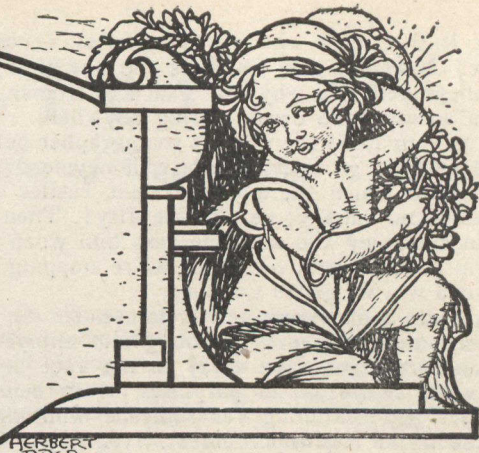




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Miss Canada at Sea

By ALICE L. EBERLE

Drawings by Estelle M. Kerr

Be careful to choose wisely when you mention lunch to any one.

THERE really wasn't time to feel sad, goodness knows, when the voyage meant the exodus permanently of the family who had me in charge. There was such nailing of boxes and strapping of trunks and running up and down stairs and suddenly coming upon things that "mustn't be forgotten, if everything else was," that it kept my mind pretty active getting through doors and passages without collision, and knowing just when *not* to offer the assistance I couldn't give anyway. When, an hour before the train was due, I was going carefully through the kitchen adjusting the lamp at just the proper angle (the lights had been disconnected) lest any fearful bit of granite or patriotic stew-pan should take that opportunity for refusing to brave the perils of the deep, I kept thinking what a disaster it would be if my light should fail like those of the foolish virgins of history. Nevertheless I was awfully excited.

Yes—and happy. For, among other things, the nicest Boy was to meet me in the ladies' waiting-room a good half hour before the train left, and I was alive to the added dignity attaching to one "going abroad." How the multitudinous boxes were all nailed and roped at last I don't know, but we were twenty minutes later than I had promised the Boy and he had a little way of fuming. Moreover, when, with only ten minutes to spare, we managed to get lost from the rest of the party in the labyrinthic Union Station, I got even more excited. Gracious, if I should miss it after all. But when coming suddenly into the light, I was darted at and laid hold of to a general chorus of, "Here she is," I made rather a mess of the introductions. Especially when one of the searchers looked me over and said he hadn't been looking for that sort of a person at all.

I WAS pulled up the car steps like an obstinate piece of luggage that "would" be left, subsiding into a seat piled with rugs and suit-cases and cloaks, without even trying to make room for the nicest Boy. By this time I was beginning to get a bit doleful. The Boy's solemnly giving me his autographed photograph (which I had pleaded vainly for for years), the general excitement and con-

*An Impromptu, Impressionistic Story
of what it humanly feels like to be on
board an Atlantic liner for a week—
when the observer is a woman. The sort
of material from which fiction is frequently
made.*

fusion and a horrid feeling of being in everybody's way combined to make me realize the greatness of the occasion, and I protested almost passionately to the Boy, perched on the arm of my seat, that I would *not* fall in love with a "beastly Englishman," and smiled faintly at his exaggerated English accent and his mild "three rousing British cheeahs." I've been abroad since and Englishmen propose beautifully—but that's another story.

MORNING dawned at last in Montreal. It was raining. Before night I was using quadruple superlatives to describe the streets. When I trod the gang-plank at ten o'clock, with my sea-sickness remedy where I could get at it easily, and my books and roses and chocolates, there wasn't the smallest infinitesimal spark of the orthodox emotion about parting from one's native land. I make this confession hesitatingly because I am fully aware of its impropriety. As the odour of fresh paint and disinfectants rushed into my face as I followed the steward with my luggage, I clutched frantically for my "remedy" and said, with the calmness of one meeting the expected, "I think I'm getting sea-sick." It must have been midnight when everything was in the place of everything else, and nothing was where it could possibly be found without earnest searching—and, I'm afraid it was vulgar—but we were simply ravenous. So we sallied forth, and in an untidy little French restaurant I ordered—mutton-pie!

I was sound asleep on the top-shelf of my cupboard when they hauled up the gang-plank and steered down the St. Lawrence.

We passed Quebec at night; its million lights

gleaming like fairyland, and the will-o'-the-wisp search-light sliding over the river. And then jumbled sentences of people of sensibility, who had seen and been moved by Quebec, rushed confusedly through my brain. I rose to the occasion. "Tell the story," I whispered, finding the man of the "Songs of the Sourdough" among the silent group at the rail. "So happy," he returned. "Once upon a time Wolfe took Quebec. It was night. He dropped down the river saying to those in the boat with him, 'Play the man—this day we shall light a fire that will never go out,' and to the frowning banks he threw his signal, 'This day, England expects every man to do his duty.'" I slipped away to the quietness of my own thoughts, but my day, like "Alice's," was a very strange one. All the words of the "Elegy" came wrong.

The third day out, I took my remedy—never-failing-mother-somebody-or-other out on the deck and pointed out to the green-hued group, the delicate shade of the pink capsules and the soft, brown, toothsome of the larger ones, dwelling at length upon the soul-stirring words printed in red ink on the box, with all the genius of a patent-medicine agent. People when at sea approach very nearly primitive simplicity of manners! I gathered up the overturned contents of my pretty box in the dignity of silence. Let me take this opportunity to recommend this famous remedy. Take it—in your steamer-trunk—and leave it there. You will not suffer. I didn't. Except that I, too, was gathered into the cabin with the suffering members of the party—and read to.

THERE isn't really much to do on a steamer but sit in a deck chair and eat chocolates as long as the ship's supply lasts (which isn't long), and to wonder if people feel as wretched as they look, and who is married to whom, and what those horrid children are allowed to make such a row for, and why you didn't bring more rugs, and where your cushion is, and why somebody doesn't start some fun, and what's the use trying to read, no one reads on a boat, unless it's that Swede who always has a book and stands out on deck in the dark with it still open before him, and if the woman who wears the green silk tea-gown is literary, and what the