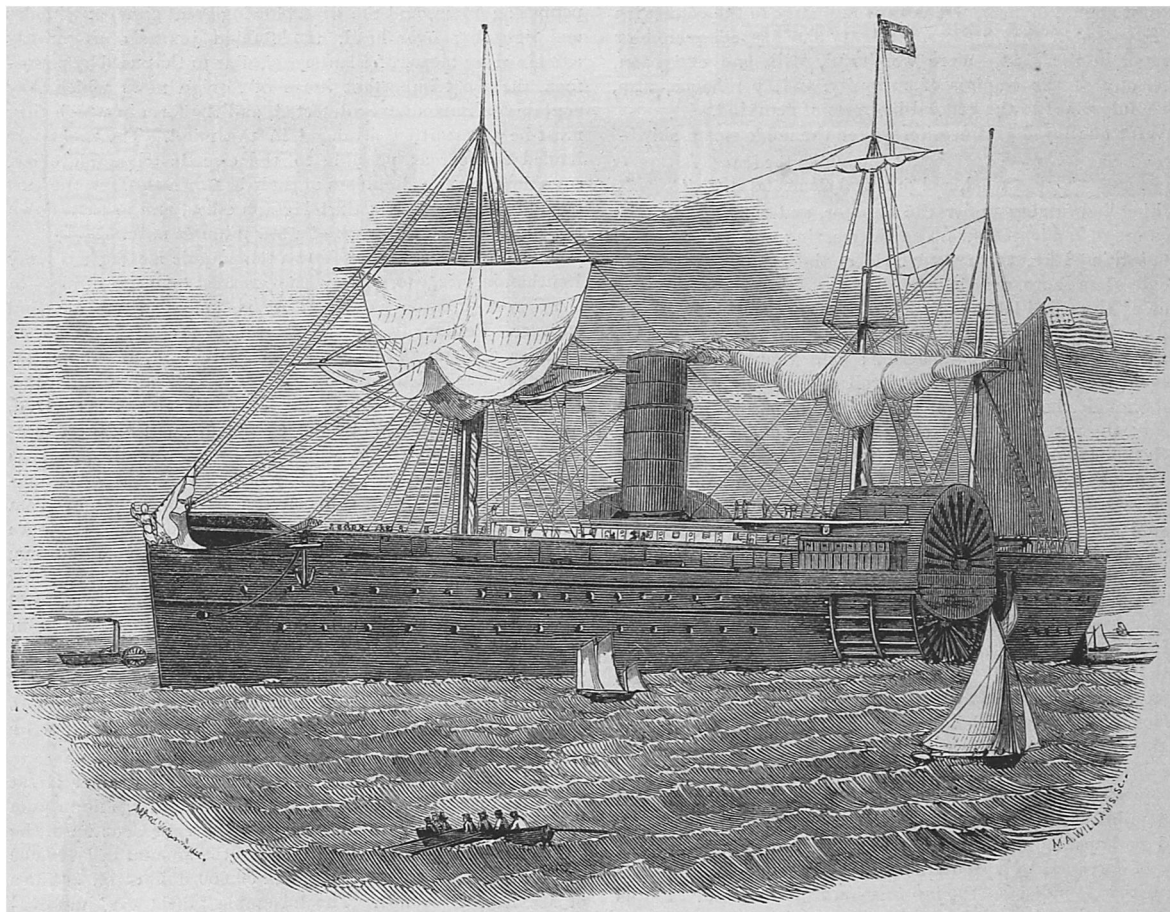


OCEAN MAIL STEAMERS.

THE mighty impetus which has been given to locomotion within the last few years, is one of the most striking characteristics of the present age. Our own shores have become a centre of activity, from which there are constantly issuing forth noble vessels, bearing valuable lives and costly freights to other climes; while as we sit calmly by our firesides, countless winged barks, buffeting the storms of ocean and braving innumerable perils, are bearing to us the necessaries and the luxuries of life. And when it is remembered how few years have elapsed since the great problem of Transatlantic Steam Navigation was solved by the successful voyages of the *Sirius* and the *Great Western*, we shall see that, despite recent failures, a mighty advance has been made in the facilities of intercourse we possess, and abundant reason is afforded for cherishing large and confident hopes for the future.

and twenty wide, while the dining-saloon is sixty feet long by more than forty in width, the woodwork of these apartments being of white holly, satinwood, rosewood, and other fine-grained descriptions, so arranged and diversified as to present a very costly appearance. The drawing-room is fitted up with mirrors, bronze-work, stained glass, and paintings, and has a singularly fine effect. Between the panels connected with the state rooms are the arms of the different states of the confederacy, painted in the first style of art; while the pillars between are inlaid with mirrors, framed with rosewood, and having at the top and bottom bronzed sea-shells of costly workmanship. In the centre are groups of allegorical figures, representing the ocean mythology of the ancients in bronze and burnished gold. The ceiling is elaborately wrought, carved, and gilded, and the cabin windows in the stern are of stained



THE UNITED STATES MAIL STEAM-SHIP "ATLANTIC."

The daily achievements of our Ocean Mail Steamers has given to the subject great and general interest; and in a time like the present, when families are being distributed over all parts of the globe, the opportunities for maintaining regular intercourse, which may exist or arise, can scarcely be over-rated in importance, either in their domestic, social, or political consequences.

Now let us take the United States Mail Steam-ship *Atlantic* as a type of a class of vessels which trade between England and the New World. Her appearance as she rides the ocean wave is truly magnificent, as will be gathered from the engraving of our artist. Her dimensions are enormous, and the elegance with which every part of the passenger cabins and saloons is fitted up, is scarcely to be surpassed. If we enter the saloon, we find a noble room nearly seventy feet long

glass, having representations of some of the principal cities of the United States painted on them. To convey some idea of the size of one of these noble vessels, the principal dimensions may be given:—

| | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------|
| Length between perpendiculars | 276 feet. |
| Breadth of beam | 45 " |
| Breadth across paddle | 75 " |
| Diameter of wheel | 36 " |
| Length of stroke | 9 " |
| Diameter of cylinder | 96 inches. |
| Power | 1000 horses. |
| Burthen | 2860 tons. |

But not only is communication maintained with the New World by splendid vessels, of which this is a type, but there are lines of steam-ships to almost all parts of the world. The

Anglo-Indian mail is one of the wonders of our age, and it is only because of the frequency and regularity of the achievement that we fail to appreciate it. Concentrated by different routes from the centres of Indian government and commerce, as well as from England's more remote dependencies in the Straits of Malacca and the Chinese seas, it emerges into the Straits of Babel-mandel, from the limitless expanse of the Indian Ocean; passes the promontory projecting from the heights of Mount Sinai, the shores of Mecca and Medina; it is remarked on the Red Sea, amid spots sacred to Scripture history; the desert is traversed with a speed which mocks the old cavalades of camels and loitering Arabs; the pyramids and Cairo are passed in their onward course; the bosom of the ancient Nile receives the burden of freight and passengers, and at length, traversing the length of the Mediterranean, they cross the interval which France presents, and finally reach our own shores. There is a certain majesty in the simple outline of a route like this, traversing the most ancient seats of empire, and what we are taught to regard as among the earliest abodes of man, which thus ministers to the connexion of Egypt with that great sovereignty she has conquered or created in the East,—more wonderful, with one exception, than any of the empires of antiquity, and, perchance, also, more important to the general interests of mankind.

With unalloyed gratification we see the noble steam-ship—

“Ploughing the seas

‘Gainst wind, and tide, and elemental strife,”

reeking and fuming under the equator, and sending forth its volumes of condensed steam on the freezing waters of Canada. The solitary lake, the crowded river, the busy harbour, and the desolate shore, are visited; the bays, friths, estuaries, and canals; the small lakes of Scotland, Ireland, and Switzerland, and the larger ones of America, the Red and Black Seas, bear the steam-vessel on their bosom; and though calms may prevail, though the thunder may roll and the lightning flash, and though the tempestuous storm may threaten to desolate the earth, yet calmly and successfully it advances, freighted with the elements of comfort and happiness to man.

We may now briefly advert to the curious and interesting processes by which the intelligence brought by our mail steamers from various parts of the world is, at the earliest moment, by the agency of the daily press, laid before the people of England. For this purpose, a better spot cannot be selected than Southampton, to which port many of the finest mail steam-ships in the world are ever bending their course.

It has often been a matter of surprise to those unacquainted with the means employed, that before a foreign mail packet comes alongside the dock wall at Southampton, hundreds of persons in London, which is eighty miles distant, are reading in the public journals, with breathless interest, the news she has brought. While the vessel is coming up Itcher Creek, the intelligence of which she is the bearer has been printed and published over the Metropolis, has affected the markets, and perhaps induced numbers to risk the acquisition or the loss of fortunes, by speculations in trade and in the public securities, founded on the information thus received. Let us look into the method by which these singular results are attained.

When a mail packet is due at Southampton, watchmen are employed day and night by newspaper proprietors to look out for her. In the day-time, when the weather is clear, and there is not much wind stirring, the smoke of a large packet in the Solent may be seen over Codlands from the quay; but homeward-bound steamers are generally found out by means of powerful telescopes, after they have passed Englehurst Castle, by looking over the flat tongue of land which terminates where Calshot Castle stands. When the mail rounds the latter point, a rocket is thrown up as her signal. Instantly watchmen may be seen running in different directions of the town; and in a few minutes there are gliding towards the quay a few persons who, if it be a winter night, would scarcely be recognised, disguised, as they appear to be, in great coats, comforters, and every kind of waterproof covering for the head, feet, and body. These persons are the outport news-

paper agents. They make for the head of the quay, and each jumps into a small yacht, which at once leaves the shore.

Cold, dark, and cheerless as it may be, says one familiar with the scene, which is thus presented, the excitement on board the little vessels leaving the pier is very great in calculating which will reach the steamer first, and at no regatta is there more nautical science displayed, or is the contention more keen and earnest. “Let us suppose the time to be about six o'clock of a dark winter's morning, the yachts reaching the steamer just as ‘ease her’ has been hoarsely bawled by the pilot off Netley Abbey. As soon as pratique has been granted, the newspaper agents climb up the side of the steamer, oftentimes by a single rope, and at the risk of their lives, and jump on board. A bundle of foreign journals is handed to each of them, and they immediately return to their yachts, and make for the shore. The excitement and contention now to reach the shore is far more intense than was the case during the attempt to reach the ship. While making for the shore, sometimes in the most tempestuous weather, perhaps the rain peppering down, and the wind blowing great guns, or thunder and lightning over head, the foreign journals are hastily examined by means of a lantern, similar to that used by policemen, the most important items of foreign news which they contain are immediately detected, and the form in which they must be transmitted arranged in the mind. The agents are landed as near as possible to the electric telegraph office, sometimes on the shoulders of their boatmen through the surf or mud. They arrive at the telegraph office, and to write down their messages is the work of a few minutes only.

“The rule for writing down telegraphic messages is truly Benthamic, viz., to convey the greatest quantity of news in the fewest possible words. That is done to save time and expense. Perhaps the message is as follows:—Great Western. Jamaica, 2. Cruz, 26. Million dollars. Dividend, fifty thousand. Mosquito war ended. Antilles healthy. Havannah hurricane. Hundred ships lost. Crops good. Jamaica, rains. Sea covered, wreck plantations. While the agents are writing these messages, the telegraph is at work, and by the time the messages are written in Southampton, they have been almost communicated to Lothbury. A cab conveys written copies of them with the utmost despatch to the newspaper offices. They are immediately in the hands of the foreign editors, or sub-editors, who comprehend the purport of them immediately. In a few minutes they have been elaborated and made intelligible, and they appear in a conspicuous part of the morning papers, in the following shape:—

“ARRIVAL OF THE WEST INDIAN AND MEXICAN MAIL.—
IMPORTANT NEWS FROM THE WEST INDIES.—DREADFUL
HURRICANE AT HAVANNAH.—AWFUL DESTRUCTION OF
PROPERTY IN JAMAICA.”

“The Royal Mail Steam-packet Company's steamer Great Western has arrived at Southampton. She brings news from Jamaica up to the 2nd instant, and from Vera Cruz up to the 26th ult.; she has on board freight to the amount of 1,000,000 dollars on merchant's account, and 50,000 dollars on account of Mexican dividends. The miserable ‘little war’ unfortunately entered into by this country on behalf of the black King of Mosquito has terminated. We regret to learn that a most destructive hurricane has happened at Havannah, and that a hundred ships have been wrecked in consequence. The weather, we are happy to say, has been fine in the West Indies, and the islands are healthy. The crops of West India produce are progressing favourably. The May rains at Jamaica have been very heavy, and have done considerable damage. The rivers have swollen enormously, overflowed their banks, and done great damage to the plantations. The sea, at the mouths of the rivers, was covered with the wrecks of the plantations.”*

The remark might appear strange, that the intelligence of the arrival of the mail-packets in the Southampton Docks is usually communicated to the inhabitants of the town through the morning papers;—but such is the case in reference to events.

* “Hants Advertiser.”

transpiring in many localities; and if we wish to obtain a clear and connected narrative of some public circumstance which has transpired in our own neighbourhood, the chances are that a newspaper published perhaps hundreds of miles away will furnish the first authentic intelligence which we shall possess. Thus people go to sea-ports to meet friends or relatives from abroad; they lodge near the water to be certain of knowing when the packet comes in; and yet it often happens that the morning papers on the breakfast table give them the first notification of the arrival of those they are so anxious to meet. And thus it is very often at Southampton.

Some years ago Paredes escaped from Mexico, and came to Southampton in a West India steamer. He arrived almost *incog.*, and was scarcely aware that he was known on board. Some slight delay arose before the steamer could get into dock, in consequence of the state of the tide, and Paredes had no idea that any communication had been made with the shore. To his utter astonishment, the first sound he heard was his

own name, for a newsboy was bawling to the passengers from a morning paper,—“Second Edition of the *Daily News*. Important News from Mexico. Arrival of Paredes in Southampton.” Since that time the Mexican monarchist travelled all over Europe; but he has been heard to declare, that the greatest wonder which he found in this part of the world was the rapidity with which news was obtained and circulated in England.

Such are the arrangements by which our ocean mail steamships are made to furnish the current history of the world at the shortest notice; and as every such vessel puts into port, it is delivering up to public knowledge the records of the proceedings of all parts of the globe. As we dwell upon the “means and appliances” thus continually rendered available for the promotion of commerce and civilisation throughout the world, we see something of the relation which the progress of the mechanical arts sustains to the promotion of the highest interests of all.

MR. GOULD'S HUMMING-BIRDS.

THE humming-bird (*trochilidae*) belongs, according to the classification of Linnæus, to the genus *picæ*, or parrot, and is scientifically described as having “a fabulated thread-like bill that is crooked and longer than the head; the upper mandible being a sheath to the lower, and the tongue like a thread divided in two and tubulous.” Linnæus was acquainted with comparatively few of the species, but the researches of Mr. Gould has enabled him to collect and describe more than 300 specimens of the interesting family—the smallest and the prettiest of birds.

The humming-bird is a native of the continents and islands of America, being distributed, more or less, all over the New World from Canada to Cape Horn. Mary Howitt tells us that—

“In the radiant islands of the East
Where fragrant spices grow,
A thousand thousand humming-birds
Are glancing to and fro;”

a fact for which the poetess must be allowed to claim a sort of poetical license; for, in truth, the real *trochilidae* are not found in the east at all. But Mrs. Howitt's general description of the beautiful little bird is so exact that, notwithstanding the error she commits in placing it in the wrong hemisphere, we cannot but complete the quotation—

“Like living fires they flit about,
Scarce larger than a bee,
Among the dark palmetto leaves,
And through the fan-palm tree.
“And in the wild and verdant woods,
Where stately moras tower—
Where hangs from branching tree to tree
The scarlet passion-flower.
“Where on the mighty river banks,
La Plate or Amazon,
The cayman, like a forest tree,
Lies basking in the sun.
“There builds her nest the humming-bird,
Within the ancient wood,—
Her nest of silky cotton down,—
And rears her tiny brood.”

The members of this interesting family are described as flitting about from flower to flower, suspended, as it were, in a manner peculiarly their own, without apparent motion, while the rapid action of their wings “in cutting the air, just as a sabre would, produces the humming noise to which the name is attributable.” Where is the person, inquires Audubon, the celebrated American naturalist, who, on seeing this lovely little creature moving on humming winglets through the air, suspended, as if by magic, in it, flitting from one flower to another with motions as graceful as they are light and airy,

pursuing its course over our extensive continent, and yielding new delights wherever it is seen; where is the person, who, on observing this brilliant fragment of the rainbow, would not pause, admire, and instantly turn his mind with reverence towards the Almighty Creator, the wonders of whose hand we at every step discover, and of whose sublime conceptions we everywhere observe the manifestations in his admirable system of creation? There breathes not such a person, so kindly have we all been blessed with that intuition and noble feeling, admiration.”

The variegated dress of the humming-bird is almost beyond the reach of art to depicture—all the most beautiful metallic colours, from the deepest gold and the most glowing crimson, to the darkest blue and the palest yellow, being intermingled in a manner quite impossible to describe.

“What heavenly tints in mingling radiance fly!
Each rapid movement gives a different dye;
Like scales of burnished gold they dazzling show,
Now sink to shade, now like a furnace glow.”

“I have seen,” says Wilson, the writer of these lines, “the humming-bird, for half an hour at a time, darting at those little groups of insects that dance in the air on a fine summer's evening, retiring to an adjoining twig to rest, and renewing the attack with a dexterity which sets all our other fly-catchers at defiance,”—a statement which at once settles the question of the humming-bird being a vegetable feeder. To enable it to prosecute its useful and necessary war upon the multitudes of insects peculiar to the tropical climates in which it principally abounds, the humming-bird is provided with a long and slender bill, and a tongue, consisting of two muscular tubes, which is capable of being protruded to a considerable distance. But besides this, the tongue, its only instrument of attack, is covered with a glutinous saliva, to which the insect adheres immediately it is touched, whence it is drawn rapidly into the mouth of the beautiful and apparently never-resting bird.

In the Zoological Gardens the humming-birds, from which our artist has selected a few of the most remarkable specimens, will be found “preserved” or “set up” in a manner so nearly approaching life as to enable the visitor to realise, without any very great stretch of imagination, their life amid the flowers and fruits of their native forests in the west.

The humming-bird, though it charms us with the brilliancy of its plumage, the exceeding delicacy of its formation, and the grace of its movements—

“While richest roses, though in crimson drest,
Shrink from the splendour of its gorgeous breast,”

must yield in one important particular to its more plainly dressed brethren of colder climates, for it has no song! Its beauty addresses itself to the eye rather than the ear—a kind