

PITTSBURG, SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 1890.

THIRD PART.

OUR RIVER GIANTS.

Big Stern Wheelers That Move Acres of Black Diamonds on Local Streams.

PITTSBURG PROUD OF THEM.

While Visitors From Tidewater Imagine They Are Ludicrous.

REPAIRING ON LAND AND WATER.

An Early Vessel That Was Propelled by Oars Moved by Steam.

STORIES OF PIONEER BOATING DAYS.

Written for the Dispatch.

The people of one end of this State are always sure of seeing a curiosity at the other end. That is a stern wheel steamboat. They don't have them in Philadelphia. They have to come around Pittsburg.

The enormous paddle wheels of the Monongahela river towboats have rolled clear from the foot of the Allegheny Mountains to the base of the Rockies, but they have not succeeded in tumbling over the great divide of their own State.

The biggest paddle wheel. Down on the Monongahela wharf the other day I saw several of these large wheels lying along the shore detached from the

It seems that the idea of wheels had not occurred to John Fitch, a watchmaker in Philadelphia, who in 1785 conceived the idea of propelling a boat by steam. His vessel, of which a picture is given here, was

Who has not read of the fleets of coal boats, that are lashed together in ten, and safely floated 1,000 miles by a single wheel! On such a trip, however, the wheel requires violence. Made of wood, you wonder how it stands the buffet of the current, the whack of ice obstructions, or the cutting collisions with sand bars.

A CARPENTER ON EVERY BOAT. The carpenter has not read of the fleets of coal boats, that are lashed together in ten, and safely floated 1,000 miles by a single wheel!

Through the engine holes, and perch high up on the paddles of the wheel. He is often compelled to perform this dangerous duty in midwater. At the Lizzie Bay, of Cincinnati, he started the wheel at the foot of Wood street, this week, I called to the carpenter who was standing on the paddle of the stern-wheel, whether he had ever been dumped into the water. "Often," he responded.

Stories are told of how the engineer, forgetting that the carpenter had gone out on the wheel, had started the engines. A splash, a yell, the sound of running feet up on deck, and finally the violent ringing of the engine bells by the pilot, reminded the engineer that the wheel's paddles had held human weight.

Such a quiet idea agrees with the character of Fitch, which is described in his own

paddles are quite narrow, and it is easy by a missile to fall into the water.

REPAIRING ALONG WATER STREET. The man on the wheel of the Lizzie Bay, in this instance was "lightening up," that is, screwing up the flanges of the paddles. A paddle is made of two boards generally, and the iron fastenings become loosened somewhat by the wear and tear of a trip between Cincinnati and Pittsburg.

It is a very interesting visit to these shops, because of the variety of work done at them. Anything at all that goes wrong on board a river steamer (or ocean vessel for that matter) can be remedied by the ingenious workmen among these two thoroughfares—the main job, from fixing a capstan up to the mouth's contract for overhauling a dismantled steamboat. Some time ago the harbor tug Stella McCullough was sunk in the Monongahela, close to its mouth. Her boilers are still at the bottom of the river, but water-logged hull has been raised and towed to shore.

A BUSY LITTLE SCENE. It now lies high and dry on the wharf at the foot of Ferry street, with broken bits of machinery scattered all around and through it. Near this hull on the river bank lies a pile of new shafts and lifeboats, built and painted in bright colors for the coal trade. Not far beyond are a lot of long, black smokestacks, in which workmen are riveting nails. They lie like disheveled giants, and so large are they that the artisans must have boxes to stand upon when trying to reach the sides.

The use of paddle wheels in conjunction with steam as a motive power, dates from about the commencement of the present century, but the employment of the paddle wheel itself is as ancient as the time of the Egyptians. A specimen is known to have been tried in Spain in the sixteenth century. In 1765, June 17, Basco de Garray tried a steamboat of 200 tons with tolerable success at Barcelona, Spain.

Monthly Magazine says he well remembers observing the long struggles of a stern-wheel boat to ascend the Horse-tail rapids a few miles below Pittsburg. He was in company with several other gentlemen at the time, and he says that "it was the unanimous opinion of the party that such a contrivance might conquer the difficulties of the Mississippi as high as Natchez, but that we of the Ohio must wait for some more happy century of invention."

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launched on the Delaware three years later. She performed the trip to Burlington, 20 miles distant, but burst her boiler on the return. Fitch built a second vessel on the same plan. She is said to have moved at the rate of eight miles per hour, but something was continually breaking and the unfortunate inventor only overcame one difficulty to meet another.

THE FIRST REAL STEAMBOAT. The first real steamboat that ever floated on western rivers was furnished with a propelling wheel at the stern. It was the New Experiment. He declared that "the only good it would be, would be to knock the life out of fish in the Ohio. He advised "batting" the paddles, and using the wheel in earnest for fishing purposes.

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THE LIGHT THAT FAILED.

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The story opens with a picture of the life of two orphans, Dick and Maisie, with Mrs. Jennet in London. Many were their hardships and a pitched froth was the result of their companionship in misery.

CHAPTER VIII. What's you that follows at my side? The foe that you must fight, my lord.—That whirled swift as I can ride.—The shadow of the night, my lord.—He's down and overpast, my lord.—Ye war against the sunset glow: The darkness gathers fast, my lord.

"This is a cheerful life," said Dick, some many days later. "I'm away, Bessie hates me; I can't get at the notion of the Melancolia; Maisie's letters are scraps; and I believe I have indignation. What gives a man pains across his head and spots before his eyes, Binkie? Shall we take some liver pills?"

Dick had just gone through a lively scene with Bessie. She had, for the fiftieth time, reproached him for sending Torpenhow away. She explained her enduring hatred for Dick, and made it clear to him that the only stay for the sake of his money. "And Mr. Torpenhow's ten times a better man than you," she concluded.

"He is. That's why he went away. I should have stayed and made love to you." The girl sat with her chin on her hand, scowling. "You met a girl named Maisie, didn't you? I was afraid of being hung. I'll kill you. That's what I'd do. Do you believe me?"

Dick smiled wearily. It is not pleasant to live in the company of a notion that cannot work out, a fox terrier that cannot talk, and a woman who talks too much. He would have answered, but at that moment an old bookman writes in Gould's "History of River Navigation" of being aboard a ship.

ENTRUSTED TO POLING. Here a very useful improvement aided the engine, a poling machine, worked by the capstan or windlass in the bow of the boat.

Even as he thought, a great fear came upon Dick, and he found his feet held his breath as he walked into the oculist's waiting room, with the heavy carved furniture, the dark green paper, and the sober-headed prints on the wall.

THE LIGHT THAT FAILED. The next good day that any had, it was the joy of three. To see her good son, Jesus Christ, Making the blind to see, Good Lord, And being may we, The Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost To all eternity!

Dick read and re-read the verse till his turn came, and the doctor was handing a short hair to the arm chair. The blue light of a gas-microscope in his eyes made him wince. The doctor's hand touched the scar of the sword cut on Dick's head, and Dick explained briefly how he had come by it.

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came upon him, and he pitched grunting at their feet. Dick laughed again, remembering the horror. It seemed exactly like his own case. "But I have a little more time allowed me," he said. He paced up and down the room, quietly at first, but afterwards with the hurried tread of fear. It was as though a black shadow stood at his elbow and urged him to go forward; and there were only weaving circles and floating pin-dots before his eyes.

"We must be calm, Binkie; we must be calm." He talked aloud for the sake of distraction. "This isn't nice at all. What shall we do? We must do something. Our time is short. I shouldn't have believed this morning; but now things are different. Binkie, where was Moses when the light went out?"

The hurried walk recommenced, Dick stopping every now and again to drag forth long-neglected canvases and old notebooks; and he turned to his work by instinct, as a thing that did not fail in him. "You won't do," he said at each inspection. "No more soldiers. I couldn't paint 'em. Sudden death comes home too nearby, and this is a battle and a murder, not a thing that you do in a studio."

"The day was falling, and Dick thought for a moment that the twilight of the blind came upon him unawares. "Allah Almighty!" he cried, despairing way, "help me through the time of waiting, and I won't whine when my punishment comes. What can I do now, before the light goes?"

He heard the man speaking in the twilight, and he tried to get up, but he was so weak that he could not rise. "Come here and let me see you, Binkie."

Understand the speech and feel a stir of fellowship in all disaster's fight. "In all disaster's fight? That's better than painting the thing merely to please Maisie. I can do it now because I have it inside me. Binkie, I'm going to hold you up by your tail. You're an omen. Come here."

Binkie swung head downward for a moment without speaking. "Better like holding a guinea-pig; but you're a brave little dog, and don't you yelp when you're maltreated. It is an omen."

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BESSIE DESTROYING THE PICTURE.

he still could see everything very clearly. He was of opinion that he would even make a deal for Maisie, and that whether she liked it or not she should be his wife. The mood passed next morning, but the sideboard and all upon it remained for his comfort. Again he set to work, and his eyes troubled him with spots and darts and blurs till he had taken counsel with the sideboard, and the Melancolia both on the canvas and in his own mind.

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