

LIFE ON A CATTLE SHIP.

(Concluded.)

representatives of the English Anti Slavery Society was a gage, that the labour for the suppression of catching and exporting African blacks was not the monopoly of any creed or of any nation, and was to be executed in all times and seasons, and territories. The most important resolution was that to allow the domestic side of slavery to rest in obedience. Attack the sources, the purveyors of the slave trade, and this will dry up the channel of domestic slavery. To keep the rooks from returning, destroy their nests.

The McKinley Bill causes us many anxieties—as the depopulation difficulty. France must reciprocate by admitting American pork and cereals, if she desires to work off stocks of pictures, bibelots, silks and wines. In the reciprocity negotiations each nation will naturally endeavour to have it like the Irishman's—all on one side. Between augmenting her own customs tariff, and fighting the import taxation of foreign markets, France has no reason to rub her hands over the commercial future. Her budget is crying like the grave: "give, give"; the annual deficit has only two sources from which to raise the wind: increasing the tax on alcohol, and on land.

The dwindling population of France is telling on the electoral lists. In 1889 there were 10,465,989 registered electors; at present there are 60,000 less.

Strikes in France are, at once, endemic and epidemic. The wall-paper makers of Paris, employed in nineteen work shops, have struck, and the demand for increased wages is nearly different in each establishment. The strikers in some cases have been conceded 8½ frs. instead of 7½ frs. per day of ten hours; the men do not work on Sundays and only for half a day on Mondays. The miners in the Pas-de-Calais are no sooner in than they are out again. They are in the latter position now. The demands are for 4 frs. a day, a modicum less for some workers; 5½ bushels of good coal and 4 of poor coal, per month, per miner; bachelors to receive the same quantity; overseers to be more respectful towards the men; stokers to be paid the same as engine-drivers, and the Benefit Funds to be applied solely to the necessities of the workmen and to be managed by them. The majority of colliers' strikes take place on the same lines.

Here is an instance of two of a trade not agreeing. The Prefect of the Police is invited by the native glaziers to suppress their foreign companions—proof additional that the brotherhood of man is based on self-interest. Every morning between eight and eleven, one of the most strident street-cries is: "*Ohé l'vitrier!*" "Do you want the glazier?" He is a more convenient ambulatory institution than you would at first imagine. If you break a pane of glass you have not a shop at hand where you can go and tell the glazier to be sent. When a shop of that kind exists, its owner is a glass merchant, and will execute your wishes when he has time and charge high. You must pay for the time expended in his coming to measure for the new pane, the price of the glass, of course, and fitting it in.

The street-glazier only looks at, and looks up at, the façade of the houses; how he manages to pick his way along the crowded foot-paths is a mystery. He carries on his back quite a work-shop; a rack for glass of all dimensions; places for putty, measures, diamonds, and the removed glass. At first sight he no more attracts your attention than the artisan who squeaks through a penny trumpet: "Does the kitchen cistern want a cock?" or the fellow with stentorian lungs who bellows into the courtyard: "Have you any empty wine barrels to sell?" or the cooing tones of the perambulator artiste, that announces his *tripe, à la mode caen*. Examine the glazier closely; he is a hermit creature, with peculiar aspect; he belongs to a guild whose members are sober, frugal and independent. For him, life is nothing without broken windows.

No matter how small may be his daily earnings, he will put by a few sous. That's the best antidote against debt. He is a member of a community, composed of fifteen to twenty chums, occupying a dormitory-living room in common. They breakfast on a morsel of dry bread; in the evening they dine together, chiefly on preparations of macaroni. There are 6,700 glaziers in Paris; 4,700 are Italians; 1,100 Swiss, etc., and only 500 French. The latter consider the temple of Ephesus to be in danger, and hence the usual appeal to Jupiter. It is petitioned that the foreigner be compelled to take out a license, in the form of a brass medal, like costermongers and old clo' men, to identify them. But their moral bill of health at the Prefecture of the Police is sound.

The ambulatory glazier works for one-half the price of his shop rival; he earns about 2,500 frs. yearly, and puts by 1,500 frs.; he avoids Panamas. At the end of six years he saves sufficient to set up as a sweep. What a drop you will say, from light to darkness. He is not a sweep in the sense of cleaning chimneys; he is *fumiste*, not a *ramoneur*; that is, he repairs and cures chimneys, stoves, etc. When he relinquishes glazing he sells his beat, as one ragman does his rounds to another. When he has made enough as *fumiste*, he returns to his native Alps; buys a chestnut plantation, and fits out men to go to Paris to sell roasted or steamed chestnuts. Often he invests in cows, and joins a co-operative dairy industry; he may rise to become a town councillor of his native village; perhaps its mayor. He weds; if he has a son, he will strive to make him a doctor or a lawyer, never a clergyman; if he can work a caucus, his sons may count upon civil service berths. His daughters marry grocers, or keep a dairy; many trend to Paris and buy the good-will of a tavern, or a small hotel.

The next morning all the confusion of the previous day had vanished. Each of us settled into his place; and the regular routine began which lasted till the end of the voyage. At four o'clock in the morning the bosses rooted us out and we went below to water the stock. One man dipped out of the casks, the rest of us carried the filled buckets, two at a time to William who dashed the water into the troughs, beginning with those farthest away. How the poor brutes did lick up the water! They must have suffered a good deal, for it was always stifling hot between decks; and our cattle were near the engines. This was a nasty job, particularly in rough weather. There was not only the difficulty of walking loaded on the unsteady deck, but the "alleys" were narrow, and the cattle would stick their heads through the bars and upset the pails in their eagerness to get at the precious fluid. We were usually soaking from the waist down before we had finished. Then the order would be given: "Pile them 'empties' and come on deck." We packed our dozen patent pails together and followed William up the iron ladder to the main deck, where it was at least cool and light. Then we watered the six hundred sheep, following the same plan as with the cattle. It took a long time for the sheep troughs were outside the pens and leaked badly. They needed a great deal of water, and the deck and pens were running in streams. The noise they made was almost deafening. As soon as they smelt the water, there was a head between every two slats, ba-a-ing with all its might. Then we went below and gave the cattle their hay. We tumbled the bales along the passage to William who cut them open with his hatchet; tore the compressed hay apart with our hands and stuffed it in armfuls between the head-boards to the beasts. This was hot, dusty work and hard on the hands, for the hay was full of thistles. William had a peculiar way of encouraging us at it. Once "Brum" had paused to pick a few of the thistles out of his fingers, and William roared: "What are ye sittin' and lookin' at it fer, like a crow in November?"

It nearly startled poor "Brum" out of his skin, and he abounded in pleasantries of this kind, did the humorous William.

It was worse still when it came to feed the sheep on the upper deck. In pulling the hay apart, the wind blew the dust about in clouds, and we had to card it more thoroughly for the sheep than for the other cattle. William was hard to please in the matter of quantity, and the degree of looseness of the hay suitable to a sheep's digestion. As a consequence of stuffing the hay between the slats, our fingers were like horn before the voyage was over. The dust blew, the sheep ba-a-ed, the thistles pricked and William stormed. One day a sailor was passing through the hurly-burly, and whispered to me:—

"You've got a good job there, take care you don't get drunk and lose it!"

Then the meal and oats were carried in buckets and put into the troughs, our foreman spreading it out with his hand. It took us nearly two hours, without resting a minute, to satisfy the beasts. Then the pens were inspected to see that no sheep had died, and lastly the dirty "alley-ways" were scraped down and the refuse hay and oats thrown over-board. We were busy as nailers from four till eight when we had breakfast. The ingenious William had plenty of odd jobs for us till noon but from dinner time till about half past three, we were free. We could idle, talk to the other men or sleep. Then the greater part of the morning's programme was repeated; watering, feeding, cleaning and so on. At six we had supper, which was breakfast without the porridge and hard tack instead of bread. There was very little to do from six to eight, when some man got a lantern and went on watch till twelve. Then he woke up someone else, gave him the lantern and turned in. It was rather hard on a landsman, after having been worked all day by William in the way I have described, to get only four hours' sleep; for if you went on at twelve you had to turn to at four with the rest of the gang. The greatest difficulty was in keeping awake. The heat on the boiler deck in midsummer was overpowering, and if you once lay down you were done for. There was very little to do except make your rounds and poke up the steers that were lying down. Once the bull that was in a pen by himself broke loose; but he was too much frightened by his novel situation to give us much trouble in getting him back. It was hard to fight off drowsiness, but woe to the man found asleep on his watch.

Johnson and I soon got into the hang of the work and after the first three days I found it hard to believe I had ever been anything else than a cattleman. School teaching seemed a profession that I followed in some dim pre-natal state of existence.

On the fourth day part of my work was changed. A very important matter was the daily filling of the water casks, about the disposal of which the mate and the foremen had their little difference of opinion. One of the crew, Jacob, the lamp-cleaner, had charge of this. He was a huge Norwegian, whose massive shoulders had contracted a permanent stoop from his inability to go along ordinary passages, without knocking his brains out. It was managed in this way: Jacob saw that the hose was carried from cask to cask, and watched the filling of them. Another hand was stationed at the engine-room door, with a whistle to let the "donkey man" (the manager of the donkey engine) know when to turn the water on and off.

He was guided by Jacob's whistles. At first there was a good deal of blundering. The signals were misunderstood or not heard and the decks would be flooded and the water wasted. The cattlemen cursed, Jacob was furious, and one signal man after another was dismissed with hard words. After several failures Jacob came to our gang for a man and William detailed me for the post.

"Now Jacob," said I, as he put the marline with the whistle round my neck, "tell me just exactly what to do, for I'm pretty stupid."

"This is all," said Jacob, "fen I blow de feesle once, you blow de feesle once, an' fen I blow de feesle two times you blow de feesle two times."

It was rather simple. All I had to remember was which signal I gave last, and of course the next one would be the reverse. One whistle was "stop!" and two meant "go ahead!" I may say with pardonable pride that I filled this difficult position to the complete satisfaction of all concerned. Jacob told William in confidence that I was a "smart boy," and my "boss" had a better opinion of me from that day. My promotion amused the other hands very much. They called us the boatswain and his mate; and "Fen I blow de feesle once" became a by-word on the ship. Once or twice one mischievous foreman got me into a mess with my superior officer by telling me to whistle before the right time, but Jacob soon put that down. We became close friends and he would have nobody but me for his lieutenant to the end of the voyage.

It was rough, hard, dirty work, and plenty of it, with coarse fare and coarser mates. Cattlemen are the offscourings of the earth, and the hardest worked, worst paid labourers to be found anywhere. Usually they are picked up by the foreman, just before starting, from the loafers round the docks; poor wretches that are glad to work their passage back to England this way. Those who wish to come back to Canada are often swindled out of their passage and left without a penny in London. Many of the hands are cockneys eager to get back to the old country, after having done little good in this. The common sailors were infinitely their superiors and looked upon them as little better than the brutes they tended. Well, in spite of all, we got fat and strong and brown on it. After a slight attack of sea-sickness, which did not keep me from my work, I enjoyed everything and took my "scouse" and hard tack with keen relish. I did not even turn up my nose at the "salt horse," over which Yorky said the only grace on the voyage,

Old horse! old horse! what brought you here?
From Sacarap to Portland Pier,
I've carted stone this many a year;
Till killed by blows and sore abuse,
They've salted me down for sailor's use.

It was tough but we never found the horseshoe in the soup, that Sam told us we might expect.

The strangest part of the performance was being at the beck and call of a rough Irishman like William, after being the petty tyrant of a country school myself. But that was part of the adventure and had only to be borne for a couple of weeks. It was compensation enough to breathe the wonderful sea air and look on the strange sights in sky and water. The hardest part was keeping watch; for the green hands were imposed upon and had to do the most of it; I was on every other night, all the way over. But between my rounds, I would go off and talk to the man on the look-out as the good ship *Arcola* ploughed her way along in the clear, starry, summer night; or watch the ghostly furrow of phosphorescence at the bow; or other wonders of the night. I made up my sleep by long drowees on the sweet hay or the clean-smelling pine planks over the sheep-pens. The weather was beautiful all the way across, the old hands called it a river trip, for its smoothness; and so, I do not think, I can call my experience a hardship.

Our last day on the *Arcola* was a memorable one. The strong head-wind of the previous day moderated and we had a glorious sail up the Channel. It seemed full of vessels of all kinds; little black coasters and colliers, plying inshore; great full-rigged ships, outward bound; yellow-sailed fishing smacks and trim, saucy pilot boats that cruised under the very nose of the huge liners. Early in the morning we passed the Isle of Wight, looking like a dream country in the clear light and terraced St. Katharines, a fairy-like carven city on the rock. This was the first close sight of English land for we passed within a mile and a-half of it. Early the previous morning as we turned out to our work we saw the waves breaking over the low outer rocks of the Scilly Islands. We had seen distant green fields on the top of high cliffs, but never could make out the landscape so clearly as now. Then we passed out of sight again till we reached Beachy Head about noon, and then we came to the long narrow sand spit of Dungeness, and under its lee a crowd of ships wind-bound. Here the *Arcola* slowed her engines for the pilot. The boat did not venture to come alongside, but sent out the dingy. The crew had a hard pull to reach us; but, after some manoeuvring, the pilot came up the side and the little dingy was rocking far astern. The pilot, a big roast-beef Englishman in a fine blue uniform, went directly on the bridge, shook hands formally with the captain and took charge of the steamer. We were now quite close enough to the shore to make out the various watering places along the coast and even see the swift Channel packets lying at their wharves. Some of them passed us; looking very low and sharp built, with the huge paddle-boxes seemed out of all proportion to the rest of the steamer. About six we passed Dover; all we could see was the