

## LETTER V.

## CROSSING THE PACIFIC OCEAN.

PROMPTLY at 12 o'clock Wednesday, November 1, the "Alaska" slipped her moorings at the wharf in San Francisco, and started with us on her long voyage across the Pacific. A few minutes before, the fierce sound of the Chinese gong, struck by a Chinaman who seemed eager to look again upon his native shores, hurried our friends from the ship. The Rev. Dr. Guard, the eloquent preacher, the Rev. Dr. Gibson, the faithful missionary in China and among the Chinese in San Francisco, the Rev. E. K. Miller, Brothers Chamberlain, Brown, Parsons, and many others, had come on board to cheer us with their presence and parting benedictions; but now from the wharf they waved their kind farewells as the widening distance left their forms undistinguishable. The steam-tug which has pulled us from the wharf looses her ropes, and the "Alaska's" massive wheels begin to turn in the water. But we are not yet fully started on our voyage. A little steam-skiff is hurrying toward us from the wharf with the message to wait for the mail-bags. For once the post-office authorities were not on time, but the punctual ship left at her appointed hour. Soon the tug with the mail-bags is alongside, and the cargo of letters and papers is transferred to the mail-rooms of our vessel. We begin to move again, and the firing of the cannon on board and the raising

of our pennant in place of the flag announce that we have started.

Up through the beautiful bay our ship hastens toward the Golden Gate. The pilot at the prow signals to the quartermaster at the wheel. Now and then he exchanges words with the master of some daring schooner or yacht that ventures too near us, and warns him of his danger, to be answered by a jeer, albeit his advice is taken and we are given a wider berth. The harbor does not impress us as being remarkably well fortified, but let us hope that it will never be found out in actual war. Now we are passing through the "Golden Gate," with the light-house on our right, while on the left stand the seal-rocks, where the sea-lions are ever found basking in the sunlight after a hearty meal at the expense of the many fishes that follow the course of the ships from the ocean to the bay. No wonder that the fishermen regard these rapidly increasing sea-lions as accounting for the smaller harvest of their nets, and insist that they are "a good many too many." We are now out on the Pacific, and we feel the swell of the ocean. The pilot's ship is waiting for him off to the right, and we barely stop for the boat that is ready to take him from us. All the ships in sight are sailing vessels, and they may be counted on one's fingers. We cast a farewell look toward the city, and our eyes rest on Lone Mountain, which for a hundred years has cheered the sailor's heart with his first sight of land.

Our course takes us near to the Farralone Islands. Could we go yet nearer, we could get glimpses of the sea-lions in great numbers on the rocks, or disporting themselves in the water. While we are watching the last bit of land which we shall see before reaching Japan, the revolving light flashes from the light-house. It seems like an apparition, so soon

does it disappear after a few moments of intense brilliancy. The sailor is thus in no danger of confounding it with a star near the horizon, and of being unwittingly cast upon the rocks. Nothing is now left to remind us of land but the sea-gulls, which follow us in great numbers, waving farewells with their snowy wings. The light of the Farrallone Islands has disappeared below the horizon, and we are out on the waste of waters, with a voyage of over five thousand miles before we shall see even a single ship, much less the solid land. O God of the ocean, guide and protect our noble ship!

Shall we look at our ship and what she has on board? The "Alaska" is three hundred and seventy-four feet long, forty-seven and one-half feet broad, and thirty-one and one-half feet deep. Her engine is twelve hundred horse-power. She can carry one hundred and thirty cabin passengers and one thousand steerage. Her tonnage is four thousand. She is a side-wheeler, and of course somewhat slower than a screw or propeller, especially at the beginning of the voyage. She carries one thousand five hundred tons of coal, and until that is considerably reduced by consumption we shall hardly make more than eight miles an hour; at no time, even with the help of well-filled sails, can we expect to make much over ten. Being a side-wheeler, there is much less roll than on a propeller. The state-rooms are well fitted up, and have excellent ventilation. The windows are large and very different from the port-hole windows of an Atlantic steamer. There is a "social hall" distinct from the dining hall. It is fitted up with piano, library, easy-chairs, etc., and is free from the odor of the dining hall, so nauseating to a seasick person. The officers are Americans and the crew Chinese. There are over eighty Chinamen employed—thirty-one in the engine-room, thirty-seven in the stew-

ard's department, and twenty-four sailors. The sailors are very quiet and prompt about their work, and, dressed in the sailors' overalls, you need to look twice to see that they are Chinese. The mate directs them either immediately or through a Chinese boatswain. The cooks and waiters are all Chinese, and a greater variety of elegantly prepared and served dishes we have yet failed to find anywhere. The waiters are admirably trained, and no Sunday-school ever responded to the tap of the bell with near their quickness and precision. We should strongly feel like taking one of them back to Missouri if we were only crossing the Pacific the other way.

The great capacity of one of these steamers can be realized with difficulty. Besides the large quantity of freight carried—consisting mostly of four or five hundred tons of flour, large quantities of ginseng (used by the Chinese for medicine), quicksilver, and about nine hundred thousand dollars in silver coin—we have on board nearly seven hundred and fifty persons, for whose subsistence during a month's voyage ample supplies of provisions must be taken. Thus we carry a dozen beeves, to say nothing of hogs, sheep, and fowls without number. In addition to immense quantities of canned fruits and vegetables, salt, dried, and pickled meats, large supplies of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as ice to keep them, are also taken. In short, a steam-ship is an immense wholesale grocery, hotel, and warehouse, all in one. We have our barber shop, doctor's office, apothecary shop, butcher shop, carpenter shop, ice house, bakery, cow pens, sheep pens, pig pens, hen houses, and, save a laundry, all other requisites for a complete village. There is hardly any thing which a passenger could wish, except the daily paper, that he does not have immediately supplied. The expenses of the ship are of

course very large, averaging about sixty thousand dollars for the voyage to Hong Kong and back. Aside from the government subsidy of forty-six thousand dollars for every voyage, the principal income is from the steerage passengers. Thus at fifty-one dollars each the five hundred and seventy-one Chinese passengers we have on board pay over twenty-eight thousand dollars. European steerage passengers to Hong Kong pay one hundred dollars each, while cabin passengers pay three hundred dollars each, all in gold.

The crew of the ship, including about fifty Americans, numbers one hundred and thirty persons, employed at from eight dollars to two hundred and fifty dollars per month. The officers are the captain, first, second, and third officers, purser, chief engineer and three assistants, doctor, four quartermasters, freight clerk, and stewards. Aside from these are watchmen, coalers, oilers, water-tenders, butchers, carpenters, bakers, mess-boys, porters, and stewardess. There seems to be ample employment for all. This is the first vessel of any kind that we were ever on twenty-four hours before finding out which was the captain. He has often been like "Gentleman George," of a Mediterranean ship, well known to European travelers by his pompous airs and the constant reminder that he is in command of the vessel. It was at the close of the second day before more than two or three of the passengers knew which was Captain —, of the "Alaska," and that was when, during the fire-drill and boat-drill, in his proper place as commander, he issued orders to his subordinates. Even that was done so quietly and unostentatiously that but for his positive tone you might suppose him lacking in force of character. But not so; himself faithful to his duty, he expects the same of every one on board ship, and as a subordinate remarked, "Every officer

or sailor would be pained if the captain thought he were not doing his whole duty." With such an officer in command, it was a special pleasure to be assigned, with Bishop Marvin, a seat at the captain's table, where our daily intercourse with him has but deepened the first impression of his ability as a navigator and of his good sense as an intelligent gentleman. In fact, we could not wish for better traveling companions than the officers of this ship. Thus far on the voyage we have heard but a single oath.

There are twenty-seven cabin passengers, five hundred and seventy-one Chinese, and six European steerage passengers. These with the officers and crew make nearly seven hundred and fifty souls on board. The Chinese go home in large numbers at this time of the year, to spend the New-year season. If any die while on board their bodies are embalmed and taken along. Already one has died during the present voyage. The Chinese spend most of their time in some sort of gambling. The rattle of the dice is heard whenever you are near the steerage. An opium den is fitted up for them below, as well as a smoking-room for the cabin passengers above. We saw some of them in the dreamy stupor that follows the use of opium. We should not be aware of the presence of these steerage passengers, save that they are allowed to come up for an airing occasionally. They are quiet and orderly, and have great respect for those in authority. Among the cabin passengers are five or six Japanese, who have been in America or Europe pursuing their studies. One of them, from Tokio, who has been at Amherst College for several years, has become a Christian. His parents are still Shintoos. He returns to them and his other kindred with the story of the love of Jesus. His whole demeanor shows how strong is the hold of his new faith. Both his father and uncle are Japanese princes, or daimios. We have

on board, besides subjects of the Emperor of China and the Mikado of Japan, subjects of Queen Victoria and of the Emperor of Russia, citizens of Switzerland, Germany, Denmark, and Austria. Some six or more are taking the tour of the world, others are returning to their stores in China, and some are going as faithful missionaries of the cross. Of these latter are the Rev. Dr. Dean, of Bangkok, Siam, and Miss Mary E. Thompson, on her way to Swatow, China, both going under the auspices of the American Baptist Missionary Union. Dr. Dean's venerable form and genial face excite the admiration of all on board. He returns to die where he has so long loved to live and labor. How many that he has baptized in the name of Jesus will rise up and call him blessed! Miss Thompson goes as teacher and director of the labors of Bible-women, and appears well qualified for her work.

Our course is quite a southerly one at this season of the year. We are now about in the latitude of Charleston, S. C., and only six hundred miles from the Sandwich Islands. The weather is very mild. Overcoats have been discarded for several days. We sit up on the hurricane deck reading or exercising nearly all day. The sea-gulls left us after the first day or two, and now our only companions are gannets, which can fly a hundred miles an hour. They probably live on some of the islands in the Pacific, and forage out on the ocean during the day. They are well fed from the steward's department, while the passengers "feed the fishes." Ugh! Neptune has been rather exacting of the occupants of state-rooms 23 and 24. Bishop Marvin occupies 24, and when Neptune claims tribute of him, who are we that we should withhold what is due? If we had thrown the fishes our liver we could not deny it, for we have usually had our eyes shut and knew not what we did. We will not tell on our traveling

companion. He confidentially told us on starting that he would *open* himself to us freely during the voyage. He has already done so, and we have reciprocated. We both feel better after thus "relieving our minds."

The most startling sound on board ship is the fire-alarm. We get accustomed to the ringing of the half hours, but when the sharp clangor of the fire-bell is heard every heart beats with alarm. You may suspect that it is only the call to the fire-drill, yet who knows but that the ship is actually on fire? Instantly every one of the crew is at his post—some with the hose, some with axes, and some with the buckets well filled with water. The most perfect order reigns, and the silence, broken only by the captain's voice, is like that of death. Then comes the order to man the boats, and instantly they are in position, filled with the Chinese crew, with erect oars, ready to be dropped upon the deep. As we witnessed this excellent drill it made us conscious of what our peril might be as leaving a burning ship we betook ourselves to these boats as our only means of safety. They are always ready, and stored with bread and water for the forlorn-hope. Thank God that they are so rarely needed! With the slim chances of sighting a vessel on the Pacific, they would only provide a lingering death.

However, many as are the dangers of a sea voyage, with proper precautions the peril may be greatly abated. Our ship is so well built, the timbers of her keel diagonally placed and calked, that without any boards on the outside she would not take water. Yet over these timbers are two sets of boards, aggregating eighteen inches in thickness. The great danger is, of course, from fire. To guard against this, the boilers are perpendicular and cylindrical. The bursting of one or more of these tubular boilers would do no damage, and might occur

without being known. The temperature of the coal-bunkers has to be reported to the captain three times daily, so that hidden fire there would reveal itself in time to be controlled. Moreover, the water in the hold is measured three times every day and reported. Besides watchmen on duty day and night, patrolling the decks, it is the duty of the captain, doctor, and steward to daily inspect every part of the ship. We were invited to accompany them on one of those tours of inspection, embracing each of the state-rooms, to see that they were properly cleaned and ventilated; the kitchens and pantry, with their shining sets of tin and silver-plate; the butcher shop and the bakery; the steerage, freshly fumigated by burnt spices, with hundreds of bunks stretching in long rows far as the eye could see—the steerage passengers in line, so that if any were sick of contagious disease he might be quarantined before it should spread; and, last of all, the engine-room, with its ponderous machinery, constructed as if to defy not simply the severest storms, but time itself. Moreover, each officer serves as a sort of check on any other officer's neglect. Thrice a day the officer of the deck sends a messenger to Captain —, announcing "Eight bells, sir." This means either 8 A.M., 12 P.M., or 8 P.M.—hours at which the commander must wind the ship's chronometers, determine her latitude and longitude, and receive reports from subordinates.

Another letter must give incidents of the voyage On the "Alaska," Nov. 11, 1876.

## LETTER VI.

## INCIDENTS OF THE PACIFIC VOYAGE.

LIFE on board ship is necessarily somewhat monotonous, and any incidents of the voyage are always hailed with joy by the passengers. For the most part, the daily programme is, read, write, eat, sleep, and, if the weather permits, walk on the hurricane deck. At twelve o'clock each day the captain takes his bearings and announces by bulletin the distance made during the last twenty-four hours, our latitude and longitude, and the course of the ship. Three of these bulletins are made out; one is given to the chief engineer, another is posted for the information of the cabin passengers, and another for the steerage. These are eagerly consulted, and calculations are made as to how long at present rate we shall be on the voyage. Then we watch the Chinese sailors at their work, scrubbing or painting the ship and handling the sails; or notice the officer of the deck on watch, walking his beat across the bow of the vessel or consulting the compass and writing up the "log" of the ship; and the quartermaster turning the wheel and sounding the "bells." Occasionally a jelly-fish or a porpoise, or, more rarely, even a whale, permits itself to be seen. The skies and the water are the great objects of study, and seem to be in close sympathy with each other. The ocean serves as a vast mirror, in which we can see all the varied tints and shades of