

THE HISTORY OF A LOAFER.

CHAP. XIII.

THE VOYAGE.

It was a drizzly March morning in Liverpool. The wharf was crowded with emigrants and their friends. To see large numbers of people parting in this manner is always a painful sight. Here might be seen a young Irishman with his newly married bride, receiving a farewell blessing from the old folks. Another group was made up of the old folks themselves, bidding a last adieu to their children, before going out to join that one dutiful son who was now a well-to-do farmer in Ohio. Another group still. It is a husband painfully taking leave of his wife and children. He is going out as a pioneer, and is promising to send for them at the earliest opportunity. May he keep his word! Then there are the scamps and loafers, expatriating themselves, because they have made the mother country too hot to hold them. These seem all to be the special darlings of their mothers, who, woman-like, bestow more tears on the black sheep, than on the choicest members of their flock.

The bell is ringing. The little steamer "Satellite" is about to make her last trip but one—the last one being devoted to bringing the mails aboard. Gerald, with his usual unpunctuality, arrived at the very last moment with a series of new and very dandy-looking trunks which were deposited on board, while he fed the cabman like a prince. On arriving on board, a new scene of confusion awaited him. He discovered that his stateroom was occupied by a gentleman who was leisurely reposing in the lower berth. He indignantly sent for the steward informing him that all the state-rooms were designed for the accommodation of two passengers, but that if the gentleman was not subject to sea-sickness, he might probably like a vacant room at the extreme stern of the vessel, which he could have all to himself. Now, Gerald was as yet supremely ignorant as to whether he were subject to sea-sickness or not, but he thought it better to conceal that ignorance, not wishing the steward to think that this was his first voyage. He sat down moodily on his trunk, and soon became intensely miserable. Presently the head and hand of a man were protruded from the lower berth, and a voice exclaimed,

"How are you, Fitzgerald?"

The voice was that of his very undesirable acquaintance of three years back, Harry Parsons. He recognized him at once, although he was considerably altered. He had grown stouter, and presented a very bloated appearance. Now, had this meeting taken place some years previously, Gerald would have felt considerable alarm, but as it was, he only saw in Parsons a pleasant travelling companion. They soon renewed their acquaintance, and Gerald told Harry of his real name and connexions.

"Oh! then," said Parsons, "this accounts for your knowing —shire so well, a peculiarity of yours which, I own, always puzzled me. So, I suppose you know my governor too?"

"I have met him several times at my father's house."

"Not a bad old fellow, my governor, but most confoundedly stingy when money matters are concerned. I believe I shall have to cut him, after all."

This levity did not shock Gerald in the least, which shows that he was getting considerably advanced in his curriculum as a Loafer.

"By the way," said Parsons, "what on earth are you going to America for?"

"For a lark," said Gerald.

"Umph," said Parsons, "so am I."

The two friends now mounted the quarter deck, so as to have a last glimpse of the "blessed roofs" of Liverpool, as Mr. Charles Dickens calls them. Though why the roofs of this city should be so supremely "blessed" above those of other cities, I have never yet been able to make out. As the steamer started, the weather began to clear up, and the sea was remarkably smooth, until arriving near the south

western coast of Ireland. I am not naturally superstitious, but on the Irish coast, near Kinsale, stands an ancient Round Tower which I never passed, and never knew anybody else to pass in fair weather. However calm the sea may have been up to that point, the instant you set your eyes on that tower, rough weather sets in. I have a great respect for the erudition of the learned Doctor Petrie, but he can never persuade me that this Round Tower at least is not the abode of The Storm King. Gerald now made the discovery that he was subject to sea sickness. There was no doubt about it! When he got better and was able to get on deck, he found that his friend Parsons, who certainly could make a gentleman of himself when he pleased, had made himself very agreeable to all the cabin passengers,—the ladies especially. He introduced Gerald to them all, by name. The cabin was unusually full at this time of year. Merchants were going home after completing their purchases in Europe. There were many Canadians among them, for at this time the Allan steamers were not. There was a wealthy fur merchant born in Bohemia, but resident in New York, a wealthy grain merchant of Liverpool, a middle-aged commercial traveller from Leeds and a gentleman from Montreal, in the watch and jewellery line, of dark complexion and Hebrew persuasion. These four played together at whist every night, for very high stakes, each of them by this means intending to make a little money during the voyage. It so happened, however, that they were, all four, first rate whist players, and being equally matched, to the disgust of all four, neither one of them made or lost any money worth mentioning.

"These gentlemen will be wanting to make our acquaintance before the voyage is over," said Harry to Gerald, "if so, we shall have some fun."

There was also on board a young Virginian, fresh from Harvard University. (Bear in mind that we speak of several years before the civil war.) This young man like most Harvard students, was a fine specimen of humanity, both mentally and bodily. He belonged to that class of Americans which Oliver Wendell Holmes characterizes as the Brahmin class. He neither "guessed" nor "calculated," spoke good English and was able to pronounce the word "view," which, according to the Professor, is the Shibboleth of all well-educated Americans. He had been making the grand tour and was now returning to Virginia. One thing horrified him, and that was the levity with which many of the English passengers spoke of the,—to him—almost sacred institution of slavery, and their hopes of its approaching abolition. As we shall meet this young gentleman several times in the course of this tale, it is as well to state at once that his name was Alfred Brabazon, and that he was the son of a wealthy tobacco planter.

There were several British officers on board. First and foremost was Col. X—or the Colonel as he was generally called,—a tall handsome man of about fifty years of age, of reserved manners, but at the same time very courteous. He was evidently somewhat particular as to the acquaintances he made. His luggage consisted of a very small trunk, a hat case, a fishing rod, and a landing net. He was evidently an old traveller, and not habituated to embarrass himself with impedimenta. Whenever the Colonel could obtain leave of absence for two or three months, he always spent it fishing in the Lower Provinces. He was a perfect enthusiast of the angle, and like most of that craft, quiet and contemplative. When asked why he did not try the Highlands of Scotland, he always replied that he abhorred the society of regular tourists, but always felt at home among his friends, the Blue-Nose farmers. Besides the Colonel, there were some young officers also. These seemed to be looked to, by all the passengers, as the general caterers for the amusement of the whole party. They organized balls on the quarter deck, having found among the steerage passengers a Piedmontese organ grinder, whose instrument was equal to a waltz and a mazurka. They got up round games at cards in the saloon, and smoking parties in the "siddery." They were the life and soul of the whole voyage, and were dubbed snobs by certain moose. Yankees, simply because their manners were social and agreeable. What an extraordinary antipathy a vulgar Yankee has for British officers! He rates them as positive fools, and cannot be persuaded but that they are warriors of an effeminate stamp, only fit to lounge in ladies' drawing rooms.

(To be Continued.)