

duty for the time being. Her opinion of "the stoker" began to improve.

But what chiefly attracted Sybil's attention and filled her with delight was the concentrated mass of life and energy and excitement that thronged round her on every side. The decks were crowded with people of all sorts and conditions, and of various nationalities. There was a large number of Norwegians—big, fair, good-humoured-looking people, who laughed and chatted together, and were evidently bent on making themselves as comfortable as circumstances would permit. Huddled together in a sunny spot, and removed a little from the ever-moving stream of intending voyagers, was an interesting group of brightly clad little girls, who were being convoyed out, under the guidance of an experienced lady matron, to the Canadian homes that awaited them. A few only of the crowd seemed downcast or disagreeable; for the most part hope and good-humour seemed to reign supreme.

But while Sybil and the two younger children were delighted with all they saw, Reggie felt or affected considerable dissatisfaction, and even disgust. As for poor Mrs. Jessop, in five minutes she was completely bewildered. She held tight to Tom's arm, followed passively where he led, listened with a sort of scared interest to his various expositions, and drew her own conclusions silently.

If the scene on deck was bewildering, that below was little short of horrifying to the poor lady. She caught glimpses of women, amid a labyrinth of crowded bunks, unpacking food and chattels, undressing children, soothing babies, and generally making what seemed hopeless efforts to get things tidy and ship-shape. A glimpse, in passing, of the unmarried men's quarters revealed a forest of hammocks hanging close together in a space where a man of moderate height could not stand erect. The very thought of her Reggie entering such a place sent a shudder through Mrs. Jessop's sensitive frame.

Tom Playfair smiled to himself, and began to speculate as to whether a small dose of practical experience might not be effective where argument had failed.

However, seeing Mrs. Jessop look so miserable, he said cheerfully—

"You know, this is the steeage, and it's not much you can expect for four pounds ten. Let us go along to the 'intermediate'—that's where your quarters will be, I understand."

Things were certainly better in the "intermediate"; there was more room, more air, more light. The improved accommodation was certainly well worth the additional payment demanded for it. The sleeping cabins, though plainly furnished, were wholesome-looking and airy, and the passengers in this part of the ship seemed all of a respectable class. The stewardess was a bright, pleasant woman, and withal of a kindly, sympathetic disposition: so, at least, Mrs. Jessop concluded after a brief conversation with her.

"What I should miss would be my privacy. One could never be alone in such a place as this," said the widow, looking round her with more cheerfulness than she had hitherto displayed.

"Oh, we get accustomed to that," replied the stewardess. "You see, it's not for very long, and the passengers are all friendly like when they are thrown together in this way."

"United by common misfortune, chained together like galley-slaves," muttered Reggie, as he turned disgustfully away.

Mrs. Jessop said nothing; she contented herself with a vague smile and a deprecating motion of her head. Yes, she was not thinking of the danger of the voyage, of what it would cost, of whether she would be sick, of what fortune might await her on the other side. The one overwhelming thought was that she would be obliged to live more or less in public for ten days. She could never be five minutes alone. Other women would see her dressing and undressing. She would have to take her meals along with a mixed multitude; all sorts of people would be free to look at her, to watch her, to "take stock" of her. She could not endure the thought. She had lived so long in privacy, had "kept herself to herself," had shrunk under the blight of misfortune from society and human sympathy, that the glare of publicity was as painful to her as the sunshine would be to one who had been nurtured in a dark cavern.

The party now returned on deck.

"Ah!" exclaimed Tom, "there goes the chief steward. I'll just ask if I may take you through the saloon. You'd like to see what the first-class accommodation is like, wouldn't you?"

The requisite permission was at once given, and Tom led his party into the great dining-room, which extended right across the ship. Very few first-class