

clouds in busy progress over the heavens. The air is warm, but there are many swells and rufflings in the clear river as I rest on the old stone bridge half-way to Ilminster. How cool those tufts of comfrey look, hanging out their white and lilac bells with the curious sad stain on the petals, over the thick dark leaves from which they sprout. I should dearly like to find the "spotted comfrey or cowslip of Jerusalem" of which old Parkinson speaks, but "of that I told," he says, "in my former booke," and how can one house hope even to contain more than one of the delightful works of the communicative gardener of the seventeenth century? The water under the bridge flows on so silently, just as it did when the old coaches thundered over it long ago in eager rivalry: A noble old woman of more than eighty summers told me, the other day, with sparkling eyes looking more at the past than at me across the basin of peas she was shelling, about the old days before the canal was dug, when there were only two houses in the lower village and the common was not enclosed. Her father kept geese on the common and no doubt turned many an honest penny by means of it. When she was a maid she had to run out and stop the great coach as it thundered past and sell some of the geese to the coachman. How well she remembered hearing how one day two rival coaches would neither let the other pass, and dashed along for a mile abreast at a head-long pace, the gay ladies on the top shouting with laughter though in imminent danger of an overturn. The two cottages sent out their inmates to watch the race, and for once the geese were forgotten. No doubt as the winning coach rolled over the bridge where we are resting, there were merry shouts of triumph, but those gay folk are scattered long ago, and the highway is nearly turned to a by-way.

The last day of July is come. It is early yet and the morning mist lies on the garden in little puffs of down, indeed, as Keats fancifully says the—

"Finely tapering stems,
Had not yet lost those starry diadems
Caught from the early sobbing of the morn."

As the sun mounts in a blue sky the air grows warm. Those yellow-and-white water-lilies under the bridge beyond that red cottage look very cool as we bicycle past them on our way to visit a lovely old stone manor-house. There is already a threat of autumn in the bright red berries of the arum peeping from the ditches, but the elderberries are still quite green, and the young oak leafage is still fresh enough to recall the spring. The red in the oak-leaves is as lovely still as when Chaucer noted the

"Branches broad
That sprongen out ayen the sunne
shene,
Some very red, and some a glad light
grene."

The large pink patches of rest-harrow with its woody little stems which do not speed the plough, look very gay against the strips of camomile daisy which grow wherever the turf has

been taken up. When we bend into the by-lane, we find the darker pink of the red barzias in among the sweet spikes of the yellow-agrimony. Another lovely pink flower is the wood-betony; it is very common about here, and the vivid blossoms peeping from the soft leaves are so much brighter than most of the dead-nettle tribe that they are worth learning, though not quite easy at first to distinguish from wound-wort or stachys. Hampered as we are by town ignorance, these hedge-row friends are too dear not to deserve at least an effort to find their Christian names. We get farther and farther from frequented paths as we pass that cottage which is edged all along with white and pink garden mallows in a gay fringe. The road bends and brings us near a great withy field deep in summer green. The old stone bridge over the river gives us a peep of a deep bay of true bulrushes. Their swaying green forms and black plumes, the moist dark hair waving in the sea seems to us an embodiment of the water-spirit. Beyond them stretches a high bank, all motley with wild mallow, with its darker veins in the transparent pink, and great masses of wild parsnip, with its graceful leaves and soft-spreading yellow flowers, "red loose strife and blond meadow-sweet among." One more turn and we have reached the old stone gables of the midwater homestead, once a court where generations of a good old county stock lived out contentedly their quiet lives. How gay the roses are in the half quadrangle that faces the road. The kind inmates allow us to step into the cool panelled hall, where we admire the richly-wrought iron fire-back with the ducal crown, and look at the dark oil picture over the fire-place, let into the panel and stained with age, but still distinguishable as a hunting-piece of some reckless Nimrod of the past, who would hunt on Sunday while the devil showed him the way as he sat horned and hooped in a tree hard by. But step with me through the low stone door into the rare old red-walled garden beyond. What a presence there is of Sir Roger de Coverley under that ancient speckled holly with all the stiffness vanished owing to the unpruned luxuriance of years. The young tufts grow straight upwards, quite pale lemon-white, with spots of red in the centre, out of the sloping green branches. It is a lovely tree, and our hostess tells us it makes sad work when the gales come and toss the branches about. On this still day—for the breeze has fallen—there is nothing to disturb those downy yellow-and-black guinea-fowl chicks nestling in the old pail tilted against a graceful tall stone column with a ball at the top, which is covered with roses. There are other columns further on, part of some stately colonnade of the past, but the garden can never have looked lovelier than it does to-day when random nature has decked it out, and not some gardener with ruthless scissors and broom.

We peep into the cool dairy, with its great pans of sweet milk. It was once the kitchen where, no doubt, madam was once not too fine to superintend the brewing and baking that went on in the huge brewing corner and the immense bread-oven that are pointed out

to us. The library and drawing-room are low-ceiled and simple, but how pretty with their painted panels and corner-cupboards delicately gilded and ornamented with the family arms. No doubt its shelves were fragrant once with pot-pourri stored in old china, perhaps like Mrs. Tulliver's that her sisters found fault with "'cause o' the small gold sprig all over them, between the flowers." We think of the awed words spoken, perhaps, those long years ago when news was brought of the snowy day in January and the deep groan that passed through the crowd when the king's head fell on the block. History and dates seem strangely real as we stand in these old rooms, reverently kept indeed, but dwelt in no longer by the kinship who lived there in the past. The old house was alienated once for conscience sake, but the times changed and the old owner returned. We linger near the plum trees in the garden, and peep through the tall stone gate at the disused bowling-alley beyond, and think of the fair faces and old love-stories of the past. No doubt there was gay laughter here and sorrow too in this Cupid's alley long ago.

"It may be one will dance to-day,
And dance no more to-morrow;
It may be one will steal away
And nurse a life-long sorrow.
What then? The rest advance, evade,
Unite, disport and dally,
Re-set, coquet and gallopade,
Not less in 'Cupid's Alley.'"

No one seems to suit the low-ceiled rooms like Mackenzie's "Country Dowager." Do you remember that last century word-picture? "She had buried a beloved husband and four children. Her youngest, Edward," her beautiful, her brave, "fell in Flanders, and was not entombed with his ancestors. His picture, done when a child, an artless red-and-white portrait, smelling at a nosegay, but very like withal, hung at her bedside, and his sword and gorget were crossed under it. . . . Methinks I see her seated, her spectacles on, but raised a little on her brow, for a pause or explanation, their shagreen case laid between the leaves of a silver-clasped family Bible. On one side her bell and snuff-box, on the other her knitting apparatus in a blue damask bag. Between her and the fire an old Spanish pointer, that had formerly been her son Edward's. . . . I could draw the old lady at this moment—dressed in grey, with a clean white hood nicely plaited (for she was somewhat finical about the neatness of her person), sitting in her straight-backed elbow-chair, which stood in a large window, scooped out of the thickness of the ancient wall. The middle panes of the window were of painted glass, the story of Joseph and his brethren. On the outside waved a honeysuckle-tree, which often threw its shade across her book or her work; but she would not allow it to be cut down. 'It has stood there many a day,' said she: 'and we old inhabitants should bear with one another.'"

With this quiet old picture we may say good-bye to the old manor-house and our pleasant summer memories.

"DOWN TO THE SEA IN SHIPS."

By C. E. C. WEIGALL, Author of "The Temptation of Dulce Carruthers."

It is certainly in this bustling age of ours a far less remarkable thing to have travelled over many lands, and through many seas, than it used to be in the days of our grandmothers. So that no doubt an increased number of the girls who took THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER, when first this excellent periodical started on

its career (and I shudder to think how long ago that must be, since I have been a subscriber from the very commencement) are either obliged to travel from choice, or encouraged to do so from inclination.

Our grandmothers. Why, the very name brings back the thought of slim domestic girls

in country gardens, busy with their *potpourri*, or their lavender bags, and content with their quiet reading of the *Vicar of Wakefield*, or the numberless stories of Miss Edgeworth, beginning with her *Purple Jar*. The very thought of crossing the channel was repugnant to the minds of our mothers' mothers, and

the preparations for a journey to London exceeded tenfold the preparations that we should think necessary for a voyage to Japan.

A few days' parting from home was heralded by several tears and many farewells. Whereas now we shake hands calmly with our nearest relations and receive their good wishes that we may be not too cold in Siberia nor roasted to death in Rangoon, with as much *sangfroid* as though we were going to the nearest town to do some shopping.

But, since so many readers of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER are probably compelled more from necessity than choice, to go down to the sea in ships, perhaps a few hints from one who has travelled a good deal may not be unwelcome.

We may either be following the drum in Hong Kong or India, or intending to spend a pleasant six weeks in Malta with some friends, in the height of the season.

At any rate our preparation will be the same. And we shall have equally as much to think of, if we are going out unattached, or as the wife of one of the soldiers of the queen.

To begin at the beginning, since it is always as well to do things thoroughly, we will suppose that we are going to Bombay, which is a voyage of some three weeks, and that we have not had much time to prepare for the intended journey.

I must not touch upon the outfit requisite for such a journey. For, an article concerning a foreign outfit must of necessity occupy some pages, to be attempted in at all a thorough manner.

But we will begin with our packing, supposing that we have procured everything necessary. And believe me that packing tactfully needs more forethought for a voyage than most people imagine.

To begin with, the less luggage that we have in our cabin, so much the better for our own comfort and that of our fellow-travellers.

And since the greater part of our boxes must go down the hold, it is necessary to select a good low box for our cabin trunk, suitable for slipping under our berth.

The remainder of our trunks and boxes must be labelled carefully, and bestowed in the hold. And here again forethought is necessary, for on a long voyage the captain arranges that his passengers may have a chance, once a week, of getting anything from the lower recesses of the ship that they may require. And the necessary baggage is hauled up from the hold, and placed on the deck at the passengers' disposal.

Therefore, in labelling them, it is advisable to procure labels printed clearly in colours, "Not wanted on the voyage," and again, "Wanted on the voyage." And in the "Wanted on the voyage" pack everything that your wildest imagination may conceive of your being likely to require, such as extra linen, towels, cool dresses or medicines.

In your cabin trunk you must place three changes of linen, thin and thick. Two pair of shoes, one pair of boots, plenty of warm stockings, and also thin ones for going on shore at the various ports. A hot bottle, a thin serge skirt, with plenty of clean shirts and smart ties. A large number of handkerchiefs and a smart hat.

You must take with you plenty of warm wraps. A driving coat, golf cape, sealskin, or whatever you may possess in the shape of out-door garments. For even in the height of summer the Channel and the Bay of Biscay are cold enough to freeze one to the bone. And a hot bottle is often a comfortable possession at night in one's bunk.

A warm travelling rug or a thick shawl is almost a necessity for the first part of the voyage. For the early mornings on deck and the evenings are always chilly. And of course a roomy deck chair, that can be procured for about three shillings, is a necessity. As is also a cushion for one's head.

The thin serge skirt will probably be cool enough for landing in, even if the weather be tropical. But if expedient, it is preferable to provide yourself with a pretty white drill gown, or cotton, for going on shore. For the habit of too many English ladies is to land, say at Malta, in the most slovenly attire. So that for the honour of our native country, as well as for our own gratification, it would be as well if the intending traveller were to land at Gibraltar and Malta, at least, where the garrisons are large and critical, smartly gowned. A waterproof holdall, for hanging on the cabin wall, is a necessity. In it you will place sponge and tooth-brush, brush and comb, hair nets, hair-pins, and pins.

And in the pockets you will be able to place all your trinkets and your veil and gloves when you retire for the night. But your money should be slung round your neck in a small canvas bag made for the purpose. As to the drugs that are expedient for you to purchase for the voyage they had better be few in number, and carefully chosen.

A bottle of chlorodyne and a phial of Carter's little liver pills are all that you will require. And above all do not forget a plentiful supply of lemons in case of sickness. For very often the supply on board ship is limited.

Avoid every remedy for sea-sickness as you would the plague. They are worse than useless, and are often most injurious. And also be quite certain that you take no stimulant of any sort as a preventive.

Spirits or wine make the sufferer infinitely worse during sickness. But as a tonic, when recovering, or if the sickness is really alarming, a glass of dry champagne will often give great relief, sipped with a little ice.

And as the best champagne is extremely costly, and bad champagne is worse than useless, this fact will act as a good deterrent to anyone who might by chance be tempted to exceed the dose.

A large number of people fly to the aid of brandy or whiskey, thinking that in stimulant they will find a remedy for the terrible suffering of sea-sickness. But if you will believe in the advice of one who has tried everything under the sun, nothing but patience has any effect upon the disease.

If the traveller is a bad sailor, it is an excellent thing for her to lie quietly down in her berth directly the vessel weighs her anchor, and in a recumbent position, grow accustomed to the strange movement of the ship, and the noise of the engines.

And above all, make up your mind to come on deck every day, however ill you feel, and make up your mind that whatever your suffering may be it is a matter entirely of the nerves, and that it can be conquered. Was anyone ever sick in a shipwreck or a fire at sea?

So make up your mind, oh traveller whom I have escorted to the quay and even on board of the east going ship, that you will be ill for a few hours, and then oblige yourself to resume the daily life of the ship, merely avoiding cold baths and unwholesome food, and confining your drinks to lemon squashes, and iced soda water.

Then, on board ship, as in every condition of life, unselfishness comes into hourly play. You will probably have one or two ladies in

your cabin, and you must remember that an unselfish woman always considers the wants and wishes of other people before her own.

If your companion is not ill, you must disguise your sufferings as far as possible. And if she be a worse sailor than yourself, there are so many ways in which you may help her.

Lend her your smelling-salts, or bathe her temples with Eau-de-Cologne, or see that her arrowroot is tempting, and if the stewardess has no time to feed her with it, take the cup yourself, and give the contents to her by spoonfuls.

Then when she can come on deck, muffle her in a shawl, and lend her your own close-fitting little cap that you have used for your own sick days, and coax her up on deck.

Nothing brings out the good and bad side of a woman so plainly as travelling by sea.

For nothing gives a greater scope for unselfishness to have play. It is possible for the companion of one's cabin to make herself so unpleasant that the voyage becomes almost unbearable. Or on the other hand, friendships have been formed by the intimate association of life in a passenger steamer, that have never been broken while life may last.

And above all, if there be children on board ship, never complain of the noise they make, or frame cutting remarks that are calculated to hurt the sensibilities of their mothers and guardians.

Life on board ship is not easy for anyone, least of all for a small child, who is deprived of nursery and toys at one fell swoop.

And I have seen many a girl win the praise and thanks of the captain and officers of the ship as well as from the passengers, by forming a little fairy story party in the afternoon, and attracting all the children on deck around her, and by that means keeping the crowd of small souls merry and quiet for an hour or two, during which time the fractious Indian official with the liver, and the bilious lady with the affection of the heart, could have their afternoon nap on deck in peace, and when the lovers could play their game of deck quoits, or have their talk by the bridge in safety, without being in momentary dread of the appearance of a child with a buttery mouth, and a design upon their peace of mind.

And so the voyage with its amusements and its dreariness slips away, and we are landing in India almost before we realise that the hardships of the Bay are over, and the blinding heat of the Red Sea is a thing of the past.

And if this short talk of mine has conveyed any helpful suggestions to any reader of THE GIRL'S OWN PAPER who is about to brave the perils of the deep, I shall feel more than thankful. For perhaps I shall have helped to make an ocean voyage more agreeable by suggesting this little haven of unselfishness than it otherwise might have been. For a ship is a good emblem of the world, laden as it is with souls full of various aims and different virtues, and alas, different vices.

And just as we see the companion of our cabin, at her very worst, with dishevelled hair and lack-lustre eyes in the morning, so does every man, woman, and child shut up in the small compass of one of our passenger steamers, see us day by day, stripped of every pretence, since we have to live our lives in public, from sunrise to sunset. And therefore, may God help us to live as Christians and to show by our lives what we believe in our hearts, even during these few weeks spent at sea.

Unselfish, even in the trials of sea-sickness, which, if it be not profane to say so, trieth the very reins and heart.

