

LETTERS FROM BERMUDA.

LETTER XIV.

HAMILTON, February, 18.—

DEAR FRIEND—As my last visit was to the Docks I must continue with our visit to the Bellerophon as I promised. Though it is quite beyond my power to describe this magnificent war-vessel in the manner she is entitled to, I can only tell something about her size, tonnage and appearance. Commander R—, having obtained the Admiral's permission, sent the flagship's boat for our party to visit the Bellerophon—a very handsome, large boat, cushioned and carpeted—and we set off in state rowed by twelve marines and escorted by two gentlemanly young Middies. On reaching the Bellerophon we went on board, and were conducted over it with much ceremony and politeness. The officers, &c., showed us great attention and explained everything which we enquired about to us.

The Bellerophon is a screw, iron ship, armour-plated, 15 cannon, tonnage, 7,551. The immense number of guns and swords stacked against the walls greatly astonished us, and the artistic manner of arrangement excited our admiration. Everything was bright and glittering, yet a number of men were busily engaged rubbing the brasses, &c., and polishing steel things which seemed already as bright as they could possibly be.

The Bellerophon is a magnificent vessel.

"She walks the waters like a thing of life, And seems to dare the elements to strife."

"Behold a stately ship, Proud of her gaudy trim, comes this way sailing, With all her bravery on and tackle trim. Sails filled and streamers waving, Courtied by the winds that hold their play."

"Morn on the waters! purple and bright, Bursts on the billows the flashing of light; O'er the glad waves, like a child in the sun, See the tall vessel goes gallantly on; Full on the breeze she unbosoms her sail, And her pennon streams onward like hope in the gale."

"'Tis thus with our life as it passes along, Like a vessel at sea amid sunshine and song! Gaily we glide in the gaze of the world, With streamers aloft and with canvas unfurled; All gladness and glory to wondering eyes, Yet freighted with sorrow, and chartered with sighs."

Seneca says: "Life is a navigation, a voyage in the progress of which we are perpetually changing our scenes. We first leave childhood behind us, then youth, then the years of ripened manhood, then the better or more pleasing part of old age."

"Life is like yon fisher's boat, Gay she quits the friendly shore; On life's ocean thus we float Till the morn of youth is o'er."

The boundless ocean also may remind us of eternity. I can never see this mass of heaving waters even in a calm without a kind of pleasing wonder and without reverently thinking on the Hand that poured it out into the proper channel.

When sailing upon the ocean in the midst of the illimitable waste of troubled waters one's thoughts naturally revert to the idea of the Almighty Father, the Great Spirit, Creator of all things, and it convinces us of His existence and presence as much as a metaphysical demonstration. The immensity and grandeur of the ocean exemplify clearly the power of the omnipotent Being who is neither circumscribed by time nor space.

How helpless and insignificant we feel when during a tempest the horizon on every side is nothing but foaming billows and floating mountains of water. The Psalmist thus describes a storm at sea: "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters: These see the works of the Lord and His wonders in the deep. For He commandeth and raiseth the stormy wind which lifteth up the waters thereof. * * * They cry

unto the Lord in their trouble, and He bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm so that the waves thereof are still, * * * and He bringeth them into their desired Haven."

"The storm was laid, the winds retired, Obedient to Thy will; The sea that roared at Thy command, At Thy command was still."

There is beauty as well as majesty in the giant waves as they dash their curling crests of snowy foam against the base of some stubborn rock, or rush madly on the pebbly beach, sweeping back with relentless fury every thing within their reach! Every one is gratified, however, when the peaceful calm sets in, gloriously heralded by the keen air and cloudless sky—when the placid bosom of the sea reflects in shades of gold and ultramarine the bright concave hemisphere of sunlit sky overhead. Moore describes it thus:

"How calm, how beautiful comes on The stilly hour when storms are gone; When waving winds have died away And clouds beneath the glancing ray Melt off and leave the land and sea Sleeping in bright tranquillity."

"By strength of heart the sailor fights with roaring seas."

"The sea, that home of marvels."—W. E. GLADSTONE.

"The sea! The sea! The open sea! The blue, the fresh, the ever free: Without a mark, without a bound, It runneth the earth's wide region round. It plays with the cloud, it mocks the skies; Or like a cradled creature lies."

Appropos of the sea, when it is ill-behaved, I must tell you an amusing episode which was related to us by a lively young midshipman of H. M. S. Leander—a Sunday service on board ship. I will tell it in his own words as nearly as possible: "The order to *rig church* being given, if the weather be fine and sea calm we have a 'sit down church,' but if the day is windy and rough we have a 'stand up church.'" The chaplain, whom we dubbed Parson, Padre, or Skypilot, has a portable reading desk. This is rigged to a stanchion, and placed between officers and men. On the Sunday I am speaking of there was a gale, head winds and a sea on, so it was decided to have a stand up church. We were running 10 or 11 knots dead before the wind, with stunsails set on both sides. The blue jackets and marines stood at ease toeing a line with mathematical accuracy, gravely bowing to each other with unmoved faces as the ship rolled slowly upon the heaving surface of the sea. As the rolling increased the bowing continued, but with exaggerated emphasis. The ship would roll heavily to starboard, and the 'joeys,' facing in-board, would assume an acute angle with the deck, as if rehearsing a gymnastic drill, while the opposite line on the port side seemed trying to touch the deck with the back of their heads, while standing at attention. Then the old ship gave a staggering pitch, inclining all the line ast; then rolled over to port with such suddenness that even old sea-dogs almost fell away to leeward. The Commodore, a man of short stature but unusual bulk, came up the after hatchway and had hardly planted one foot on the slippery deck than his heel shot away from under him by the sudden roll of the ship, and he sat down with all the weight of his 10 stone and with terrific abruptness upon the deck, to the great detriment of his comfort and dignity.

Upon the gale she stooped her side And bounded o'er the swelling tide As she were dancing home; The merry seamen laughed to see Their gallant ship so lustily Furrow the green sea foam.

George Herbert says: "He that would learn to pray, let him go to sea."—(Inventus mundi.) The chaplain was a quiet, timid sort of man, and his clerk's *Inventus* of disposition was proverbial. One of the witty ones said the Padre was *Pietus*

Parsonified; and his good lady's name being Margaret, her's was *Maggiety*! The Padre hugged his desk closely for protection, and we got through with the first lesson tolerably, but in the middle of the second lesson the ship gave a sudden terrific roll and our chief engineer started off on his chair on a hand gallop and bore straight down upon the ward-room skylight with a velocity far beyond that of a Canadian tobogganer. However, the old ship was now on her mettle, and her counter roll was a master-piece; over and over she went till her port side was up to the skies, and down went the starboard side till the seas bubbled and seethed through the open ports; then she gave a little kick and lay over still farther; that settled the matter; in one terrible rattling crash, the mass of men, blue jackets, marines and boys, went swooping away in an indescribable and chaotic ruin head over heels into the lee scuppers, followed by every thing movable on the ship. After that we piped down."

"Ye gentlefolks of England who live at home in ease; Ah! little do ye think upon the perils of the seas."

We returned on the flagship's boat to the Docks, having passed a pleasant day, and sailed home in the steam tug Pioneer. Never shall I forget the enchanting beauty of the evening during that sail home. The lovely sky was reflected in the crystal water, with the shadows falling on it from either side. The trees and bushes were mirrored distinctly, like a lovely picture, in the calm, pellucid wave.

"The sun sets in an opal West whose light Will soon be o'er and one fair star alight."

When the mind is tranquil and the finer sensibilities of our nature attuned to harmony, they seem to be but chords responding to the magic of the beautiful objects that environ us—the strings of an *Æolian* harp, which vibrate to every passing breeze. The very spirit of beauty seems living and moving around us,

"As music, when soft voices die, Vibrates in the memory."

"The Sun, the Father of Light! The Moon its Mother mild!"

"The sun had set in glory; chords of gold Were fringed with wondrous purple, crimson bars

Reddened the gentle wavelets as they rolled, Till from heaven's blue glamed out the silent stars.

Then passed the moon up to her queenly throne, The waters flashed with gems and glittering ore:

All earth was hushed to stillness save the moan

Of the monotonous waves along the shore."

This majestic roof, fretted with golden fire, Gold candles fixed in Heaven's air.

O glorious sky with thee all shapes of glory find their home,

And thou hast taught me well, majestic dome!

By stars, by sunsets, by soft clouds which rove

Thy blue expanse, or sleep in silvery rest, That Nature's God hath left no spot un-unbleased

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