

The Atlantic Ice-drifts.

The *New York Herald*, August 19, says under the head of the Great Atlantic ice drifts and its results:

The extraordinary record of icebergs encountered by European steamers arriving here recently, shows that the glacial drift in the North Atlantic this year is almost without a parallel for both duration and magnitude. The *Vandalia*, which arrived on the 6th inst., reported passing eight of these formidable ice masses, some of which were from one hundred to one hundred and twenty feet above the sea. Two months ago such a phenomenon was not out of season. But the prolongation of this ice drift to double its usual length indicates the action of some remarkable thermal force within the polar circle. As early as January 30 the steamer *Glamorgan* passed an ice field in latitude 47° north, longitude 48° west, stretching more than forty miles. From that date the accumulation of ice off the Newfoundland coast increased, until on March 1st it extended in a southeast direction two hundred miles. In the early part of May all the harbors of Labrador were reported blocked with ice, and as late as June 10, an English vessel bound to this port had to sail through two hundred and fifty miles of sea covered with bergs, the ice belt thus projecting to the fortieth parallel between the forty-fourth and fifty-third meridians, and extending over two hundred thousand square miles. In the south Atlantic Ocean, during the summer of the Antipodes, the great Antarctic icebergs reach their utmost limits, approaching the parallel of 41° degrees south, having passed the latitude of Cape Horn to the east of the Falkland Islands. But their advance so near the tropic is less remarkable, as they are originally larger than the Arctic bergs, and they do not meet, as the latter do, an ocean current of high temperature.

The occurrence of such a phenomenal and protracted discharge of ice from the Arctic basin is a mystery yet unsolved. It may possibly be the result of some abnormally warm year in the north polar area, though some may be disposed to account for it by the passage through the Davis Strait, as an under current, of a branch of the warm Gulf Stream, the existence of which Lieutenant De Haven, in his search for Franklin, apparently proved by observations of bergs of heavy draught drifting northward against strong surface currents. The more probable cause of the voluminous outflow from the icy seas is a general excess of moisture in the high North, by which the process of radiation of the earth's heat in winter is arrested, and hence, with the approach of the spring equinox, an exceptional amount of precipitation, loosening the glacial masses, would occur, while unusual severe gales would drive them out to sea. Whatever may be the cause of their decent in such massive forms and large numbers over the North Atlantic, their presence must have a potent meteorological influence on the ocean. Mr. David Cunningham, of Dundee, forcibly suggests that the movable ice causes a high barometric pressure and a correspondingly low temperature over the Western North Atlantic basin. No doubt to this result must be attributed the cool, wet British summer, which has marred the fine crop prospects of last spring. But the effect of the great ice drift will be strikingly seen as the West Indian hurricanes of the next two months begin to develop and advance along the Gulf Stream towards Europe, when their proximity to the cold ocean around Newfoundland will in all probability cause excessive condensation and extreme barometric falls in the storm centers, giving unusual intensity to their cyclonic winds and attendant cross seas. For this reason, if for no other, navigators will do well during the coming hurricane season to give the Banks a wide berth.

The Wretched Season in England.

(*London Daily Telegraph*)

Never was the genial September sun more welcome than at the close of this unseasonable season. We deserve a little brightness, a touch of gaiety, a ray of daylight, wherewith to behold the fading tints of our own beautiful England before the darkness comes, and we are overcovered by a canopy of gloom. For, truth to tell, it has been a wretched year. The springtime came too soon, and had no strength to fulfill its promise. The unsuspicious blossoms, smiling too early in our London gardens, and delighting many a heart, were soon cut off and withered by wild tempests of hail and sleet. Seldom had the pink almond appeared so soon on the leafless tree; never so early was the garden path snowed over with the unformed flowers. Lilac and laburnum, hawthorn, red and white, they all came in profusion, and were destined to become spring's sacrifice. Can any one have forgotten that morning when London awoke to find every spire of chestnut flower burnt and blackened, and the young leaves scorched as if a whirlwind of fire had passed across the land. From that moment the beauty of the year seemed to have faded away. It was not alone that the season which should be the most consoling was rude, rough and ungenial. We could have borne that. Englishmen are said to be made by the east wind. But it was miserably cold and wet. What need to look back upon our lost pleasures? The cricket matches, when the turf, however well drained, could not drink in the excess of water, and lakes appeared between the wickets; the garden parties saved from ruin solely by the good temper of the guests. The fashionable race meetings such as Ascot made muddy and wretched with the trampling of many feet; even Henley doomed to a drenching to which the history of this delightful meeting has scarcely any parallel. It was a season of umbrellas and waterproof coats, and when the time for the holidays came, there was, as if by one consent, an exodus from England, most of those who departed philosophically remarking that, after what had happened in the past months on our "tight little island," it could not be worse elsewhere. Unfortunate delusion! It was worse, far worse, as experience has taught only too many—worse even by comparison, colder than any one could have conceived, wetter than any human being could have dreamed, worse with the aggravation of no home to go to, no familiar corner in which comfortably to growl. Wet weather is bad enough, no doubt, in London. A cold season is not enlivening to the spirits; but at the worst there is the study at home and the distraction of whist at the club. A spell of wet weather may be destructive of all exercise, and materially increase our petty disbursements; but if it rains "heavens hard," if we are treated to a deluge that is supposed to contain cats and dogs, to say nothing of pitchforks, still there is ever within whistle a hansom cab. But once we have packed up, and committed ourselves to the servitude of a tourist ticket, there is no turning back. We must put a bold front on the matter; we must grin and bear it.

For, truth to tell, the traveller this year did not go far enough away. Sunshine was alone to be found across the Alps and the Apennines. But most of the travellers stopped short of the barrier that obstinately interposed between the searching damp of cold and the blue and ever cloudless sky. The Rhine, no doubt was a miserable spectacle, the stream had become positively ugly with the constant rains, the castles on the jagged rocks stood disconsolate in the mist, and forlorn enough were the tourist travellers on the up-river steamers, trying to feel jolly over their early dinner and Walperzheim under a dripping awning. Rain is not favourable to the effective display of any kind of scenery. It utterly spoils the Rhine; and even the travellers who passed the rapid river by on the railway on either bank were inclined to pull down the blinds and look at its green waters no more. All this time there was sunshine on the Danube. Gaiety and life seemed to begin in that ever-courteous and laughing city of Vienna; though, so far as English travellers were concerned, the hospitable little tables in the hotel courtyards were deserted, and the Viennese inhabitants consumed alone their decorated dishes of cold fish and their still colder glasses of light and amber-coloured beer.

There was no rain at all in smiling Hungary—that land which veritably flows with milk and honey, and is so rich in produce that its people leave it half ungathered. That most delightful of all river cities, Buda Pesth, had not a cloud above it, not a speck in the blue sky, at a time when people were rain-besieged at Zermatt and weatherbound in the giant hotels of gay Lucerne. How was it that those who hoped against hope for fine weather at Ems and Wiesbaden, at Hombourg and Baden Baden, and who drank the accustomed waters under umbrellas, had not bethought them of the cure house on Margareten Insel on the Danube river, that miniature paradise of trees and flowers where the wandering foot of the Englishman is so seldom set? For if there are excursion boats on the Rhine and the Lake of Lucerne are there not pleasure steamers also on the Danube, where in a lazy and luxurious fashion the traveller, sick of the train, can interview the countries that have bought their liberty, can see the rocky fastnesses and the eagle's lair about the bold scenery of the Iron Gates, and catch the first glimpse of the picturesqueness and colour of eastern life where melon sellers and vendors of grapes, veiled women and turbaned men, Turkish porters and Greek popes crowd to the landing-place of Turin Severin or gay Widdin, receiving thus their sole communication with the outer world? It rained desperately no doubt in the neighborhood of the climbing inns of the athletic Alps, there was despair at Zermatt and the Riffel, a wet fog swept around the platform of the Eggischhorn, and blotted out the beauty of the Great Aletsch Glacier, the clergymen and schoolmasters were at their wits' end what to do at Murren, and the weatherbound traveller looking from his window at the Wengernalp or the little Scheideck heard the distant avalanches and saw no rosy sunset over the Jungfrau, the Eiger, or the Monch. Meanwhile there was a sunset that would have delighted Turner to brighten Varna, not a ripple to disturb the passage of the Austrian Lloyd steamer on the Black Sea; and all through the long fast of Ramadan down to the time that the cannons of Constantinople proclaimed the advent of Bairam, the mournful dogs of Pera basked on the jagged stones of the tortuous, evil-smelling streets, and it required Christian courage to face that blaze of sun across the bridge which divides the fashionable Turkish quarter from the native homes and shops and alleys of old Stamboul. Strange, indeed, must it have appeared recently to the troops on the transports eastward bound to read, on the Mediterranean, with its waveless waters of deep blue, of storms in the Channel and dripping beaches all the way from Dieppe to Trouville, of tempestuous weather around the Isle of Wight and the southern ports, when they found on either side of them what the Laureate has so happily described as "summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea," and when they heard such glowing accounts from Egyptian refugees of Athens crowned with a perpetual sun, Sicily without a shower, and Naples with days that were endurable and nights at Pausilippe as soft as spring and light as noon.

"Oh! rest ye, brother mariners, we will not wander more," groan inwardly the seasick and retreating passengers cast upon our coasts, glared at by Dover, stared at by Folkestone, bundled about into inhospitable custom-houses at Southampton, or hurrying homewards from Flushing. Too many of them cannot fail to confess that they have, take one thing with another, had a very bad time of it. Their sorrows, however are over, the reaction is at hand, and if the weather-wise be correct, we are promised a delightful autumn. To some minds there may be a settled melancholy in the fall of the leaf. Nature is then in the minor key. The year, so far as beauty is concerned, is almost over, and there is nothing to anticipate but the fog. Yet, socially considered, the autumn is, after all, the merriest division of the year. People unbend and become more genial. During the London season they are on stilts; at a country house they become natural, and are humanized. For life at a country-house means something much more than everlasting sport and never-ending slaughtering of partridges; it does not mean going out in the morning and coming home dog-tired at night; it is not an embodiment of selfishness and egotism, as many people suppose. Quite the contrary. Grave men and women are boys and girls again, at least in heart; and country-house life in