

The Boatman's Horn.*

BY GEN. WILLIAM O. BUTLER.

O, boatman! wind that horn again,
For never did the listening air,
Upon its lambent bosom bear
So wild, so soft, so sweet a strain!
What, though thy notes are sad and few,
By every simple boatman blown,
Yet is each pulse to nature true,
And melody in every tone.
How oft in boyhood's joyous days,
Unmindful of the lapsing hours,
I've loitered on my homeward way
By wild Ohio's bank of flowers;
While some lone boatman from the deck
Poured his soft numbers to the tide,
As if to charm from storm and wreck
The boat where all his fortunes ride!
Delighted Nature drank the sound,
Enchanted echo bore it round
In whispers soft and softer still,
From hill to plain and plain to hill,
Till e'en the thoughtless, frolic boy,
Elate with hope and wild with joy,
Who gamboled by the river side,
And sported with the fretting tide,
Feels something new pervade his breast,
Change his light step, repress his jest,
Bends o'er the flood his eager ear
To catch the sounds far off, yet dear—
Drinks the sweet draft, but knows not why
The tear of rapture fills his eye.

—*Western Review*, Lexington, Ky., 1821.

*Before the introduction of steam navigation on the Western rivers, passengers and articles of commerce were transported in barges, keelboats, pirogues, rafts and Kentucky flatboats. The nondescript craft all carried bugles which were blown at every stopping place, and as they passed the settlements. The recollection of these events inspired General Butler to write his exquisite poem.