

LETTERS FROM BERMUDA.

LETTER III.

HAMILTON, December, 18.—

DEAR H.—Since my last letter we have made several expeditions through Hamilton and vicinity—I should say excursions, as expeditions, strictly speaking, usually refer to war-like enterprises, ours being quite pacific and made with feelings of the utmost good-will to all. The only antagonists we ever meet are wind and weather. They frequently make a fierce attack on unwary travellers. Banning themselves together, the wind and rain sweep everything before them; then a conflict ensues, seemingly a struggle for mastery, and, as old Boreas for an instant stops to rest, the flood-gates of Heaven are opened and a deluge is poured down.

In vain the unlucky pedestrian who is "caught out" endeavors to shield himself with his umbrella. The wind turns it inside out and tears it from its lawful owner. The only prudent course in a "squall," as they call it, is to hasten to the nearest shelter, whatever that may be, or in less time than it takes to tell it the "unfortunate" will be drenched as completely as if he had been blown into the bay and just crawled out.

One of these squalls occurs about every few weeks; and on the first sign of a storm, if we were on Front street, the shopkeepers invariably offered us seats, and politely invited us to remain until the rain ceased. "*Cela va sans dire.*" As we were captives that was merely a "*façon de parler.*" The little tornado, though fierce, is of short duration; and in about twenty or thirty minutes Nature, like a wilful child, smiles through her tears and soon looks as lovely and serene as usual. Excuse this nonsense. I could have made it much more concise by quoting the words of Holy Scripture: "There appeared a cloud like a man's footprint; the Heavens darkened and there were clouds and wind and a great fall of rain." (I. Kings, xvii.) This verse describes fairly a squall in Bermuda.

We thought it better to visit the public buildings of Hamilton and places in the vicinity before going out of town to explore the other places of interest in the Bermudas.

I will now tell you a little of the geology of these islands. The usual building stone is soft, and it can be *sawn into blocks as wood is sawn*. It resembles the white stone of France, but is not as durable as the latter. The formation of these islands for the most part is derived from broken-up shells, corals and nullipores, etc., presenting every state from the most friable material to the compact limestone.

The Royal Engineers' quarries contain, however, excellent, hard, durable stone suitable for foundations, walks, etc.

I should think that an earthquake was the cause of the present state of these islands—perhaps the earthquake of 1801. From soundings taken recently around Bermuda it is proved to be a peak rising abruptly from the abyssal depth of 1,820 fathoms, while at a distance of eighty miles its base rests upon the ocean floor at the great depth of 3,875 fathoms; so that if the formation stood above water it would appear as a mountain over 23,000 feet in height.

It has been proved, in fact, that Bermuda was at one time, if not a mountain, yet elevated greatly above the surface of the water.

Experiments made in 1870 by submarine blastings show that at a depth of 42 feet caves full of stalactites and congealed water resembling cornelian were discovered, and also layers of red earth two feet thick, similar to that forming the common soil of the islands,

and mixed with the remains of cedar trees.

It has also been proved that Bermuda was formerly 24 miles by 12, extending to the reefs; though now, with islands and rocky islets (altogether 300 may be counted), the whole lies in a space of 28 miles by 8, and so slightly raised above the ocean surface the highest point of land only reaches 250 feet above the level of the water.

The white stone of Bermuda will not hold water, being porous; and the inhabitants, by using bricks and cement, make excellent cisterns and provide extensive "water-sheds," as they are called, to catch rain-water.

"The clouds consign their treasures to the fields,
And, softly shaking on the dimpled pool
Preclusive drops, let all their moisture flow
In large effusion o'er the freshened world."

The water sheds are constructed for the purpose of catching rain-water. I suppose as a water-shed is the highest ground in a country from which rivers or streams descend, the name is suitable to the artificial ones formed in Bermuda. The inhabitants of these islands are obliged absolutely to depend on the rain as a beverage, and for everything in which fresh water is necessary.

"When the blackening clouds in sprinkling showers
Distil from the high summits down, the rain
Runs trickling; with the fertile moisture cheered,
The orchards smile; joyous the gardeners see
Their thriving plants and bless the heavenly dew."

There are no natural wells or lakes in Bermuda. Being thus circumstanced the people have everywhere made large tanks to contain rain-water, which is clear as crystal and most delicious to drink. The roofs of all houses, water sheds, &c., are kept constantly coated with lime. The tanks and cisterns are prepared to preserve water pure and fresh for two or three months in case a drought should occur. A drought is, happily, rare in Bermuda; but if that contingency be not provided for, it would be a serious matter for the Bermudians. They could sing dolefully with the "Ancient Mariner":

"Water, water, everywhere,
And all the boards did shrink;
Water, water everywhere,
And not a drop to drink."

That might be the very inconvenient situation of the inhabitants—an awkward predicament for the Temperance people. The Teetotallers would have to drink ale or wine, unless they had a stock of Temperance drinks ready for use. They must "Use a little wine for their often infirmities;" or they might say with the poet:

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I'll pledge thee with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine."

That is a temperance pledge surely.

The following lines express Bermudian sentiments concerning rain: "When the clouds have poured their rain,
Sweeter smell the flowers;
Brightest shine Heaven's starry train
In Earth's sunless hours."

How beautiful is the rain!
After the dust and heat,
In the broad and fiery street,
In the close and narrow lane
How beautiful is the rain!
To the dry grass and drier grain
How welcome is the rain!

Most of the menial labor is performed by the colored people, the majority of whom are mulattoes of every shade, from ebony and walnut to cream color. They are a simple-minded, civil people, usually neatly dressed, and smiling.

They laugh and sing and dance away the time.
Gay as the birds and happy as their clime."

The drives about Hamilton are very pleasant. You bowl along those white stone roads, which are smooth

and free from dust, over a constant succession of hill and dale, always undulating and always winding. Scenery new and beautiful greets you at every turn. You pass through long avenues of oleander trees thickly interlaced, being planted close together to shield gardens and orchards from the high winds.

Here and there are lovely gardens filled with tropical plants and flowers, and inside stand the handsome white mansions of the owners, surrounded by green verandahs. The latter are a necessity in this semi-tropical climate.

Occasionally a brilliant blue green color flashes like a jewel as the road turns towards either side, and we get a glimpse of the ocean. It is stated that, with the exception of the waters of the Mediterranean Sea, none can compare with those around Bermuda for color and transparency. One may see below the surface of the water twenty-feet on a calm day. The rocks with their growth of coral are plainly visible, and seem to those in the boats to be quite near the surface.

"Along the margin many a shining dome
White as the palace of a Lapland gnome
Brightened the wave."

I will conclude with an echo of Cary's wish:

"Here could I wish, so fate allowed,
No longer toiling through the crowd,
Mine age this calm content to taste,
With ocean breath mine own to waste."

Adieu. PLACIDIA.

Mr. Gladstone's Modesty.

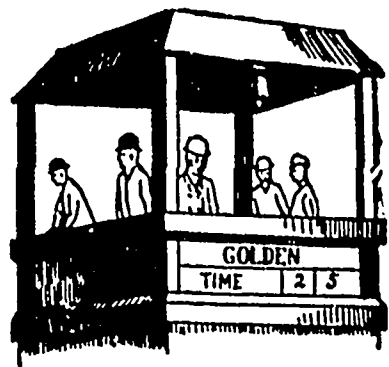
Mr. Gladstone has written a reply to the address presented to him by the Liberal Federation on the occasion of his retirement from office. He excuses himself for his delay in answering on the ground of the weakness of his eyesight. In referring to the summary of the achievements of his political lifetime contained in the address, Mr. Gladstone says:

"While the picture is just as regards the action of the nation and the Liberal party, only a very small and insignificant fraction of the accomplished results can be ascribed seriously to myself. Concurrence to the best of my limited ability is all that I can claim. Subject to this observation I conceive that the facts of my parliamentary history are such as will obtain conspicuous notice on the page of history.

"It is not for me to enter upon the deeply interesting prospects of the future, but I will express my earnest hope that the future will be marked by the same practical tone, the same union of firmness and moderation, the same regard for individual freedom, the same desire to harmonize the old age and the new, and the same sound principles and policy of administration which have given the work of the past year so much promise of stability."

According to the Lewiston Journal, a Maine lumber man says that the wild lands of Maine would make thirteen States as large as Rhode Island, two as large as New Hampshire and Vermont, and one twice as large as Massachusetts.

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