

TO-NIGHT—

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Cooped In a Cabin

By P. O'D.

(In Saturday Night—Toronto.)

A cabin on shipboard is a sort of cubby-hole with shelves. If the untraveller reader should wish to capture the sensation of sleeping in one, we can only suggest that he should climb up with the preserves in the pantry during an earthquake.

Ours is an inside cabin for four. Fortunately, there are only three of us in it. If the fourth man were to come along, he would have to dress and undress out in the corridor. He might even have to sleep out there. We have been using his bunk as a receptacle for everything the three of us take out of our steamer trunks and suit cases. It is very convenient—or would be if the stuff didn't tumble off every time the ship rolls. As it is, we spend most of our time staggering about knee-deep in collars and trousers and pairs of suspenders and toilet articles.

Of course, there are receptacles provided in the cabin for such things. There is a neat little cupboard about the right size of a layette—that, we believe, is the technical term for the trousseau of a child of two months. In addition there are four tiny drawers, one for each of the inmates. We might be able to keep our personal jewelry in ours, if we didn't wear it all on our wrist in a strap. It might also be very handy for spare car tickets, but naturally one has used them all getting down to the boat.

So far as we can figure the thing out, the best system of disposing of temporary belongings is to throw them on the other fellow's bed. Then he tosses them to the floor, and in this way a very pleasing spirit of camaraderie is built up.

But it is in the morning when you get up and start in to wash that all the ingenuity and heartlessness of shipbuilders is revealed. These clever gentlemen have invented a sort of folding basin which tips up into the wall. Theoretically, it is an admirable contrivance. Practically, it is a miserable failure. It holds about a tea-cup of water, and is so close to the wall that the only part of you that can be washed without slopping the water all over the floor is the upper part of the forehead. And to do even that you are in constant danger of bashing your head against the woodwork every time the ship lurches. Already we have a set of bumps on our forehead that would indicate the possession of extraordinary genius if they were permanent. And probably they will become permanent by dint of repeated concussion—permanent and purple.

The floor space is nicely designed so that only one human being of ordinary stature can stand on it and do anything to himself. But such is the unshakable nature of human optimism that there are always at least two of us trying to shave and wash at the same time. Luckily, we all use safety razors. If we didn't, heaven only knows what horrible tragedy would occur. It has been blowing hard the last couple of days, and every few minutes we are brought up in one another's arms. Shaving under such circumstances becomes an acrobatic performance of a highly complicated nature. In the course of which we have shaved almost every part of our head except our chin. Inadvertently we have done a little impromptu shaving on our cabin companions, and they have rendered us the same service—yesterday one of them nearly removed our right ear.

We did not begin this article, however, with any idea of harrowing the reader's soul with an account of the horrors of ocean travel. If the reader has been there himself, the reader doesn't need to be told. If the reader hasn't, nothing that we could say

would give him any adequate notion of the situation.

Our real idea was to describe the company in our cabin—our stable-mates, so to speak. We are not doing this in any spirit of vindictiveness or revenge. In the first place, they will never see this account, and in the second we are not that kind of fellow. But we are a chronic and incorrigible psychologist, and this is the first time we have ever lived in a tin with a couple of other sardines.

One of the gentlemen—naturally they are both of the sterner sex—one of the gentlemen, we repeat, who have been washing and shaving out of the same tea-cup with us for the past four days, is a youthful novelist of budding distinction. He wears silk dressing gowns and is prodigal of epigrams. He watches us with a cool and disconcerting eye—possibly we will figure as a comic butler in his new novel—and he has a most embarrassing habit of making notes when we say anything particularly silly. We would give anything to read the notes, but naturally our sense of honor is of a singularly exalted and fastidious type. Besides, he keeps them locked up in his writing case when he isn't carrying them in his pocket.

Intimate association with a man of his type and his intellectual attainments is naturally a very great privilege, and we are doing our best to become as intimate with him as possible. Only yesterday morning we pitched one another clear across the cabin into the opposite bunk, when a more than usually large and vigorous wave caught the ship while we were engaged in our matutinal ablutions. It is only fair to him to state that he displayed, when he got his breath, a command of language which promises greatly for his future career.

We are conscious, however, of a certain sense of strain. His style of conversation is one that is difficult to live up to. You see, he has discovered that we have spent a certain number of years as a book-reviewer, and he is fond of putting us over the literary funds. So far we cannot say that we have performed with much credit to ourselves.

"Who was it that said the protagonist of Balzac's novels was the twenty-franc piece?" he asked us the other morning while we sat on the edge of our bunk waiting for the roll of the boat to throw us into our trousers.

Men who ask questions like that in the morning seem destined to die young and unloved. We didn't care a darn who made the remark originally, and we didn't see why anyone else should care. It seemed a very poor joke to make on poor old Balzac. And what's a protagonist anyway?

"What's that got to do with you getting ready for breakfast?" we countered in the way of a wife with her husband.

"Oh, nothing, dear old bean," he assured us. "But I was thinking of making a summary of Joseph Conrad in a similar style. What would you say was the protagonist of Conrad's novels?"

Naturally we had no intention of helping him with his epigrams—we have trouble enough with the simple ones we make for ourselves. But we were conscious of a steady flow of aimless profanity.

Last night we got in a bit late. We felt obliged to keep an eye on the ship's progress in the moonlight—a young lady also condescended to assist in the work. When we got in our friend, the novelist, was reclining gracefully on one elbow in his upper berth, smoking a large pipe and reading with an air of contempt John Galsworthy's last book—these rival artists do certainly love one another.

"Ha, ha!" he said to us in his best

satirical style. "You have been out listening to the sirens, my boy—very dangerous in the moonlight, old thing, very dangerous!"

Now if there is any form of address which gets on our nerves, it is to be called an "old bean" or an "old thing." As the years go on we even hate to be called "old boy"—it begins to sound too descriptive. Besides, we hadn't been listening to the sirens. We had been trying to get the sirens to listen to us. So we just told him brutally it was none of his business. But he paid no attention to our petulance—he was in travail with another epigram.

"I have often wondered," he said, "if women realize that we kiss them only when they are not sufficiently interesting to talk to."

Think of rooming with a fellow who talks like that under the influence of a night-cap! Think also of a man who knows as little as that about kissing! Fortunately, we are receiving considerable moral support from the third inmate of the cabin. At first we frankly despised of him. He is a mild little man with an extraordinarily propitiating manner. For the first couple of days we never saw him except in vague outline when he was coiled up under the bed-clothes in his berth. When we were there, he was always asleep—in fact, our talented fellow-traveller promptly christened him "the Dormouse," inspired, we presume, by recollections of "Alice in Wonderland."

The "Dormouse's" manner is always nervously apologetic, even with us, though we are not a man of dominating personality in any sense. He slipped into the cabin the other afternoon while we were taking a nap.

"Ho, hearse me, sir," he said in the Cockney language. "Hi was just wantin' my coat, if you don't mind, sir."

With magnanimity we assured him that we didn't mind, and that he could come in and get his coat any time.

"Thank you, sir," and then in his nervous anxiety not to be in the way, he sized his garment and ran, leaving the door open.

"Oh, Mr. Dormouse—" we called and stopped in confusion. That is the worst of those infernal nicknames. Luckily he didn't get the application.

"Yes, yes, the door, sir," he said, and hurried back to latch it.

The "Dormouse" is the sort of person that it is very difficult to treat otherwise than with marked condescension—his manner invites it. On the few occasions when we all happen to be in the cabin together, the novelist bathes him in a flow of airy persiflage which leaves him vaguely uncomfortable but otherwise as unaffected as a doormat by the music of a hurdy-gurdy.

For the first few days we paid no attention to the "Dormouse." Personally, we have accepted him as an unobtrusive feature of the furnishings of the cabin. His one suit case is shoved modestly under his bunk. He makes no attempt to use any of the cabin-hooks or the funny little drawers intended for the Lord only knows what purpose. His one ambition seems to be to get in no man's way, and he achieves it. He is up and dressed long before we dream of turning out, and all we hear of him at night is a pathetic little sigh from behind the curtains when the novelist turns on all the lights and conducts a scintillating monologue for an hour or two before consenting to go to sleep.

But since yesterday morning we have begun to form expectations of the "Dormouse." We happened to roll over and open an eye while he was engaged in dressing himself. Even in the dimness of the cabin—the "Dormouse" would never dream of turning on the lights and disturbing us—we were astonished to notice the breadth of his shoulders and the wiry strength of his arms. It suddenly occurred to us that the "Dormouse," though well on to middle-age, is an unusually husky and active person. And then we recalled having noticed in a vague way the obvious power and weight of his gnarled hands.

We took occasion in the smoking room during the afternoon to enter into conversation with him—the "Dormouse's" one virile characteristic seems to be a fine and whole-hearted appreciation of the brew that has made Scotland famous.

"Been long in Canada?" we asked—it is usually a pretty safe opening.

"Ten years," he said, "and I'm on my way 'ome for a visit."

He was not very communicative till we happened in the course of the very desultory and rather tiresome conversation to say something about a prize-fighter or prize-fighting. Immediately there came into his mild though battered countenance a dull glow indicative of awakened intelligence and interest. In fact, he opened up with a line of technical language and inside ring history which was very surprising in a man of his lambslike docility.

"You seem to know a lot about the prize-right," we finally said.

He looked around a little nervously and at the same time with a touch of swagger, as though he were half afraid he might be overheard and yet conscious of a certain pride in his secret.

"W'y shouldn't I know abahit it?" he asked. "I was the Clapham Chicken in my d'y. Hi was."

The "Clapham Chicken"—it meant nothing to our Colonial ears. We recalled, however, the pleasant custom of English ring-followers in dubbing their heroes as though they were exhibits at a poultry show.

"My, my, how interesting," we murmured.

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POTASH AND PERLMUTTER

The mid-week programme at the Casino is a delightful comedy success entitled "Potash and Perlmutter." Briefly, the story deals with the trials and tribulations of those most lovable partners who risk their all to save from a Russian prison a co-religionist who has been falsely accused of bomb-throwing, but who, through their very self-sacrifice, secured the services of the greatest cloak and suit designer of her day, Ruth Goldman, a young woman who is described as having a "business head like Andrew Carnegie and a form like Lillian Russell." For three acts the misfortunes and fortunes of the partners are carried forward amid a perfect gale of laughter, that drowns the occasional tear. Although containing a thousand laughs, the play is full of deepest heart-interest and although he does not appear on the programme, the busiest character of all is little Cupid.

The first scenes of the piece are laid in the somewhat shabby downtown office and the work-room of the firm, then in their handsome Fifth Avenue establishment, and finally in the home of Abe Potash. This is a story that will appeal to all theatre goers as it is a brilliant bit of action.

Shipping Notes.

S.S. Stanmore sailed for Halifax at noon to-day.

S.S. Canadian Miner sailed from Montreal for this port on Saturday last.

Schr. Frank H. Adams arrived at Catalina yesterday from Sydney, with 200 tons of coal to Allen Haynes.

Schr. Nellie T. Walters sailed from Hermitage yesterday for Oporto, with 3510 qtls. of fish from T. Garland.

Schr. Eileen Lake arrived at Bonne Bay yesterday from Turk's Island, with a cargo of salt to A. B. Harding.

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