

A Voyage - Reflections on the City of New York, from  
the harbour at night.

I had been almost two weeks on the ocean, buffeted and beaten by wind & by wave & driven about by a continuous succession of gales & tempests, when the afternoon of the fourteenth day brought us in sight of land on the coast of New Jersey. We stood directly for it, and at dusk in the evening, had approached apparently within a storm's throw of the beach. I had watched it with eager eye from the moment of its first appearance, and now that we were near, gazed with infinite delight <sup>on</sup> the prospect which the low woodland shore presented. Never did my heart so leap for joy, and never did my fancy paint such delightful images of the felicity of quiet country life, as when my eye first rested upon a rural little cottage, situated in a cluster of small trees almost at the edge of the water. The smoke curled gracefully from the chimney <sup>ascended slowly until it</sup> & was lost amid the shades of the evening - and a man with several boys had just left the hay stacks & were wending their way to the house as if weary of their toil - a little wretch could be seen driving home the cows - a female whom I at least fancied to be a young maid was engaged in milking others, while a lad sitting straddle of the bars, with a whip in his hand, seemed to take delight in driving them back.



Oh! how I longed to lay my head, for one night, on the  
the humble, home-made pillow cases of this lovely  
cottage.

I climbed a short distance up the fore rigging of  
the ship, and was indulging in rather a melancholy  
by train of thought, ~~thinking~~ about home & its com-  
forts, to which the prospect before me had given rise,  
when the wind suddenly shifted & began to blow very  
fresh. I was now informed that we <sup>would soon</sup> make the lights  
at Sandy Hook, and that there was every prospect  
of arriving at the city by ten o'clock. Full of the  
thoughts of so unexpected an accomplishment of  
my most ardent wishes, I retired below, request-  
ing one of the men to call me when we came in  
sight of the city. This assistance was not however  
called into requisition, for altho' I had gone to bed,  
I did not sleep so soundly but that I could hear  
every movement on the deck. I had been lying  
thus for several hours, when the sudden confusion  
above, created by the hurrying of the men to & fro, the  
lowering of the sails & the angry tones of the Captain's  
voice started me to my feet. With the first impulse  
I hastened upon deck, and stumbling along over coils  
of rope, sought a situation as much out of the  
way as possible, where I stood & strained my eyes in  
every direction. The darkness was so great that I  
could see nothing with satisfaction, every thing around  
presenting the obscure & dusky appearance of <sup>simply</sup> ~~an~~  
land in the distance. The city, however, could be



readily distinguished, by the brilliancy of the many  
hundred lamps which lighted the streets. The effect  
was imposing and lead to a long train of reflections.  
I could but contrast its appearance with the one  
which it had presented through the day. ~~And~~ while  
since & all was bustle & confusion, but night had  
suddenly enveloped it and checked the strong current  
of business. The noisy car was no longer heard rat-  
tling over the stony pavements. The busy crowd that  
thronged the streets had retired to their quiet homes.  
The cry of the lonely watchman - "twelve O'clock,  
and all's well," was the only sound that could be  
heard. It was literally a plumbering mass of thou-  
sands of human beings. This was its outward  
appearance; but could the curtain be drawn aside,  
what a different aspect would it present! How  
vast & how various the transactions, offspring of  
night, that were now engaging the attentions of in-  
numerable numbers of this vast multitude! How  
infinite beyond conception the different thoughts,  
that occupied the minds of hundreds, whose weary  
eyes had not yet found slumber! Even now  
perhaps the convivial party were spending the  
jocund hours in merriment & social converse - the  
lover with <sup>his</sup> fair - the wooer with his maid. At this  
very moment, no insignificant portions of this com-  
munity were indulging in debauchery & lewdness.  
Hundreds of females young & lovely - once virtuous,  
loved & revered - the pride of their fond parents & the



solace of their declining years, were now offering  
their delicate bodies, a prey to the brutal lust of  
cold hearted strangers, smiling when they would weep,  
kissing when they would have spurned with loathing,  
embracing when they would shrink back as from an  
adder. The theaters were crowded & resounded with  
the applauses of admiring Spectators.

Here too was the man of business, who having  
retired from the labours & anxieties of the day,  
tossed from side to side, unable to sleep, & brooding  
with perplexing thoughts over the morrow. The  
young husband, I doubted not, might there be  
found, keeping watch with his lovely & adoring  
bride, and repeating with affectionate fondness  
the story of their early loves. And the pious mo-  
ther, who, kneeling at the bed side with her  
tender offspring, taught them to kiss "Our Father"  
& to hallow his holy name. In short I thought  
of it as a perfect world, in itself, where could be  
found every species of virtue & of vice.

August 20<sup>th</sup> 1840.

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Unfinished.