

XXVII. HE GETS A PEEP AT IRELAND, AND AT LAST ARRIVES AT LIVERPOOL

The Highlander was not a grayhound, not a very fast sailer; and so, the passage, which some of the packet ships make in fifteen or sixteen days, employed us about thirty.

At last, one morning I came on deck, and they told me that Ireland was in sight.

Ireland in sight! A foreign country actually visible! I peered hard, but could see nothing but a bluish, cloud-like spot to the northeast. Was that Ireland? Why, there was nothing remarkable about that; nothing startling. If that's the way a foreign country looks, I might as well have staid at home.

Now what, exactly, I had fancied the shore would look like, I can not say; but I had a vague idea that it would be something strange and wonderful. However, there it was; and as the light increased and the ship sailed nearer and nearer, the land began to magnify, and I gazed at it with increasing interest.

Ireland! I thought of Robert Emmet, and that last speech of his before Lord Norbury; I thought of Tommy Moore, and his amatory verses: I thought of Curran, Grattan, Plunket, and O'Connell; I thought of my uncle's ostler, Patrick Flinnigan; and I thought of the shipwreck of the

gallant Albion, tost to pieces on the very shore now in sight; and I thought I should very much like to leave the ship and visit Dublin and the Giant's Causeway.

Presently a fishing-boat drew near, and I rushed to get a view of it; but it was a very ordinary looking boat, bobbing up and down, as any other boat would have done; yet, when I considered that the solitary man in it was actually a born native of the land in sight; that in all probability he had never been in America, and knew nothing about my friends at home, I began to think that he looked somewhat strange.

He was a very fluent fellow, and as soon as we were within hailing distance, cried out--"Ah, my fine sailors, from Ameriky, ain't ye, my beautiful sailors?" And concluded by calling upon; us to stop and heave a rope. Thinking he might have something important to communicate, the mate accordingly backed I the main yard, and a rope being thrown, the stranger kept hauling in upon it, and coiling it down, crying, "pay out! pay out, my honeys; ah! but you're noble fellows!" Till at last the mate asked him why he did not come alongside, adding, "Haven't you enough rope yet?"

"Sure and I have," replied the fisherman, "and it's time for Pat to cut and run!" and so saying, his knife severed the rope, and with a Kilkenny grin, he sprang to his tiller, put his little craft before the wind, and bowled away from us, with some fifteen fathoms of our tow-line.

"And may the Old Boy hurry after you, and hang you in your stolen hemp, you Irish blackguard!" cried the mate, shaking his fist at the receding boat, after recovering from his first fit of amazement.

Here, then, was a beautiful introduction to the eastern hemisphere; fairly robbed before striking soundings. This trick upon experienced travelers certainly beat all I had ever heard about the wooden nutmegs and bass-wood pumpkin seeds of Connecticut. And I thought if there were any more Hibernians like our friend Pat, the Yankee peddlers might as well give it up.

The next land we saw was Wales. It was high noon, and a long line of purple mountains lay like banks of clouds against the east.

Could this be really Wales?--Wales?--and I thought of the Prince of Wales.

And did a real queen with a diadem reign over that very land I was looking at, with the identical eyes in my own head?--And then I thought of a grandfather of mine, who had fought against the ancestor of this queen at Bunker's Hill.

But, after all, the general effect of these mountains was mortifyingly like the general effect of the Kaatskill Mountains on the Hudson River.

With a light breeze, we sailed on till next day, when we made Holyhead and Anglesea. Then it fell almost calm, and what little wind we had, was

ahead; so we kept tacking to and fro, just gliding through the water, and always hovering in sight of a snow-white tower in the distance, which might have been a fort, or a light-house. I lost myself in conjectures as to what sort of people might be tenanted that lonely edifice, and whether they knew any thing about us.

The third day, with a good wind over the taffrail, we arrived so near our destination, that we took a pilot at dusk.

He, and every thing connected with him were very different from our New York pilot. In the first place, the pilot boat that brought him was a plethoric looking sloop-rigged boat, with flat bows, that went wheezing through the water; quite in contrast to the little gull of a schooner, that bade us adieu off Sandy Hook. Aboard of her were ten or twelve other pilots, fellows with shaggy brows, and muffled in shaggy coats, who sat grouped together on deck like a fire-side of bears, wintering in Aroostook. They must have had fine sociable times, though, together; cruising about the Irish Sea in quest of Liverpool-bound vessels; smoking cigars, drinking brandy-and-water, and spinning yarns; till at last, one by one, they are all scattered on board of different ships, and meet again by the side of a blazing sea-coal fire in some Liverpool taproom, and prepare for another yachting.

Now, when this English pilot boarded us, I stared at him as if he had been some wild animal just escaped from the Zoological Gardens; for here was a real live Englishman, just from England. Nevertheless, as he soon

fell to ordering us here and there, and swearing vociferously in a language quite familiar to me; I began to think him very common-place, and considerable of a bore after all.

After running till about midnight, we "hove-to" near the mouth of the Mersey; and next morning, before day-break, took the first of the flood; and with a fair wind, stood into the river; which, at its mouth, is quite an arm of the sea. Presently, in the misty twilight, we passed immense buoys, and caught sight of distant objects on shore, vague and shadowy shapes, like Ossian's ghosts.

As I stood leaning over the side, and trying to summon up some image of Liverpool, to see how the reality would answer to my conceit; and while the fog, and mist, and gray dawn were investing every thing with a mysterious interest, I was startled by the doleful, dismal sound of a great bell, whose slow intermitting tolling seemed in unison with the solemn roll of the billows. I thought I had never heard so boding a sound; a sound that seemed to speak of judgment and the resurrection, like belfry-mouthed Paul of Tarsus.

It was not in the direction of the shore; but seemed to come out of the vaults of the sea, and out of the mist and fog.

Who was dead, and what could it be?

I soon learned from my shipmates, that this was the famous Bett-Buoy,

which is precisely what its name implies; and tolls fast or slow, according to the agitation of the waves. In a calm, it is dumb; in a moderate breeze, it tolls gently; but in a gale, it is an alarum like the tocsin, warning all mariners to flee. But it seemed fuller of dirges for the past, than of monitions for the future; and no one can give ear to it, without thinking of the sailors who sleep far beneath it at the bottom of the deep.

As we sailed ahead the river contracted. The day came, and soon, passing two lofty land-marks on the Lancashire shore, we rapidly drew near the town, and at last, came to anchor in the stream.

Looking shoreward, I beheld lofty ranges of dingy warehouses, which seemed very deficient in the elements of the marvelous; and bore a most unexpected resemblance to the ware-houses along South-street in New York. There was nothing strange; nothing extraordinary about them. There they stood; a row of calm and collected ware-houses; very good and substantial edifices, doubtless, and admirably adapted to the ends had in view by the builders; but plain, matter-of-fact ware-houses, nevertheless, and that was all that could be said of them.

To be sure, I did not expect that every house in Liverpool must be a Leaning Tower of Pisa, or a Strasbourg Cathedral; but yet, these edifices I must confess, were a sad and bitter disappointment to me.

But it was different with Larry the whaleman; who to my surprise,

looking about him delighted, exclaimed, "Why, this 'ere is a considerable place--I'm dummed if it ain't quite a place.--Why, them 'ere houses is considerable houses. It beats the coast of Afrilcy, all hollow; nothing like this in Madagasky, I tell you;--I'm dummed, boys if Liverpool ain't a city!"

Upon this occasion, indeed, Larry altogether forgot his hostility to civilization. Having been so long accustomed to associate foreign lands with the savage places of the Indian Ocean, he had been under the impression, that Liverpool must be a town of bamboos, situated in some swamp, and whose inhabitants turned their attention principally to the cultivation of log-wood and curing of flying-fish. For that any great commercial city existed three thousand miles from home, was a thing, of which Larry had never before had a "realizing sense." He was accordingly astonished and delighted; and began to feel a sort of consideration for the country which could boast so extensive a town. Instead of holding Queen Victoria on a par with the Queen of Madagascar, as he had been accustomed to do; he ever after alluded to that lady with feeling and respect.

As for the other seamen, the sight of a foreign country seemed to kindle no enthusiasm in them at all: no emotion in the least. They looked around them with great presence of mind, and acted precisely as you or I would, if, after a morning's absence round the corner, we found ourselves returning home. Nearly all of them had made frequent voyages to Liverpool.

Not long after anchoring, several boats came off; and from one of them stepped a neatly-dressed and very respectable-looking woman, some thirty years of age, I should think, carrying a bundle. Coming forward among the sailors, she inquired for Max the Dutchman, who immediately was forthcoming, and saluted her by the mellifluous appellation of Sally.

Now during the passage, Max in discoursing to me of Liverpool, had often assured me, that that city had the honor of containing a spouse of his; and that in all probability, I would have the pleasure of seeing her. But having heard a good many stories about the bigamies of seamen, and their having wives and sweethearts in every port, the round world over; and having been an eye-witness to a nuptial parting between this very Max and a lady in New York; I put down this relation of his, for what I thought it might reasonably be worth. What was my astonishment, therefore, to see this really decent, civil woman coming with a neat parcel of Max's shore clothes, all washed, plaited, and ironed, and ready to put on at a moment's warning.

They stood apart a few moments giving loose to those transports of pleasure, which always take place, I suppose, between man and wife after long separations.

At last, after many earnest inquiries as to how he had behaved himself in New York; and concerning the state of his wardrobe; and going down into the fore-castle, and inspecting it in person, Sally departed; having

exchanged her bundle of clean clothes for a bundle of soiled ones, and this was precisely what the New York wife had done for Max, not thirty I days previous.

So long as we laid in port, Sally visited the Highlander daily; and approved herself a neat and expeditious getter-up of duck frocks and trowsers, a capital tailoress, and as far as I could see, a very well-behaved, discreet, and reputable woman.

But from all I had seen of her, I should suppose Meg, the New York wife, to have been equally well-behaved, discreet, and reputable; and equally devoted to the keeping in good order Max's wardrobe.

And when we left England at last, Sally bade Max good-by, just as Meg had done; and when we arrived at New York, Meg greeted Max precisely as Sally had greeted him in Liverpool. Indeed, a pair of more amiable wives never belonged to one man; they never quarreled, or had so much as a difference of any kind; the whole broad Atlantic being between them; and Max was equally polite and civil to both. For many years, he had been going Liverpool and New York voyages, plying between wife and wife with great regularity, and sure of receiving a hearty domestic welcome on either side of the ocean.

Thinking this conduct of his, however, altogether wrong and every way immoral, I once ventured to express to him my opinion on the subject. But I never did so again. He turned round on me, very savagely; and

after rating me soundly for meddling in concerns not my own, concluded by asking me triumphantly, whether old King Sol, as he called the son of David, did not have a whole frigate-full of wives; and that being the case, whether he, a poor sailor, did not have just as good a right to have two? "What was not wrong then, is right now," said Max; "so, mind your eye, Buttons, or I'll crack your pepper-box for you!"