

"On a sudden all traffic in the thronged mart was suspended; porters cleared the front street of every description of merchandise, boatmen ceased lading and unlading their vessels, and put out into the middle of the stream. The centre of the river teemed with craft, from small boats to large barges, including the gay 'flower-boats.'

"Loud shouting from the fleet announced the appearance of the flood, which seemed like a glistening white cable stretched athwart the river at its mouth, as far down as the eye could reach. Its noise, compared by Chinese poets to that of thunder, speedily drowned that of the boatmen; and as it advanced with great rapidity—at the rate, I should judge, of twenty-five miles an hour—it assumed the appearance of an alabaster wall, or rather a cataract four or five miles across and about thirty feet high, moving homely onward!

"Knowing that the bore of the Hoogly—which scarcely deserves mention in comparison with the one before me—invariably overturned boats which were not skilfully managed, I could not but feel apprehensive for the lives of the floating multitude. As the foaming wall of water dashed furiously onward, they were silenced, all being intently occupied in keeping their prows towards the wave, which threatened to submerge everything afloat; but they all vaulted, as it were, to the summit in perfect safety.

"The spectacle was of greatest interest when the bore had passed about half way among the craft. On one side they were quietly reposing on the surface of the unruffled stream, while those on the lower portion were pitching and heaving on the flood; others were scaling, with the agility of salmon, the formidable cascade.

"A very short period elapsed between the passage of the bore and the resumption of traffic. The vessels were soon attached to the shore again, and women and children were occupied in gathering articles which the careless or unskilful had lost in the confusion. The streets were drenched with spray, and a considerable volume of water splashed over the banks into the head of the Grand Canal, a few feet distant."