

SECOND CLASS TO EUSTON.

We were all grouped round a glorious fire after dinner, entertaining each other with mild female adventures by land and sea, when one of the party called on our dear little hostess, Mrs Sackville, to contribute an account of a sensational journey she had once made between Dublin and London in the dim distant days of her maidenhood. After some modest demurring, she began with these words—

'I remember I had just recovered from a severe attack of rheumatic fever that had kept me in bed half the winter, and my uncle Edward had written, asking me to come and spend a few months with him in Devonshire for change of air—an invitation which my mother and aunt Catherine accepted for me eagerly. It was arranged that I was to start on the first of April with old General and Mrs. Hackett, who were taking their daughter over for the season, when, a fortnight before the time, a letter, emphasised by a previous telegram, came from my uncle, ordering me to cross at once, as important business had called him suddenly to town, and he was prepared to gratify me with a fortnight's wholesale sight-seeing if I made up my mind to start the next morning, otherwise he would return home at once. As I had never been to London, I was determined not to lose such an opportunity, and with great difficulty I coaxed my mother and aunt to let me start alone; for, though they had made superhuman efforts to provide me with a chaperon among their acquaintance, the notice had been too short—no matter they could hear of was leaving Ireland that week. They both accompanied me to the boat, and, after an anxious consultation, decided that it would be safer for me to travel second than first class, as it was an accepted fact that the worst characters—the 'swell mob' and the 'fast' abandoned young men—always travelled first class; so my ticket was bought and confided to me reluctantly.

However, every precaution necessary to ensure my safety during the perilous twelve hours' journey was duly taken. I was provided with a sober unattractive travelling-dress, and a thick brown veil to shield the beauty of my countenance, which my dear mother thought of an unusual order—an opinion, alas, not shared by the rest of the world! Then my modest every-day jewelry—my bangles, rings, even my watch—was confiscated and placed in the bottom of my trunk; my purse was allowed to contain only a couple of three-penny bits for porters and one sixpence for a cup of tea at Chester, the rest of my pocket-money, in notes, being artfully stitched between the lining and stuff of my dress by aunt Catherine.

'You will be sure to write—no, telegraph the moment you arrive, love,' whispered my mother tremulously, as she clung to me on board the boat. 'Make your uncle do it—you know he will meet you at Euston—and promise me, Nell, that you will get at once into a carriage with ladies at Holyhead—with ladies who are travelling the whole way through, remember. Dear me!—anxiously glancing round—'how very few there seems to be! And—and the deck is quite swarming with men!'

'There are exactly seven females in sight, and the ladies' cabin is quite empty,' grimly announced my aunt, who had been round on a tour of inspection; 'and, as you observe, Sophia, the deck is literally swarming with men—young men of a most objectionable stamp too!'

As she spoke, there sauntered towards us about a score of young fellows, apparently under five-and-twenty, all furnished with pipes and cigars, and some of them wearing rather rakish and fanciful travelling-caps, laughing and joking boisterously together.

'Catherine, what are we to do?' whispered my mother. 'Her ticket is taken now; she must go, I suppose. Dear, dear, but we are unfortunate! Had we not better ask the captain who those dreadful men are? They all seem to know one another—it is very strange!'

'I know who they are, mother,' I exclaimed animatedly. 'They are that horrid English foot-ball team that beat us so disgracefully in the College Park yesterday. That's what puts them in such good humor—the wretches!'

'I don't think I ever saw a more dissipated, depraved cast of countenance in the whole course of my experience,' said my aunt, scowling at a boy of about eighteen with a particularly frank, open face, who, after a shy, quick glance at me, politely removed his hat and turned away. 'In a lad of his years it positively makes me shudder. No, Sophia—addressing my mother—'we cannot now postpone her journey; but we can put her under the charge of a lady, from whose side she must not stray one minute till she arrives at Euston. I think I'll ask that person in green who is leaning on the rails.'

'Don't, aunt Cathy,' I pleaded hurriedly—'not her; she is crying, I think.'

But she stalked away, not minding me, and presently returned with the information that the lady was not crossing at all, but only seeing her husband off.

'I think I'll apply to that stout pair in the sable cloaks; they look solid and respectable.'

'They look first class; and I am second, remember.'

'That does not matter in the least; you can change your ticket, or pay the difference to the guard,' said aunt Catherine, moving away.'

'This time she was more successful, for, after a few minutes' conversa-

tion, the sable cloaks waddled obligingly in our direction; and I was forth with placed under their ample wing.

'I think we shall have a nice passage; the night seems likely to hold up,' remarked the elder woman pleasantly, addressing me.

'Oh, yes!' answered my mother eagerly. 'The glass has been rising all day. We should not have let her start otherwise, though she is an excellent sailor.'

'She looks rather delicate—your daughter.'

'And her hair is quite short, like a boy's!' chimed in the second sister, with a gasp in her voice; and she retreated from me slightly.

'Her head was shaved about a month ago; the poor child had a serious illness.'

'A fever—a fever! I knew it—I suspected it!' shrieked the two old ladies, seizing their papers and wraps, and hysterically calling their maid to their assistance. 'It's perfectly disgraceful, allowing people to travel in such a condition!' added the second sister. 'Keep away, keep away! Don't dare to come near us or speak to us, or we'll—we'll report you to the captain!'

Before we had time to utter a word of explanation, they were at the other end of the boat, among the steerage-passengers. At that moment the bell rang to clear out all for the shore; and my aunt pounced on a pretty little woman who was staggering up the deck laden with a variety of unsightly luggage—a battered blue handbox, two shabby baskets, three or four bulging paper packages, and a big bird-cage containing two canaries—and made a last despairing appeal.

'She was successful this time, for Mrs. Jeremiah O'Toole, as I afterwards learned was the good lady's name, graciously volunteered to take particular care of me.'

'The young lady is travelling second class,' began my aunt, shrewdly suspecting, I fancy, that my chaperon held a third-class ticket, when, to my relief, she interrupted with—

'Second class? And so am I. It was the last word my dear husband said to me when we parted on the thirty-first of last month—'Rosanna, if you didn't promise to follow me second class, great as will be the inconvenience and expense, I'll come over for you myself. For I'd rather have ye locked up in a truck with a herd of wild cattle than run the awful risks of travellin' first alone—risks that nobody knows more about than me, who has been trampin' all over the world since I was four years old.' For his father was an officer in the Army, my dear, and he himself is an elegant engineer, always bein' rushed from one corner of the earth to another, layin' down railways here, buildin' bridges there—one week in London, the next in New York—'

'Good-bye, good-bye, darling! Get strong as quickly as you can; and mind you telegraph from Euston!'

A few minutes later we were steaming slowly down the Liffey.

The night was bright and balmy; so we remained on deck; and the four hours passed quickly enough, and my companion, as I shrewdly suspected, from her introduction, proved a most valuable and communicative companion.

She confided to me her family-history from birth and bridal, gave me a pathetic account of the misfortunes of her parents—who from a condition of luxurious opulence were in less than a few months reduced to abject penury through the treachery of friends and relatives—told me of her first meeting, in most romantic circumstances, with the dashing O'Toole—how, after ten days' fiery courtship, he induced her to throw over a wealthy suitor, heir to a baronetcy, whom her parents favored, and elope with him; how they had been pursued by her father and brother, who fortunately arrived too late to stop the nuptial ceremony that made her the happiest woman in the world.

Her O'Toole was perfection—the best, most generous, considerate husband that ever drew the breath of life; and the only drawback to their perfect happiness—namely, the absence of children—was in a considerable measure mollified by their mutual devotion to Jane and Jezebel, the two canaries which Mrs. O'Toole nursed on her lap and chirped and chattered to the whole time with rather tiresome effusiveness. They were the dearest, sweetest, sharpest, most companionable little loves! Jane was all meekness and affection; but Jezebel had a little temper of her own that was amusing when roused; and they both understood everything O'Toole or she said to them, and a cross word would upset Jane for a week—she was that sensitive and warm-hearted; and once, about a year and ten months after her marriage, Jezebel had disappeared for nine days, and they thought the foolish darling was gone forever, when one morning at breakfast—and this is as sure as you're sittin' beside me, my dear—'

At this point the interesting anecdote was interrupted by our entrance into harbor, and Mrs. O'Toole hurried down to the cabin to collect more of her property deposited there. The landing was an awful business, for the poor little woman was almost overwhelmed with parcels and baskets. As I was but lightly laden, I offered to relieve her of the bird-cage; but she begged me to take charge of one of the handboxes instead, as Jezebel would try to peck the arm off me if I attempted to lift the cage.

The handbox did not contain a cap or bonnet, as I soon learned to my dismay, for, when I lifted it unwarily by the string that bound it, the bottom gave way, and a heap of most unsightly rubbish fell out. Shall I ever forget the contents of that luckless handbox, or the state of my feelings as I stood in helpless confusion while the gallant football team, whom I wished at the other side of the world, chased reels of cotton, bits of gutted candle-

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