

## On the Briny.

By P. O'D.

(Toronto Saturday Night.)

The great thing at sea is to form comfortable habits—to get up when you have to, to bathe when the bath-steward will let you, to take such exercise as is forced on you by your more energetic travelling companions, and to be ill, if you must, within the restricted hours. Of course, there are careless people who have no set time for being ill, but spread it more or less over the entire day. This is a form of self-indulgence which cannot be too highly deplored.

The extraordinary thing is how quickly one does drop into a sort of routine. People like myself who used to get up with the hens—or, at least, with the chicken next door—seem to find no difficulty in holding their shelf in a poky little cabin until the last possible minute before breakfast.

After breakfast there is the walk on deck. That is where the Englishman and his wife or sweetheart come into their own. Being members of a seafaring race, they seem to get their sea-legs sooner than anybody else. Their sea-legs are also a good deal longer. It is nothing less than an inspiration to see them striding up and down the deck with the lank freedom of their race.

As to deck chairs, has anyone ever been known to occupy his or her own, or to be able to get it when they wanted it? At the beginning of the voyage the deck-steward sells you one of the things—also a rug, in case you are not already provided—and that is the last you see of it. Although your name is carefully misspelled and attached to it—ours bore the splendid but somewhat unusual name of "O'Donoghue"—the chair immediately becomes the property of everyone else on board.

Of course, in one way this is not so bad, for you naturally avail yourself of the same privilege and use the next fellow's chair. But it is not without its disadvantages. A timid bachelor, for instance, might feel a certain embarrassment in coming up on deck in the morning and discovering that his chair had during the previous evening been mysteriously moved over beside that of the blond lady whom everyone on board has been talking about. And you can't very well drag it away—not without exciting comment.

Having slipped languidly into some chair or other, and having rolled yourself comfortably up in a rug, and having lit your pipe and opened a book and decided to dose through a chapter or two, you are immediately assailed by a couple of energetic devils who are trying to get up a game of deck-tennis.

This is a game invented expressly to make ocean-travel a burden. It is played with a rope-ring made out of a section of an old hawser. The idea is to throw it backwards and forwards across the rope until such time as one member of the party faints, or is drowned trying to recover it from the edge of the deck, or has his fingernails so battered by it that he can't hold it any longer.

If there are ladies in the game, however, it becomes much simpler and easier. The dear girls make a point of pitching the old thing into the sea or down through the sky-light into the engine-room. This furnishes a welcome breathing spell, while one hunts up the deck-hand in order to purchase two or three more of the weapons—old hawsers must be worth their weight in gold to that man.

By the time enough rope-rings have been thrown into the sea to form a chain across it, or are piled up in the engine-room sufficiently to stop the boat, the deck-steward arrives, with a tray full of mugs of beef-tea. This is the first serious diversion of the morning. Personally, we hate beef-tea, but we always make a point of drinking it—if we didn't, people might think we were a bad sailor. And naturally, we would suffer anything rather than have them think that.

Incidentally, it is a curious form of human weakness and vanity that no one will admit to feeling squeamish. Perhaps it is one way of asserting the power of mind over matter. We have gone up to people lying prone in their deck-chairs, rolling their eyes every time the boat lifted on a wave, and with complexions ranging from a light lawn to a sage green.

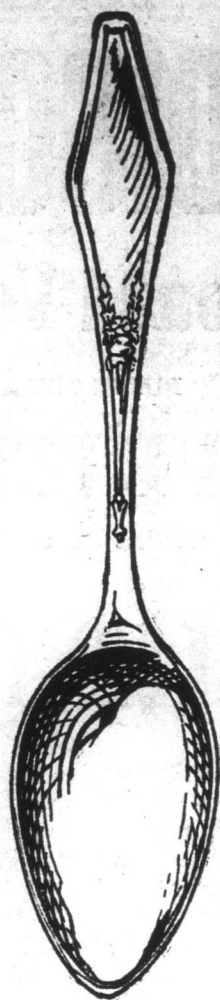
"Too bad, old man. Getting you a bit?" we have asked with the innate sympathy of the perfectly fit—naturally, we ourselves are never, never sick at sea. What, never? Well, hardly ever. And they have raised up on one elbow to look us fiercely in the eye, and



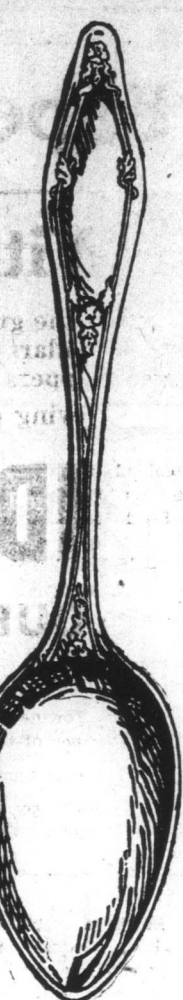
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demand where in blazes we got the idea that they were not well. Under the circumstances, one could hardly enlarge on the symptoms they were displaying. The only thing left was to murmur that there were quite a few casualties on board, and beat a swift retreat, sternly resolved never again to show the slightest sympathy in such cases. But, of course, this is a resolution which none but the sick ever keep—they are too busy to do any gloating over others.

Those are the days when the dining-saloon is comparatively deserted. Here and there a few heroes and heroines hold the breach—half of them ready to surrender at the very next attack. Every now and then one of them takes a good long look at the food in front of them, and retires hurriedly—possibly to jot down some poetic idea that has just occurred to them. These are occasions when unseemly laughter is more unseemly than ever, and allusions to the movement of the boat are entirely out of place. Conversation languishes frightfully, for everyone is thinking only of things that must not be mentioned.

At our table a rule was made that anyone who said a word in reference to the forbidden subject should be fined. One must not ask for a "roll." One could not speak of a "swell" dinner or dress or anything else—but then "swell" is a vulgar word, anyway. The gentleman who asked the steward for some "still" soup, had to contribute a shilling to the fund. Even heavier was the penalty of another untimely jest. He had just selected a nice, thick banana, which in itself should be a punishable offence on such occasions.

"Don't you think bananas are very hard to digest?" one of the ladies asked him.

"I should worry!" he said in his vulgar way. "I may not have to."

That remark cost him a dollar—he should have been given eight days, too.

Afternoons at sea are given up to the cultivation of such social virtues as may be encouraged around the bridge-tables or in the smoking-room. They are also given up to sleep—next to eating sleeping is one of the chief occupations of those who go up and down in ships. Personally, I found it sufficiently difficult to spend the middle hours of the night in a cabin about the right size for an Airedale terrier, with

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After all, who can blame them? Night is always a mysterious and beautiful thing, but nowhere so beautiful and mysterious as at sea. And if there is a moon—well even philosophers might easily forget the dictates of their arid wisdom and behave like ordinary sentimental mortals. Moonlight and the ocean and the little world of the ship heaving gently on that universal bosom of silver—it is a thing to make poets of preachers and profane and one of newspapermen.

Not that we personally succumbed to the lovely and insidious influence. Certainly not. In the first place the bashful reticence of our nature would prevent it; and in the second—dash it all, it is a bit difficult to be poetical at sea without assistance. One requires

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But it was at night that romance descended upon the ship like the mantle of Venus—incidentally, wasn't that lovely and slightly disreputable lady born of the sea-foam? But her votaries cared nothing for her past. In two they might be seen in all the dark corners of the decks, watching the wild waves, and no doubt murmuring such lines of Swinburne or Tennyson as remained in their memories.

After all, who can blame them? Night is always a mysterious and beautiful thing, but nowhere so beautiful and mysterious as at sea. And if there is a moon—well even philosophers might easily forget the dictates of their arid wisdom and behave like ordinary sentimental mortals. Moonlight and the ocean and the little world of the ship heaving gently on that universal bosom of silver—it is a