

ABBOTT JACOB

ROLLO IN
HOLLAND

Jacob Abbott

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Chapter I. Preparations

Holland is one of the most remarkable countries on the globe. The peculiarities which make it remarkable arise from the fact that it is almost perfectly level throughout, and it lies so low. A very large portion of it, in fact, lies below the level of the sea, the waters being kept out, as every body knows, by immense dikes that have stood for ages.

These dikes are so immense, and they are so concealed by the houses, and trees, and mills, and even villages that cover and disguise them, that when the traveller first sees them he can hardly believe that they are dikes. Some of them are several hundred feet wide, and have a good broad public road upon the top, with a canal perhaps by the side of it, and avenues of trees, and road-side inns, and immense wind mills on the other hand. When riding or walking along upon such a dike on one side, down a long slope, they have a glimpse of water between the trees. On the other, at an equal distance you see a green expanse of country, with gardens, orchards, fields of corn and grain, and scattered farm houses extending far and wide. At first you do not perceive that this beautiful country that you see spreading in every direction on one side of the road is below the level of the water that you see on the other side; but on a careful comparison you find that it is so. When the tide is high the difference is very great, and were it not for the dikes the people would be inundated.

Indeed, the dikes alone would not prevent the country from being inundated; for it is not possible to make them perfectly tight, and even if it were so, the soil beneath them is more or less pervious to water, and thus the water of the sea and of the rivers would slowly press its way through the lower strata, and oozing up into the land beyond, would soon make it all a swamp.

Then, besides the interpercolation from the soil, there is the rain. In upland countries, the surplus water that falls in rain flows off in brooks and rivers to the sea; but in land that is below the level of the sea, there can be no natural flow of either brooks or rivers. The rain water, therefore, that falls on this low land would remain there stagnant, except the comparatively small portion of it that would be evaporated by the sun and wind.

Thus you see, that if the people of Holland were to rely on the dikes alone to keep the land dry, the country would become in a very short time one immense morass.

To prevent this result it is necessary to adopt some plan to raise the water, as fast as it accumulates in the low grounds, and convey it away. This is done by pumps and other such hydraulic engines, and these are worked in general by wind mills.

They might be worked by steam engines; but steam engines are much more expensive than wind mills. It not only costs much more to make them, but the expense of working them from day to day is very great, on account of the fuel which they require. The necessary attendance on a steam engine, too, is very expensive. There must be engineers, with high pay, to watch the engine and to keep it always in order, and firemen to feed the fires, and ashmen to carry away the ashes and cinders. Whereas a wind mill takes care of itself.

The wind makes the wind mills go, and the wind costs nothing. It is true, that the head of the mill must be changed from time to time, so as to present the sails always in proper direction to the wind. But even this is done by the wind itself. There is a contrivance by which the mill is made to turn itself so as to face always in the right direction towards the wind; and not only so, but the mill is sometimes

so constructed that if the wind blows too hard, it takes in a part of the sails by its own spontaneous action, and thus diminishes the strain which might otherwise be injurious to the machinery.

Now, since the advantages of wind mills are so great over steam engines, in respect especially to cheapness, perhaps you will ask why steam is employed at all to turn machinery, instead of always using the wind. The reason is, because the wind is so unsteady. Some days a wind mill will work, and some days it will lie still; and thus in regard to the time when it will do what is required of it, no reliance can be placed upon it. This is of very little consequence in the work of pumping up water from the sunken country in Holland; for, if for several days the mills should not do their work, no great harm would come of it, since the amount of water which would accumulate in that time would not do any harm. The ground might become more wet, and the canals and reservoirs get full,—just as brooks and rivers do on any upland country after a long rain. But then, after the calm was over and the wind began to blow again, the mills would all go industriously to work, and the surplus water would soon be pumped up, and discharged over the dikes into the sea again.

Thus the irregularity in the action of the wind mills in doing such work as this, is of comparatively little consequence.

But in the case of some other kinds of work,—as for example the driving of a cotton mill, or any other great manufactory in which a large number of persons are employed,—it would be of the greatest possible consequence; for when a calm time came, and the wind mill would not work, all the hands would be thrown out of employ. They might sometimes remain idle thus a number of days at a time, at a great expense to their employers, or else at a great loss to themselves. Sometimes, for example, there might be a fine breeze in the morning, and all the hands would go to the mill and begin their work. In an hour the breeze might entirely die away, and the spinners and weavers would all find their jennies and looms going slower and slower, and finally stopping altogether. And then, perhaps, two hours afterwards, when they had all given up the day's work and gone away to their respective homes, the breeze would spring up again, and the wind mill would go to work more industriously than ever.

This would not answer at all for a cotton mill, but it does very well for pumping up water from a great reservoir into which drains and canals discharge themselves to keep a country dry.

And this reminds me of one great advantage which the people of Holland enjoy on account of the low and level condition of their country; and that is, it is extremely easy to make canals there. There are not only no mountains or rocks in the way to impede the digging of them, but, what is perhaps a still more important advantage, there is no difficulty in filling them with water. In other countries, when a canal is to be made, the very first question is, How is it to be filled? For this purpose the engineer explores the whole country through which the canal is to pass, to find rivers and streams that he can turn into it, when the bed of it shall have been excavated; and sometimes he has to bring these supplies of water for a great distance in artificial channels, which often cross valleys by means of great aqueducts built up to hold them. Sometimes a brook is in this way brought across a river,—the river itself not being high enough to feed the canal.

The people of Holland have no such difficulties as these to encounter in their canals. The whole country being so nearly on a level with the sea, they have nothing to do, when they wish for a canal, but to extend it in some part to the sea shore, and then open a sluice way and let the water in.

It is true that sometimes they have to provide means to prevent the ingress of too much water; but this is very easily done.

It is thus so easy to make canals in Holland, that the people have been making them for hundreds of years, until now almost the whole country is intersected every where with canals, as other countries are with roads. Almost all the traffic, and, until lately, almost all the travel of the country, has been upon the canals. There are private canals, too, as well as public. A farmer brings home his hay and grain from his fields by water, and when he buys a new piece of land he makes a canal to it, as a Vermont farmer would make a road to a new pasture or wood lot that he had been buying.

Rollo wished very much to see all these things—but there was one question which it puzzled him very much to decide, and that was whether he would rather go to Holland in the summer or in the winter.

"I am not certain," said he to his mother one day, "whether it would not be better for me to go in the winter."

"It is very cold there in the winter," said his mother; "so I am told."

"That is the very thing," said Rollo. "They have such excellent skating on the canals. I want to see the boats go on the canals, and I want to see the skating, and I don't know which I want to see most."

"Yes," said his mother, "I recollect to have often seen pictures of skating on the Dutch canals."

"And I read, when I was a boy," continued Rollo, "that the women skate to market in Holland."

Rollo here observed that his mother was endeavoring to suppress a smile. She seemed to try very hard, but she could not succeed in keeping perfectly sober.

"What are you laughing at, mother?" asked Rollo.

Here Mrs. Holiday could no longer restrain herself, but laughed outright.

"Is it about the Dutch women skating to market?" asked Rollo.

"I think they must look quite funny, at any rate," said Mrs. Holiday.

What Mrs. Holiday was really laughing at was to hear Rollo talk about "when he was a boy." But the fact was, that Rollo had now travelled about so much, and taken care of himself in so many exigencies, that he began to feel quite like a man. And indeed I do not think it at all surprising that he felt so.

"Which would you do, mother," said Rollo, "if you were I? Would you rather go in the summer or in the winter?"

"I would ask uncle George," said Mrs. Holiday.

So Rollo went to find his uncle George.

Rollo was at this time at Morley's Hotel, in London, and he expected to find his uncle George in what is called the coffee room. The coffee room in Morley's Hotel is a very pleasant place. It fronts on one side upon a very busy and brilliant street, and on another upon a large open square, adorned with monuments and fountains. On the side towards the square is a bay window, and near this bay window were two or three small tables, with gentlemen sitting at them, engaged in writing. There were other tables along the sides of the room and at the other windows, where gentlemen were taking breakfast. Mr. George was at one of the tables near the bay window, and was busy writing.

Rollo went to the place, and standing by Mr. George's side, he said in an under tone,— "Uncle George."

Every body speaks in an under tone in an English coffee room. They do this in order not to interrupt the conversation, or the reading, or the writing of other gentlemen that may be in the room.

"Wait a moment," said Mr. George, "till I finish this letter."

So Rollo turned to the bay window and looked out, in order to amuse himself with what he might observe in the street, till his uncle George should be ready to talk with him.

He saw the fountains in the square, and a great many children playing about the basins. He saw a poor boy at a crossing brushing the pavement industriously with an old broom, and then holding out his hand to the people passing by, in hopes that some of them would give him a halfpenny. He saw a policeman walking slowly up and down on the sidewalk, wearing a glazed hat, and a uniform of blue broadcloth, with his letter and number embroidered on the collar. He saw an elegant carriage drive by, with a postilion riding upon one of the horses, and two footmen in very splendid liveries behind. There was a lady in the carriage, but she appeared old, and though she was splendidly dressed, her face was very plain.

"I wonder," said Rollo to himself, "how much she would give of her riches and finery if she could be as young and as pretty as my cousin Lucy."

"Now, Rollo," said Mr. George, interrupting Rollo's reflections, "what is the question?"

"Why, I want to know," said Rollo, "whether you think we had better go to Holland in the winter or in the summer."

"Is it left to you to decide?" asked Mr. George.

"Why, no," said Rollo, "not exactly. But mother asked me to consider which I thought was best, and so I want to know your opinion."

"Very well," said Mr. George, "go on and argue the case. After I have heard it argued I will decide."

Rollo then proceeded to explain to his uncle the advantages, respectively, of going in the summer and in the winter. After hearing him, Mr. George thought it would be decidedly better to go in the summer.

"You see," said he, "that the only advantage of going in the winter is to see the skating. That is very important, I know. I should like to see the Dutch women skating to market myself, very much. But then, in the winter you could see very little of the canals, and the wind mills, and all the other hydraulic operations of the country. Every thing would be frozen up solid."

"Father says that he can't go now very well," continued Rollo, "but that I may go with you if you would like to go."

Mr. George was just in the act of sealing his letter as Rollo spoke these words; but he paused in the operation, holding the stick of sealing wax in one hand and the letter in the other, as if he was reflecting on what Rollo had said.

"If we only had some one else to go with us," said Mr. George.

"Should not we two be enough?" asked Rollo.

"Why, you see," said Mr. George, "when we get into Holland we shall not understand one word of the language."

"What language do they speak?" asked Rollo.

"Dutch," said Mr. George, "and I do not know any Dutch."

"Not a word?" asked Rollo.

"No," said Mr. George, "not a word. Ah, yes! I know one word. I know that *dampschiff* means steamboat. *Damp*, I suppose, means steam."

Then Rollo laughed outright. *Dampskiff*, he said, was the funniest name for steamboat that he ever heard.

"Now, when we don't know a word of the language," added Mr. George, "we cannot have any communication with the people of the country, but shall be confined entirely to each other. Now, do you think that you could get along with having nobody but me to talk to you for a whole fortnight?"

"Yes, indeed!" said Rollo. "But then, uncle George," he continued, "how are you going to get along at the hotels without knowing how to speak to the people at all?"

"By signs and gestures," said Mr. George, laughing. "Could not you make a sign for something to eat?"

"O, yes," said Rollo; and he immediately began to make believe eat, moving his hands as if he had a knife and fork in them.

"And what sign would you make for going to bed?" asked Mr. George.

Here Rollo laid his head down to one side, and placed his hand under it, as if it were a pillow, and then shut his eyes.

"That is the sign for going to bed," said Rollo. "A deaf and dumb boy taught it to me."

"I wish he had taught you some more signs," said Mr. George. "Or I wish we had a deaf and dumb boy here to go with us. Deaf and dumb people can get along excellently well where they do not understand the language, because they know how to make so many signs."

"O, we can make up the signs as we go along," said Rollo.

"Yes," said Mr. George. "I don't think that we shall have any great difficulty about that. But then it would be pleasanter to go in a little larger party. Two people are apt to get tired of each other, when there is nobody else that they can speak a single word to for a whole fortnight. I don't think that I should get tired of you. What I am afraid of is, that you would get tired of me."

There was a lurking smile on Mr. George's face as he said this.

"O, uncle George!" said Rollo, "that is only your politeness. But then if you really think that we ought to have some more company, perhaps the Parkmans are going to Holland, and we might go with them."

"I would not make a journey with the Parkmans," said Mr. George, "if they would pay all my expenses, and give me five sovereigns a day."

"Why, uncle George!" exclaimed Rollo; "I thought you liked Mr. Parkman very much."

"So I do," said Mr. George. "It is his wife that I would not go with."

"O, uncle George!" exclaimed Rollo again.

Rollo was very much surprised at hearing this declaration; and it was very natural that he should be surprised, for Mrs. Parkman was a young and beautiful lady, and she was very kindhearted and very amiable in her disposition. Mr. Parkman, too, was very young. He had been one of Mr. George's college classmates. He had been married only a short time before he left America, and he was now making his bridal tour.

Mr. George thought that Mrs. Parkman was very beautiful and very intelligent, but he considered her a very uncomfortable travelling companion. I think he judged her somewhat too harshly. But this was one of Mr. George's faults. He did not like the ladies very much, and the faults which he observed in them, from time to time, he was prone to condemn much too harshly.

Chapter II.

A Bad Travelling Companion

The reason why Mr. George did not like his friend Mr. Parkman's young wife was not because of any want of natural attractiveness in her person, or of amiableness in her disposition,—for she was beautiful, accomplished, and kindhearted. But for all this, from a want of consideration not uncommon among young ladies who are not much experienced in the world, she was a very uncomfortable travelling companion.

It is the duty of a gentleman who has a lady under his charge, in making a journey, to consult her wishes, and to conform to them so far as it is possible, in determining where to go, and in making all the general arrangements of the journey. But when these points are decided upon, every thing in respect to the practical carrying into effect of the plans thus formed should be left to the gentleman, as the executive officer of the party; just as in respect to affairs relating to housekeeping, or any thing else relating to a lady's department, the lady should be left free to act according to her own judgment and taste in arranging details, while in the general plans she conforms to the wishes of her husband. For a lady, when travelling, to be continually making suggestions and proposals about the baggage or the conveyances, and expressing dissatisfaction, or wish for changes in this, that, or the other, is as much a violation of propriety as it would be for the gentleman to go into the kitchen, and there propose petty changes in respect to the mode of cooking the dinner—or to stand by his wife at her work table, and wish to have her thread changed from this place to that—or to have some different stitch to be used in making a seam. A lady very naturally feels disturbed if she finds that her husband does not have confidence enough in her to trust her with such details.

"I will make or mend for you whatever you may desire," she might say, "and I will get for your dinner any thing that you ask for; but in the way of doing it you ought to leave every thing to my direction. It is better to let me have my own way, even if your way is better than mine. For in matters of direction there ought always to be only one head, even if it is not a very good one."

And in the same manner a gentleman might say when travelling with a lady,—

"I will arrange the journey to suit your wishes as far as is practicable, and will go at such times and by such conveyances as you may desire. I will also, at all the places where we stop, take you to visit such objects of interest and curiosity as you wish to see. But then when it comes to the details of the arrangements to be made,—the orders to servants and commissioners, the determination of the times for setting out, and the bargains to be made with coachmen and innkeepers,—it is best to leave all those things to me; for it always makes confusion to have two persons give directions at the same time."

To say this would be right in both cases,—there must always be *one* to command. A great many families are kept in continual confusion by there being two or more ladies who consider themselves more or less at the head of it—as, for instance, a wife and a sister, or two sisters and a mother. Napoleon used to say that *one* bad general was better than *two* good ones; so important is it in war to have unity of command. It is not much less important in social life.

Mrs. Parkman did not understand this principle. Mr. George had seen an example of her mode of management a day or two before, in taking a walk with her and her husband in London. They were going to see the tunnel under the Thames, which was three or four miles down the river from Morley's Hotel, where they were all lodging.

"Which way would you like to go?" asked Mr. Parkman.

"Is there more than one way?" asked his wife.

"Yes," said Mr. Parkman, "we can take a Hansom cab, and drive down through the streets, or we can walk down to the river side, and there take a boat. The boats are a great deal the cheapest,

and the most amusing; but the cab will be the most easy and comfortable, and the most genteel. We shall have to walk nearly half a mile before we get to the landing of the boats."

"Is there much difference in the price?" asked Mrs. Parkman.

"Not enough to be of any consequence," replied her husband. "It will make a difference of about one and a half crown; for by the boats it would be only two or three pence, while by the cab it will be as many shillings. But that is of no consequence. We will go whichever way you think you would enjoy the most."

"You may decide for me," said Mrs. Parkman. "I'll leave it entirely to you. It makes no difference to me."

"Then, on the whole, I think we will try the boat," said Mr. Parkman; "it will be so much more amusing, and we shall see so much more of London life. Besides, we shall often read and hear about the steamers on the Thames when we return to America, and it will be well for us to have made one voyage in them. And, Mr. George, will you go with us?"

"Yes," said Mr. George.

So they all left the hotel together, and commenced their walk towards the bridge where the nearest landing stage for the Thames boats lay.

They had not gone but a very short distance before Mrs. Parkman began to hang rather heavily upon her husband's arm, and asked him whether it was much farther that they would have to walk.

"O, yes," said Mr. Parkman. "I told you that we should have to walk about half a mile."

"Then we shall get all tired out," said his wife, "and we want our strength for walking through the tunnel. It does not seem to be worth while to take all this trouble just to save half a crown."

Mr. Parkman, though he had only been married a little more than a month, felt something like a sense of indignation rising in his breast, that his wife should attribute to him such a motive for choosing the river, after what he had said on the subject. But he suppressed the feeling, and only replied quietly,—

"O, let us take a cab then, by all means. I hope you don't suppose that I was going to take you by the boat to save any money."

"I thought you said that you would save half a crown," rejoined his wife.

"Yes," said Mr. Parkman, "I did, it is true."

Mr. Parkman was too proud to defend himself from such an imputation, supported by such reasoning as this; so he only said, "We will go by a cab. We will take a cab at the next stand."

Mr. George instantly perceived that by this change in the plan, he was made one too many for the party, since only two can ride conveniently in a Hansom cab.¹ So he said at once, that he would adhere to the original plan, and go by water.

"But, first," said he, "I will go with you to the stand, and see you safe in a cab."

So they turned into another street, and presently they came to a stand. There was a long row of cabs there, of various kinds, all waiting to be employed. Among them were several Hansoms.

Mr. Parkman looked along the line to select one that had a good horse. The distance was considerable that they had to go, and besides Mr. Parkman knew that his wife liked always to go fast. So when he had selected the best looking horse, he made a signal to the driver. The driver immediately left the stand, and drove over to the sidewalk where Mr. Parkman and his party were waiting.

Mr. Parkman immediately opened the door of the cab to allow his wife to go in; but she, instead of entering, began to look scrutinizingly into it, and hung back.

"Is this a nice cab?" said she. "It seems to me that I have seen nicer cabs than this."

"Let us look," she added, "and see if there is not a better one somewhere along the line."

¹ A Hansom cab is made like an old-fashioned chaise, only that it is set very low, so that it is extremely easy to step in and out of it, and the seat of the driver is high up behind. The driver drives *over the top of the chaise*! Thus the view for the passengers riding inside is wholly unobstructed, and this makes the Hansom cab a very convenient and pleasant vehicle for two persons to ride in, through the streets of a new and strange town.

The cabman, looking down from his exalted seat behind the vehicle, said that there was not a nicer cab than his in London.

"O, of course," said Mrs. Parkman. "They always say that. But *I* can find a nicer one, I'm sure, somewhere in the line."

So saying she began to move on. Mr. Parkman gave the cabman a silver sixpence—which is equal to a New York shilling—to compensate him for having been called off from his station, and then followed his wife across the street to the side where the cabs were standing. Mrs. Parkman led the way all down the line, examining each hack as she passed it; but she did not find any one that looked as well as the first.

"After all," said she, "we might as well go back and take the first one." So she turned and began to retrace her steps—the two gentlemen accompanying her. But when they got back they found that the one which Mr. Parkman had first selected was gone. It had been taken by another customer.

Mr. George was now entirely out of patience; but he controlled himself sufficiently to suppress all outward manifestation of it, only saying that he believed he would not wait any longer.

"I will go down to the river," said he, "and take a boat, and when you get a carriage you can go by land. I will wait for you at the entrance to the tunnel."

So he went away; and as soon as he turned the corner of the street he snapped his fingers and nodded his head with the air of a man who has just made a very lucky escape.

"I thank my stars," said he to himself, "that I have not got such a lady as that to take care of. Handsome as she is, I would not have her for a travelling companion on any account whatever."

It was from having witnessed several such exhibitions of character as this that Mr. George had expressed himself so strongly to Rollo on the subject of joining Mr. Parkman and his wife in making the tour of Holland.

But notwithstanding Mr. George's determination that he would not travel in company with such a lady, it seemed to be decreed that he should do so, for he left London about a week after this to go to Holland with Rollo alone; and though he postponed setting out for several days, so as to allow Mr. and Mrs. Parkman time to get well under way before them, he happened to fall in with them several times in the course of the journey. The first time that he met with them was in crossing the Straits of Dover.

There are several ways by which a person may go to Holland from London. The cheapest is to take a steamer, by which means you go down the Thames, and thence pass directly across the German Ocean to the coast of Holland. But that makes quite a little voyage by sea, during which almost all persons are subject to a very disagreeable kind of sickness, on account of the small size of the steamers, and the short tossing motion of the sea that almost always prevails in the waters that lie around Great Britain.

So Mr. George and Rollo, who neither of them liked to be seasick, determined to go another way. They concluded to go down by railway to Dover, and then to go to Calais across the strait, where the passage is the shortest. Mr. and Mrs. Parkman had set off several days before them, and Mr. George supposed that by this time they were far on their way towards Holland. But they had been delayed by Mrs. Parkman's desire to go to Brighton, which is a great watering place on the coast, not far from Dover. There Mr. and Mrs. Parkman had spent several days, and it so happened that in going from Brighton to Dover they met, at the junction, the train that was bringing Mr. George and Rollo down from London; and thus, though both parties were unconscious of the fact, they were travelling along towards Dover, after leaving the junction, in the same train, and when they stepped out of the carriages, upon the Dover platform, there they were all together.

Mr. Parkman and Mr. George were very glad to see each other; and while they were shaking hands with each other, and making mutual explanations, Mrs. Parkman went to the door of the station to see what sort of a place Dover was.

She saw some long piers extending out into the water, and a great many ships and steamers lying near them. The town lay along the shore, surrounding an inner harbor enclosed by the walls of

the piers. Behind the town were high cliffs, and an elevated plain above, on which a great number of tents were pitched. It was the encampment of an army. A little way along the shore a vast promontory was seen, crowned by an ancient and venerable looking castle, and terminated by a range of lofty and perpendicular cliffs of chalk towards the sea.

"What a romantic place!" said Mrs. Parkman to herself. "It is just such a place as I like. I'll make William stay here to-day."

Just then she heard her husband's voice calling to her.

"Louise!"

She turned and saw her husband beckoning to her. He was standing with Mr. George and Rollo near the luggage van, as they call it in England, while the railway porters were taking out the luggage.

Mrs. Parkman walked towards the place.

"They say, Louise," said Mr. Parkman, "that it is time for us to go on board the boat. She is going to sail immediately."

"Ah! but, William," said Mrs. Parkman, "let us stay here a little while. Dover is such a romantic looking place."

"Very well," said Mr. Parkman, "we will stay if you like. Are you going to stay, Mr. George?"

"Yes," said Mr. George; "Rollo and I were going to stay till this afternoon. There is a boat to cross at four o'clock."

It was about eleven o'clock in the morning when this conversation occurred. The porter stood by all the time with Mr. Parkman's two trunks in his charge, waiting to have it decided when they were to go.

"I should think, sir," said the porter, "that as you have a lady with you, you would find this boat better. This is a tidal steamer, but the four o'clock is the mail boat, and it will be pretty rough this afternoon. There is a breeze coming up."

"O, never mind the breeze," said Mrs. Parkman. "We are used to it, porter. We've crossed the Atlantic."

"Very well," said Mr. Parkman, "we will wait until four o'clock."

"Then I'll put the luggage in the luggage room," said the porter, "and take it to the boat at half past three. That's the way to the hotel," he added, pointing the way.

There are several very nice hotels in Dover, but the one which the porter referred to is one of the finest and most beautifully situated hotels in Europe. It is a large and handsome edifice, built in modern style, and it stands close to the railroad station, on a point of land overlooking the sea. The coffee room, which, unlike other English coffee rooms, is used by both ladies and gentlemen, is a very spacious and splendidly decorated apartment, with large windows on three sides of it, overlooking the sea and the neighboring coasts. Each sash of these windows is glazed with one single pane of plate glass, so that whether they are shut or open there is nothing to intercept the view. The room is furnished with a great number of tables, each large enough to accommodate parties of four or six, and all, except two or three in different parts of the room that are reserved for reading and writing, are covered with neat white table cloths, and other preparations more or less advanced for breakfasts or dinners that may have been ordered, while at almost all times of the day, a greater or less number of them are occupied by parties of tourists, their bags and baskets lying on the neighboring chairs.

It was into this room, so occupied, that our travellers were ushered as they walked from the station into the hotel.

Mrs. Parkman walked forward, and took her seat near a window. The gentlemen attended her.

"What a magnificent view!" said she.

The view was indeed magnificent. Across the water was to be seen the coast of France, lying like a low cloud close to the horizon. Ships, and steamers, and fish boats, and every other sort of craft were seen plying to and fro over the water,—some going out, others coming in. Through one of the windows in the end of the room, Mrs. Parkman could see the castle crowning its bold and

lofty promontory, and the perpendicular cliffs of chalk, with the sea beating against the base of them below. Through the opposite window, which of course was at the other end of the room, the view extended down the coast for a great distance, showing point after point, and headland after headland, in dim perspective—with a long line of surf rolling incessantly upon the beach, which seemed, in that direction, interminable.

After looking for some time at the view from the windows, Mrs. Parkman turned to observe the company in the room, and to watch the several parties of new comers as they successively entered. She wished to see if there were any young brides among them. While she was thus engaged, her husband selected a table that was vacant, and ordered breakfast. Mr. George and Rollo did the same at another table near.

While Mr. George and Rollo were at the table drinking their coffee, Mr. George asked Rollo what he supposed the porter meant by saying that the eleven o'clock boat was a tidal boat.

"*I* know," said Rollo. "I read it in the guide book. The tidal steamers go at high tide, or nearly high tide, and if you go in them you embark from the pier on one side, and you land at the pier on the other. But the mail steamers go at a regular hour every day, and then when it happens to be low tide, they cannot get to the pier, and the passengers have to land in small boats. That is what the porter meant when he said that it would not be pleasant for a lady to go in the mail steamer. It is very unpleasant for ladies to be landed in small boats when the weather is rough."

"I don't believe that Mrs. Parkman understood it," said Mr. George.

"Nor I either," said Rollo.

"I presume she thought," added Mr. George, "that when the porter spoke about the rough sea, he only referred to the motion of the steamer in going over."

"Yes," said Rollo, "but what he really meant was, that it would be bad for her to get down from the steamer into the small boat at the landing. I am afraid that she will not like it, though I think that it will be real good fun."

"Very likely it will be fun for *you*," said Mr. George.

"I would a great deal rather go across in a mail steamer at low tide than in any other way," said Rollo.

Chapter III. The Mail Steamer

Rollo's explanation in respect to the mail steamer was correct. As has before been stated in some one or other of the volumes of this series, the northern coast of France is low, and the shore is shelving for almost the whole extent of it, and there are scarcely any good harbors. Immense sandy beaches extend along the coast, sloping so gradually outward, that when the tide goes down the sands are left bare for miles and miles towards the sea. The only way by which harbors can be made on such a shore is to find some place where a creek or small river flows into the sea, and then walling in the channel at the mouth of the creek, so as to prevent it being choked up by sand. In this way a passage is secured, by which, when the tide is high, pretty good sized vessels can get in; but, after all that they can do in such a case, they cannot make a harbor which can be entered at low tide. When the tide is out, nothing is left between the two piers, which form the borders of the channel, but muddy flats, with a small, sluggish stream, scarcely deep enough to float a jolly boat, slowly meandering in the midst of them towards the sea.

The harbor of California is such a harbor as this. Accordingly, in case a steamer arrives there when the tide is down, there is no other way but for her to anchor in the offing until it rises again; and the passengers, if they wish to go ashore, must clamber down the side of the vessel into a small boat, and be pulled ashore by the oarsmen. In smooth weather this is very easily done. But in rough weather, when both steamer and boat are pitching and tossing violently up and down upon the waves, it is *not* very easy or agreeable, especially for timid ladies.

After finishing their breakfast, Mr. George and Rollo went out, and they rambled about the town until the time drew near for the sailing of the boat. Then they went to the station for the luggage, and having engaged a porter to take it to the boat, they followed him down to the pier till they came to the place where the boat was lying. After seeing the trunk put on board they went on board themselves. A short time afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Parkman came.

The steamer, like all the others which ply between the coasts of France and England, was quite small, and the passengers were very few. There were only four or five ladies, and not far from the same number of gentlemen. As the passage was only expected to occupy about two hours, the passengers did not go below, but arranged themselves on seats upon the deck—some along the sides of the deck by the bulwarks, and some near the centre, around a sort of house built over the passage way which led down into the cabin.

Soon after Mr. and Mrs. Parkman came on board, Mr. Parkman said to his wife,—

"Now, Louise, my dear, you will be less likely to be sick if you get some good place where you can take a reclining posture, and so remain pretty still until we get over."

"O, I shall not be sick," said she. "I am not at all afraid."

So she began walking about the deck with an unconcerned and careless air, as if she had been an old sailor.

Pretty soon Mr. George saw two other ladies coming, with their husbands, over the plank. The countenances of these ladies were very pleasing, and there was a quiet gentleness in their air and manner which impressed Mr. George very strongly in their favor.

As soon as they reached the deck, and while their husbands were attending to the disposal of the luggage, they began to look for seats.

"We will get into the most comfortable position we can," said one of them, "and keep still till we get nearly across."

"Yes," said the other, "that will be the safest."

So they chose good seats near the companion way, and sat down there, and their husbands brought them carpet bags to put their feet upon.

In about fifteen minutes after this the steamer put off from the pier, and commenced her voyage. She very soon began to rise and fall over the waves, with a short, uneasy motion, which was very disagreeable. The passengers, however, all remained still in the places which they had severally chosen,—some reading, others lying quiet with their eyes closed, as if they were trying to go to sleep.

Mr. Parkman himself tried to do this, but his wife would not leave him in peace. She came to him continually to inquire about this or that, or to ask him to look at some vessel that was coming in sight, or at some view on the shore. All this time the wind, and the consequent motion of the steamer, increased. Scudding clouds were seen flitting across the sky, from which there descended now and then misty showers of rain. These clouds gradually became more frequent and more dense, until at length the whole eastern sky was involved in one dense mass of threatening vapor.

It began to grow dark, too. The specified time for sailing was four o'clock; but there was a delay for the mails, and it was full half past four before the steamer had left the pier. And now, before she began to draw near the French coast, it was nearly half past six. At length the coast began slowly to appear. Its outline was dimly discerned among the misty clouds.

Long before this time, however, Mrs. Parkman had become quite sick. She first began to feel dizzy, and then she turned pale, and finally she came and sat down by her husband, and leaned her head upon his shoulder.

She had been sitting in this posture for nearly half an hour, when at length she seemed to feel better, and she raised her head again.

"Are we not nearly there?" said she.

"Yes," said her husband. "The lighthouse is right ahead, and the ends of the piers. In ten minutes more we shall be going in between them, and then all the trouble will be over."

Rollo and Mr. George were at this time near the bows. They had gone there to look forward, in order to get as early a glimpse as possible of the boats that they knew were to be expected to come out from the pier as soon as the steamer should draw nigh.

"Here they come!" said Rollo, at length.

"Yes," said Mr. George. "I see them."

It was so nearly dark that the boats could not be seen distinctly. Indeed there was not much to be discerned but a black moving mass, slowly coming out from under the walls of the pier.

The steamer had now nearly reached the ground where she was to anchor, and so the seamen on the forecastle took in the foresail, which had been spread during the voyage, and the helmsman put down the helm. The head of the steamer then slowly came round till it pointed in a direction parallel to the shore. This carried the boats and the pier somewhat out of view from the place where Mr. George and Rollo had been standing.

"Now we can see them better aft," said Rollo.

"Yes," said Mr. George, "and they will board us aft too; so we had better be there ready."

Accordingly Mr. George and Rollo went aft again, and approached the gangway on the side where they supposed the boats would come.

In going there they passed round first on the other side of the entrance to the cabin, where the two ladies were sitting that have already been described. As they went by one of the gentlemen came to them and said,—

"Keep up your courage a few minutes longer. We are very near the pier. In ten minutes we shall be in smooth water, and all will be over."

The ladies seemed much relieved and rejoiced to hear this, and then the gentleman went with Mr. George and Rollo towards the gangway, in order that they might make further observations. He was joined there a moment afterwards by his companion. Now, these gentlemen, as it happened, knew nothing about the plan of landing in boats. They had made no particular inquiry at Dover in

respect to the steamer that they had come in, but took it for granted that she would go into the harbor as usual, and land the passengers at the pier. Their attention had just been attracted to the singular movement of the steamer, when Rollo and Mr. George came up.

"*What!*" said one of them, speaking with a tone of surprise, and looking about eagerly over the water. "We are coming to, Mr. Waldo. What can that mean?"

Just then the little fleet of boats, six or seven in number, began to come into view from where the gentlemen stood. They were dimly seen at a distance, and looked like long, black animals, slowly advancing over the dark surface of the water, and struggling fearfully with the waves.

"What boats can those be?" said Mr. Waldo, beginning to look a little alarmed.

He was alarmed not for himself, but for his wife, who was very frail and delicate in health, and ill fitted to bear any unusual exposure.

"I am sure I cannot imagine," replied the other.

"It looks marvellously as if they were coming out for us," said Mr. Waldo.

"Can it be possible, Mr. Albert, that we are to land in boats such a night as this?" continued he.

"It looks like it," replied the other. "Yes, they are really coming here."

The boats were now seen evidently advancing towards the steamer. They came on in a line, struggling fearfully with the waves.

"They look like spectres of boats," said Mr. George to Rollo.

Mr. Albert now went round to the other side of the companion way, to the place where the two ladies were sitting.

"Ladies," said he, "I am very sorry to say that we shall be obliged to land in boats."

"In boats!" said the ladies, surprised.

"Yes," said Mr. Albert, "the tide is out, and I suppose we cannot go into port. The steamer has come to, and the boats are coming alongside."

The ladies looked out over the dark and stormy water with an emotion of fear, but they did not say a word.

"There is no help for it," continued the gentleman; "and you have nothing to do but to resign yourselves passively to whatever comes. If we had known that this steamer would not go into port, we would not have come in her; but now that we are here we must go through."

"Very well," said the ladies. "Let us know when the boat for us is ready."

Mr. Albert then returned to the gangway, where Rollo and Mr. George were standing. The foremost boat had come alongside, and the seamen were throwing the mail bags into it. When the mails were all safely stowed in the boat, some of the passengers that stood near by were called upon to follow. Mr. George and Rollo, being near, were among those thus called upon.

"Wait a moment," said Mr. George to Rollo, in a low tone. "Let a few of the others go first, that we may see how they manage it."

It proved to be rather difficult to manage it; for both the steamer and the boat were rocking and tossing violently on the waves, and as their respective motions did not at all correspond, they thumped against each other continually, as the boat rose and fell up and down the side of the steamer in a fearful manner. It was dark too, and the wind was blowing fresh, which added to the frightfulness of the scene.

A crowd of people stood about the gangway. Some of these people were passengers waiting to go down, and others, officers of the ship, to help them. The seamen in the boat below were all on the alert too, some employed in keeping the boat off from the side of the ship, in order to prevent her being stove or swamped, while others stood on each side of the place where the passengers were to descend, with uplifted arms, ready to seize and hold them when they came down.

There was a little flight of steps hanging down the side of the steamer, with ropes on each side of it in lieu of a balustrade. The passenger who was to embark was directed to turn round and begin to go down these steps backward, and then, when the sea lifted the boat so that the seamen on board

could seize hold of him, they all cried out vociferously, "Let go!" and at the same moment a strong sailor grasped him around the waist, brought him down into the bottom of the boat in a very safe, though extremely unceremonious manner.

After several gentlemen and one lady had thus been put into the boat, amid a great deal of calling and shouting, and many exclamations of surprise and terror, the officer at the gangway turned to Mr. George, saying,—

"Come, sir!"

There was no time to stop to talk; so Mr. George stepped forward, saying to Rollo as he went, "Come right on directly after me;" and in a moment more he was seized by the man, and whirled down into the boat, he scarcely knew how. Immediately after he was in, there came some unusually heavy seas, and the steamer and the boat thumped together so violently that all the efforts of the seamen seemed to be required to keep them apart.

"Push off!" said the officer.

"Here, stop! I want to go first," exclaimed Rollo.

"No more in this boat," said the officer. "Push off!"

"Never mind," said Rollo, calling out to Mr. George, "I'll come by and by."

"All right," said Mr. George.

By this time the boat had got clear of the steamer, and she now began to move slowly onward, rising and falling on the waves, and struggling violently to make her way.

"I am glad they did not let me go," said Rollo. "I would rather stay and see the rest go first."

Another boat was now seen approaching, and Rollo stepped back a little to make way for the people that were to go in it, when he heard Mrs. Parkman's voice, in tones of great anxiety and terror, saying to her husband,—

"I cannot go ashore in a boat in that way, William. I cannot possibly, and I will not!"

"Why, Louise," said her husband, "what else can we do?"

"I'll wait till the steamer goes into port, if I have to wait till midnight," replied Mrs. Parkman positively. "It is a shame! Such disgraceful management! Could not they find out how the tide would be here before they left Dover?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Parkman. "Of course they knew perfectly well how the tide would be."

"Then why did not they leave at such an hour as to make it right for landing here?"

"There *are* boats every day," said Mr. Parkman, "which leave at the right time for that, and most passengers take them. But the mails must come across at regular hours, whether the tide serves or not, and boats must come to bring the mails, and they, of course, allow passengers to come in these boats too, if they choose. We surely cannot complain of that."

"Then they ought to have told us how it was," said Mrs. Parkman. "I think it is a shameful deception, to bring us over in this way, and not let us know any thing about it."

"But they did tell us," said Mr. Parkman. "Do not you recollect that the porter at the station told us that this was a mail boat, and that it would not be pleasant for a lady."

"But I did not know," persisted Mrs. Parkman, "that he meant that we should have to land in this way. He did not tell us any thing about that."

"He told us that it was a mail boat, and he meant by that to tell us that we could not land at the pier. It is true, we did not understand him fully, but that is because we come from a great distance, and do not understand the customs of the country. That is our misfortune. It was not the porter's fault."

"I don't think so at all," said Mrs. Parkman. "And you always take part against me in such things, and I think it is really unkind."

All this conversation went on in an under tone; but though there was a great deal of noise and confusion on every side, Rollo could hear it all. While he was listening to it,—or rather while he was *hearing* it, for he took no pains to listen,—the gentleman who had been talking with Mr. Waldo,

and whom the latter had called Mr. Albert, went round to the two ladies who were waiting to be called, and said,—

"Now, ladies, the boat is ready. Follow me. Say nothing, but do just as you are told, and all will go well."

So the ladies came one after the other in among the crowd that gathered around the gangway, and there, before they could bring their faculties at all to comprehend any thing distinctly amid the bewildering confusion of the scene, they found their bags and shawls taken away from them, and they themselves turned round and gently forced to back down the steps of the ladder over the boiling surges, when, in a moment more, amid loud shouts of "Let go!" they were seized by the sailors in the boat, and down they went, they knew not how, for a distance of many feet into the stern of the boat, where they suddenly found themselves seated, while the boat itself was rocking violently to and fro, and thumping against the side of the steamer in a frightful manner.

The officer, who had charge of the debarkation on the deck of the steamer above, immediately called to Mrs. Parkman.

"Come, madam!" said he.

"No," said she, "I can't possibly go ashore in that way."

"Then you will have to stay on board all night."

"Well, I'd rather stay on board all night," said she.

"And you will have to go back to Dover, madam," continued the officer, speaking in a very stern and hurried manner, "for the steamer is not going into the pier at all."

Then immediately turning to Rollo, he said, "Come, young man!"

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