

DAYS OF THE OLD PACKET

CONTRAST BETWEEN PRESENT AND PAST ATLANTIC LINERS.

REMINISCENCES OF THE OLD PASSENGER SHIPS—MOST OF THEM WERE FLYERS—HARDSHIPS FROM WHICH PRESENT PASSENGERS ARE EXEMPT.

What a contrast there is between the present facilities for transportation between Europe and America and those of years ago. Now there are daily departures from either side of the Atlantic of large, well-appointed steamships. The ocean greyhounds now land passengers at Queenstown, Southampton, or New-York within a week from the day of sailing, and the longest transatlantic voyage can be made in a fortnight.

The voyager has a roomy, well-ventilated stateroom, a liberally-appointed table, with liberty to indulge in as many meals as seasickness will allow, the cuisine generally being in keeping with the surroundings and on a par with the current fare at a first-class hotel. He has plenty of room to move about without coming in contact with his fellow-passengers. If he desires privacy, the 300 feet of promenade deck and the limits of his large stateroom permit him to isolate himself. If, on the other hand, he wants company to relieve the monotony of a sea voyage, he can always find some congenial fellow-traveler among the 500 passengers. In fact, a European voyage to-day by any of the standard lines partakes largely of the nature of a picnic.

The great size and power of the present transatlantic steamer make a very long passage almost impossible unless by accident to the machinery. The arrival of many of the steamers can be gauged to hours. In winter, when heavy gales are common in the North Atlantic, if the sea is not too heavy twenty-four hours will cover all delays on the voyage. Bound eastward, the strong westerly and northwesterly winds common on this coast in winter are a potent factor in shortening the passage.

The surroundings of the emigrant on the voyage are very far in advance of those on the old packet ships. The saloon passenger has better attendance, luxurious stateroom fittings, and a more dainty bill of fare, but the comfort of the steerage passenger is assured by legal restrictions imposed on the vessel. He must have so many cubic feet of room and a proper quantity of wholesome food. He is debarred from taking his promenade on the quarter deck, but there is lots of room forward on these big steamers, and, take it altogether, he receives a better return for the amount of his passage money than the saloon passenger.

The accommodations for passengers on the old packet ships were much more confined, mainly owing to the smaller size of the vessels. These ships were the very best as to hull, spars, and fittings. Most of them were built in New-York by Webb, Smith & Dimon, Westervelt, and other old builders on the East River. A few were the outcome of the best builders in the Eastern States. The cabin was under a poop deck that reached forward to the mainmast. Sometimes a few feet of the forward part of this deck was partitioned off and made a second cabin, and utilized for light freight when not carrying second cabin passengers. In the first cabin there were generally twenty staterooms as large as the size of the ship would allow, and comfortably furnished. The fittings of the second cabin, not being permanent, had but little to recommend them other than that the occupants had a table to themselves, and were entirely separated from the steerage passengers. The steerage occupied the whole of the 'tween decks. Single and double and upper and lower berths were arranged all around the sides of the ship. As far as possible, families were placed together and the women passengers given all the privacy possible in the limited space available. The steerage was reached by ladders at the fore and main hatches which were always open except in bad weather, and ventilators through the deck and a windsail or two furnished the fresh air to the steerage. Should the weather become stormy and the sea heavy the hatches were closed, and the poor emigrant had to make the best of his surroundings until the weather moderated.

The number of passengers was limited by law, each vessel being measured by the Custom House authorities, who issued a certificate as to the number the ship could carry. The provisions were also under legal supervision as to quality and quantity. Stringent rules were in force regarding the cleanliness of the passenger, and all possible sanitary precautions were taken to prevent sickness and death during the voyage and with the view of landing the emigrant here in health and with only the inconveniences inseparable from a long voyage in rather confined quarters. The passage in old times was a very long one at best. Three weeks either way was considered a good run, and in the winter time ninety days has been consumed in the western passage. The ship might reach soundings on our coast and be even within sight of Sandy Hook Lightship, when suddenly a heavy northwester might swoop down over the Highlands and drive her before it perhaps hundreds of miles, with the perilous task before her of beating back again to Sandy Hook against a heavy head wind and a temperature in the neighborhood of zero. Contrast this with today's experience.

The progress made in railroad traveling since first the locomotive appeared is wonderful. The European passenger of to-day who in his youth came to this country in the steerage of one of the old packets can see greater improvement in the accommodations for passengers now available by any of the European steamers. The old packet ship filled all the wants of transit in their day. They are no longer a necessity. Progress has put steamers in their place.

In their day the sailing vessels were the pride of the New-Yorker and a credit to our merchant marine. They were all American. No foreign flag ever flew at the peak of a packet ship out of New-York that was worthy of the name, and no foreign vessel ever competed successfully for the trade we had inaugurated and made successful. To-day we look in vain for an American vessel among the large fleet of fast European steamers. The Ohio and her sister ships that formerly constituted the line from Philadelphia to Liverpool are occasionally heard of as ocean tramps, available for charter to any port where a paying freight is to be had. Philadelphia had a Liverpool line of fine ships managed by the Copes. Boston had a Liverpool line owned by Enoch Train & Co. The senior of the firm was the uncle of George Francis Train, who made his first extended trip in his uncle's ship, Anglo-American, under the command of Capt. James Murdoch.

In New-York there were in the Liverpool trade the Swallowtail Line, (so called from the shape of the private signal) of Grinnell, Minturn & Co., comprising, among others, the ships New World, Queen of the West, Henry Clay, Ashburton, and Albert Gallatin; the Dramatic Line of E. K. Collins, (who afterward operated the Collins Line of steamers), comprising the Roscius, Sheridan, Siddons, and Garrick; the Black Ball Line, consisting of the Columbia, New-York, Fidelia, Montezuma, Yorkshire, Manhattan, Isaac Webb, Harvest Queen, Neptune, Great Western, and James Foster, Jr., and the Red Star Line of Robert Kermit—the Waterloo, West Point, John R. Skeddy, Constellation, and Underwriter. Woodhull & Minturn ran the Constellation, Liverpool, and Hottinguer; Taylor & Merrill the Ivanhoe, Guy Manning, and Marmion; Williams & Gulon the Cultivator, John Bright, Australia, and Universe; D. & A. Kingsland the America, Columbus, Webster, and Orient; David Ogden the St. Patrick, St. George, Racer, Victory, and Dreadnaught; Taylor & Ritch the De Witt Clinton, Enterprise, and Jacob A. Westervelt; Slater, Gardner & Howell the Chaves, Saratorza, Senator, and Jamestown; Samuel Thompson's Nephews Company the Star of the West, Calob Grimsshaw, Excelstor, Joseph Walker, and Jeremiah Thompson.

These ships, with others, were run at regular intervals, and had stated days of sailing, only varied by bad weather or some other unavoidable delay.

There were two prominent lines to London, one by John Griswold, consisting in part of the Devonshire, Amazon, Victoria, Hendrik Hudson, Palestine, and Southampton. Grinnell, Minturn & Co. operated the other line with the Sir Robert Peel, London, Prince Albert, Yorktown, and Rhine. There were three lines to Havre, Messers. Boyd & Hincken ran the St. Denis, St. Nicholas, Onelda, Quesnel, and Mercury. Fox & Livingston had the Havre, New-York, Admiral, and Zurich. Two of the Havre packets, the Iowa and the Duchesse d'Orleans, were selected to carry Stevenson's regiment to California at the time that Territory was ceded to the United States. William Whitlock had in his line the splendid Bavaria, the Helvetia, Germania, Gallia, Logan, and Rattler. The Bavaria is credited with receiving, on her first voyage, the highest freight rate paid to Europe during the excitement in rates consequent on the famine in Ireland.

There is a great change in the appearance of the docks on West Street and South Street since old packet days. The East River is still the resting place of the bulk of the sailing vessels entering this port. On the North River, below Twenty-third Street, an occasional schooner can be seen, but never a square rigger. In past days on South Street, William Whitlock's Havre packets berthed near Old Slip, almost opposite his office; E. K. Collins's ships were at the first pier below Wall Street; Griswold's London Line at the foot of Pine Street; Kermit's Line, Grinnell, Minturn & Co.'s London and Liverpool Line, and the line of Woodhull & Minturn lay between Maiden Lane and Burling Slip; Marshall's Black Ball Line was at the foot of Beekman Street, while Taylor & Merrill, Williams & Gulon, and others filled the piers up to Roosevelt Street and above Peck Slip.

On the North River, the piers from the Battery to Cedar Street, now covered with sheds and monopolized by the truck lines of rail-

roads and one or two lines of steamers, were the berths for many of the lines: Boyd & Hincken's and Fox & Livingston's Havre lines, and David Ogden and D. & A. Kingsland, for their Liverpool lines, found room at the piers between those points. Fox & Livingston were situated near Albany Street, being the furthest up town of all lines on the North River.

There was great rivalry between the lines. The fastest ship and the most popular Captain secured the largest passenger list. Full cabins were always assured to certain vessels, while other ships commanded by men equally worthy in every particular, but perhaps a little less affable and a little more "snit," had to be content with second place. When the steamship lines between here and Europe were first inaugurated several of the old packet Captains were placed in command of the steamers, in many cases simply by reason of their popularity with the traveling public. Capt. West of the Philadelphia packet ship Shenandoah took the Collins steamer Atlantic, Capt. Nye of the Henry Clay took the Pacific, Capt. Luco of the Constellation the Arctic, Capt. Mackstaff of the Fidelia the United States, and Capt. Wotton and Lines of the Havre packets took the Fulton and the Arago.

Many of these old ships were exceptionally fast sailers, keeping up their reputation for speed after their usefulness had ended in the packet service and they had been transferred to some other trade. On this list should be placed the names of the Roscius, Independence, Henry Clay, John R. Skiddy, Devonshire, Constitution, Marmion, John Bright, Enterprise, St. Denis, New-York, and Admiral. For continuous short passages, covering the whole time the ship was in the trade, the palm would probably be awarded to the Yorkshire of the Black Ball Line, Capt. Bailey, who commanded her, generally managed to keep his ship at the front most of the time, and it was seldom she was beaten on the passage by a ship leaving at the same time. Later on, when the demand for clipper ships began, the Dreadnaught, built at Newburyport, Mass., by John Currier, and commanded by Capt. Samuels, was added to the fleet of Liverpool packets by David Ogden. Under the command of Capt. Samuels she made some notable passages to and from Liverpool, and claims the record for the shortest passages between the two ports. A peculiarity of this vessel is worthy of note. After Capt. Samuels gave up the command of the Dreadnaught, and up to the time she foundered she never made more than a fair passage in any direction, and is credited with some quite long ones, worse than the average.

Capt. Nye of the Henry Clay, afterward in the Collins steamer Pacific, claimed to be pretty nearly perfectly in everything pertaining to nautical matters. On one occasion some unlucky Captain managed to put his ship on Sandy Hook Beach while inward bound. Commenting on the occurrence, Nye remarked that any man who put his ship ashore within ten miles of Sandy Hook Light was a fool. On his next voyage the Henry Clay went ashore so near to Sandy Hook Lighthouse that you could almost jump on to the lantern from her flying jibboom. After that Nye did not pose as an instructor in navigation.

Capt. Larrabee of the Sir Robert Peel was a perfect sailor and gentleman, and was gifted with quaint abilities at repartee. Once his ship was lying in the Mersey, outward bound and ready to sail, waiting for the tide and the pilot. Among the passengers was a young Englishman, whose large ideas as to the great superiority of his own country had, so far, never been controverted. He went up to Capt. Larrabee, who stood by the wheelhouse, earnestly watching the landing stage. The ensign was flying from the peak, and our English friend, after a few commonplace remarks to Larrabee, said, pointing to the ensign:

"I say, Captain, that flag has not braved for a thousand years the battle and the breeze."

"No," quickly replied Larrabee, "but it has licked one that has."

Instances of heroism on the part of the Captains of the old packets are numerous. On one midwinter homeward voyage the ship John Bright fell in with another ship in distress, likewise bound to the westward, and, like the Bright, with a full complement of steerage passengers. The passengers of the disabled vessel were transferred to the Bright. Ship fever soon broke out and spread rapidly. The overcrowded steerage, bad weather, and slow progress helped the spread of the disease. Death held high carnival, and the Captain was doctor, nurse, and chaplain, as well as navigator. To help the ship's doctor, assist the convalescent, bury the dead, and at the same time work the ship was what this man had to do, and he did it well. After reaching port and docking his ship, the Captain himself succumbed to the disease, and for a long time his life hung by a thread. He is now filling a responsible position on shore with one of the prominent European lines of steamers.

There were other lines of packets than those to Europe. The coastwise trade, now handled by such fine steamers as ply almost daily to Charleston, Savannah, New-Orleans, and Galveston, was carried on by sailing vessels. The ships Anson, Sutton, South Carolina, and Charleston were among those in the Charleston line. The Anson and the Sutton were of barely 400 tons. In their day they transported many a bale of cotton and many a passenger. I have seen them with their decks completely filled with cotton, space only being left for the sailors to get around decks to work the vessel.

There were three prominent lines in the New-Orleans trade. William Nelson, whose loading berth was at Pine Street, had the Memphis, Vicksburg, St. Louis, and John G. Coster. Frost & Hicks had a loading berth at the north side of Wall Street, where the Ward Havana steamers now lie. They had the Indiana, Niagara, Mediator, Wisconsin, and others. At the south side of Wall Street was the line of Thomas P. Stanton, comprising, among others, the Quebec, Oswego, St. Charles, and Hudson. The New-Orleans packets sailed as often as the trade warranted, semi-weekly or weekly. They carried large cargoes both ways and made money for their owners. J. H. Brower & Co. had a line of ships to Galveston. Their vessels were built in Connecticut, and owing to the shallow water on the Galveston bar had to be of very light draught. The Stephen F. Austin and the William B. Travis were part of their fleet. Twelve feet draught, loaded, was the mark for a Galveston packet in those days.

There were lines to Savannah, maintained by Sturges, Clearman & Co., R. M. Demill, and Dunham & Dimon; Mobile was reached by the Hubberts' ships, and there was intermittent service to Apalachicola and other Gulf ports. Hargrove & Co. had a monopoly of the Mexican trade by means of fine vessels running to Vera Cruz.

The old business houses which inaugurated and developed to such large proportions our foreign and coastwise trade have likewise faded from sight. A walk through South and Front Streets from Coenties Slip to Dover Street does not result in finding the old signs on the stores and offices to-day. Howland & Aspinwall, Grinnell, Minturn & Co., Josiah Macy's Sons, and James W. Elwell & Co. are about all that are left. The present members of these firms were boys when the packet lines were in existence. The old sailing ship was pushed to the wall by the steamer. To-day the great improvements in steam machinery, securing greatly increased speed with less expenditure of fuel, is forcing into the rear rank many of the steamers which not long ago were considered perfect. The Algiers and the New-York of the Morgan Line are now extra boats, useful in emergent cases, but not fast enough for the regular service. Boats like the El Sol, El Mar, and El Monte, that can make the trip to New-Orleans in less than five days, are what is wanted. In the Galveston trade we find the Concho and the Comal replacing the City of Dallas and the State of Texas. The Kansas City and the City of Birmingham take the place of boats like the K. K. Cuyler and Knoxville in the Savannah trade. The Yucatan and the Yumuri are better adapted to the Havana line than the old Moro Castle, and even on the daily line to Boston the wants of the trade demand the substitution of steamers like the Herman Winter and H. F. Dimock for the old Glaucon and Neptune. It has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the United States can build and equip steamers equal to any afloat in their adaptability to the wants of our domestic commerce. May the time be near when the American flag will be seen at the peaks of steamers in the European trade!

MUSIC IN THE CHURCHES.

The "Recordare," from Mozart's requiem mass, is to be the principal musical selection at St. Chrysostom's Chapel, Thirty-ninth Street and Seventh Avenue, to-day.

At the Holy Trinity Church, Lenox Avenue and One Hundred and Twenty-second Street, to-day, Gade's anthem "Zion" will be sung as an offertory in the morning. At evening prayers the offertory will be an anthem from Haydn.

At St. James's Church, Madison Avenue and Seventy-first Street, will be given this evening a musical service of great interest. Part I. of "The Two Advents," a cantata composed especially for the choir of St. James by Dr. George Garrett, organist of St. John's College, Cambridge, England, will be given. Gounod's "Magnificat" and "Nunc Dimittis" will also be sung by the vested choir, and Mendelssohn's "Lauda Sion" will be given as the offertory.

At Trinity Chapel, in West Twenty-fifth Street, the offertory this morning will be "In Thy Day Shall This Song be Sung."

DEATH OF JOHN BRENNAN.

John Brennan, seventy years old, died yesterday at his residence, 18 Grand Street, from the effects of an accidental inhalation of illuminating gas. His bedroom was heated by a gas stove, and in turning off the gas when he went to bed on Wednesday night, he must have turned the stopcock on again. He was found unconscious at 6 o'clock Thursday morning, and despite the efforts of several doctors, he died at 4 o'clock yesterday morning.

The dead man was a native of Ireland. He came to this country in his youth, and for many years was engaged in the grocery business. He retired from active business fifteen years ago. His wife died fifteen months ago. He had four sons and three daughters. One of his sons is ex-Assemblyman Michael Brennan of the Fifth District, and another is Alderman John Brennan of Albany.