

It is impossible to compare the scene we have just witnessed with any similar event in the history of our city : and, therefore, it is the more difficult to convey to you any adequate idea of the number of persons assembled to greet our departure, the enthusiasm they evinced, or the display made by the aquatic spectacles got up without any concert in action, and very far exceeding any thing that has taken place on previous occasions.

In 1823, New York poured forth its tens of thousands of inhabitants, and put in requisition all its steam-boats and water craft, to celebrate the meeting of the waters of Lake Erie and the Atlantic, and at the same time testify the respect and gratitude of her citizens for the genius, science, and patriotism of the great Clinton—who, amidst the jeers and taunts of political opponents, and the lukewarmness, doubts, and timidity of friends, nobly persevered in the construction of that stupendous work (the Erie Canal), which has secured to his native city the immense trade of the interminable regions of the great west, and to his memory a name as imperishable as the valleys and hills by which it is traversed. That important work had been brought to a successful and triumphant termination—the waters of Erie and the Atlantic intermingled, and great was the rejoicing and splendid the aquatic exhibition got up for the occasion.

Again, in 1824, a somewhat similar scene was exhibited in our bay, when the good La Fayette, the friend of Washington and the champion of Liberal principles in the old and the new world, came among us by invitation, and received the homage of a nation of intelligent and grateful freemen, grateful to one who had nobly struggled in their cause when it most wanted friends, and desirous of testifying their gratitude and esteem by all the tokens of respect and affection which it was in their power to exhibit. Numerous steamers, freighted with a grateful multitude, escorted him to our battery, and tens of thousands were there ready to give him the most heartfelt cheers upon his landing. It was, indeed, a glorious and instructive spectacle ; and to this, and the opening of the Erie Canal, we have long referred, as the two occasions in the history of the new world, which stood unrivalled for the character of the display and the number of persons who were partakers in it.

But a new era has come upon us—skill, science, and enterprise, called into activity by the inexhaustible wealth of that nation “whose merchants are princes,” have brought us in closer contact with a father-land ; the distant conceptions of Watt, and the predictions of Fulton, have been realised ; the broad Atlantic has been safely, and, as we believe, profitably navigated by steam ; “England and her eldest daughter,” London and New York, have been brought within twelve days’ sail of each other ; time and space have alike been measurably annihilated ; the descendants of the pilgrims and of those from whom they separated in the hour of persecution, have been brought in closer union ; and two great nations, descended from a common ancestry, speaking the same language, and having the same birthright in the literature which adorns it, have had the bonds of national friendship and fraternal feeling more securely rivetted around them by the arrival, in the western hemisphere, of the Great Western and the Sirius, under circumstances which clearly demonstrate, not only the practicability, but the advantages, commercially, of navigating the Atlantic Ocean by steam.

The arrival of these two steam ships in our waters, within a few hours of each other, produced an excitement in our city, which was more universal, and extended further among all classes of our population, than any event since the war of 1812 ; and our authorities and citizens generally, vied with each other in doing honour to the enterprising commanders, who had so successfully achieved the great work in which they had embarked. But it was not possible until this afternoon, justly to estimate the full extent of the excitement which existed, or properly to appreciate the universal enthusiasm which this novel event had imparted to every portion of our population. We knew that the subject was on the lips of all, and that the usual salutations of the day were always followed by congratulations upon the arrival of these thrice welcome strangers in our waters ; we knew that the Great Western was literally run down with thousands of all classes, eager to look upon this eighth wonder of the world, this steam leviathan, which had thus realised their most sanguine anticipations in relation to the ultimate navigation of the Atlantic by steam ; we knew, too, that the Sirius, was very generally looked upon as a kind of *interloper*, chartered for the purpose of snatching honours from those to whom they justly belonged, and that the exhibition of interest at her departure was no test of what would be