

XLVII. HOMEWARD BOUND

Once more in Liverpool; and wending my way through the same old streets to the sign of the Golden Anchor; I could scarcely credit the events of the last thirty-six hours.

So unforeseen had been our departure in the first place; so rapid our journey; so unaccountable the conduct of Harry; and so sudden our return; that all united to overwhelm me. That I had been at all in London seemed impossible; and that I had been there, and come away little the wiser, was almost distracting to one who, like me, had so longed to behold that metropolis of marvels.

I looked hard at Harry as he walked in silence at my side; I stared at the houses we passed; I thought of the cab, the gas lighted hall in the Palace of Aladdin, the pictures, the letter, the oath, the dirk; the mysterious place where all these mysteries had occurred; and then, was almost ready to conclude, that the pale yellow wine had been drugged.

As for Harry, stuffing his false whiskers and mustache into his pocket, he now led the way to the boarding-house; and saluting the landlady, was shown to his room; where we immediately shifted our clothes, appearing once more in our sailor habiliments.

"Well, what do you propose to do now, Harry?" said I, with a heavy

heart.

"Why, visit your Yankee land in the Highlander, of course--what else?" he replied.

"And is it to be a visit, or a long stay?" asked I.

"That's as it may turn out," said Harry; "but I have now more than ever resolved upon the sea. There is nothing like the sea for a fellow like me, Redburn; a desperate man can not get any further than the wharf, you know; and the next step must be a long jump. But come, let's see what they have to eat here, and then for a cigar and a stroll. I feel better already. Never say die, is my motto."

We went to supper; after that, sallied out; and walking along the quay of Prince's Dock, heard that the ship Highlander had that morning been advertised to sail in two days' time.

"Good!" exclaimed Harry; and I was glad enough myself.

Although I had now been absent from the ship a full forty-eight hours, and intended to return to her, yet I did not anticipate being called to any severe account for it from the officers; for several of our men had absented themselves longer than I had, and upon their return, little or nothing was said to them. Indeed, in some cases, the mate seemed to know nothing about it. During the whole time we lay in Liverpool, the

discipline of the ship was altogether relaxed; and I could hardly believe they were the same officers who were so dictatorial at sea. The reason of this was, that we had nothing important to do; and although the captain might now legally refuse to receive me on board, yet I was not afraid of that, as I was as stout a lad for my years, and worked as cheap, as any one he could engage to take my place on the homeward passage.

Next morning we made our appearance on board before the rest of the crew; and the mate perceiving me, said with an oath, "Well, sir, you have thought best to return then, have you? Captain Riga and I were flattering ourselves that you had made a run of it for good."

Then, thought I, the captain, who seems to affect to know nothing of the proceedings of the sailors, has been aware of my absence.

"But turn to, sir, turn to," added the mate; "here! aloft there, and free that pennant; it's foul of the backstay--jump!"

The captain coming on board soon after, looked very benevolently at Harry; but, as usual, pretended not to take the slightest notice of myself.

We were all now very busy in getting things ready for sea. The cargo had been already stowed in the hold by the stevedores and lumpers from shore; but it became the crew's business to clear away the

between-decks, extending from the cabin bulkhead to the forecastle, for the reception of about five hundred emigrants, some of whose boxes were already littering the decks.

To provide for their wants, a far larger supply of water was needed than upon the outward-bound passage. Accordingly, besides the usual number of casks on deck, rows of immense tierces were lashed amid-ships, all along the between-decks, forming a sort of aisle on each side, furnishing access to four rows of bunks,--three tiers, one above another,--against the ship's sides; two tiers being placed over the tierces of water in the middle. These bunks were rapidly knocked together with coarse planks. They looked more like dog-kennels than any thing else; especially as the place was so gloomy and dark; no light coming down except through the fore and after hatchways, both of which were covered with little houses called "booby-hatches." Upon the main-hatches, which were well calked and covered over with heavy tarpaulins, the "passengers-gattee" was solidly lashed down.

This galley was a large open stove, or iron range--made expressly for emigrant ships, wholly unprotected from the weather, and where alone the emigrants are permitted to cook their food while at sea.

After two days' work, every thing was in readiness; most of the emigrants on board; and in the evening we worked the ship close into the outlet of Prince's Dock, with the bow against the water-gate, to go out with the tide in the morning.

In the morning, the bustle and confusion about us was indescribable. Added to the ordinary clamor of the docks, was the hurrying to and fro of our five hundred emigrants, the last of whom, with their baggage, were now coming on board; the appearance of the cabin passengers, following porters with their trunks; the loud orders of the dock-masters, ordering the various ships behind us to preserve their order of going out; the leave-takings, and good-by's, and God-bless-you's, between the emigrants and their friends; and the cheers of the surrounding ships.

At this time we lay in such a way, that no one could board us except by the bowsprit, which overhung the quay. Staggering along that bowsprit, now came a one-eyed crimp leading a drunken tar by the collar, who had been shipped to sail with us the day previous. It has been stated before, that two or three of our men had left us for good, while in port. When the crimp had got this man and another safely lodged in a bunk below, he returned on shore; and going to a miserable cab, pulled out still another apparently drunken fellow, who proved completely helpless. However, the ship now swinging her broadside more toward the quay, this stupefied sailor, with a Scotch cap pulled down over his closed eyes, only revealing a sallow Portuguese complexion, was lowered on board by a rope under his arms, and passed forward by the crew, who put him likewise into a bunk in the fore-castle, the crimp himself carefully tucking him in, and bidding the bystanders not to disturb him till the ship was away from the land.

This done, the confusion increased, as we now glided out of the dock. Hats and handkerchiefs were waved; hurrahs were exchanged; and tears were shed; and the last thing I saw, as we shot into the stream, was a policeman collaring a boy, and walking him off to the guard-house.

A steam-tug, the Goliath, now took us by the arm, and gallanted us down the river past the fort.

The scene was most striking.

Owing to a strong breeze, which had been blowing up the river for four days past, holding wind-bound in the various docks a multitude of ships for all parts of the world; there was now under weigh, a vast fleet of merchantmen, all steering broad out to sea. The white sails glistened in the clear morning air like a great Eastern encampment of sultans; and from many a forecastle, came the deep mellow old song Ho-o-he-yo, cheerily men! as the crews called their anchors.

The wind was fair; the weather mild; the sea most smooth; and the poor emigrants were in high spirits at so auspicious a beginning of their voyage. They were reclining all over the decks, talking of soon seeing America, and relating how the agent had told them, that twenty days would be an uncommonly long voyage.

Here it must be mentioned, that owing to the great number of ships

sailing to the Yankee ports from Liverpool, the competition among them in obtaining emigrant passengers, who as a cargo are much more remunerative than crates and bales, is exceedingly great; so much so, that some of the agents they employ, do not scruple to deceive the poor applicants for passage, with all manner of fables concerning the short space of time, in which their ships make the run across the ocean.

This often induces the emigrants to provide a much smaller stock of provisions than they otherwise would; the effect of which sometimes proves to be in the last degree lamentable; as will be seen further on. And though benevolent societies have been long organized in Liverpool, for the purpose of keeping offices, where the emigrants can obtain reliable information and advice, concerning their best mode of embarkation, and other matters interesting to them; and though the English authorities have imposed a law, providing that every captain of an emigrant ship bound for any port of America shall see to it, that each passenger is provided with rations of food for sixty days; yet, all this has not deterred mercenary ship-masters and unprincipled agents from practicing the grossest deception; nor exempted the emigrants themselves, from the very sufferings intended to be averted.

No sooner had we fairly gained the expanse of the Irish Sea, and, one by one, lost sight of our thousand consorts, than the weather changed into the most miserable cold, wet, and cheerless days and nights imaginable. The wind was tempestuous, and dead in our teeth; and the hearts of the emigrants fell. Nearly all of them had now hied below, to escape the

uncomfortable and perilous decks: and from the two "booby-hatches" came the steady hum of a subterranean wailing and weeping. That irresistible wrestler, sea-sickness, had overthrown the stoutest of their number, and the women and children were embracing and sobbing in all the agonies of the poor emigrant's first storm at sea.

Bad enough is it at such times with ladies and gentlemen in the cabin, who have nice little state-rooms; and plenty of privacy; and stewards to run for them at a word, and put pillows under their heads, and tenderly inquire how they are getting along, and mix them a posset: and even then, in the abandonment of this soul and body subduing malady, such ladies and gentlemen will often give up life itself as unendurable, and put up the most pressing petitions for a speedy annihilation; all of which, however, only arises from their intense anxiety to preserve their valuable lives.

How, then, with the friendless emigrants, stowed away like bales of cotton, and packed like slaves in a slave-ship; confined in a place that, during storm time, must be closed against both light and air; who can do no cooking, nor warm so much as a cup of water; for the drenching seas would instantly flood their fire in their exposed galley on deck?

How, then, with these men, and women, and children, to whom a first voyage, under the most advantageous circumstances, must come just as hard as to the Honorable De Lancey Fitz Clarence, lady, daughter, and seventeen servants.

Nor is this all: for in some of these ships, as in the case of the Highlander, the emigrant passengers are cut off from the most indispensable conveniences of a civilized dwelling. This forces them in storm time to such extremities, that no wonder fevers and plagues are the result. We had not been at sea one week, when to hold your head down the fore hatchway was like holding it down a suddenly opened cesspool.

But still more than this. Such is the aristocracy maintained on board some of these ships, that the most arbitrary measures are enforced, to prevent the emigrants from intruding upon the most holy precincts of the quarter-deck, the only completely open space on ship-board.

Consequently--even in fine weather--when they come up from below, they are crowded in the waist of the ship, and jammed among the boats, casks, and spars; abused by the seamen, and sometimes cuffed by the officers, for unavoidably standing in the way of working the vessel.

The cabin-passengers of the Highlander numbered some fifteen in all; and to protect this detachment of gentility from the barbarian incursions of the "wild Irish" emigrants, ropes were passed athwart-ships, by the main-mast, from side to side: which defined the boundary line between those who had paid three pounds passage-money, from those who had paid twenty guineas. And the cabin-passengers themselves were the most urgent in having this regulation maintained.

Lucky would it be for the pretensions of some parvenus, whose souls are deposited at their banker's, and whose bodies but serve to carry about

purses, knit of poor men's heartstrings, if thus easily they could precisely define, ashore, the difference between them and the rest of humanity.

But, I, Redburn, am a poor fellow, who have hardly ever known what it is to have five silver dollars in my pocket at one time; so, no doubt, this circumstance has something to do with my slight and harmless indignation at these things.