

XXXIII. THE SALT-DROGHERS, AND GERMAN EMIGRANT SHIPS

Surrounded by its broad belt of masonry, each Liverpool dock is a walled town, full of life and commotion; or rather, it is a small archipelago, an epitome of the world, where all the nations of Christendom, and even those of Heathendom, are represented. For, in itself, each ship is an island, a floating colony of the tribe to which it belongs.

Here are brought together the remotest limits of the earth; and in the collective spars and timbers of these ships, all the forests of the globe are represented, as in a grand parliament of masts. Canada and New Zealand send their pines; America her live oak; India her teak; Norway her spruce; and the Right Honorable Mahogany, member for Honduras and Cam-peachy, is seen at his post by the wheel. Here, under the beneficent sway of the Genius of Commerce, all climes and countries embrace; and yard-arm touches yard-arm in brotherly love.

A Liverpool dock is a grand caravansary inn, and hotel, on the spacious and liberal plan of the Astor House. Here ships are lodged at a moderate charge, and payment is not demanded till the time of departure. Here they are comfortably housed and provided for; sheltered from all weathers and secured from all calamities. For I can hardly credit a story I have heard, that sometimes, in heavy gales, ships lying in the very middle of the docks have lost their top-gallant-masts. Whatever the toils and hardships encountered on the voyage, whether they come from

Iceland or the coast of New Guinea, here their sufferings are ended, and they take their ease in their watery inn.

I know not how many hours I spent in gazing at the shipping in Prince's Dock, and speculating concerning their past voyages and future prospects in life. Some had just arrived from the most distant ports, worn, battered, and disabled; others were all a-taunt-o--spruce, gay, and brilliant, in readiness for sea.

Every day the Highlander had some new neighbor. A black brig from Glasgow, with its crew of sober Scotch caps, and its staid, thrifty-looking skipper, would be replaced by a jovial French hermaphrodite, its fore-castle echoing with songs, and its quarter-deck elastic from much dancing.

On the other side, perhaps, a magnificent New York Liner, huge as a seventy-four, and suggesting the idea of a Mivart's or Delmonico's afloat, would give way to a Sidney emigrant ship, receiving on board its live freight of shepherds from the Grampians, ere long to be tending their flocks on the hills and downs of New Holland.

I was particularly pleased and tickled, with a multitude of little salt-droghers, rigged like sloops, and not much bigger than a pilot-boat, but with broad bows painted black, and carrying red sails, which looked as if they had been pickled and stained in a tan-yard. These little fellows were continually coming in with their cargoes for ships

bound to America; and lying, five or six together, alongside of those lofty Yankee hulls, resembled a parcel of red ants about the carcass of a black buffalo.

When loaded, these comical little craft are about level with the water; and frequently, when blowing fresh in the river, I have seen them flying through the foam with nothing visible but the mast and sail, and a man at the tiller; their entire cargo being snugly secured under hatches.

It was diverting to observe the self-importance of the skipper of any of these diminutive vessels. He would give himself all the airs of an admiral on a three-decker's poop; and no doubt, thought quite as much of himself. And why not? What could Caesar want more? Though his craft was none of the largest, it was subject to him; and though his crew might only consist of himself; yet if he governed it well, he achieved a triumph, which the moralists of all ages have set above the victories of Alexander.

These craft have each a little cabin, the prettiest, charming-est, most delightful little dog-hole in the world; not much bigger than an old-fashioned alcove for a bed. It is lighted by little round glasses placed in the deck; so that to the insider, the ceiling is like a small firmament twinkling with astral radiations. For tall men, nevertheless, the place is but ill-adapted; a sitting, or recumbent position being indispensable to an occupancy of the premises. Yet small, low, and narrow as the cabin is, somehow, it affords accommodations to the

skipper and his family. Often, I used to watch the tidy good-wife, seated at the open little scuttle, like a woman at a cottage door, engaged in knitting socks for her husband; or perhaps, cutting his hair, as he kneeled before her. And once, while marveling how a couple like this found room to turn in, below, I was amazed by a noisy irruption of cherry-cheeked young tars from the scuttle, whence they came rolling forth, like so many curly spaniels from a kennel.

Upon one occasion, I had the curiosity to go on board a salt-drogher, and fall into conversation with its skipper, a bachelor, who kept house all alone. I found him a very sociable, comfortable old fellow, who had an eye to having things cozy around him. It was in the evening; and he invited me down into his sanctum to supper; and there we sat together like a couple in a box at an oyster-cellar.

"He, he," he chuckled, kneeling down before a fat, moist, little cask of beer, and holding a cocked-hat pitcher to the faucet--"You see, Jack, I keep every thing down here; and nice times I have by myself. Just before going to bed, it ain't bad to take a nightcap, you know; eh! Jack?--here now, smack your lips over that, my boy--have a pipe?--but stop, let's to supper first."

So he went to a little locker, a fixture against the side, and groping in it awhile, and addressing it with--"What cheer here, what cheer?" at last produced a loaf, a small cheese, a bit of ham, and a jar of butter. And then placing a board on his lap, spread the table, the pitcher of

beer in the center. "Why that's but a two legged table," said I, "let's make it four."

So we divided the burthen, and supped merrily together on our knees.

He was an old ruby of a fellow, his cheeks toasted brown; and it did my soul good, to see the froth of the beer bubbling at his mouth, and sparkling on his nut-brown beard. He looked so like a great mug of ale, that I almost felt like taking him by the neck and pouring him out.

"Now Jack," said he, when supper was over, "now Jack, my boy, do you smoke?--Well then, load away." And he handed me a seal-skin pouch of tobacco and a pipe. We sat smoking together in this little sea-cabinet of his, till it began to look much like a state-room in Tophet; and notwithstanding my host's rubicund nose, I could hardly see him for the fog.

"He, he, my boy," then said he--"I don't never have any bugs here, I tell ye: I smokes 'em all out every night before going to bed."

"And where may you sleep?" said I, looking round, and seeing no sign of a bed.

"Sleep?" says he, "why I sleep in my jacket, that's the best counterpane; and I use my head for a pillow. He-he, funny, ain't it?"

"Very funny," says I.

"Have some more ale?" says he; "plenty more." "No more, thank you," says I; "I guess I'll go;" for what with the tobacco-smoke and the ale, I began to feel like breathing fresh air. Besides, my conscience smote me for thus freely indulging in the pleasures of the table.

"Now, don't go," said he; "don't go, my boy; don't go out into the damp; take an old Christian's advice," laying his hand on my shoulder; "it won't do. You see, by going out now, you'll shake off the ale, and get broad awake again; but if you stay here, you'll soon be dropping off for a nice little nap."

But notwithstanding these inducements, I shook my host's hand and departed. There was hardly any thing I witnessed in the docks that interested me more than the German emigrants who come on board the large New York ships several days before their sailing, to make every thing comfortable ere starting. Old men, tottering with age, and little infants in arms; laughing girls in bright-buttoned bodices, and astute, middle-aged men with pictured pipes in their mouths, would be seen mingling together in crowds of five, six, and seven or eight hundred in one ship.

Every evening these countrymen of Luther and Melancthon gathered on the forecastle to sing and pray. And it was exalting to listen to their fine ringing anthems, reverberating among the crowded shipping, and

rebounding from the lofty walls of the docks. Shut your eyes, and you would think you were in a cathedral.

They keep up this custom at sea; and every night, in the dog-watch, sing the songs of Zion to the roll of the great ocean-organ: a pious custom of a devout race, who thus send over their hallelujahs before them, as they hie to the land of the stranger.

And among these sober Germans, my country counts the most orderly and valuable of her foreign population. It is they who have swelled the census of her Northwestern States; and transferring their ploughs from the hills of Transylvania to the prairies of Wisconsin; and sowing the wheat of the Rhine on the banks of the Ohio, raise the grain, that, a hundred fold increased, may return to their kinsmen in Europe.

There is something in the contemplation of the mode in which America has been settled, that, in a noble breast, should forever extinguish the prejudices of national dislikes. Settled by the people of all nations, all nations may claim her for their own. You can not spill a drop of American blood without spilling the blood of the whole world. Be he Englishman, Frenchman, German, Dane, or Scot; the European who scoffs at an American, calls his own brother Raca, and stands in danger of the judgment. We are not a narrow tribe of men, with a bigoted Hebrew nationality--whose blood has been debased in the attempt to ennoble it, by maintaining an exclusive succession among ourselves. No: our blood is as the flood of the Amazon, made up of a thousand noble currents all

pouring into one. We are not a nation, so much as a world; for unless we may claim all the world for our sire, like Melchisedec, we are without father or mother.

For who was our father and our mother? Or can we point to any Romulus and Remus for our founders? Our ancestry is lost in the universal paternity; and Caesar and Alfred, St. Paul and Luther, and Homer and Shakespeare are as much ours as Washington, who is as much the world's as our own. We are the heirs of all time, and with all nations we divide our inheritance. On this Western Hemisphere all tribes and people are forming into one federated whole; and there is a future which shall see the estranged children of Adam restored as to the old hearthstone in Eden.

The other world beyond this, which was longed for by the devout before Columbus' time, was found in the New; and the deep-sea-lead, that first struck these soundings, brought up the soil of Earth's Paradise. Not a Paradise then, or now; but to be made so, at God's good pleasure, and in the fullness and mellowness of time. The seed is sown, and the harvest must come; and our children's children, on the world's jubilee morning, shall all go with their sickles to the reaping. Then shall the curse of Babel be revoked, a new Pentecost come, and the language they shall speak shall be the language of Britain. Frenchmen, and Danes, and Scots; and the dwellers on the shores of the Mediterranean, and in the regions round about; Italians, and Indians, and Moors; there shall appear unto them cloven tongues as of fire.