

WONDERS OF THE SEA.

Water is as indispensable to all life, whether vegetable or animal, as is the air itself. From the cedar on the mountains, to the lichen that clings to the wall; from the mastodon that pastures on the forests, to the animalculæ that float in the sunbeam; from the Leviathan that heaves the sea into billows, to the microscopic creatures that swarm a million in a single foam-drop; all alike depend for their existence on the single element, and must perish if it be withdrawn. But this element of water is supplied entirely by the sea. All the waters that are in the rivers, the lakes, the fountains, the vapors, the dew, the rain, the snow come alike out of the ocean. It is a common impression that it is the flow of the rivers that fills the sea. It is a mistake. It is the flow of the sea that fills the rivers. The streams do not make the ocean, but the ocean makes the streams. We say that the rivers rise in the mountains, and run to the sea; but the truer statement is, that the rivers rise in the sea, and run to the mountains, and that their passage thence is only their homeward journey to the place from which they started. All the water in the rivers has once been in the clouds; and the clouds are but the condensation of the invisible vapour that floats in the air; and all this vapour has been lifted into the air by the heat of the sun playing upon the ocean. Most persons have no impression of the amount of water which the ocean is continually pouring into the sky, and which the sky itself is sending down in showers to refresh the earth. If they were told that there is a river above the clouds, equal in size to the Mississippi or the Amazon; that this river is drawn up out of the sea, more than a mile high; that it is always full of water, and that it is more than twenty-five thousand miles in length, reaching clear round the globe, they would call it a very extravagant assertion. And yet, not only is this assertion substantially true, but very much more than this is true. If all the waters in the sky were brought into one channel, they would make a stream more than fifty times as large as the Mississippi or the Amazon. How many rivers are there in the sky? Just as many as there are on earth. If they were not first in the sky, how could they be on the earth? If it is the sky that keeps them full, then the sky must always have enough to keep them full; that is, it must always be pouring down into them just as they themselves are pouring down into the sea. It is computed that the water which falls from the clouds every year would cover the whole earth to the depth of five feet; that is, if the earth were a level plain, it would spread over it an ocean of water five feet deep, reaching round the whole globe. The sky, therefore, has not only a river of water, but whole oceans of it. And it has all come out of the sea. The sea, therefore, is the great inexhaustible fountain which is continually pouring up into the sky precisely as many streams as large as all the rivers of the world are pouring into it. It is this which keeps the ocean at the same level from year to year. If it were not sending off into the air precisely as much as it receives from the rivers, it would be continually rising on its shores, and would finally overflow all the lands of the earth.

And now, if the sea is the real birth-place of the clouds and the rivers; if out of it come all the rains and dews of heaven; then instead of it being a waste and an incumbrance, it is a vast fountain of fruitfulness, and the nurse and mother

of all the living. Out of its mighty breasts come the resources that feed and support all the population of the world. All cities, nations, and continents of men; all cattle, and creeping things, and flying fowl; all the insect race that people the air with their million tribes innumerable; all grasses and grains that yield fruit for man and for beast; all flowers that brighten the earth with beauty; all trees of the field and forest that shade the plains with their lowly drooping, or that lift their banners of glory against the sky, as they march over a thousand hills; all these wait upon the sea, that they may receive their meat in due season. That which it gives them, they gather. It opens its hand, and they are filled with food. If it hides its face they are troubled, their breath is taken away, they die, and return to their dust.

Omnipresent, and everywhere alike, is this need and blessing of the sea. It is felt as truly in the centre of the continent, where, it may be, the rude inhabitant never heard of the ocean, as it is on the wave-beaten shore. He is surrounded every moment by the presence and bounty of the sea. It is the sea that looks out upon him from every violet in his garden bed; from every spire of grass that drops upon his passing feet the beaded dew of the morning; from the rustling ranks of the growing corn; from the bending grain that fills the arms of the reaper; from the juicy globes of gold and crimson that burn amongst the green orchard foliage; from his bursting presses, and his barns that are filled with plenty; from the broad forehead of his cattle, and the rosy faces of his children; from the cool dropping well at his door; from the brook that murmurs by its side; and from the elm and spreading maple that wave their protecting branches beneath the sun, and swing their breezy shadows over his habitation. It is the sea that feeds him. It is the sea that clothes him. It is the sea that cools him with the summer cloud, and that warms him with the blazing fires of winter. He eats the sea, he drinks the sea, he wears the sea, he ploughs sows, and reaps the sea, he buys and sells the sea, and makes wealth for himself and children out of its rolling waters, though he lives a thousand leagues away from the shore, and has never looked on its crested beauty, or listened to its eternal anthem.

Thus, the sea is not a waste and an incumbrance. Though it bears no harvest on its bosom, it yet sustains all the harvests of the world. Though a desert itself, it makes all the other wildernesses of the earth to bud and blossom as the rose. Though its own waters are salt and wormwood, so that it cannot be tasted, it makes all the clouds of heaven to drop with sweetness, opens springs in the valleys, and rivers among the hills, and fountains in all dry places, and gives drink to all the inhabitants of the earth.—*Christian's Penny Magazine.*

In the Indian department of the great Exhibition is a red praying wheel from Thibet. The prayer is written on a piece of paper and fixed to the wheel, which revolves on a spindle held in the hand. The idea of the worshipper is that every time the wheel turns the prayer is made. Frequently the wheel is fitted to be turned by a small stream. In the mountains of Thibet travellers see considerable numbers of these praying machines thus driven by water power.