

CHAPTER XL.

Construction and Management of Railways in America.—Journey by Long Island from New York to Boston.—Whale Fishery in the Pacific.—Chewing Tobacco.—Visit to Wenham Lake.—Cause of the superior Permanence of Wenham Lake Ice.—Return to Boston.—Skeletons of Fossil Mastodons.—Food of those extinct Quadrupeds.—Anti-war Demonstration.—Voyage to Halifax.—Dense Fog.—Large Group of Icebergs seen on the Ocean.—Transportation of Rocks by Icebergs.—Danger of fast Sailing among Bergs.—Aurora Borealis.—Connection of this Phenomenon with drift Ice.—Pilot with English Newspapers.—Return to Liverpool.

May 21, 1846.—IN the construction and management of railways, the Americans have in general displayed more prudence and economy than could have been expected, where a people of such sanguine temperament were entering on so novel a career of enterprise. Annual dividends of seven or eight per cent. have been returned for a large part of the capital laid out on the New England railways, and on many others in the northern states. The cost of passing the original bills through the state parliaments has usually been very moderate, and never exorbitant; the lines have been carried as much as possible through districts where land was cheap; a single line only laid down where the traffic did not justify two; high gradients resorted to, rather than incur the expense of deep cuttings; tunnels entirely avoided; very little money spent in building station-houses; and, except where the population was large, they have been content with the speed of fourteen or sixteen miles an hour. It has, moreover, been an invariable maxim "to go for numbers," by lowering the fares so as to bring them within the reach of all classes. Occasionally, when the intercourse between two rich and populous cities, like New York and Boston, has excited the eager competition of rival companies, they have accelerated the speed far beyond the usual average; and we were carried from one metropolis to the other,