

in its thousand holes and caves for the same wild animals which pastured upon the spot ages ago? Will it ever be a Palmyra, a Palenque? And yet, even though it may, the Thames will ebb and flow as of yore—it will be the only feature in the scene in itself unchanged; the river which witnessed the growth of London on its banks, will witness its decay, and rise and fall amid desolation, as it did amongst industry and plenty. Water preserves its verisimilitude better than land. The Tiber ripples as when, "on a raw and gusty day," Cassius leaped into its torrent. Woollen mills have been erected on the banks of the Tweed, but there we see probably the same pools, the same flashing streams through which, in other days, the moostrooper spurred his panting horse. The Gravesend steamer of the present day contends with the same currents, and ploughs through the same eddies which the adventurous Roman galleys battled with near two thousand years ago, when they threaded the long reaches of the unknown stream, as a British expedition may now wend its way up some savage African river. Men cannot mould water into different forms as they can earth; there it runs as it ran ages ago, and as it will probably run ages hence.

The Thames was the making of London. The forest of masts upon its bosom reared the wilderness of bricks upon its banks. The Londoners early knew the value of the river, and there is fine English sense and spirit in the answer of the city merchants to James, when he threatened to remove his court to Oxford. "Your Majesty may take your court where you please, so long as you leave us our river." Thames mud was better than royal favour. James, in spite of the many foolish things which he thought, wrote, said, and did, had a spice of Scotch shrewdness in his composition; and perceiving in this matter his loving subjects had the whip hand of him, he very wisely left the court where he found it.

It is probably, however, in the time of his predecessor, that the Thames was in the season of its highest glory, both as a picturesque and business-like stream. The roads then from London to Westminster were sad concatenations of ruts; the river afforded an easier and a more pleasant path. The mansions of the nobility were then, too, almost exclusively situated by the water side—extending in a long line of sumptuous palaces and trim gardens from London Bridge to Westminster Abbey. The aristocracy of the land then kept their gilded and carved barges, as their successors do their town carriages; and we can conceive these gorgeous boats, urged through the water by crews of haged and liveried rowers, mingling with the swarming wherries of the humbler citizens, enlivening the still river on a summer's eve, while swarms floated hither and thither, fishermen shot their nets, the piles of pictures buildings upon the banks, broken by snatches of foliage and green gardens, and crowned by the tall spire—there was no dome then—of old St. Paul's. These were the most glorious days of the "silent highway." But streets began to be smoothed down, and carriages to run on them, and so the wherry got much out of fashion. Taylor, the water poet, inveighs in good set terms, against the changing fashion of his day, which threatened to throw him and his brethren of the oar out of bread. Had he lived in latter times, how he would have attacked steamboats! with what cordiality he would have abused them, their makers and their patrons! But steam has probably, wrought a greater change in the traffic of the Thames in ten years, than was effected in a century before its introduction. Only think of a voyage to Gravesend occupying two or three days—yet such was frequently the case. Whenever the tide turned against the travellers, they had to cast anchor, and wait patiently or impatiently, as the case might be, until the next turn of the stream in their favour. Charles Lamb has left an exquisite account of a voyage to Margate in one of the ancient hoys—of the tediousness and annoyances of the whole proceeding, and how the company regarded the man who recognized the Reculvers, as a very travelled personage.

We do not know a more amusing sight than to watch the starting of a dozen steamers to all the watering places down the coast, from London Bridge, on a fine summer morning. What a bustle—what leave-taking—what jostling of baggage-laden porters—what shouting of orders—what ringing of bells—what arrivals of just-in-time-to-be-too-late wretches—(we don't think a steamer ever yet started that there was not somebody too late)—and, heard over all, what a continuous shrill scream of escaping steam! See! the white vapoury mist, sweeping amid ropes, and masts, and flags, ever and anon puffing in the Captain's face, as he takes his stand upon one of the paddle-boxes, and then gradually melting away into the breezy, sunny air. These steamboats, too, seem prone to get all jammed together in the most inextricable confusion. It seems as if they had grown there, and that there was no chance whatever of their getting out of the fix. One thinks of the uncles and nieces in the "Citic," with their daggers, not one of whom can strike another, without somebody else striking him or her, as the case may be. At length, however, after a vest deal of shouting and abuse, and pulling and pushing, and a "turn astern," and "a couple of turns ahead," first shouted in the gruff voice of the captain, and then repeated by a small boy, with a sound like that of a young echo, which has not yet come to its proper voice, one by one the fire-boats, as the Indians term them, manage to get underweigh—a Dover boat, probably, carrying off one half a family, while a Herne Bay craft is happy in the possession of the other moiety, their luggage being probably equally divided between a steamer going to Sheerness with troops, and another to Gravesend upon an ex-

ursion, with the "Norton Folgate United Tea Totalers!"

Most interesting, too, are the three miles which form the Pool. They are the most busy three miles of water in the universe. You pass down a street of ships. What a glorious nautical panorama! Every rig—every build—every nation, has its representative in the congress. The coal trade is in especial well represented, albeit the numerous members from Newcastle and Sunderland are rather grimy to look upon. You pass so rapidly by, that you have hardly time to trace the names painted on sterns and quarters; or you would be reminded of every shipping port in Britain, and many more beyond the seas. What a mass of floating riches, directed with how much nautical skill, and bearing the produce of how much mercantile industry! It is pleasant, too, to see the flags of so many nations fluttering as amicably together as a string of stockings upon a clothes line. There is the gorgeous tricolor, with its rich blue, white, and red folds—a far handsomer flag than the *drapeau blanc* of the old régime. The lumbering Dutchman carries a tricolor also, but with the colours running lengthwise—perhaps to signify that, being by nature somewhat lazily inclined, he prefers lying down to standing up. The Yankees have not succeeded in producing a very handsome emblazonment; the stripes look too gridironish like. There, however, are all the flags of the maritime world, "red colours and white, blue colours and grey," fluttering together in the breeze, on as friendly terms as if they had never varied amid the smoke of gunpowder, or been (very foolishly) nailed to the mast.

Who that has traversed the Pool, has not been struck with the exquisite *sang froid* of the people who navigate the floating barge? They drift upwards or downwards with the tide, coolly confiding in their own thick-sided solidity, against all the dints which fortune may favour them with. They don't try to get out of the way of steam boats—not they. They know that their own sides are thicker than those of gaudy, butterfly steamers. They are like the thick-headed, ne-hearted blockheads of the world, who tumble on through life, impelled only by circumstances, and no inward volition, or progressive impulse of their own; trusting for their peace to their callousness, and too stupid to see or care about the scorn of those who, feeling their own superiority, would glance by them, but shun the collision of delicacy and fine feeling with cold, impassive, matter-of-fact worldly-mindedness.

A RAMBLE IN THE COUNTRY.

LOITERING for a few brief moments in the little village of —, whose clean and rustic hostelry has tempted you to imbibe a refreshing draught ere you proceed further on your inspiring journey—observe the charming stillness which pervades the scene, and the glowing, healthful faces of the contented folks who dwell there, happy in the innocent delights which Nature has spread around them.

Cast one passing glance on the good old lady knitting at the cottage door, whilst her favourite grand daughter is reading a lesson in a little book, which she has been taught to prize more than silver or gold. See yonder group of boys, whose pastime it is to test the seaworthiness of a curious-looking boat, which the blacksmith's son has modelled with his own penknife, out of a piece of deal, found in his own playground—then turn with a gladdened eye to the little urchin, struggling with impotent menace beneath his elder sister's strong, coercive hand, and refusing to submit his supple limbs to the enthrallment of their daily gear. Glancing within, you note the ruddy blaze of a newly kindled fire, the busy housewife setting forth the morning meal, and cherub-cheeked children sunning themselves upon the threshold, and lavishing caresses on the shaggy dog which lies supine upon the step, or starting up in chase of vagrant butterflies temptingly flitting before their kindling eyes.

Wandering from the village into lanes made lovely by an overarching roof of greenery, and past farm-houses bulwarked round about by swelling stacks, thatched barns, shed, stables, pens, and piggeries, you gain the upland meadows that are all alive with men and horses, ploughs, harrows, drills and rollers in the active operations of a tardy seed time. Occasionally a covey of plump partridges rise whirling in the air; occasionally a timid hare springs up and dashes to the nearest covert with all the speed that trembling fear can urge; and now a green and gentle slope conducts you to a slight and sparkling tunnel, spanned by a rustic bridge, mossy, and seamed, and creaking to the tread. You cannot pass it by without a momentary pause, there is such witchery in its melodious flow, and the eye lingers so long and lovingly upon its cool transparent waters; and thus, halting awhile upon the narrow bridge, you call to mind many a well remembered passage in the writings of your most treasured authors; and probably there will recur to memory, among the rest, a passage in its kind so exquisite that we are confident of pardon for its repetition here:

"Like the still,
Unbroken beating of the sleeper's pulse,
The reeds bend down the stream: the willow
leaves,
With a soft cheek upon the lulling tide,
Forgets the lifting winds; and the long stems,
Whose flowers the water, like a gentle nure,
Bears on its bosom, quietly give way,
And lean in graceful attitudes to rest."

Threading a plashy path, skirted by stunted willows and venerable pollard-trees, you reach a bosky dingle, and in whose wandering paths the cottage children joy to congregate; and where the wild flowers pave the moist elastic sward with Nature's rich mosaic, there loiter they, and bear from thence a fragrant spoil of

purple violets, and pale anemones, pencilled geraniums, and soft-eyed primroses. And if intruding foot falls startle the childish spoilers at their sport, it would rejoice a painter's heart to see them clustering in groups so picturesque, shading their glistening eyes with round and ruddy arms, and putting on a look as full of mingled archness as bewilderment. Above you floats a very atmosphere of song, and through the green and matted roof, the light looks in, but rarely, and then with broken tempered rays. The ground beneath is tapis-tried with flowers, and with the tendrils of a multitude of parasites, wandering from tree to tree, and weaving a fairy net-work round the knotted trunks and sinuous branches. But ere we quit this branchy fastness, and ere the full tide of song dies gradually away upon the ear, rest for a moment on the twisted root of yonder stalwart tree, and hear what sweet music a living poetess hath discoursed anent these winged choristers:—

"How pleasant the life of a bird must be,
Flitting about in each leafy tree;
In the leafy trees so broad and tall,
Like a green and beautiful palace-hall,
With its airy chambers, light and boon,
That open to sun, and stars, and moon,—
That open to the bright blue sky,
And the frolicsome winds, as they wander by!

"They have left their nests in the forest bough,
Those homes of delight they need not now;
And the young and old they wander out,
And traverse their green world round about;
And, hark! at the top of this leafy hall,
How, one to the other, they lovingly call:—
'Come up, come up!' they seem to say,
'Where the topmost twigs in the breezes play!

"Come up, come up, for the world is fair,
Where the merry leaves dance in the summer air!

And the birds below give back the cry,
'Welcome, we come to the branches high!
How pleasant the life of the birds must be,
Living in love on a leafy tree;
And away through the air what joy to go,
And to look on the green, bright earth below!

"What a joy it must be, like a living breeze,
To flutter about 'mong the flowering trees,—
Lightly to soar, and to see beneath
The wastes of the blossoming purple heath,
And the yellow furze like fields of gold,
That gladden some fairy region old!
On mountain tops, on the billowy sea,
On the leafy stems of the forest tree,
How pleasant the life of a bird must be!"

Emerging into open sunshine, a patch of common land receives you, overspread with golden gorse, and covered with grazing oxen, ragged donkeys, more ragged ponies, and a swarm of gambing geese. Traversing its arid expanse, you gain the farthest edge, whence, in a rapid and continuous descent, the ground slopes southerly. Will not this style, with the contiguous tree casting a dense and grateful shade upon its bars, detain you for a while until the eye has feasted to satiety upon the fair broad prospect which lies outspread beneath? How wooingly the welcome wind dallies with the glowing cheek that freshens and rejoices in its soft embrace!—and as it swells and quickens in its play, you catch the chime of distant bells, rising and falling with the uncertain ebb and flow of the wavering breeze, upon whose fickle wings the subdued and mellow sound is borne.

Far down, within the valley's warmest hollow, bosomed in neighbouring trees, a grey church tower lifts up its reverend front, part buried in the deepest shadow, part luminous with the sunshine's glorious sheen. Here, a farm, and there a nest of cottages, a knoll of trees, an humble wayside inn, with its conspicuous sign swinging aloft, a silver gleamed pool, orchards and gardens, showy with trees just blossoming, a water mill bridging a shimmering stream, a villa environed by fly-firs and evergreens, a village green bestudded with a busy company of cricketers,—lie scattered round; and there, rooted by the banks of a refulgent stream, roofless and open to the eddy winds of heaven, the noble gable and tottering walls of an old monastic ruin loom out magnificently against a back ground of the brightest green. One fair oriel, with its nullions, transoms, and tracery yet entire, attests the ruin's ancient majesty, while a small campanile, niched and besprent with corbels droll and grim, is all that spoils the storm have spared of five goodly towers and campaniles that once rose proudly up to heaven. Ever and anon, islands of dusk cloud shadow float languidly athwart the valley's green expanse and the truant eye, following their noiseless flight, flits as they flit, from field to wood, from swelling eminence to sunken lane, from meandering stream to a placid pool, from roof to roof, until the shadow dwindles in the distance to a mere undistinguishable speck.

So, wearing out the afternoon, you wait the coming on of eventide. At length, the wet evening sun, beginning to decline, gives note of its approach, and gathering round him a dazzling host of rainbow coloured clouds, sinks in a blaze of glory to repose. Twilight steals on, hushing and curtaining the sun deserted earth; but from every brake still issues forth a flow of song diminishing in volume as the winged choristers one by one nestle within their tiny homes, and drooping, yield to slumber. Anon, it dwindles to a solitary twitter, ceasing at times, then languidly renewed—then almost inaudible, and presently heard no more. Woods with their unmoving branches and unfathomable gloom—winding waters glancing luridly in the sunset's lingering glow—church towers, frowning and massier in the waning light—hills, purple and indistinct in the faint far distance, hamlets, with here and there a right

shining through the casements of the scattered cottages,—all put on a novel aspect,—an aspect solemn, weird and unfamiliar. You no more hear the whoop and halloo of the children at their evening sport, nor catch the slow and weary footfalls of the horses heavily pacing homewards from the darkening fields. A perfect Sabbath calm is slowly settling down. Twilight itself begins to wane and—

"Night, sable goddess! from her ebon throne,
In rayless majesty now stretches forth
Her leaden sceptre o'er a slumbering world."

The Politician.

The British Press.

From Bell's New Weekly Messenger.

A GREAT NOISE IN A SMALL WAY.

An awful sound is wafted across the Atlantic. Our brother Jonathan is angry. It is extremely hard to please some people. They are never happy unless they are miserable; and would expire if they had not a grievance. When realities fail, they have recourse to invention; and then ponder on the fabrication until it has the effect of a reality. The last new trouble of our dearly beloved and quarrelsome brother is an ideal attempt on the part of the British government to shake off the fetters of our dear brother's slaves, and set them free. Lord Aberdeen had expressed a wish to see slavery abolished in Texas, and the expression of a wish has raised the anger of brother Jonathan "tarnation high," to the great astonishment of Europeans in general, and the Earl of Aberdeen in particular, who of all men in England is most innocent of aught that should give offence to the government of the United States. We are surprised, indeed, that Jonathan should have any fear of what Lord Aberdeen, or any of his colleagues in the government, are doing, after the abject and pitiful concession that was made by Lord Ashburton, of the boundary. Some of the American Statesmen seem to have taken fire at something Mr Upshur said one Murphy had told him of one Andrews having heard from Lord Aberdeen (a genuine way of American tale travelling) about Texas; and so to save Texas from falling under the influence of Great Britain, it is to be annexed to the United States—at least a treaty for such annexation has been negotiated. But when will it be ratified?

We anticipate that the treaty will be rejected by the Senate; for there is a majority of members, including the most intelligent and dispassionate, opposed to it. America has wise and able statesmen, who are doubtless as much annoyed as our own government, (perhaps more so) by the idle clamours and frantic vehemence of their shallow patred countrymen, who jump at a cause for quarrel with the British, and are impatient to show that they can "lick" us. Mr Clay has published a letter, wherein he states his view of the subject in bold, manly, and enlightened terms. "He considers," he says, "the annexation of Texas, without the consent of Mexico, as a measure compromising the national character, involving us in war with Mexico, probably with other foreign powers, dangerous to the integrity of the Union, inexpedient to the present financial condition of the country, and not called for by any general expression of public opinion." Mr Van Buren concurs generally in this opinion, although his language is not so emphatic as Mr Clay's. Mr Calhoun will be defeated in his project of annexing Texas, upon which he will have the mortification to find that he has vainly bestowed a great deal of pains, and a great deal of patriotic fire, and virtuous indignation. There is one very remarkable statement in the warlike letter of this gentleman, with regard to the elevating influence of slavery. According to his showing, emancipated slaves become indolent, immoral and unhealthy—and that freedom cannot be given to the black race without impairing their moral and physical condition. If this startling doctrine be true, slavery must be the most happy condition of life, and free men all over the world will sigh for the slave's chain and the log. The poet who said—

"A day—an hour—of virtuous liberty,
Is worth a whole eternity of bondage."
must have been under a great delusion, as Mr Calhoun does not confine himself to the truth. The noise which this affair has made will subside, like a penny cracker. Nervous travellers were reminded the other day that the violent hissing of a railway engine before it starts, is not an indication of danger, but a surety of safety, as the valve is then open for the escape of the steam. We consider this annexation noise from America, a guarantee