

ON A MISSISSIPPI STEAMBOAT.—BY CATHERINE OWEN.



STEAMERS AT THE WHARF.

EW Orleans is in sharp contrast to other American cities. Unlike most of them it seems to have grown, and not been made by rule and measure. After leaving the dazzling newness of Galveston, its old-world look, its narrow, shady, many-balconied streets, make us think that in crossing the Gulf of Mexico we have landed on the old Continent.

There is a sultry silence in some of those old streets, filled with dense shadow and brilliant sunlight, that remind one of Spain, and the Spanish faces with olive skin and almond eyes favour the illusion; and then again one turns a corner and seems to be in some city of Southern France; fantastic colour and bright vivacity greet one at every step, with music and song and flower-filled spaces. Gay little villas of prosperous modern French merchants abut on the melancholy grandeur of the old creole noblesse; and then again we come to blocks of new and American houses, in which every form of latter-day luxury and modern improvement has been imported, and the spick-and-span newness, and perfect cleanliness, speak of the energetic Northern element that has crept into the fine old city since the war.

There is a squalid picturesqueness at the boat-landings of many American cities, but nowhere is it so replete with colour and life as in New Orleans on a bright day; and days here seem always bright; I have heard many Northern people say they longed for a grey sky, for some relief to this perpetual sunshine.

The great Mississippi steamboat abuts right on to the wharf, which is itself part of a commercial thoroughfare through which horse-cars, carriages, and vehicles are passing; and as the huge white bow of the boat, with its many windows, and balconies running round the decks, looms up before one, it looks like a high-shouldered house of eccentric shape.

The Mississippi steamboats resemble those of the Hudson, except that the sleeping accommodation is more like that of an ocean steamer. This is necessary, as the journey from New Orleans to St. Louis often takes almost as long as from England to New York. There is on these steamers no less luxury, plate-glass and gilding, than on those of the Hudson, but the perfect cleanliness is absent. There is a general air of *laissez aller*, the employés take their time about everything, and in this way typify the difference between North and South.

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But if the steamer, or at least the particular one on which I made the trip, was not shining with cleanliness, it was not dirty; the beds were clean, so was the table-linen; it was only that the grime inseparable from steam navigation was not so rigorously fought against as it is in the North; and therefore men sitting on velvet chairs, in the light linen clothes so general in the South, were apt to carry the marks away.

The appearance of travellers on these boats, too, is very different. North, every one tries to put the best foot forward; and those of the poorer classes who travel, dress as well as their means will permit. In the South it is different: there is no separation of classes, of course; all have equal rights on board, for all pay the same; but the difference between wealth and poverty appears more sharply drawn, because the poorer seem to take no care to hide it—sometimes from a natural light-hearted carelessness, at others no doubt from utter disregard as to what any one may think. And thus the Mississippi boat, instead of carrying a crowd of prosperous-looking people like those on the Hudson boats, has a medley in which the social status of each can be more accurately judged. From the opulent planter in immaculate white or grey linen, to the seedy-looking small-store-keeper going North to buy goods, or the numberless others, all wearing the clothes in which they pursue their calling, none are dressed up: there are cattle dealers, cattle drovers, gentlemen whom it is difficult to class, others about whom there is no difficulty at all, ladies the same, and not a few weary-looking people who have made a mistake in settling, and are going back to the North to try again.

The impedimenta of travel which many bring on board are significant of the semi-tropical climate we are leaving. Under the awning in the coolest part of the steamer hang great bunches of bananas and other fruit, which diminish day by day as the journey proceeds, and the fruit is shared with the children, though, as I found, generally brought on board with the idea of taking some local production North. Several mocking-birds in cages hung amongst the bananas, when I made the trip, and one man was taking two baby alligators to New York.

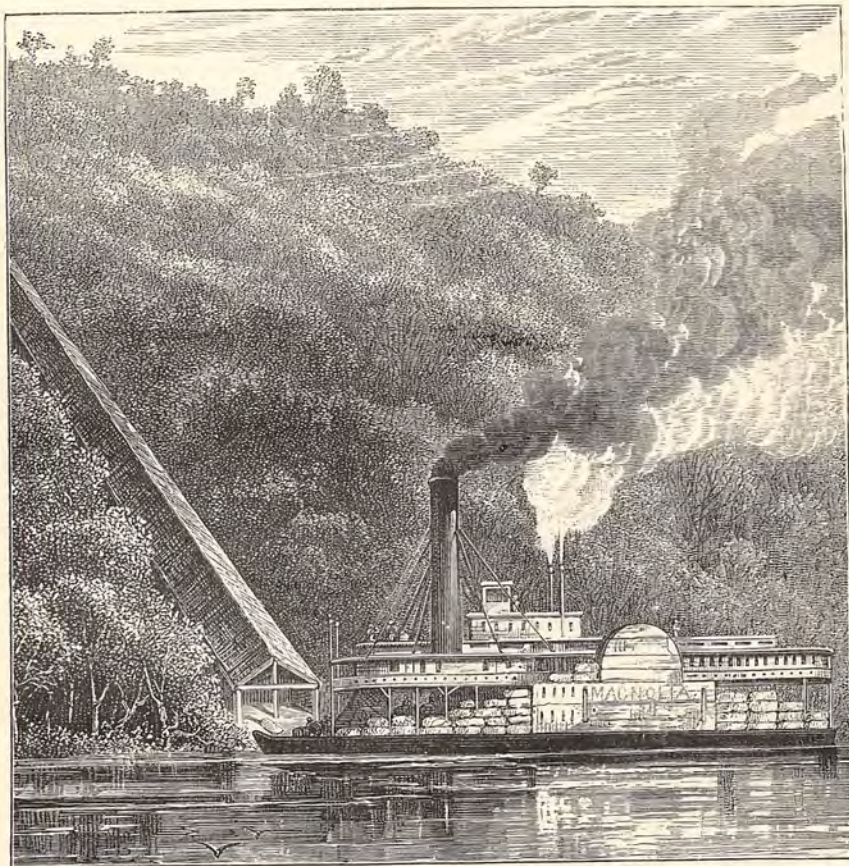
Of the scenery of the lower Mississippi there is not much to be said; it is absolutely flat on either bank. There is the novelty to Northern eyes of gliding between fields of waving sugar-cane, alternated with acres of orange groves, so long as we are in the State of Louisiana; but once that State is passed and we are travelling through Tennessee and Mississippi States, there is nothing to redeem the general ugliness.

The boat stops at numberless small landings with strange names, to take on or put off passengers or freight—a bale or two of cotton, sometimes sugar. Occasionally these little settlements are verdant, prosperous-looking places, with cheery people to watch the boat coming in; but more often they are such as

remind one of Dickens' "Eden," the yellow ague-worn faces, and weary listless air, telling of the fatal malaria that dwells in those water-soaked lands.

Every now and again some spot of interest in connection with the rebellion comes in view—Bâton

must be more largely diluted. Yet the water is disgusting in appearance, being like coffee to which a very little milk has been added; it is nearly opaque, and even when filtered is very uninviting in appearance; yet those who drink it protest that it is whole-



A COTTON-SHOOT ON THE MISSISSIPPI.

Rouge, Natchez, Vicksburg, all large handsome cities,—but to specify the points of historic interest would carry me beyond the limits of this paper.

Dickens has told us of the sluggish, filthy river, whose turbid and loathsome waters brought disease and death to the poor settlers at Eden. But though he in no way exaggerated the foul appearance of the water, and believed in calling it filthy he was correct, it is probably more free from actual filth than many a river of bright running water.

Its appearance is as dirty a hundred miles from a large city as in its vicinity, which would indicate that its dark appearance is not due to sewage; far fewer factories discharge their contents into it during its whole length than into the Thames, and as all the population that dwells on its banks is probably less than that of London, while the volume of water is a great many times more than in the Thames, whatever is foul

some, and some account for its appearance by saying it is dyed by the bark of trees from the forests through which it passes, which gives it the tan-coloured appearance; and in some parts of the stream huge quantities of bark are found floating in it. A planter on the steamer told me his men had caught at least forty cords of wood that spring, which had floated down below New Orleans, and that the planters generally obtained their supply in this way.

But in addition to the colour it may get from the prodigious amount of trees and vegetation it is for ever bringing down to the Gulf of Mexico, it is soiled by the red ochre of the Red River and the Arkansas, and the white mud of the Missouri.

Some idea of the vastness of this *Miche Sepe*, as the Indians called the Mississippi, may be gained from a statement which I quote from a recent article. "Its length from Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico is

more than one-eighth the distance round the world ; its basin exceeds a million square miles." Nevertheless no idea of beauty can be attached to the lower part of this Father of Waters, with its low-lying banks ; even the majesty of its breadth is lost sight of as one glides through it, brown and turbid, and watches waves of liquid mud roll from the bow of the boat.

I am sorry to say a great deal of drinking, smoking, and card-playing goes on, on board these steamers ; and notices are conspicuously posted about, "Beware of gamblers," reminding one of the stories we have read of gamblers fleecing innocent travellers on these journeys ; and the result is that every traveller looks somewhat askant at his neighbour for the first few hours of the trip.

The water was very high when we left New Orleans, and every hour got higher, until when we reached Memphis we found the "levées" had broken, and vast tracts of land were under water, and as we proceeded the devastation became terrible. So complete was the inundation that I failed at times to recognise it as such ; the river seemed to have become a vast lake, and then I was told that beneath it were hundreds of acres of cultivated fields, that what I took for small bushes growing in the water were full-grown trees of which only the very tops were visible. The water was sixty feet above the average level, and soon we found a frame-house floating, and many poor wretches in boats, who had lost everything in the floods. Population is happily very scant in these districts, so that the loss of life is small during the frequent rising of the terrible river ; but who can measure the suffering ?

The steamer would go for many hours and we would see no habitation, only evidence by the tops of the trees that the banks were wooded ; then perhaps

a solitary man in a boat would come towards us—he wanted a newspaper, or to inquire news from below.

One boat we met which contained a man and a pig ! It was hours since we had seen a house, and this solitary boatman on the dreary waste of waters brought home to one strangely the solitude of life in these wilds. He had saved his pig ! was it possible he had lived so utterly alone that he had no human being to save—no wife, child, or friend ?

And thus we came to Cairo, where the Ohio river joins the Mississippi. Cairo, a large prosperous city now, is said to have been the Eden of Dickens ; in his time it was but an unhealthy settlement, now it is a city with, of course, all the "modern improvements" for which America is so celebrated.

At Cairo, as we are bound for Cincinnati, we leave the Mississippi, and enter the Ohio, which is also flooding ; and now we change submerged cotton lands for miles and miles of tobacco fields under water, and can only think of the unfortunate men who see thus their year's harvest destroyed and can do nothing to save it.

Every effort has been made to devise some plan by which to prevent the periodical destruction of the miles of "levées," which carries ruin and death to the cities, towns, and villages in its course, but as yet in vain. It is the great problem science has yet to solve.

No attempt has been made in this short paper to specify all the large cities between New Orleans and Louisville, nor have I attempted statistics ; my aim in these papers is rather to give pen-pictures of what most strikes the eye and senses, than to present facts which have been frequently given by travellers, and can be found in any encyclopædia.

REMUNERATIVE EMPLOYMENTS FOR GENTLEMEN.

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.

I AM nearly twenty-eight years of age," writes a gentleman, in describing his own personal experience with regard to this subject—"I am nearly twenty-eight years of age, and was educated at a Public School and Cambridge University, but with no view to following any profession or trade. I now find myself totally unable to obtain suitable and at the same time remunerative employment. My age is perhaps to some extent against me, and my somewhat rusty 'book-learning' would not enable me to succeed in the competitive examinations for which the preparation is now usually so careful, systematic, and prolonged. I am, of course, in a general sense, fairly well educated, my habits are steady and business-like, and I have acquired some knowledge of office routine. I shall be very glad of, and very grateful for, any advice, assistance, and information you may be able to give."

Such instances might easily be multiplied to an almost indefinite extent. Hundreds of young men,

even among those who, unlike our correspondent, *have* been educated with a view to following some particular profession or trade, find themselves obliged unwillingly to waste the youthful energies which they would so gladly apply in some useful occupation did circumstances permit. They find themselves continually placed in a dilemma. Their education and business training have fitted them for a particular kind of work, for which the supply of workers is greater by far than the demand. They seek to obtain employment in another sphere, and are met with the not unreasonable objection that they are lacking in the necessary experience and skill. Their overtures in both cases, therefore, meet with neither encouragement nor success. Meanwhile time goes on, and the outlook for these young men becomes every day less promising.

It is exceedingly difficult to point out any means by which they may be enabled to enter upon a new and more satisfactory career. Even if able to make a start, it would be very unlikely that a sufficient salary