

The new Steamer Francis Skiddy.

We have before briefly noticed this latest addition to our North River packets. An inspection enables us now to give a more full description of her. She was originally built for the purpose of testing the practicability of the "Rotary Engine," and was launched about two years since from the yard of Mr. GEORGE COLLYER, who modeled and constructed her for Messrs. HICKS & Co. There were four boilers placed on her guards, and a portion of the joiner's work was completed, when further work was suspended until the completion of the engine, which was being constructed at the Cold Spring Foundry, under the direction of H. G. THOMPSON, Esq., the inventor. After much trouble and delay, the cylinder was cast, and finished up, but when completed it was found to be too weak to support its own weight. The inventor laid the blame upon the builder, and the builder said that he had strictly followed the directions given him. A suit was commenced between the parties, and the engine was broken up for old iron. Thus ended the Rotary experiment— notwithstanding the parties interested were possessed of abundant resources, and were confident of the success of the engine. It is to be regretted that the experiment was not carried out, as probably no boat was ever constructed combining so many good points as she does. The boat was sold, and Messrs. JAMES McCULLOUGH, Jr., J. W. COOPER, THOMAS G. ANDREWS and JAMES B. TOWNSEND became the owners.

The name which the original owners designed to give her was the "General Taylor," but her present proprietors have named her after Mr. FRANCIS SKIDDY, as a mark of the respect which they entertain for that gentleman. This Spring she was taken to the foundry of Messrs. CUNNINGHAM, BELKNAP & Co., and those gentlemen placed on board one of their first-class engines, with a cylinder 70 inches in diameter and with a 14-foot stroke. Here machinery is very plain, but is admirably fitted, and worked so smoothly the first day it was tried, that there was not the least perceptible jar.

The hull of the boat is 325 feet long, 38 feet beam—width of guards 70 feet, depth of hold 10½ feet. Her wheels are 40 feet in diameter, with a bucket eleven feet long. She registers about 1,200 tons. In finishing her off the owners have had the good taste to avoid the gewgaw display which has heretofore been so prevalent with our steamboat builders. The wood work is painted white and is relieved by a modest gold beading, that gives it a chaste, finished look. The entrance to the ladies saloon is particularly neat and appropriate. The saloon is carpeted with Brussels tapestry carpet; the side seats cushioned and covered with blue and damask brocatelle—and the centre filled in with rosewood sofas, tables, Voltaire and parlor chairs. On each side of the entrance is a magnificent oval looking-glass, set in a richly carved frame. The carpeting and fitting up of the cabins was done under the superintendence of Mr. J. W. A. STRICKLAND, and shows the taste and judgment of one who thoroughly understands his business, and who knows how to give the best possible effect in the arrangement of his materials.

The lower cabin extends nearly the entire length of the boat, and will be used as a sitting-room and refreshment saloon. The *table d'hote* will be abolished, and a bill of fare substituted, with the prices affixed, so that the passengers can select whatever they want, and dine when "the humor takes them."

THE EXCURSION.

The trial trip of the *Francis Skiddy* took place on Saturday afternoon. The steamer left the pier at the foot of Vestry street, at 1 P. M., with a company of guests numbering six or seven hundred. The departure was witnessed by a crowd collected on the adjacent piers and docks. The *Skiddy* moved off gaily, amidst the cheers of the multitude—with streamers flying and favored by a beautiful day, neither sultry nor too cold. Gliding down the river for a considerable distance, the steamer tacked, described a circle and shot up-stream toward West Point. The trip to that point was accomplished in exactly three hours. On the way, the vessel was welcomed by the salutes of the various river craft; bells pealing musically from either shore, and replied to by the *Skiddy*. The company on board oscillated from side to side, acknowledging the cordial greetings that reached them from the country-seats and villages upon the line of the Hudson, and the best humor pervaded the ceremonies of the occasion. A premature irruption of sundry Vandals among the guests, produced a momentary unpleasantness. Young men who refrain from excesses only when under home restraint, shed no especial lustre upon the company into which they may chance to be thrown. The officers of the boat, we are happy to say, exerted themselves efficiently to remedy the evil. The appointments of the boat were excellent. A bountiful table was spread in the Dining Saloon, and refreshments appeared upon deck, so that the comfort of the inner-man, essential to enjoyment where fresh air sharpens the zest of appetite, was not forgotten. Reaching West Point at 4 o'clock, the company left the boat for a short ramble among the picturesque hills of that beautiful retreat. Taking "Cozzens's" by storm, the party made the best of the time permitted them, viewed with admiring eye the noble outline of the *Skiddy*, as, with her four pipes lazily smoking, and a white cloud of escaping steam floating upward, she lay at the wharf below the cliff—a specimen of the handicraft of Man, that did the eye good to look upon. The spectator naturally called to remembrance the triumphs of FITCH and FULTON, rude and cumbersome as they were, in comparison with the achievements of these later days. Steam navigation has made wonderful progress in recent years. Machinery is brought to a state of perfection which surprises the uninitiated. An engine never before tried, new from the hand of the maker, like that of the *Skiddy*, works freely and without commotion; the parts are smoothly joined, the revolutions rapid and the motion scarcely perceptible. The maximum speed attained by the *Skiddy* was made in the return trip, making *twenty revolutions* per minute, a result that was the more surprising because of the newness and incompleteness of the details of the machinery. A pipe had become displaced on the way, and occasioned a short delay at West Point.

The return was an unprecedented instance of speed, against head tide and wind. The breeze was very stiff and would have sensibly retarded a poorer vessel. Not so the *Skiddy*, whose sharp bows cut the water with the keenness and precision of a knife, throwing aside the sparkling volume of spray with a seeming disdain of such peurile opposition.

On the way, a meeting was organized on the promenade deck, of which Judge ALEXANDER C. MORTON, of Georgia, was appointed Chairman; and EDWARD J. WARREN, of New-York, Secretary. On taking the chair, Judge MORTON made a few remarks upon the interesting occasion that had drawn together so large a company, and adverted to the union of interests which bind together the extreme sections of the country. A Committee on Resolutions was appointed, consisting of the following gentlemen, who retired for deliberation, and returned with a series of appropriate resolutions, which were adopted with great unanimity. The Committee was composed as follows:

James F. Otis, Chairman; Gen. Walbridge, Chas. L. Frost, Ezra Ludlow, Jr., Chauncey D. Hurd, Chas. Watson, George Barnes, Eben D. Crocker, W. M. Starr, John Randall, H. M. Butler and Jno. D. Cox.

The sentiments of the resolves applied to the value of mechanical improvements, to the interest manifested in this and kindred enterprises, and closed with complimentary allusions to the *Skiddy*, her owners and the Commander, Capt. A. L. STONE.

One or two other meetings took place during the day in different parts of the boat. Mr. JAS. McCULLOUGH, agent of the *Skiddy*, was called out by a party on the forward promenade, and made a neat speech, stating that the boat was named the *Francis Skiddy* on account not only of the personal friendship of the owners, but because the name of Mr. SKIDDY is eminently identified with the history and the successful progress of steamboat navigation. Mr. McCULLOUGH paid a flattering tribute to the enterprise and amiable qualities of Mr. SKIDDY. In the earlier part of the day, Mr. SKIDDY was called upon for a speech, and responded briefly. Other speeches were made by Mr. WARREN, Mr. OTIS and others.

The 6 o'clock steamers from the City, bound to Albany, passed us on the return of the *Skiddy*—the *Isaac Newton*, *Empire of Troy*, *Armenia* and smaller craft, saluting their new companion as each shot by, with the clang of bells, shouts and the waving of handkerchiefs. The *Reindeer*, fast as her namesake, and inspiring pleasant reminiscences of the excellent DE GROOT, now turned "mine host," to the great chagrin of Hudson pleasure-seekers—who hope for his return, some day—was among the friends who greeted the advent of the *Francis Skiddy*.

The day declined as we reached the Palisades, but the air was soft and pleasant, and the upper deck was thronged till the noble steamer warped into her dock at the foot of Jay-street, having made the trip from West Point in two hours and a half. Her running time from Caldwell's, was *two hours and three minutes*, which is the shortest trip yet on record, as made against tide and wind, both dead ahead. The shortest time ever made from the same point, with wind and tide, was one hour and fifty-nine minutes—leaving the *Skiddy* only *four minutes* behind the quickest trip, under double disadvantages. This result surprised the most sanguine admirers of the vessel, and proves her very superior qualities.

A model of strength, speed and comfort, the *Francis Skiddy* is a timely and a welcome accession to the craft which animate and adorn the Hudson.