



THE HUDSON RIVER NIGHT-BOAT.

"HERE she goes!" You occupy some coigne of vantage on the bank of the river after the shadows of night have fallen. It is not absolutely dark. The outlines of the hills

are dimly visible. The white sails of a passing vessel show in ghostly indistinctness as she slips by. The stars are shining; perhaps the moon sheds her radiance. The summer air blows sweetly about you—it comes with freshness over the water, or, scented with the new-mown hay, blows from the land.

Away down the river you see the gleam of lights. There are two or three tiers of them, and they find their counterpart in the answering water. You catch a flash as of emerald and ruby above the other lights that glow through their long stretches. They are the "running lights"—green on the starboard, red on the port—which all vessels must carry for the convenience of pilots of other vessels. And so the boat draws near with steady beat of paddles; its huge bulk sweeps by, and is soon lost to view, as the floating village—for such it may well claim to be—passes on its way to one end or other of the magnificent stream.

This is one way of seeing a Hudson River Night-Boat. But a better way is to make a trip to some one of the river towns and find out for yourself the comfort and convenience and pleasure of this means of conveyance.

Each of the principal towns or groups of towns along the Hudson—Poughkeepsie, Rondout, Catskill, Hudson, and the rest—has its line of steamboats. These boats give employment during the season of navigation to a large num-

ber of hands. They carry immense quantities of freight, and are generally well filled, sometimes crowded, with passengers.

Will the reader take the trip with me up the river on one of these boats, and we will return from Albany on one of the floating palaces of the "People's Line."

It has been a sweltering, exhausting day in the city. Reaching the wharf late in the afternoon, you find the sun still has power, but there is some breeze from the river. The boat is pretty well filled with freight. There are great stacks of empty fruit-boxes; there is household furniture; supplies for the country merchants; a carriage, perhaps, and a team of horses; bar iron for some factory purpose—in short, a miscellaneous collection of all sorts of goods for the supply of the towns on the river or farther back. When the boat returns she will be loaded with farm and garden products; fruit—and what a bustle there will be when she lands in the early morning as the trucks hasten down to secure their share of the fragrant load!—vegetables, hay, calves. She brings down those things the city needs from the country, and takes back to the country those things that must be supplied from the centres of trade. The captain of one of these boats is generally not the navigating officer, as when a vessel sails more dangerous waters; those functions are left to the pilots. The captain is really a commission merchant, in charge of a floating warehouse, which is constantly receiving and discharging its stock of goods. Very often the captain has an interest in the boat, and carries on a successful mercantile career in connection with it. Plying back and forth between two or three villages and

the city, he acquires a very considerable local acquaintance, and has it in his power—a power which he generally uses—to make a trip very enjoyable for his passengers.

Ascending to the saloon you find comfortable accommodations. The state-rooms are clean and attractive. You are served with an excellent supper at a moderate price. Then, as the evening shadows gather, you can sit on the deck and enjoy the cool refreshment of the breeze, and watch the beautiful unfolding of the panorama, than which there is scarcely one more charming on any river in the world. A night's sleep, as sweet almost as in your own bed at home, and you awake in the early morning at your destination. During all the season of navigation, eight or nine months, it is no wonder that these boats are the favourite conveyances for large numbers of travellers.

But if these boats in the local trade are fine and comfortable, what is to be said of the great vessels that constitute the fleet of the "People's Line"? They are simply superb. Where the ordinary river-boat has a crew—officers, hands, waiters, etc.—of twenty-five or thirty persons, the *St. John* or the *Drew* has seventy or eighty. These veritable "floating palaces" will carry nearly eight hundred passengers, and it is by no means always an easy matter to secure a state-room unless you apply in ample time. Everything about these boats is fine and complete. The lofty saloon, with its double tiers of state-rooms, is elegant and luxurious. The rooms are finely fitted and furnished, though one finds no more real comfort in them than in the smaller boats. The table is served on the European plan, and you can order a simple or a luxurious meal. In short, there is everything to make travel attractive and delightful.

It is near the hour for departure. The crowd thickens in the broad gangway. There is a long "cue" at the captain's

office awaiting their turn to procure their tickets. All the employees are in uniform, while the captain with his gold lace is nearly as resplendent as an admiral of the navy. Indeed, it is no small responsibility to have charge of so many lives and so much property. All easy enough if everything goes well; but in case of accident, how much depending on his coolness and self-command!

It is a very animated scene as the last connecting train from the West arrives at the dock, and the passengers for New York come aboard. Friends are exchanging adieus; acquaintances find that they are to have each other's company on the trip down. The selfish man is pushing eagerly for the best place, and the timid and unaccustomed traveller taking what he can get. How the scene would astonish the old Dutchmen who navigated Hudson's river in their day in their small sloops, and to whom a trip to New York was vastly more of a matter than is a voyage to Europe now!

But the lines have been cast off, the great wheels have begun to revolve, and the trip has begun. Some of the passengers go down to the dining-room. Some sit out on the deck, forward or aft, to enjoy the beauty of the summer night. Some prefer the luxury of the saloon, with its gorgeous appointments and brilliant lights. Let us go to the forward hurricane deck, and see for a little how the boat is handled.

It is no small matter to take such a huge structure safely through the intricacies of the navigation of the upper Hudson. The river is narrow, the channel is crooked; there are sailing vessels and great flotillas of canal-boats all threading their way in one direction or the other. There are four men at the rims of the great wheel in the pilot-house, and it takes their utmost activity to guide the vessel. A lookout on the deck—a man of experience evidently in river navigation—keeps a careful watch for-

ward, and reports his observations at the pilot-house. Now the boat is slowed to cross some shallow, or to pass a "tow" without washing their decks. Again the speed is increased. Now a sharp turn is made, and then there is a run through a long stretch of straight water. So all the night through, pilot and wheelmen are carefully watching the course and skilfully guiding the vessel, as the powerful engine drives her on her way.

When we awake in the morning the

floating town is nearly at the city. A little later seven or eight hundred people have landed, and are dispersed through the great metropolis; but one would never know, unless he paused to think, that literally a whole villageful had passed over the gangway of the great steamer into the city's streets. What a triumph of man's ingenuity it is when such great companies are daily carried to and fro, not only in safety, but in absolute luxury, and at such small cost.



THE BALOLO FESTIVAL.

IN her book "At Home in Fiji," Miss Gordon Cumming tells the following extraordinary fact in natural history, which is peculiar to these islands:—

"It is called 'The Balolo Festival'—in other words, 'The Feast of Worms,' and occurred yesterday. The balolo is a small sea-worm, long and thin as ordinary vermicelli. Some are fully a yard long; others about an inch. It has a jointed body and many legs, and lives in the deep sea.

Only on two days in the whole year do these creatures come to the surface of the water. The first day is in October, which is hence called 'Little Balolo,' when only a few appear. The natives know exactly when they are due, and are all on the lookout for them. They make their calculations by the position of certain stars. After this no more are seen till the high tide of the full moon, which occurs between the twentieth and twenty-fifth of November, which hence takes the name of 'Great Balolo,' when they rise to the surface in countless myriads, always before daybreak. In the Samoan Isles the days occur about a fortnight earlier.

At certain well-known points near the reefs the whole sea, to the depth of several inches, is simply alive with these red, green, and brown creatures, which form one writhing mass, and are pursued by shoals of fish of all sizes, which come to share the feast with the human beings. The latter are in a state of the wildest excitement, for it is the merriest day of the year, and is looked forward to from one November to the next by all the young folk. About midnight they go out in their canoes, and anxiously await the appearance of the first few worms; and great is the struggle to secure these, which herald the approach of untold myriads. For several hours there is the merriest sport and laughter, every one bailing up the worms and trying who can most quickly fill his canoe, either by fair sport or by stealing from his neighbour. All is noise, scrambling, and excitement, the lads and lasses each carrying wicker baskets, with which they capture the worms without carrying too much salt water on board.

As the day dawns, these mysterious creatures with one accord sink once more to their native depths, and by the moment of sunrise not one remains on the surface; nor will another be seen for a twelvemonth, when, true to its festival, the balolo will certainly return.