

GENERAL LITERATURE.

APPROACH TO ENGLAND.

Our voyage across the Atlantic had been eminently prosperous. From our departure from New York we encountered no obstruction during the seventeen days that brought us to the Irish coast. Our good ship—the *Europe*, Captain Edward G. Marshall, surmounted the waves buoyantly and often seemed to skim their surface like a javelin head. We almost imagined her to be conscious of the happiness she imparted, as seated on the deck in the glorious summer moonlight, we saw her sweeping through the crested billows, with a pleasant, rustling sound, right onward in the way she ought to go.

Methought, also, the deep bestirred itself to exhibit its *dramatis persone* in good condition for our amusement. Immense families of porpoises rooled and gambolled: other huge creatures seeming to have hideous ears, leaped and plunged heavily; and a whale with her cub glided onward, her huge mass inflated with a mother's pride and pleasure as she led her promising monster to his ocean play. The sun came forth from his chambers, and returned again in glorious majesty; and the coming phosphorescence, contrasted with the fleecy crest and the purple base of the waves, was intensely beautiful.

Thus were we created along our watery way, and, by making the most of the scenery without, and the resources within, experienced as little *ennui* as could be expected; and indulged in no anticipation of evil. But that terror of mariners awaited us in St. George's channel—a dense fog upon an iron bound coast. We had joyfully seen the light in the head of old Kinsale: afterwards the harbour of Cork and the mountains of Dungannon revealed themselves, and were lost. Then, wrapped in a thick curtain, we went on fearfully with continual soundings. A chill rain occasionally fell, and the winds moaned and cried among the shrouds like living creatures. The faithful and attentive captain, oppressed with a sense of his responsibility, scarcely took refreshment or repose. At night, on the 19th, we heard his voice cheerfully announcing, that a bright light from Tuscar rock was visible, that our course was right, and that all might retire to rest free from anxiety.

As morning dawned, I lay waking, and listening to sounds that seemed near my ear and even upon my pillow. They were like water forcing its way among obstructions, or sometimes as if it were poured hissing upon heated stones. At length I spoke to the friend who shared my state room, of a suppressed voice of eddies and whirlpools, like what is often heard in passing Hurlgate when the tide is low. She thought me imaginative; but on hearing that I had long been reasoning with myself and yet the sounding remained, she threw on her dressing gown and ascended to the deck. The fog was still heavy, and all things appeared as usual. Soon the carpenter, being sent aloft to make some repairs, shouted, in a terrible voice, "Breakers! breakers!" The mist lifted its curtain a little, and there was a rocky sixty feet in height, against which the sea was breaking with tremendous violence, and towards which we were propelled by wind and tide. At the first appalling glance, it would seem that we were scarcely a ship's length from it. In the agony of the moment, the captain, clapping his hands, exclaimed, that all was lost. Still, under this weight of anguish, more for others than himself, he was enabled to give the most minute orders with entire presence of mind. They were promptly obeyed: the ship, as if instinct with intelligence, obeyed her helm, and,

sweeping rapidly around, escaped the jaws of destruction.—Still we were long in troubled waters; and it was not for many hours, and until we had entirely passed Holyhead, that the captain took his eye from the glass, or quitted his post of observation. It would seem that, after he had retired to rest the previous night, the ship must have been imperfectly steered, and, aided by the strong drifting of the tides in that region, was led out of her course towards Cardigan bay, thus encountering the reef which is laid down on the charts as Bardsey's isle.

The passengers, during this period of peril, were generally quiet, and offered no obstruction, through their own alarms, to the necessary evolutions on the deck. One from the steerage—an Irishman, who had been thought but a few days before in the last stage of pulmonary disease—was seen, in the excitement of the moment, labouring among the ropes and blocks as if in full health and vigour. It was fearful to see him, with a face of such mortal paleness, springing away from death in one form to meet and resist him in another.

Every circumstance and personage connected with that scene of danger seem to adhere indelibly to recollection. A young girl came and sat down on the cabin floor, and said, in a low, tremulous tone, "I have loved my Saviour, but have not been faithful to him as I ought," and in that posture of humility awaited his will.

A mother, who, since coming on board, had taken the entire charge of an infant not a year old, retired with it in her arms to a sofa, when the expectation of death was the strongest upon us all. Masses of rich black hair fell over her brow and shoulders, and her eyes rivetted upon the nursing with whom she might so soon go down beneath the deep waters. He returned that gaze with an almost equal intensity; and there they sat, uttering no sound, scarcely breathing, and pale as a group of sculptured marble. His large, dark eyes seemed to cast—

"Not those baby looks, that go
A-lunneaning to and fro;
But an earnest gaze as deep,
Such as soul gives soul at length.
When, through work and wail of years,
It hath won a solemn strength."

In that strange communion was the mother imparting to her nursing her own speechless weight of agony at parting with other beloved objects in their distant home? Or did the tender soul take upon itself a burden, which pressed from it a sudden ripeness of sympathy? Or was the intensity of prayer drawing the spirit of the child into that of the mother, until they were as one before God?

Strong lessons were learned at an hour like this. Ages of thought were compressed into a moment. The reach of an unbodied spirit, or some glimpse of the power by which the deeds and motives of a whole life may be brought into view at the scrutiny of the last judgment, seemed to reveal itself. Methought the affections, that so imperatively bind to earth, loosened their links in that very extremity of peril; and a strange courage sprang up; and the lonely soul, driven to one sole trust, took hold of the pierced hand of the Redeemer, and found it strong to save.

That night the prayer and sacred music, which regularly hallowed our hour of retirement, should have been more deeply surcharged with devout gratitude than ever; snatched, as we had been, from the devouring flood, and from "the evil time that snareth the sons of men, when it falleth suddenly upon them."—"*Pleasant Memories of Pleasant Lands*," By Mrs. L. H. Sigourney.

ABYSSINIAN CHRISTIANS.

The practical religion of the Abyssinian Christian is of the very lowest degree of formality.—Fasts, penances, and excommunications, from the chief discipline; but the penitent can always provide a substitute for the two former, and the latter is always to be averted by money. Spiritual offences, however, are rare; for murder and sacrilege alone give umbrage to the conscience of the natives of Shoa.—Abstinence and largesses of money are equivalent to wiping away every sin. Their creed advises the invocation of saints, confession to the priests, and faith in charms and amulets.—Prayers for the dead, and absolution, are indispensable; and, as a more summary mode of relieving the burdens of the flesh, it is pronounced, that all sins are forgiven from the moment the kiss of the pilgrim is imprinted on the stones of Jerusalem, and that even kissing the hand of priests purifies the body from all sin. A creed of this order, which makes spiritual safety dependent, not upon personal purification of mind and the divine mercy, but upon forms which are unconnected with either, and which even can be executed by a substitute, of course excludes the necessity for morals of any kind. All is corruption—"Born amid falsehood and deceit, cradled in bloodshed, and nursed in the arms of illenness and debauchery, the national character almost defies the missionary."

There are some strange remnants of Judaism still lingering amongst the tribes of these highland regions. The Galla have a tradition, that their whole nation will one day be called on to march *en masse*, and reconquer Palestine for the return of the Jews. The king of Shoa regards himself as a direct descendant of the house of Solomon, calls himself the king of Israel, and the national standard bears the motto, "The Lion of the tribe of Judah hath prevailed." They believe the 45th Psalm to be a prophecy of Queen Mageda's visit to Jerusalem: whether she was attended by a daughter of Hiram, king of Tyre.—The Jewish prohibitions against the flesh of unclean animals are observed by the Abyssinians. The sinew which shrank, and the eating of which was prohibited by the Israelites, were also prohibited in Shoa. The Jewish Sabbath is strictly observed. The Abyssinians are said, by Ludolf, to be the greatest fasters in the world.—The Wednesdays and Fridays are fasts; the forty days before Easter are rigidly observed as a fast; and from the Thursday preceding Easter till the Sunday, no morsel of meat is to enter the lips, and the prohibition against drink is equally rigorous. St. Michael and the Virgin Mary are venerated in the highest degree; St. Michael as the leader as the chief of all saints, the queen of heaven and earth, and both as the great intercessors of mankind.

Like the Jews of old, the Abyssinians wail and lament on all occasions of death; and the shriek ascends to the sky, as if the soul could be recalled from the world of spirits. As with the Jews, the most inferior garments are employed as the weeds of woe; and the skin torn from the temples, and scarified on the cheek and breast, proclaims the last extremity of grief. As the Rabbins believe that angels were the governors of all sublunary things, the Abyssinians adopt this belief: carrying it even further, they confidently implore their assistance in all concerns and invoke and adore them in a higher degree than the Creator. The clergy enjoy the price of death-bed confession; and the churchyard is sternly denied to all who die without the rite, or whose relations refuse the fee and the funeral feast. Eight pieces of salt are the price of waiving a poor man's soul to the place of rest, and the