

The Cherub's Choice

Written for The Western Home Monthly by Bertha C Foster

THE big American liner was ploughing her way across the ocean, keeping good time, in spite of heavy seas and head winds. It was early in September, but, notwithstanding bright sunshine, bitterly cold. Those of the passengers who were able to struggle out of their berths, paced the decks, arm in arm, or sat huddled up in little groups, their deck chairs close together, wrapped in rugs, trying vainly to keep warm. A few lardier souls played games down on the lower deck, or skipped and ran races, endeavouring to cheer up their poor sea-sick companions and make them see the delights of crossing the Atlantic. There were the usual groups flirting in corners, the gossips watching for tit-bits of scandal, the card players, the men who spend most of their time at the bar, and the medley that go to make up the company on board a boat crossing between Liverpool and New York.

A very tall, broad-shouldered man, in a thick frieze coat, stood leaning against a barrier which prevented the second-class passengers encroaching upon the sacred precincts of the first. Every day he was there, scanning the white faces of the less fortunate ones, who struggled up to breathe the sea breezes. Every day he walked their deck, taking no notice of resentful looks. Second class passengers object to the superior first class visitors, as much as vice-versa.

He was always alone, always apparently on the lookout for somebody. "Fourth day out," he growled to himself. "It's time she was getting well, if she's been sick. Wish I knew her name!"

Again he strolled down the deck. A friendly steward, not unmindful of a possible tip, touched him on the arm.

"Are you looking for somebody, sir?" The big man looked at him speculatively.

"Yes, a lady with a little child. I don't know her name, but the child is about two years old, a pretty kid with golden curls, and the lady is fair and tall."

He was annoyed at the steward's covert smile, and vexed with his own inadequate description.

CLOUDED BRAIN

Clears Up On Change to Proper Food.

The brain cannot work with clearness and accuracy if the food taken is not fully digested, but is retained in the stomach to ferment and form poisonous gases, etc. A dull, clouded brain is likely to be the result.

A lady relates her experience in changing her food habits, and the results are very interesting:

"A steady diet of rich, greasy foods such as sausage, buckwheat cakes and so on, finally broke down a stomach and nerves that, by inheritance, were sound and strong, and medicine did no apparent good in the way of relief.

"My brain was clouded and dull, and I was suffering from a case of constipation that defied all remedies used.

"The Road to Wellville," in some providential way, fell into my hands, and may Heaven's richest blessings fall on the man who was inspired to write it.

"I followed directions carefully, the physical culture and all, using Grape-Nuts with sugar and cream, leaving meat, pastry and hot biscuit entirely out of my bill of fare. The result—I am in perfect health once more.

"I never realize I have nerves, and my stomach and bowels are in fine condition. My brain is perfectly clear and I am enjoying that state of health which God intended his creatures should enjoy, and which all might have by giving proper attention to their food." Name given by Canadian Postum Co., Windsor, Ont. Read "The Road to Wellville," in pkgs. "There's a reason."

Ever read the above letter? A new one appears from time to time. They are genuine, true, and full of human interest.

"There's lots of tall ladies with children on this boat. We've over three hundred second-class passengers on board, sir."

"I know, but I wish particularly to find this one. She is going to Canada—Winnipeg—and her boxes were marked 'N.' Hang it all—there can't be such an awful lot of ladies travelling alone with one child! It may be worth your while to find out her name." His hand was in his pocket, the man caught sight of a bright coin.

"Very good, sir, I'll do my best."

"My cabin is number 73, and my name is Ralph Carew, but I do not wish the lady to know of my enquiries. I merely wish you to find out how she is, and her name, and let me know."

"Very good, sir, and the steward retired."

That same afternoon, as Ralph Carew sat in a sheltered corner, trying to get up some sort of interest in a new novel, his bedroom steward came to his side.

There's one of the second-class stewards waiting to speak to you, sir," he said, in a reproachful tone.

Ralph sprang to his feet.

"Where is he?" he cried.

"Came to your cabin, sir."

Ralph hurried inside, where he found the little steward, his face beaming with importance.

"I think I've found her, sir," he whispered. "She's been awful sick, but she's up to-day, and the stewardess says she'll be out on deck to-morrow morning, about ten o'clock."

"Well—her name?"

"Mrs. Norton. She is a widow, going to Winnipeg by the G.T.P. from New York. The baby's the 'cutest kid' on board, they call him the 'Cherub,' but he's an awful handful for his mother. If you come on the second-class deck to-morrow I'll be on the lookout for you, sir."

"Right," and a second coin changed hands. "You are a deck steward, eh? Well, do all you can to make the lady comfortable."

He walked away, calling himself a sentimental fool, but he found his book more uninteresting than ever. Do what he would he could not banish the vision of a soft, appealing pair of blue eyes, hair the color of a ray of sunshine, the most alluring little curls blown about by the wind, and surely the sweetest voice ever heard.

Punctually at ten o'clock the next morning he presented himself at the barrier, where he found the friendly steward waiting.

"She's just come up sir, and I've put her in the best corner I can find, over there. She is alone, with the kiddie."

Ralph nodded. For a moment he hesitated. Now she was found he was almost afraid to address her, for the few words they had exchanged at Liverpool, when he had rendered her some slight service, scarcely warranted further intercourse. But on board ship conventions are relaxed, and having once made up his mind for anything Ralph was accustomed to get what he wanted.

She looked up as he approached, and her eyes seemed bluer than ever.

He raised his cap, holding out his hand to the baby, who struggled to escape from his mother's arms.

"Come for a walk, old man?" he said.

The baby regarded him with solemn eyes, then stretched out his chubby hand, with a beaming smile.

"I want to see the big hole, where the sailor man put my cart," he said, with cheerful friendliness.

"Don't let him bother you. He has done nothing but enquire about his cart ever since he saw it lowered into the hold."

Ralph Carew laughed good-temperedly. He was genuinely fond of children, and clearly the way to win the mother's friendship was through her little son. They went off hand in hand, and more than one of the passengers looked after the big man and toddling boy, with sympathetic eyes.

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