

# Views of Old Europe

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## Chapter I THE VOYAGE

An enthusiastic desire of visiting the Old World haunted me from early childhood. I cherished a presentiment, amounting almost to belief, that I should one day behold the scenes, among which my fancy had so long wandered. The want of means was for a time a serious check to my anticipations; but I could not content myself to wait until I had slowly accumulated so large a sum as tourists usually spend on their travels. It seemed to me that a more humble method of seeing the world would place within the power of almost everyone, what has hitherto been deemed the privilege of the wealthy few. Such a journey, too, offered advantages for becoming acquainted with people as well as places—for observing more intimately, the effect of government and education, and more than all, for the study of human nature, in every condition of life. At length I became possessed of a small sum, to be earned by letters descriptive of things abroad, and on the 1st of July, 1844, set sail for Liverpool, with a relative and friend, whose circumstances were somewhat similar to mine. How far the success of the experiment and the object of our long pilgrimage were attained, these pages will show.

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### LAND AND SEA

There are springs that rise in the greenwood's heart,  
Where its leafy glooms are cast,  
And the branches droop in the solemn air,  
Unstirred by the sweeping blast.

There are hills that lie in the noontide calm,  
On the lap of the quiet earth;  
And, crown'd with gold by the ripened grain,  
Surround my place of birth.

Dearer are these to my pining heart,  
Than the beauty of the deep,  
When the moonlight falls in a belt of gold  
On the waves that heave in sleep.  
The rustling talk of the clustered leaves  
That shade a well-known door,  
Is sweeter far than the booming sound  
Of the breaking wave before.

When night on the ocean sinks calmly down,  
I climb the vessel's prow,  
Where the foam-wreath glows with its phosphor light,  
Like a crown on a sea-nymph's brow.  
Above, through the lattice o' rope and spar,  
The stars in their beauty burn;  
And the spirit longs to ride their beams,  
And back to the loved return.

They say that the sunset is brighter far  
When it sinks behind the sea;  
That the stars shine out with a softer fire—  
Not thus they seem to me.  
Dearer the flush of the crimson west  
Through trees that my childhood knew,  
When the star of love, with its silver lamp,  
Lights the homes of the tried and true!

Could one live on the sense of beauty alone, exempt from the necessity of "creature comforts," a sea-voyage would be delightful. To the landsman there is sublimity in the wild and ever-varied forms of the ocean; they fill his mind with living images of a glory he had only dreamed of before. But we would have been willing to forego all this and get back the comforts of the shore. At New York we took passage in the second cabin of the *Oxford*, which, as usual in the Liverpool packets, consisted of a small space amid ships, fitted up with rough, temporary berths. The communication with the deck is by an open hatchway, which in storms is closed down. As the passengers in this cabin furnish their own provisions, we made ourselves acquainted with the contents of certain storehouses on Pine St. wharf, and purchased a large box of provisions, which was stowed away under our narrow berth. The cook, for a small compensation, took on himself the charge of preparing them, and we made ourselves as comfortable as the close, dark dwelling would admit.

As we approached the Banks of Newfoundland, a gale arose, which for two days and nights carried us on, careering Mazeppa-like, up hill and down. The sea looked truly magnificent, although the sailors told us it was nothing at all in comparison with the storms of winter. But we were not permitted to pass the Banks, without experiencing one of the calms, for which that neighborhood is noted. For three days we lay almost motionless on the glassy water, sometimes surrounded by large flocks of sea-gulls. The weed brought by the gulf stream, floated around — some branches we fished up, were full of beautiful little shells. Once a large school of black-fish came around the vessel, and the carpenter climbed down on the fore-chains, with a harpoon to strike one. Scarcely had he taken his position, when they all darted off in a straight line, through the water, and were soon out of sight. He said they had smelt the harpoon.

We congratulated ourselves on having reached the Banks in seven days, as it is considered the longest third-part of the passage. But the

hopes of reaching Liverpool in twenty days, were soon overthrown. A succession of southerly winds drove the vessel as far north as lat. 55 deg., without bringing us much nearer our destination. It was extremely cold, for we were but five degrees south of the latitude of Greenland, and the long northern twilights came on. The last glow of the evening twilight had scarcely faded, before the first glimmering of dawn appeared. I found it extremely easy to read, at 10 P. M., on the deck.

We had much diversion on board from a company of Iowa Indians, under the celebrated chief "White Cloud," who are on a visit to England. They are truly a wild enough looking company, and helped not a little to relieve the tedium of the passage. The chief was a grave and dignified person, but some of the braves were merry enough. One day we had a war-dance on deck, which was a most ludicrous scene. The chief and two braves sat upon the deck, beating violently a small drum and howling forth their war-song, while the others in full dress, painted in a grotesque style, leaped about, brandishing tomahawks and spears, and terminating each dance with a terrific yell. Some of the men are very fine-looking, but the squaws are all ugly. They occupied part of the second cabin, separated only by a board partition from our room. This proximity was any thing but agreeable. They kept us awake more than half the night, by singing and howling in the most dolorous manner, with the accompaniment of slapping their hands violently on their bare breasts. We tried an opposition, and a young German student, who was returning home after two years' travel in America, made our room ring with the chorus from *Der Freischutz*—but in vain. They would howl and beat their breasts, and the pappoose would squall. Any loss of temper is therefore not to be wondered at, when I state that I could scarcely turn in my berth, much less stretch myself out; my cramped limbs alone drove off half the night's slumber.

It was a pleasure, at least, to gaze on their strong athletic frames. Their massive chests and powerful limbs put to shame our dwindled

proportions. One old man, in particular, who seemed the patriarch of the band, used to stand for hours on the quarter deck, sublime and motionless as a statue of Jupiter. An interesting incident occurred during the calm of which I spoke. They began to be fearful we were doomed to remain there forever, unless the spirits were invoked for a favorable wind. Accordingly, the prophet lit his pipe and smoked with great deliberation, muttering all the while in a low voice. Then, having obtained a bottle of beer from the captain, he poured it solemnly over the stern of the vessel into the sea. There were some indications of wind at the time, and accordingly the next morning we had a fine breeze, which the Iowas attributed solely to the Prophet's incantation and Eolus' love of beer.

After a succession of calms and adverse winds, on the 25th we were off the Hebrides, and though not within sight of land, the southern winds came to us strongly freighted with the "meadow freshness" of the Irish bogs, so we could at least smell it. That day the wind became more favorable, and the next morning we were all roused out of our berths by sunrise, at the long wished-for cry of "land!" Just under the golden flood of light that streamed through the morning clouds, lay far-off and indistinct the crags of an island, with the top of a lighthouse visible at one extremity. To the south of it, and barely distinguishable, so completely was it blended in hue with the veiling cloud, loomed up a lofty mountain. I shall never forget the sight! As we drew nearer, the dim and soft outline it first wore, was broken into a range of crags, with precipices jutting out to the sea, and sloping off inland. The white wall of the lighthouse shone in the morning's light, and the foam of the breakers dashed up at the foot of the airy cliffs. It was worth all the troubles of a long voyage, to feel the glorious excitement which this herald of new scenes and new adventures created. The lighthouse was on Tory Island, on the north-western coast of Ireland. The Captain decided on taking the North Channel, for, although rarely done, it was in our case nearer, and is certainly more interesting than the usual route.

We passed the Island of Ennistrahul, near the entrance of Londonderry harbor, and at sunset saw in the distance the islands of Islay and Jura, off the Scottish coast. Next morning we were close to the promontory of Fairhead, a bold, precipitous headland, like some of the Palisades on the Hudson; the highlands of the Mull of Cantire were on the opposite side of the Channel, and the wind being ahead, we tacked from shore to shore, running so near the Irish coast, that we could see the little thatched huts, stacks of peat, and even rows of potatoes in the fields. It was a panorama: the view extended for miles inland, and the fields of different colored grain were spread out before us, a brilliant mosaic. Towards evening we passed Ailsa Crag, the sea-bird's home, within sight, though about twenty miles distant.

On Sunday, the 28th, we passed the lofty headland of the Mull of Galloway and entered the Irish Sea. Here there was an occurrence of an impressive nature. A woman, belonging to the steerage, who had been ill the whole passage, died the morning before. She appeared to be of a very avaricious disposition, though this might indeed have been the result of self-denial, practised through filial affection. In the morning she was speechless, and while they were endeavoring to persuade her to give up her keys to the captain, died. In her pocket were found two parcels, containing forty sovereigns, sewed up with the most miserly care. It was ascertained she had a widowed mother in the north of Ireland, and judging her money could be better applied than to paying for a funeral on shore, the captain gave orders for committing the body to the waves. It rained drearily as her corpse, covered with starred bunting, was held at the gangway while the captain read the funeral service; then one plunge was heard, and a white object flashed up through the dark waters, as the ship passed on.

In the afternoon we passed the Isle of Man, having a beautiful view of the Calf, with a white stream tumbling down the rocks into the sea; and at night saw the sun set behind the mountains of Wales.

About midnight, the pilot came on board, and soon after sunrise I saw the distant spires of Liverpool. The Welsh coast was studded with windmills, all in motion, and the harbor spotted with buoys, bells and floating lights. How delightful it was to behold the green trees on the banks of the Mersey, and to know that in a few hours we should be on land! About 11 o'clock we came to anchor in the channel of the Mersey, near the docks, and after much noise, bustle and confusion, were transferred, with our baggage, to a small steamboat, giving a parting cheer to the Iowas, who remained on board. On landing, I stood a moment to observe the scene. The baggage-wagons, drawn by horses, mules and donkeys, were extraordinary; men were going about crying "*the celebrated Tralorum gingerbread!*" which they carried in baskets; and a boy in the University dress, with long blue gown and yellow knee-breeches, was running to the wharf to look at the Indians.

At last the carts were all loaded, the word was given to start, and then, what a scene ensued! Away went the mules, the horses and the donkeys; away ran men and women and children, carrying chairs and trunks, and boxes and bedding. The wind was blowing, and the dust whirled up as they dashed helter-skelter through the gate and started off on a hot race, down the dock to the depot. Two wagons came together, one of which was overturned, scattering the broken boxes of a Scotch family over the pavement; but while the poor woman was crying over her loss, the tide swept on, scarcely taking time to glance at the mishap.

Our luggage was "passed" with little trouble; the officer merely opening the trunks and pressing his hands on the top. Even some American reprints of English works which my companion carried, and feared would be taken from him, were passed over without a word. I was agreeably surprised at this, as from the accounts of some travellers, I had been led to fear horrible things of custom-houses. This over, we took a stroll about the city. I was first struck by seeing so many people walking in the middle of the streets, and so many

gentlemen going about with pinks stuck in their button-holes. Then, the houses being all built of brown granite or dark brick, gives the town a sombre appearance, which the sunshine (when there is any) cannot really dispel. Of Liverpool we saw little. Before the twilight had wholly faded, we were again tossing on the rough waves of the Irish Sea.

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## Chapter II

### A DAY IN IRELAND

On calling at the steamboat office in Liverpool, to take passage to Port Rush, we found that the fare in the fore cabin was but two shillings and a half, while in the chief cabin it was six times as much. As I had started to make the tour of all Europe with a sum little higher than is sometimes given for the mere passage to and fro, there was no alternative—the twenty-four hours' discomfort could be more easily endured than the expense, and as I expected to encounter many hardships, it was best to make a beginning. I had crossed the ocean with tolerable comfort for twenty-four dollars, and was determined to try whether England, where I had been told it was almost impossible to breathe without expense, might not also be seen by one of limited means.

The fore cabin was merely a bare room, with a bench along one side, which was occupied by half a dozen Irishmen in knee-breeches and heavy brogans. As we passed out of the Clarence Dock at 10 P.M., I went below and managed to get a seat on one end of the bench, where I spent the night in sleepless misery. The Irish bestowed themselves about the floor as they best could, for there was no light, and very soon the Morphean deepness of their breathing gave token of blissful unconsciousness.

The next morning was misty and rainy, but I preferred walking the deck and drying myself occasionally beside the chimney, to sitting