see them in sharpest juxtaposition; there they are focussed into narrow limits, and brought out in conspicuous contrast. Look, I beg of you, at the pinched, poverty-marked faces of those Irish women emigrants, with scanty shawls over their heads, and tin cooking-cans in their hands; and then contemplate the other side—the dainty ladies of the luxurious saloon, clad in expensive furs and costly dresses, whose every passing

caprice is anticipated. Want and wealth everywhere, you see; Dives in the saloon, and Lazarus in the steerage; riches and rags on the raging sea—Belgravia and Bethnal Green on the Atlantic, even.

The last luggage is being lowered into the hold, where perchance in some dark crevice may hide some starving stowaway, who across the water has the chance—ever open to tact and talent—of some day becoming President of the United States. The first bell is ringing for the tender now, and I am in "Queenie's" little state-room, with its two snowy berths, and its electric bell, and its bright, cheerful appointments, and its plate-glass window, whose face will soon be washed by the "rolling forties" of the mid-Atlantic. A certain *écru* gossamer veil, which has been tied closely over the pale face and lambent eyes, is turned up, and somebody—"Silence that dreadful bell!" It is, however, swinging out its last summons now for the friends and relatives of passengers to leave the ship. I go back to the tender, which is dwarfed to ridiculous proportions as it lies

beside the stately sailing palace of 5,000 tons. The parting time has come. The pathos of a life is put into this mute shake of the hand, or into that tremulous word of farewell. Everybody tries to utter the eloquent word "good-bye" cheerfully, but there are eyes that belie the bravery of courageous tongues, and bleeding hearts cannot be disguised behind smiling faces. The tender puts off. There is a snowstorm of pocket-handkerchiefs, and a sorrowful imitation of a cheer. And now the screw of the great steamer is throbbing, and the sailing city, with its mixed argosy of hope and despair, love and hate, business and pleasure, weal and woe, glides down the broad water-way. And when the crowd on her deck have become a black mass, I can still see a sweet, sensitive girl, with sealskin hat and long, tight-fitting sealskin jacket, that shows every grace of that young rounded form. See! she is waving a white handkerchief, that looks no bigger than a postage-stamp. The snowy signal cannot flutter more than her own yearning heart. The great vessel recedes in the yellow haze of the river. Farewell! No, not farewell, "Queenie;" only—*au revoir*. E. B.



A WORD UPON EASY ATTAINMENTS.

BY THE REV. W. M. STATHAM.



ALL worthy attainment is hard! Genius should never be opposed to plodding, for genius to be successful must have an infinite power of taking pains. I am not about to write on the attainments of scholarship, or scientific pursuit, or musical proficiency, or medical skill: or even bonnet-making, which I am told is difficult.

No: Easy Attainment is my theme. In a literary sense, to glue a few commonplace expressions to-

gether, with interlardings of Latin quotation: in a pedestrian sense, to walk with an air of considerable conceit, so that the typical street-boy would ask, "Please, sir, will you tell me if you are anybody in particular?" in a conversational sense, to stick an eye-glass in your eye, letting the interlocutor down by perfect silence, and saying with an air of imperturbable wisdom, "Aw."

Some attainments are manifestly very easy. Organ-grinding is; but I select it because it is as distressing to others as it is easy to the performer. So are some habits. A man who "filberts" his nails or "bayonets" his teeth in society, ought to be admonished that it is an ill-mannered attainment. It is very mild to pronounce it bad etiquette: it is a sort of employment that does not add to the felicity of others.

But I suppose you have travelled with people who have a hateful way of—coughing, shall I say? No; clearing the throat in an ostentatious way, like the noise of a damaged drum, just to call attention; and you have met people who had apparently bought