

A
050
B78

THE BROAD-AXE.

Cros Tyrinsque mihi nullo discrimine agetur.

Vol. I.

Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Tuesday, April 11, 1871.

No. 6.



"Hew to the Line, let the Chips fall where they may."

LITERARY.

The following passage from Dickens' "Martin Chuzzlewit," is a beautiful piece of word-painting. It brings before the mind's eye, as vividly as one of Turner's sea pieces, the ocean and the storm, with their yeasty waste of waters, as well as the stout ship and her experienced mariners, battling bravely against them. The navigation is now open, and in this Island there are hundreds who follow seafaring as a means of livelihood. Some who "go down to the sea in ships" may have wondered, with Dickens, "whither go the clouds and the winds so eagerly?" but perhaps they never strove to embody their ideas in writing. Others may not have thought about the subject at all. Listen to the novelist, as he describes them:

"A dark and dreary night; people nestling in their beds or circling late about the fire. Want, colder than charity, shivering at the street corners; church towers humming with the faint vibrations of their own tongues, but newly resting from the ghostly preachment, 'One!' The earth covered with a sable pall, as for the burial of yesterday; the clump of dark trees, its grand plumes of funeral feathers, waving sadly to and fro; all hushed, all noiseless, and in deep repose, save the swift clouds that skim across the moon, and the cautious wind, as creeping after them upon the ground, it stops to listen, and goes rustling on, and stops again, and follows, like a savage upon the trail.

"Whither go the clouds and winds so eagerly? If, like guilty spirits, they repair to some dread conference with powers like themselves, in what wild region do the elements hold council, or where unbend in terrible disport?"

"Here! Free from that cramped prison called the earth, and out upon the waste of waters.

Here, roaring, raging, shrieking, howling, all night long. Hither come the sounding voices from the caverns on the coast of that small island, sweeping a thousand miles away so quietly in the midst of angry waves; and hither, to meet them, rush the blasts from unknown desert places of the world. Here, in the fury of their unchecked liberty, they storm and buffet with each other, until the sea, lashed into passion like their own, leaps up in ravings mightier than theirs, and the whole scene is whirling madness.

"On, on, on, over the countless miles of angry space, roll the long heaving billows. Mountains and caves are here, and yet are not, for what is now the one, is now the other; then all is but a boiling heap of rushing water. Pursuit and flight, and mad return of wave on wave, and savage struggle, ending in a spouting up of foam, whitens the black night; incessant change of place and form and hue; constancy in nothing but eternal strife; on, on, on, they roll, and darker grows the night, and louder howl the winds, and more clamorous and fierce become the million voices of the sea, when the wild cry goes forth upon the storm, 'a ship!'

"Onward she comes in gallant combat with the elements, her tall masts trembling, and her timbers starting on the strain; onward she comes, now high upon the curling billows, now low down in the hollows of the sea, as hiding for the moment from its fury; and every storm voice in the air, and water cries more loudly yet, 'a ship!'

"Still she comes striving on, and at her boldness and the spreading cry the angry waves rise up above each other's hoary heads to look, and round about the vessel, far as the mariners on the deck can pierce the gloom, they press upon her, forcing each other down, and standing up and rushing forward from a far, in dreadful curiosity. High over her they break; and round her surge and roar; and, giving place to others, moaningly depart, and dash themselves to fragments in their baffled anger; still she comes onward bravely. And though the eager multitude crowd thick and fast upon her all the night, and dawn of day discovers the untiring train yet bearing down upon the ship in an eternity of troubled water, onward she comes, with dim lights burning in her hull,

A
050
B78