

## A RETROSPECT.

One word I ask—deny me not the pain.  
The simple pleasure of a parting word:  
A horrid dream of bygone days may claim  
The little boon of being once more heard.  
Ah, coward, wounds so cruel to renew:  
But slow repentance justly is thy fate.  
With poignant grief life's weary journey through,  
And reparation now, alas, too late.  
How easy 'tis to err—the punishment how great!

Ab, gentle matron, 'tis no lover's sigh  
These lips to breathe can ever hope or dare;  
A humble heart in pure sincerity  
Now seeks relief from years of mournful care.  
At Mercy's shrine let meek repentance kneel,  
That Justice may thy sentence stern forbear;  
Against my prayer thy bosom do not steel—  
Can vengeful feelings haunt a form so fair?  
Oh, drive not true remorse to still more fell despair.

By ancient friendship, by thy beaming eye,  
By thoughts untold in rambles by the shore,  
Oh, leave me not to make no sign, and die  
Misunderstood—unheard for evermore.  
The early griefs, life's short and solemn span,  
Permit the telling of a hidden woe:  
Forget the boy's misdeeds, forgive the man,  
Nor add aversion to the heavy blow  
For long years keenly felt, with oft a bitter throe.

To thee, then, Mary, I confess the wrong  
(Refuse me not this once that name so dear):  
Thy widowed days can surely not be long,  
Let us be friends the while we live here.  
Who has not loved? who not endured the smart  
Of friendship forced upon his young love-dream?  
I may not strive now to regain thy heart,  
But bid me hope to merit thy esteem—  
No brighter ray of light could through my life's  
path stream.

## LONG-SHOREMEN.

Sailors call boatmen "long-shoremen"—that is, men who live along the shore and do their business in shallow waters. They all come under the heading of watermen in Jack's mind; and when a sailor wants to insult another he calls him a 'long-shoreman'. This is not very fair to watermen or boatmen. It is true they are not seamen; they know very little about ships; but they see a good deal of weather; many of them go fishing in winter, they are the people who man the life-boats, and they risk their lives in a dozen ways very much more often than Jack does his. They are a separate and distinct class in our maritime population. They are a cross between landmen and sailors. In appearance, indeed, some of them are infinitely more nautical than the most nautical sailors afloat. I have seen them with rings in their ears, crosses and bracelets tattooed on their hands and wrist, a profusion of well-oiled locks hanging over their mahogany cheeks, dressed in sou'-westers, voluminous jerseys, and loose trousers, and looking as much like hardy and sea-oned mariners as it is possible for tarpanlins and india-ink and gun-powder to make men. But no sailor who saw them could be deceived. He would know them to be long-shoremen; something in the lounge, something in the gait, something in the way they hold their arms and carry their heads, would convict them. A sailor would know that those fellows were not used to dancing decks, nor to hanging on with their eyelids, nor to that routine of ship discipline which ends in rounding men's backs and arching their legs like an erect frog's. All their nautical appearance would go for nothing the instant they bestirred themselves.

An ocean sailor, a real salt-water man, is as active as a cat; his spring is inimitable—he tumbles about with astonishing alertness. The boatman, on the other hand, is heavy and slow; he sprawls and splashes, is ponderous, and over-exerts himself. This, no doubt, is the result of his lounging life. No boatman will ever stand upright if there is anything within the circumference of the horizon which he can lean against. A group of them gathered round a stone post presents a pleasing picture. They hang in various postures, leaning like lay figures without any bottom to stand upon, always contriving, however, to keep their backs turned upon one another, for in no other attitude do they seem able to converse. It is difficult to look at a lounge without fearing that he must have been desperately hard at work for hours, and that he is now suffering from severe exhaustion. I remember observing a boatman lounging a whole morning over a post, contorting his figure against it and around it and over it, until, apparently, in despair of ever being able to fit his body to it to his satisfaction, he went over to an anchor and writhed about the fluke of it until it fell dark, when he gave up the labour of lounging for the day, and withdrew to an alehouse to recruit his shattered strength.

In the summer-time the British boatman is slightly active. He lounges, indeed, but he lounges with the air of a man who is willing to be courted into agility. The seaside breeze is full of his cry of "Bort, sir, bort! bootiful day for a row, sir. Try a little fishin', sir! Pouting as long as your arm a-swimmin' about outside, sir, likewise codlin', sir, and plaice as it is a weariness to haul overboard."

I remember being seduced by one of these men into "trying" an hour's fishing. I knew it was rather early for fish worth catching to be about, and, besides, the water was like glass—nothing stirring it but the long-drawn folds of the delicate ground-swell, and a vague horizon that seemed to revolve like a horizontal corkscrew in the quivering haze of heat. The man who wanted me to go with him had a neck that inclined forward, and gave his head an eager posture; his blanket trousers came as high as his shoulder-blades, and the perspiration trickled down his nose from under his cap as he stood soliciting me.

"I don't believe there are any fish to be caught," said I.

"Beg your parding," he exclaimed, looking at me with dull astonishment; "Would you be pleased to repeat that remark, sir?"

I did as he asked me.

"No fish to be caught!" he cried. "P'raps pointing isn't fish; p'raps codlin' as long as that—ay, and as that—isn't fish? P'raps lemon soles, as eat with more relish nor turbot, with backs all meat, and fetchin' two shillings apiece on the barrers, isn't fish? Mind I won't contradict you and say they is fish; but when I saw a gent come ashore two hours ago, followed by Bill Burton and Old Dan'l a-carrying of his catchings, and stooping—strong men as they be—under the weight of 'em, it seemed to me that it wot they'd got in their hands wot'n't fish, then fish must ha' changed their natures in a violent hurry."

"It will be very hot work sitting in an open boat," said I.

"Hot? Well, an' a good job, too," he answered. "It's the heat as makes the fish hungry. It's contrary with fish with what it is with men. Hot weather makes men thirsty, but it gives the fish a appetite. That's the difference 'tween livin' in air and livin' in water."

"Very well," said I; "get the bait and lines, and bring your boat round."

He bunched off, with a very grave face, and after a long and violent struggle with his boat, during which he cast off the painter, shipped his rowlocks, adjusted a red-hot cushion in the sternsheets, and threw out his oars with the ponderous energy peculiar to boatmen, he brought his boat alongside, and I got into her. He proved, as I had suspected, a talkative man, and favoured me with his views on a great number of subjects. I believe he talked with the idea of distracting my mind from contemplation of the mission I had embarked on, and to prevent me from complaining of the fierce heat of the sun. After he had rowed a certain distance he began to peer about him with great ostentation of anxiety, pausing on his oars and dropping his head on one side while he viewed the land; then pulling another stroke or two and pausing again. I asked if anything was the matter with him.

"The right hole," he answered, "where all the good fish come together is just hereabouts, and I'm waiting to get the bearing. I'm the only boatman belongin' to the place as knows the exact spot, which obliges me to be a bit sly, for the watermen are a trifle jealous of my luck, and they're not over-particular in their use o' spy-glasses."

I found him very slow in getting the bearings of the "exact spot." Either he over-shot it or was too far to the westward of it, or the trickle of tide dropped him astern of it. He would look at me under his eyelids sometimes just to see if I was not growing more hopeful of obtaining sport in the face of his accurate and laborious measures to come at it. At last he made up his mind that he was exactly over the wonderful hole where all the good fish assembled, on which he tossed his oars in and tumbled a little anchor over the bows.

We were about two mile distant from the shore. The oil-smooth water was an exquisite vehicle of sound, and the cries from the land, the tinkling of bells, the rattle of wheels floated past my ears with beautiful clearness, and in miniature notes, as though the little kingdom of Lilliput was under our bows, and I was listening to the echoes from its tiny metropolis. The heat thickened the atmosphere, and the vessels on the horizon loomed large and vaguely; the water was a delicate light green, dotted here and there with spots of colour in the shape of red and white and black buoys, gently leaning one way with the tide. It was pleasant to listen to the lip-lipping of the current tenderly caressing the sides of the boat that slowly rose and slowly fell on the breathing bosom of the water. But for the heat I might have pardoned my boatman for courting me into this trip. The swaying of the boat was lulling, the hazy distances were dreamy and the light of them soft, and the monotone stillness of the air was heightened rather than disturbed by the fine, small sounds which came from the shining land. But neither the voice, the appearance, nor the movements of the boatman were friendly to poetic musings. It was not easy to watch his face and survey the posture of his immense blanket-trousers as he sat clearing the fishing lines and think of the "beautiful." We got our lines overboard, and I waited with some expectation for those "bites" which the boatman assured me would quickly come "as thick as mud in a wine-glass."

I noticed that he fished with a very business-like air, with a slight look of wonder, as if rather surprised at not immediately hooking a large fish. After hanging over the edge of the boat for above half an hour, during which time I lost my bait on an average of once every five minutes, either through the tide or through crabs, I got a powerful bit, and dragged up, with a beating heart, a great mass of sea-weed! This was very mortifying. But now the boatman had a bite. It was apparently more powerful than mine had been. He struggled with the line, and I might have supposed he had caught a large cod.

"Lord, how he pulls!" he muttered, and then, when I was looking eagerly, he shouted, "Gone and be blowed to him!" It was an excellent bit of acting. He looked dreadfully annoyed and disappointed. He pulled up the hook, examined it narrowly, said "it looked all right to him," and that "it was werry odd, though true, as a scientific gent, a nat'ral philosopher, had told

him, that some fish has the art of getting off a hook arter they're on it; it 'ud be interesting to know how they did it; if he had the larning he'd write to the papers and recommend the Aqueerium folks to look into that matter." He was more fortunate than I, for he had several strong and struggling bites after that, whereas the time went by without bringing me one. His fish always managed to get off, somehow or other, just before they reached the surface. I own that he acted his part so cleverly that several times I was deceived, and caught myself bobbing over the gunwale with renewed hope, and wondering why all the fish should collect on his side of the boat. But at last the comedy grew wearisome, and what was more, the sun threatened in a short time to make it unbearable. I pulled up my line and flung it into the boat, and told him to get his anchor.

"Surely you ain't going to give up, sir?" he exclaimed. "Why, the fish han't had time yet to smell the bait."

"They must have lost the sense of smell," said I, "for we have been here an hour and a half."

"Look here, sir," said he in a low voice: "I wouldn't tell you before, as it's a place I keep special for two or three gents as pays me five shillings an hour for the privilege. But as you've had no luck I don't mind telling you. You see that buoy? Well, about ten fathoms to the right o' that is a bit of ground thick with fish—thick? ay, thick ain't the word. There's no word to touch the truth. I'll row you over there." And he began to bustle about, but I had had enough.

"Up with your anchor," said I, "and put me ashore."

He saw I was in earnest, but he had not done with me yet. There was a good twenty minutes to be wasted in winding up the lines, getting in the anchor, swabbing the bottom of the boat, wiping his forehead, looking around the sea, getting his oars out, and moistening his hands. I suppose it was the surprise he labored under, the astonishment at our want of luck and at my want of perseverance that made him so slow. He worked like a man oppressed with amazement, and, true actor as he was, he made simulated emotion profitable to the last, for his astonishment kept me at sea three-quarters of an hour after I told him to put me ashore.

But it is impossible to begrudge a boatman his earnings. His winter is very nearly nine months long, and I have never yet been able to ascertain how he lives during the dreary months when his town is empty and the "stormy winds do blow." If there is a lifeboat belonging to his town he may get a pound or two now and again by helping to man it; he may also make a little money by hovelng. But the greater proportion of boatmen don't man the life-boats, and don't hovel; and that nobody should ever be able to find out how they live in the winter is not very surprising, seeing that they have no ideas whatever on that subject themselves. And yet it must be admitted that philanthropy may sometimes be wasted on boatmen. I once asked a boatman, on a cold, tempestuous November day, if anything was going forward to enable him to earn a few shillings.

"Anything going forward?" he answered. "Yes, meat's going forward, rent's going forward, coal's going forward—everything's going forward; and they're very nearly out o'sight already."

"Is there no hovelng to be done?" I asked. "Hovelng?" (these fellows always repeat your question). "No, there's no hovelng; it's all steam. 'Hovelng's dead and gone."

"How on earth do you live?" I said.

"Live?" he echoed hysterically. Who says I live? I don't live waster. If any man should tell ee that Bob Morgan lives, you just turn and call him a liar."

Next day was fine, I saw this same man lounging against a stone post, and went up to him.

"Here Morgan," said I, "get your boat round; 'I'll go for a row with you."

He looked at me lazily, preserving his lounging attitude. "'Taint worth my while to go for a row," he answered. "Pretty thing if a ship should go ashore when I was out rowing! Why, I'd lose my salvage, and all for a couple o' bob!"

"But do you mean to say that you'll throw away a couple of shillings on the chance of a vessel going ashore?" I asked.

"Ay," he answered; "times are two hard to risk losin' a chance, master."

The stone post was too comfortable for that man to quit. He would rather keep leaning against it and grumbling at life, and wishing an earthquake would come and swallow everybody up, than earn two shillings by working. Yet one cannot but think kindly of the boatman. His quaint figure, his leathern face, his wonderful breeches, mix themselves up in our pleasant memories. To think of him is to recall the bright summer day, the sparkling of surf upon the golden sand, the blue sea, the clear and singing wind, the leaning, gleaming yacht, the brown smack, the mellow creaking of oars in the rowlocks, and the buzzing of foam at the wherry's stern. He is an amusing man, a queer talker—a man to use Leigh Hunt's phrase, of a uniformity full of variety. In many respects boatmen are real studies.

An agreeable hour may be passed in watching and hearing them solicit custom. One man is very confidential; he sinks his voice to a whisper; he accompanies you as you go, and walks on tiptoe. "Bootiful day, sir. Italian sky, sir. The werry day for a row, sir. Give the lady a treat, sir? No hexercise like rowin' for

developing the figure. It makes the waist small, mum, and by circulatin' the blood it gives a werry genteel color to the cheeks, mum."

When the confidential boatman releases you the brazen boatman attacks you. "Bort, sir! Now's your time; gale o' wind to-morrow. Bort, lady! Come along, miss; give the lady a row, sir! You jump in, miss; the gent'll follow yer. This way, miss."

Then, before you have advanced another dozen of steps, you have the sneaking boatman sticking to your skirts. "Don't want to say nothin' against them men, sir; but if you don't want to be drowned you come along with me. The safest bort in the world, miss; fit to cross the Atlantic. I'm not a touter, sir. Mine's a bort as wants no recommendin'. Been a waterman all my life, I have, and only cares to row real ladies and gents."

Sometimes these solicitations lead to a quarrel between the boatmen, and their language and attitudes then grow picturesque. It usually begins in this way: "Look here, William: what are you messin' about the gent for? You saw me ax him, and he said NO." "You keep yourself to yourself, Tom. I've got nothin' to say to you. If ye can't yet a job yourself don't you try to stop other men from airming a shilling."

By this time two or three other boatmen have come up, and they stand listening to the quarrel with their backs turned upon the combatants, who recede from each other as they grow more insulting, until at last distance obliges them to shout with their hands against their mouths; and I have heard a quarrel carried on for an hour between two boatmen, who have backed some hundred yards. And yet, among these lounging men, these grumbling fellows, whom one laughs at in summer and wonders at in winter, are some real heroes. I remember when the *Indian Chief* was lost off Harwick, seeing the life-boat's crew who had rescued a number of men from the wreck come ashore, and among them were several of, apparently the laziest loungers in the town to which they belonged. These men had been out for two days and a night, exposed to as cold and furious a gale of wind as had blown in those seas for many a year; and how they behaved, the manful, resolute spirit and fine humanity they had exhibited, was recorded by me at the time. Among the populations of boatmen are scores of brave souls, men who are to be quickened and stirred out of their loungings into noble achievements at the first call that is made. Indeed, those who know the boatman only in the summer months know very little about him. His average character is best illustrated at life-boat stations; but these are now happily numerous enough to express his quality and worth in times when danger is to be faced and human life to be rescued all round the coast. In so numerous a body there will be found very poor specimens, of course. But they are well known in their various ports and towns. They are careful to run to the life-boat only when the weather is fine and warm. They are the grumblers who will not work when the offer of work is made them. The characteristics of a few such men easily prejudice a whole community; and if the English boatman does not stand so high in the public esteem as he deserves, it is because he is here and there found to be an unfit, uncivil, growling, and lazy fellow.

But the word boatman is a comprehensive term. A waterman who gets his living by rowing people in his wherry may, if you choose, be called a boatman; but a boatman proper—one of that race of fine fellows called Deal Boatmen, for instance—would not take it kindly if you spoke of him as a waterman. It is well, perhaps, that there should be some kind of distinction. Look, for example, at the occupants of a galley-punt on a blowing day. There are plenty of watermen who would take that job, no doubt; but they don't; it is not their business; galley-punting is a vocation of itself, and the men who work those long, slender, and fragile open boats deserve a term quite separate from the general name given to men who get their living by fine weather. I never watch a galley-punt, or "knock-toes," as they are called in some parts, without wonder and admiration.

Once I was looking through a glass at a great number of ships in the Downs. The sight was a magnificent one. It was blowing a heavy gale of wind from the southward and westward, and a sea was running that made the smaller vessels vanish and re-appear like stars behind driving clouds. I was noticing the plunging and rolling of a big, motherly, lubberly, old-fashioned bark, with great channels which she dipped under water and brought up with the foam pouring in white torrents among the dead-eyes, when my eye was taken by a fragment of canvas showing behind the pea-green ridge of a long stretch of rolling sea, whose roar I could hear in imagination as it swept through the sphere of the powerful telescope; and, to my astonishment, an instant after there was hove up a galley-punt—a mere speck of a craft—with two men in her, one steering and one sitting on the after-most thwart, with his back to the bows. She ran to the top of a great sea that broke when she was on the crest of it, and her croke-roofed strip of sail stood out of the smother of foam. Then, in a breath, she vanished, mast and all; but presently up she shot again, leaping like an arrow to the height of the swooping and gleaming activity. It made me marvel at the pluck and exquisite science of those two fellows to watch that boat coming and going upon that vast dark-green surface of broken, hurling, savage, and foaming waters, the power and volume of which were most forcibly illustrated by the