

BY
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EVERY man ought to cross the ocean at least once to find how many unwarranted things have been said about it. Those who on the land have never imperiled their veracity by mastodon statements, are so metamorphosed by the first stiff breeze off Sandy Hook that they become capable of the biggest stories. They see billows as high as the Alps, and whales long enough to supply a continent with spermaceti, and have perilous escapes from sudden annihilation, and see over the gunwales spectacles compared with which "The City of New York" is a North River clam sloop.

FALLACIES ABOUT THE SEA

ONE does not find things as they expect them on shipboard. We have very often heard that sea-sickness makes one feel that he would like to be thrown overboard. One day on our ship there were a hundred or more passengers whose stomachs had turned somersets; but not one of these people, so far as I could detect, would like to have been pitched overboard. Indeed, an effort to deposit these nauseated Jonahs on the "fishing banks" would have ended fatally to the perpetrator. Not one of the sickest patients looked at the sea as though he would like to get into it. Those who were most desperate and agonizing in looking over the taffrail for the lines of latitude and longitude, held tight fast, lest some sudden lurch of the ship should precipitate them into the Canaan of water for which the army of the sea-sick are said to be longing.

One is often told, in many well-rounded addresses, that the sails of British and American commerce "whiten every sea." But we averaged during our voyage only about two vessels in four days. The cry of "a steamer" is so rare a sound that it brings all the passengers to their feet. The mere ghost of a shroud along the line of the sky calls up all the field glasses. The most palatable food is dropped when, during the dining hour, it is announced that a ship passes. Let "Fourth of July" orators steer clear of the fallacy that the sails of our commerce whiten the sea. They make about as much impression upon it as a fly crossing the ceiling.

One hears, too, of the sense of loneliness, isolation and almost desolation felt when out of sight of land. But on board a popular steamer such a feeling is impossible. We leave a world behind, but we take a world with us. We do not any more think of how far we are from the shore than we do of how far the shore is from us. Though in mid-ocean, we are in the heart of the city, and hear feet shuffling, and hammers pounding, and wheels turning, and voices shouting. We have not found any of the monotony of the deep. We have not seen an iceberg, nor a whale; only a porpoise, here and there, a Mother Cary's chicken, or a flying fish. In simply watching the ocean and thinking, we found each day so pleasantly occupied that we sorrowed at its speedy termination.

PASSENGERS ON AN ATLANTIC LINER

SO many styles of character come together on shipboard that they are a perpetual study. Men by the third day turn inside out. (I refer to their characters and not to their stomachs.) Their generosity or their selfishness, their opulence of resource or their paucity, their courage or their cowardice, are patent. What variety of mission! This one goes to claim a large estate; this one to culture his taste in foreign picture galleries; that one to amass a fortune; this one to see what he can learn. On some the time hangs heavily, and they betake themselves to the "smoking room." Since coming on board some of them have lost all their money by unsuccessful wagers. Two or three have won everything, and the others have lost. They have bet about the speed of the ship—bet that it would be over four hundred and seventy-five knots a day, bet that it would be less, bet that the number of miles run would be an even number, bet that it would be odd. Pools, pools, pools! Pools of betting that are pools of sin! But take them all in all, we never dwell among men and women of finer culture, and better heart, and nobler life than our fellow passengers.

THE SMILE OF THE WATERS

WE are accustomed to build up all the stories of seafaring men into one tremendous imagining of the ocean. We go on board an ocean steamer ready for typhoons and euroclydons. We think the sea a monster with ships in its maw, and hurricanes in its mane. But, my readers, in our seven days' voyage we saw it in various moods, but were impressed with nothing so much as the smile of the sea. While we did not find the poetic "cradle of the deep," we concluded that the sea is only a vigorous old nurse that jolts the child up and down on a hard knee without much reference to how much it can endure.

I cannot forget the brightness of the morning in which we came down the bay. All day long we were bathed in its welcome rays. Then the sun set, and the moon took the veil of a nun and went into the dark turrets of midnight cloud, and melted into the blackness, but the sunlight of the cheery faces at the starting shone on three thousand miles of water. So many friendly hands helped steady the noble ship, and the breath of so many kindly voices filled the sails, which by the help of the great screws bore us onward and across.

Though a gentleman has pronounced the sea a vast dose of ipecac, and though it may betray me in the future, I set down the sea as one of my best friends, although I do have a way of lingering around the funnel at the stern end of the boat. We never were treated so well in all our life. We had a little wild tossing, but the waves are swarthy giants, and you must expect that their play will not be that of kittens, but of a lioness with her cubs, or a leviathan with its young. When Titans play ball, they throw rocks. The heavy surge which rolls the ship is only the effort of the sea to stop laughing. It has been in a grand gale, and its sides must heave with the uproarious mirthfulness.

INDISCRETIONS OF THE TOURIST

THERE are physical constitutions that will not harmonize with the water; but one-half the things that writers record against the sea is the result of their own intemperance. The sea air rouses a wolf of an appetite, and nine-tenths of the passengers turn into meat-stuffers. From morn till night down go the avalanches of provender. Invalids, on their way to Europe for the cure of dyspepsia, are seen gorging themselves at nine o'clock, at one, at five, and at nine. I heard men who, the night before took pigeons and chicken, and claret, and Hock, and Burgundy, and Old Tom, and Cheshire cheese, and sardines, and anchovies, and grouse, and gravies, complaining that they felt miserable in the morning, and wondered what made them ill! Much of the sea-sickness is an insurrection of the stomach against too great installment of salmon, and raisins, and roast turkey, and nuts, and pies, and an infinity of pastry. One-half of the same dissipation on land would necessitate the attendance of the family doctor, and two nurses on the side of the bed to keep the howling patient from leaping out of the third-story window.

ACROSS A SEA OF REST

OH, the joy of the sea! The vessel bounds like a racer on the "home-stretch," bending into the bit, its sides flanked with the foam, and its white mane flying on the wild wind. You drop the world behind you. Go to Long Branch, to Bar Harbor, to Saratoga or to Sharon Springs, and your letters come, and the papers, but it would be hard for cares to keep up with an Atlantic liner. They cannot swim. They could not live an hour in such a surf. They are drowned out, and are forgotten. With care behind you, you breathe the delicious freedom of a free man!

Oh, the beauty of the sun on the ocean! On the land, when morning comes, it seems to run up from the other side of the hills, and, with its face red from climbing, stands looking through the pines and cedars. On the sea, it comes down from God out of heaven on ladders of light to bathe in the water, the waves dripping from their ringlets and sash of fire, or throwing up their white caps to greet her, and the sea gull alights on her brow at the glorious baptism. No smoke of factory on the clear air. No shuffling of weary feet on the glass of the water-pavement. But Him of Genesareth setting His foot in the snow of the surf, and stroking the neck of the waves as they lick his feet and play about Him.

WHAT MAKES THE OCEAN LAUGH

HE who goes to sea with a keen appreciation of the ludicrous will not be able to keep his gravity. We confess our incapacity to see without demonstration or merriment the unheard-of postures taken by passengers on a rocking ship. Think of bashful ladies being violently pitched into the arms of the boatswain, and of a man like myself escorting two ladies across the slippery deck, till, with one sudden lurch, we are driven from starboard to port, with most unclerical sprawl, in one grand crash. Imagine the steward emptying a bowl of turtle soup into the lap of a New York exquisite, or one not accustomed to angling fishing for herring under an upset dinner plate. Consider our agitation, when, in the morning, after waking our companion with the snatch of some familiar tunes, we found her diving out of the berth head-foremost, to the tune of "Star Spangled Banner," and "Dundee," with all the variations. If, on all the ships on the deep there are so many grotesque goings on as were on our vessel, we wonder not that the sea from New York to Liverpool occasionally shakes its sides with roystering merriment.

IN A SEA OF PHOSPHORESCENCE

BUT the grandest smile of the sea is, after a rough day, in the phosphorescence that blazes from horizon to horizon. Some tell us it is the spawn of the jelly fish, and some that it is a collection of marine insects; but those who say they do not know what it is probably come nearest the truth. The prow of the vessel breaks it up into two great sheaves of light, and the glory keeps up a running fire along the beam's-end till the mind falls back benumbed, unable longer to take in the splendor. In one direction it is like a vast mosaic, and yonder it quivers, the "lightning of the sea." Here it is crystal inlaid with jet; or the eyes of sea serpents flashing through the hissing water; or a tall wave robed in white, flying, with long trail, toward the east; or the tossing up in the palm of the ocean a handful of opals, answered by the sparkle on one finger of foam; and then the long-restrained beauty breaking out into a whole sea of fire. On this suspended bridge many of the glories of the earth and heaven come out to greet each other and stand beckoning to ship, and shore, and sky for all the rest of the glories to come and join them. Meanwhile the vessel plunges its proboscis into the deep, and casts carelessly aside into the darkness more gems than ever came from Brazil and Golconda. Historians think it worth recording that, at an ancient feast, a pearl was dissolved in the wine and drank by a royal woman; but a million pearls are dissolved at this phosphorescent banquet of the deep, around whose board all nations sit drinking. The stars are to drop like blasted figs, and the sun is to be snuffed out, but when the ocean dies its spirit will rise in a white robe of mist, and lie down before the throne of God, "a sea of glass mingled with fire."

SPECIAL NOTE.—I hereby reserve the privilege of taking back all I have said if, on my way back to America, the sea does not behave itself well.

THE AMERICAN IDEA OF TRAVEL

AMERICANS traveling in Europe are for the most part in an immensity of perspiration. Starting with what they call "the small and insignificant island of Great Britain," and having adopted the feeling of the Yankee who said he thought England a very nice little island, but he was afraid to go out nights lest he should fall off, they expect to see all Europe in a few days. They spend much of their time at depots inquiring about the next train, or rush past Mont Blanc, with no time to stop, chasing up a lost valise.

I remember on board the steamer "Java" many years ago, I met an English gentleman by the name of Mr. Gale. "And who was Mr. Gale?" you ask. I know not, except that he was of so bland a nature I felt he must be a "Gale from Heaven." I was leaning over the rail of the vessel watching the first appearance of land, Ireland, sending out to meet us the "Skelligs," a cross-looking projection, like the snarly dog that comes out to serenade you with a volley of yelps at the gate of a friend, or like a dark-browed Fenian appearing to challenge the British ships and bid them "mind their eye," and look out how they run "forinst ould Ireland," when Mr. Gale summed up all his advice about European travel in the terse phrase:

"Dr. Talmage, I hope you will not be rushing about Europe as Americans generally do. Stay where you're happy."

I set this down as among the wisest counsels ever given me.

In traveling we should go where we like it best, and then we will be happy. The manufacturer should go to Birmingham and Manchester. The skillful and mighty-handed machinery will make an impression upon him that he can get from nothing else. Let the shipwright traveling in Europe take considerable time at the Liverpool docks, and watch the odd-looking craft that hover about the French coast. If a man be fond of a fine horse, and wants to see the perfection of neck, and hoof, and back, and flanks, tamed thunderbolts controlled by caparisoned drivers, let him go out to Hyde Park, or St. John's Wood, or into the royal stables back of Buckingham Palace—if he can get in—and see the one hundred and sixty-eight white and bay horses that wait the Queen's bidding. It is folly for a blind man to go and see London Tower, or a deaf one to hear the Westminster Abbey organ, or a man whose lifetime reading has been confined to the almanac and his own ledger to spend much time in the reading-room of the British Museum.

STAYING WHERE WE ARE HAPPY

MUCH of the world's disquietude comes from the fact that it will not take the advice of my English friend of many years ago. Queen Mary was fondled and caressed in France. Courts bowed down and worshipped her beauty. But she went to Scotland, and Elizabeth cut the poor thing's head off. Why did she not stay where she was happy? Walter Scott had a good home in Castle Street, Edinburgh; no debts to pay, all the world bringing offerings to his genius. But he went up to Abbotsford; must have a roof like Melrose Abbey, and the grounds extensive as a king's park. He sank his fortune and roused up a pack of angry creditors, each one with his teeth at his throat. How much better for his peace if he had continued in the plain home. Why did he not stay where he was happy? Maximilian had the confidence of Austria, and the richest of all earth's treasures—the love of a good woman's heart. He gathered up all that he had and went to Mexico. A nation of assassins plotted for his life. He fell riddled with a crash of musketry, and his wife, Charlotta, goes back a maniac. They had enough before they went. They wanted more. One dead! The other crazy! Oh, that they had been wise enough to stay where they were happy.

VOLAPUK, WITH VARIATIONS

MANY Americans abroad are exceedingly annoyed at their lack of skill in the use of the European languages. After a vain attempt to make a Parisian waiter understand French they swear at him in English. But I have always remembered when traveling abroad the art of the physician who put all the remains of old prescriptions into one bottle—the oil, and the calomel, and the rhubarb, and the assafetida—and when he found a patient with a "complication of diseases," he would shake up his old bottle and give him a dose. And so I have compounded a language for European travel. I generally take a little French, and a little German, and a little English, with a few snatches of Chinese and Choctaw, and when I find a stubborn case of waiter or landlord that will not understand, I simply shake up all the dialects and give him a dose. It is sure to strike somewhere. If you cannot make him understand, you at any rate give him a terrible scare.

I never had the anxiety of some in a strange land about getting things to eat. I like everything in all the round of diet except animated cheese and odorous codfish; always have a good appetite; never in my life missed a meal save once, when I could not get any, and knowing that "eine gerostete rindfleisch schiebe" means a beefsteak, "eine messer" a knife, and "eine gabel" a fork, and "eine serviette" a napkin, after that I feel perfectly reckless as to what I can or cannot get.

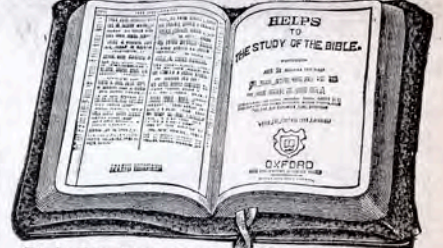
OVERCOMING FINANCIAL PERPLEXITIES

IN journeying from country to country the change in the value of coins is apt to be confusing. But guineas, and florins, and kreutzer, and double ducats have ceased to be a perplexity to me. I ask the price of a thing, look wise as if I knew all about it, and then hold out my hand and let the vender take his pick. As riches take wing and fly away, I am determined to lose nothing in that manner. Fifty years from now a Turkish plaster will be worth to me as much as a Holland guilder, and it worries me not when I am cheated, for the man who cheats me must, in the end, suffer more than I, so that my chagrin is lost in compassion for his misfortune.

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