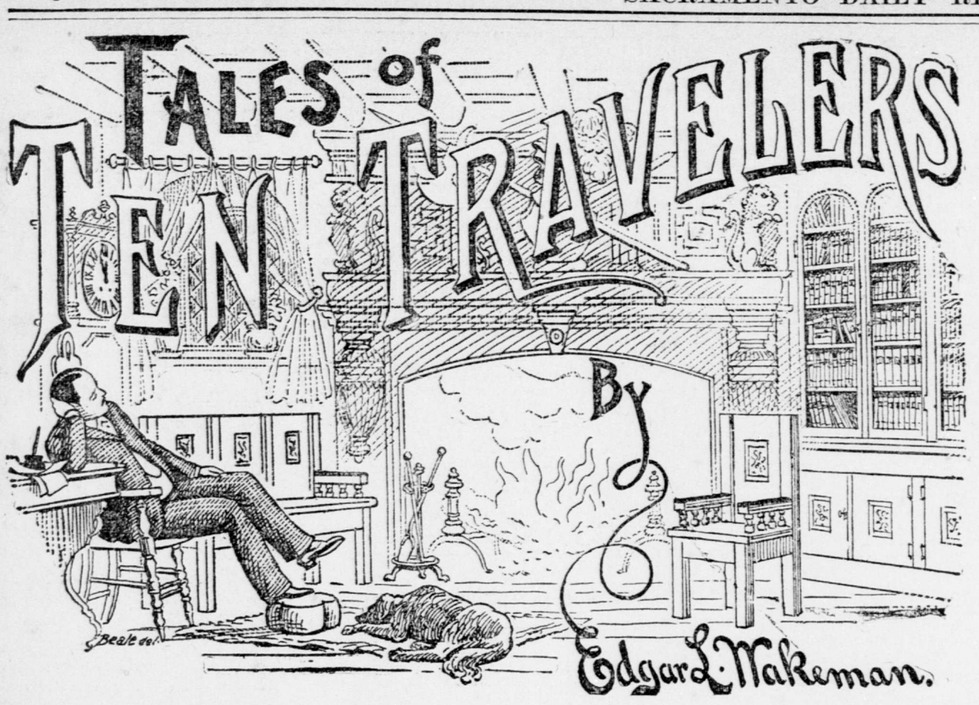

THE TOUR OF THE LESSINGS.

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The Lessings, from an interior hamlet of the great commonwealth of New York, in a condition of suppressed excitement, were at last huddled into a compact little circle upon the promenade deck of a huge ocean liner ready for its departure from the port of New York for its race across the sea.

The family of Lessings comprised John Wesley Lessing, miller and proprietor of Milltown; his wife, Mrs. Frances Leland Lessing, church, circle and society pillar of Milltown; their elder daughter, Helen Loring Lessing, who had recently appeared in the *Plenthury* magazine as the author of an inexplicable sonnet to "Cause;" their younger daughter, Catherine Lessing, an irrepressible nature with common tastes like those of her hard working father; and the Lessing's only son, Washington Lincoln Lessing, a tall, spare, sallow youth, who had recently been matriculated into the athletic curriculum of Yale.

The Lessings were in their very best attire, as first trippers always are, and they attracted much attention as Mrs. Lessing had fondly hoped they would.

"We must put our best foot forward, John Wesley," Mrs. Lessing had many times said during their several weeks' exacting preparations. "We'll have our two girls with us, you know, and there has been them, not half as rich as us, that's brought from Yerrup more'n they took!"

"'Spose there has, wife," Mr. Lessing would retort with a twinge of anxiety. "But this Yerrup business is mighty costly business. It'll take ten thousand barrel o' th' best patent roller, t' even it up."

"What's flour," Mrs. Lessing would reply, shudderingly and crushingly, "to advancement? What's flour to seeing our Helen soaring among the litteraty? What's flour in the balance with station an' dignity an' being like them that's always had things? 'Taint to be considered in the same century, John Wesley."

"Looks like 'twasn't," he would groan, as he ordered the shorts ground a little closer, reduced wages and bought his letters of credit.

The mother, daughters and son were already in their great deck chairs, whose backs had been ornamented with the word "Lessing" in guilt. The father, reduced to an aggressive defensive state by the torments of preparation, had his chair securely folded, beneath him, along with divers articles of luggage. One hand grasped the handles of several portmanteaus. The other arm encircled a half-dozen umbrellas and an assortment of shawls and rugs.

His hat had been smashed down over his knobby head by the hurried passing of stewards and passengers, and his unhappy face was screwed together, with lips set and eyes closed, as though his whole mental and physical nature was braced against some anticipated sudden shock.

George Washington Lessing, his little nut-like and hairy head supported by a walking stick big as his arm and as long as his leg, and seemingly absorbed in some obstruse university football calculus, gave no one trouble, beyond an occasional brief and stuttering remark to the effect that there was nothing to be excited about, whereupon he always settled back into the labyrinths of his educational problems.

Catherine, Kate or "Kit," as she was variously termed by the different members of the Lessing family, was on her feet half the time, a quivering bundle of wriggles and giggles. "Oh, my!" "Gracious me!" and "Bless us!" were continually escaping, along with the most rippling laughter that ever was heard, from her pretty lips at each new phase of the animated scene around her, while no influence of reproof from her mother, sister and brother, and only an occasional glance at the pitiful contortions of her father's face, could repress her.

Helen Loring Lessing, note book in hand, with rich wrappings held carefully about her by her mother's fat arms, seemed to be in a condition of tremulous though gentle emotion, after the manner of fine literary natures. She looked with pitying contempt upon the commoner ones of her own blood, or from time to time cast wise and comprehensive glances at the throngs upon the pier, along deck, or again into the blue arc above, as if to kick the ladder from under her too rapid flights of fancy, and then, having tumbled her bright inspirations all about her, would write a few jerky sentences with extraordinary physical vigor.

Mrs. Frances Leland Lessing sat glowingly beside her literary daughter. Her eyes quivered with pride as she saw how much this tour was to be to the hope of the Lessing family. She construed all the activity and excitement of the interesting scene something in the nature of personal tribute and distinction.

There surely had never been so lovely a day for a steamer's sailing. That meant something. The myriad of flowers brought aboard to departing friends could certainly not have come in such vast quantities were the Lessings of Milltown not there to enjoy them. The steamer had actually been freshly painted. That was a no mean portent. Busy and excited as they all might be, every one that passed halted and bestowed upon the family a no ordinary gaze, and this was not to be forgotten.

"Oh, if the editor of the *Plenthury* could see us now!" Mrs. Lansing murmured raptly to her daughter Helen.

"Now, indeed!" she responded haughtily, catching another creature of her fancy upon her pencil point as it fell.

"Wouldn't he enjoy it, though!" retorted the wicked Catherine with a mischievous laugh. "Just you and Helen and mumpish brother there, and poor old Pop!" Here she gave the exhausted miller a merry little dig.

"Why, he'd have you four in the 'Bric a Brac' funny page if it cost—"

"Cost—cost? I should think so!" blurted Mr. Lessing with a start, opening his eyes wide and instantly squeezing them together again. "More'n ten thousand barrel—"

"Poor, dear papa!" exclaimed Catherine with an affectionate pinch of his pudgy red cheek. "Back at Milltown figuring on flour, aren't you now? Dear old mills! I wish we could take them along with us!"

"John Wesley Lessing!" exclaimed the miller's wife sternly. "How could you bring up the subject of flour at such a moment as this?"

"Such a supreme moment!" sighed Miss Helen, with a saddened look in her ethereal face.

"Yes, indeed!" retorted her mother in no gentle mood, while gathering the wrappings closer about the family inspiration with an air plainly betokening reproval. "Can't you see our Helen is composing!"

"Oh, yes, composing herself!" gurgled Kate, nearly losing her balance over the rail, as another truck load of luggage came crashingly along the gangway.

Mr. Lessing's lips worked curiously. Since the sonnet to "Cause," in the magazine, his household had been so often called upon to pause in awe before the august spectacle of Genius perching in fecund throes upon his daughter's head; and Mrs. Lessing had also found, in her capacity of its guardian, so many opportunities to thus silence argument and opposition, that, save with dauntless Kate, the ominous announcement that Miss Helen was composing, usually brought the remnant of the Lessing family into sudden coma and collapse.

Mrs. Lessing, with the air of one who had now settled all controversy, with one arm around Miss Helen and one hand holding fast to the skirts of lively Kate, now raised herself as high as possible in her chair for a few moments' enjoyment of the exciting scene about her.

Along West street, for squares in either direction, a thousand carriages of departing passengers' friends glittered and flashed in the midday sunlight. Between the gangways the pier was wedged with people. On the steamers' side, next the wharf, decks were massed with passengers and alive with the bobbing heads of children being held aloft to give again and again their merry good-bys to those who were left behind.

Stewards toiled perspiringly under back-breaking loads and swiftly acceded to impossible injunctions. Everybody smiled, even here and there a heart were breaking. One's own voice could scarcely be heard above the clamor. Every ship's officer and steward was in his most dazzling uniform. The longshoremen, with wild yells, were stowing away driblets of over-late freight. Pouches of supplementary mail were being hurled on board. Suddenly the gong trembled and crashed below.

"There's dinner!" gasped Mr. Lessing to his wife, as he more firmly clutched his luggage.

Mrs. Lessing glared a moment at her agitated husband, and as suddenly beamed at all else around her.

"All ashore, going ashore!" shouted the half hundred stewards, from hold to hurricane deck. It was a knell to merriment, and poor Mr. Lessing seemed for a moment half determined to fly from the ship.

"Do be easy," pleaded Kate soothingly. "It'll be all right after a little now."

Faces on shipboard and at the pier side began to lengthen. Those massed behind the Lessings could scarcely see their friends' near features now. Then came the embracings, the hand grasps, the lip pressures, real and true—ah, some of them the last precious earthly messages of heart and soul to soul and heart.

The Captain on the bridge nodded his head.

Mrs. Lessing also nodded her head in some sort of unaccountable sympathetic response.

"D-d-don't maw!" begged her son. "Th'-they'll th-th-think you own th'-th' ship!"

Away went the forward lines. Then the Captain's hand pulled a stout cord. The foghorn roared and bellowed. Mr. Lessing started from his seat wildly. Miss Helen brought her note book feebly before her eyes. Her brother shifted his stick from his ear to his mouth, as if the sound might better be shut out in that quarter. Mrs. Lessing nodded firmly, as if to convey to the crowds on deck and on shore that this was precisely what she had anticipated, and Kate threw herself into her father's lap with a hysterical little shriek of—

"Whew! But that just beats our own steam whistle all hollow, don't it, Pop?"

Another nod from the Captain, with still another from Mrs. Lessing, and away went the stout aft line.

The great vessel, amid a din of escaping steam, slipped gently and slowly back into the stream, her prow and stem for a little time seeming to reach half across the mighty river which floated her.

Hundreds of passengers essayed to call back there to the pier, but they could not; their throats were too full and their hearts hurt them so, while their eyes could now make out no one's face clearly.

Those ashore seemed to have pressed forward to the very bulkheads. All that could now be seen, for the dimness of parting tears, was a mass of moving color, waving scarfs and handkerchiefs, and some who reached far and farther out as though they could not stay behind.

"Wonderful, wonderful!" came glowingly from Mrs. Lessing's lips.

"My pencil is powerless under the tender spell!" faintly sighed Miss Helen.

"Fixed just like Tennyson was in his 'Break, break, break!'" snickered her roguish sister.

"His b-b-bad break," stammered the brother, making a convenient socket for his stick out of the cavity beneath his wide lower jaw.

"I'd give th' new mill to be back on that pier!" groaned Mr. Lessing, who could not swim.

"Think of the advantages, John Wesley, and be yourself," urged Mrs. Lessing.

"Y-y-yes, of every-th-thing, and j-j-jolly up!" chimed in his son.

"Be large and broad and comprehensive, do!" begged Miss Helen feelingly.

"And don't forget," tauntingly insisted Kate with pursed lips, big eyes and a hoarse whisper, "that our Helen will be satisfied with nothing less than being presented at court!"

"A t-t-tennis c-court!" added Washington Lincoln Lessing, making a gulp as if to swallow his stick at one bolt.

At this sally of the young collegian a ripple of smiles ran over the faces of all those passengers who had not already left the immediate vicinity of the Lessings, heart sick from the overwhelming scene of separation the departure of an ocean steamer invariably compels.

This had been noticed by the Lessings, and Mrs. Lessing tossed her head; Kate also defiantly tossed her pretty head, and her sister, whose face was suffused with blushes, again had recourse to her note book.

A quite distinguished appearing lady and gentleman had been for a time standing near the Milltown family.

"I like them, for I believe them genuine," said the lady to her escort who was apparently her husband.

"Quite worth a trip to America to discover one exception to the opposite rule," replied her companion with emphasis.

These remarks were made in low but distinct tones. If they were intended for the ear of the Lessings, they produced their instantaneous and desired effect.

Mrs. Lessing glanced at her husband and flaunted her head in a way which plainly said: "John Wesley Lessing, I told you so!" Miss Helen looked with a gratified glance of appreciation. Kitty surveyed the pair coolly but not unfriendly. Mr. Lessing touched by something akin to disinterested human sympathy, became less tense in his grasp upon his luggage and suffered his eyes to open wonderingly, while his son evidenced more than ordinary interest by the rapidity with which he shifted his stick over various portions of his face and head.

In a moment more the strange lady was beamingly graciously upon all the Lessings. The strange gentleman, with a few well directed glances, had established a sympathetic understanding with the author of "Cause" and her mother; and they were directly all as pleasantly chatting together as though they had been old acquaintances unexpectedly reunited.

"It is the pleasantest thing about ocean travel," remarked the lady in the sweetest of tones, "that formalities are absolutely tabooed and that it is so easy to know those one wishes to know."

Mrs. Lessing returned her advances with interest and said she thought so too.

"My wife, Lady Rivington," observed the gentleman, and here Mrs. Lessing gave Helen a noticeable pressure of congratulation, while Kate slily kicked her brother's stick, "is peculiar in her impressions. With all the noble English houses on our visiting lists, she has a penchant for making her own friends."

"No more than yourself, my dear," retorted Lady Rivington archly. "For a clergyman and a banker, with the very aristocracy of the church and the commercial world at, I may say within, your command, you are still a veritable recluse. Now aren't you really, Mr. Waring?"

The miller became suddenly interested at the name of Waring, and grabbed at his bulky pocket as if to make sure his wallet containing his letters of credit had not been left behind.

Faint flashes of intelligence perhaps passed between the couple, but the gentleman replied pleasantly:

"Well, my dear, you are more than half right. We surely came to America to get away for a time from all that sort of thing."

Here he handed Mr. Lessing a tiny card from a delicate case. The miller said "Thankee!" rather shortly, turned the card around a few times, put on his glasses fumblingly, and then read aloud, as he would have ruminatively repeated the name of a new brand of flour:

"Mr. Herbert and Lady Rivington Waring, Castle Wold, Paddock Wood, Tunbridge, Kent. Waring Bros., London."

Mrs. Lessing here nodded ponderously to the couple for her whole family.

"Such a noble, feudal sound," murmured Miss Helen.

"Guess it's the same crowd, Frances," said Mr. Lessing to his wife. "Any relation to the London bankers, Mr. Waring?" asked Mr. Lessing, clumsily producing his credit letters.

Lady Rivington smiled her assent sweetly, but her husband bowed stiffly, as though any reference to the weight of workaday cares was hateful to him. He took the proffered papers from Mr. Lessing and examined them courteously.

"Because," continued Mr. Lessing stoutly, "I thought mebby you'd know if they're all right. It means a thousand bar——"

"Husband, husband!" groaned Mrs. Lessing. "Such coarse business matters are disagreeable to Lady Rivington and her husband. Do leave your large property interests behind you with your native shores!"

"Eh? All right, Frances. Can't be too careful, ennyhow," returned the anxious miller as he replaced his wallet, while he added: "Our name is Lessing, and I wish I was t' home with it!" After which he tightly closed his eyes.

"You see, Lady Rivington," began Mrs. Lessing, apologetically, "my husband is a slave to money-making. The rest of us, my children and myself, is different."

"My mother is the embodiment of soul," whispered Miss Helen tenderly; while Kate giggled, her father opened his eyes for an instant, and her brother banged his head violently with his stick.

"It is lovely of your daughter to say that, Mrs. Lessing. Is she an invalid?" asked Lady Rivington, sympathetically.

"Gracious me!" snorted Knate, overcome with merry wrigglings.

"Th-th-that's a t-t-touch d-d-d-down on Helen!" whispered Washington Lincoln Lessing, as his stick apparently became engaged in a mimic football struggle.

"Worse'n sick! She's a composer and a joker!" blurted Mr. Lessing, at once relapsing into silence.

"Worse to them that don't comprehend Genius!" replied Mrs. Lessing with a contemptuous glare at her husband. "You see," she continued wheedlingly to the aristocratic strangers," our daughter Helen is one of our American literatty."

"Indeed," and "What a pleasure to meet her!" came radiantly from Lady Rivington and her husband.

"She is going to write pieces on Yewrup," added Mrs. Lessing, with increasing pride and importance.

"Oh, mamma! You know I am only jotting down a few wild thoughts and vagrant observations," interrupted Miss Helen, confusedly.

"For publication, of course," insisted Mr. Waring encouragingly.

"For publication," replied the miller's wife, solemnly.

"How charming!" urged Lady Rivington, with increasing interest. "My husband fairly dotes on literary people. And your son?" This, with a bewitching smile upon the latter, who had got a fair start toward swallowing his stick whole.

"A university man," said the mother, with brief serenity.

"A son of Eli—Eli Yale," chirped Kate, saucily.

"L-l-left half b-b-back; an' I-I'll m-m-make center n-n-next year," explained Washington Lincoln Lessing. "We'll g-g-get Harvard where N-N-Nellie wore the b-b-beads!"

"More and more charming!" exclaimed Mr. Waring, grasping the young man's hand warmly. "Lady Rivington isa football enthusiast."

"Lord! What lots of time them different 'lsts' and 'Asts' has got!" mumbled Mr. Lessing to Kate, who had given her chair to Lady Rivington and was standing with her fair arm thrown lovingly around her father's red and chubby neck.

Lady Rivington's pretty eyes rested meltingly upon the face of the Yale football team's half-back, until he grew redder than if hotly engaged in bucking an opposing center, while Mr. Waring, with a peculiar look in his eyes and a conciliatory gesture toward Kate, who met his glance without flinching, inquired:

"And this one of your fair daughers, Mrs. Lessing?"

"Oh, don't mind her, Lady Rivington and Mr. Waring. She's our tom-boy at home."

"We don't mind her," replied Mr. Waring with an intonation which a close student of voices would have known meant, "We *will* mind her very closely!" while Lady Rivington observed graciously:

"Just what my late father, the Earl of Cornborough, always called me—his teasing, tantalizing tom-boy."

"Oh, no, don't mind me," replied Kate with a flash in her fine eyes. "I'm business, too; just like dear old Pop here. I keep his books and shoot. That's all."

"And shoot?" The clergyman-banker seemed to grow grave for a moment; but he quickly recovered his suavity and compliments with—

"We'll have to have Miss Kate down at Castle Wold—with you all, Mrs. Lessing; with you all. We'll give her the pick of our pheasants and a scamper after the hounds."

Mrs. Lessing and Helen clasped hands in mute thankfulness at this glorious outlook, and the authoress whispered to her mother of the inspiration she would find in genuine ancestral halls.

But the cautious miller, from his knowlege of Kate's marksmanship, scenting danger to the Coppice Wood pack, protested stoutly.

"No chasin' the blooded stock around the place, Mr. Waring. You'd have none left if Kate'd git after 'em. No, no. No ridin' after hounds. Why, that girl'll pop the head offen a sparrow on my mill cornice, with the sun in her face, Kate will!"

Mr. Waring and Lady Rivington laughed heartily at the father description of his daughter's prowess and his well grounded anxiety concerning the Coppice Wood hounds, while Kate, now coloring with pride and pique from the levity her father's recital evoked, asked innocently:

"Now wouldn't you like to see my derringers, though? I brought them with me to keep—keep the sham nobility away from sister and dear old Pop here. Mamma Lessing and brother can take care of themselves!"

Lady Rivington sobered a trifle and a dark look came into her husband's eyes. He finally said with a touch of impatience:

"You will surely excuse us from inspecting your weapons now, Miss Kate?"

"They're handy. Any time'll do," she retorted airily.

"Any right time," added Mr. Waring.

"Oh, yes; any right time!"

"John Wesley Lessing, can't you quiet your daughter?" insisted Mrs. Lessing, as if disavowing consanguinity.

"Frances Leland Lessing," retorted the worried miller with stoical resignation, "did you or I ever know enny man that's yet got a female Lessing quiet, when she didn't want to?"

A merry outburst followed this which put the new-made friends into excellent good humor, which even brought good humor to Mr. Lessing himself.

This was cleverly taken advantage of by Lady Rivington, who said brightly and with evident relief:

"My dear Mrs. Lessing, my husband is a very great traveler. He can certainly help your gifted daughter here," this with a sweet smile upon Helen, "in the relation of many interesting facts regarding sea voyages. For her sake, I am going to again tax Mr. Waring's patience—"

"His pleasure," interrupted that gentleman with a low bow.

"Beg pardon, my dear!—then, his pleasure, to explain all these delightful things for her literary work."

"How kind of you!" urged Mrs. Lessing, feelingly.

"A good angel indeed!" murmured Miss Lessing.

"Oh, Lord!" groaned Mr. Lessing, "th' jottin' an' composin's goin' to begin again, Kate!"

"Be quiet, there's a dear Pop. May be we'll really hear something," cautioned Kate, herself now genuinely interested.

"First," said Mr. Waring, in a tone of quiet command, as he beckoned a deck steward to his side, "I am going to make it more comforable all around."

He wrote on a card rapidly, a card which Kate noticed came from another receptacle than the one holding the card given to her father, and said:

"Steward, take this to the purser. Here's a half-crown. Lively, now!"

"Mr. Lessing, your staterooms are on this deck."

"Yes, Suit B," returned Mr. Lessing, again groping for his wallet.

The banker summoned another deck steward, feed him and said quietly:

"My friend, Mr. Lessing here, wishes the remaining portion of his luggage—one moment, Mr. Lessing—taken at once to Suit B."

In a moment more the bewildered miller found himself divested of his responsibilities, through the clever management of the polite banker, and comfortably seated in his own capacious deck-chair.

"Now this is something like it!" blandly remarked Lady Rivington.

"It will be still something more like it, my dear," responded her husband, cheerily "when the stewards have changed our luggage from our present quarters to suite C. That's exactly opposite to friend Lessing's. It's vacant. By being near them it will be most agreeable to us, and we can make things easy and pleasant for them all the way across the water."

"You're the best man in the whole world!" insisted Lady Rivington glowingly.

"Oh, isn't this fortunate!" sighed Mrs. Lessings.

"Perfectly divine!" added her daughter Helen.

"We'll get even somehow," suggested Mr. Lessing heartily.

They all chatted gaily for a little time, until the steward returned with the key to suite C and, with a respectful salute and "Everything tidy, sir," withdrew. Then Lady Rivington insisted with charming impatience:

"Now, do begin, for Miss Lessing's sake. Otherwise, she will lose so many things she should know. Now, dear, get your sweet little notebook ready. They're already slowing down for dropping the pilot."

"Ah, yes, dropping the pilot," began the banker blandly. "A most interesting little ceremony. No need of rushing to the port side to be crushed to death to see it!"

"No, indeed," urged Mr. Lessing, thankful for peace on any terms.

"Well, we are now just abreast of Sandy Hook. These great ocean liners are under absolute control of those brown-faced men—your New York pilots—you see up there alongside the Captain, who is just leaving the bridge with the pilot for the chartroom. The latter will certify on the ship's log that the steamer has properly cleared the port."

"Wonderful, wonderful!" murmured Mrs. Lessing, as her daughter, relieved from the strain of composing, went on with her jotting as fast as ever she could.

"Over there on the port side, where all the jays—the amateur travelers, I should say—are scrambling, is rocking a little punt, manned by apprentice pilots, which has come from the Sandy Hook lightship to receive the pilot."

"Mighty handy," suggested the miller with awakening interest.

"Beside the rail stands the purser of the mail steward with packages of letters and telegrams—I cabled the bank from the docks, my dear," he said to his wife who smiled with approval—"which have been written between the wharf and the Hook, and after the pilot clambers down the steamer's side into his punt, which is just about now occurring, America will be lost behind you."

Tears dimmed the tender-hearted miller's eyes. Kate ejaculated, "Gracious me!" Helen jotted rapidly and Mrs. Lessing burst forth with:

"Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful! My Helen shall not forget you among the literatty. She jots easy enough; but my! if you only knew how composing weakens her!"

"Us, you mean," mercilessly insisted Kate, to which her brother added a faint "Rah!" and Mr. Lessing threw out one of his arms wildly.

A suggestion of a smile lurked in the corners of the banker's mouth, but he bowed slightly and continued kindly:

"If you will all give your close attention you will now catch another delightful little ceremony of these steamer sailings."

Kate held to her father's neck closely at this point, for the sudden thundering of the ship's engines had almost brought him to his feet.

"You will see that the chief officer has now replaced the Captain upon the bridge. At the foot of the foremast and mainmast and beside the gaff, at the stern," said Mr. Waring, pointing out these different localities to the Lessings, "stand subofficers call quartermasters. The flag at the foremast is the sailing-day flag. That flying from the mainmast is the 'house' flag—that is, the owners' flag, the 'Blue Peter.'"

"Our c-c-colors. 'Rah!" exclaimed Washington Lincoln Lessing with agitated enthusiasm on the part of his stick.

"The ensign of the country where the ship is owned always flies from the gaff."

"In this instance our own glorious Cross of St. George!" ventured Lady Rivington, with a delightful burst of patriotism.

"Now watch the chief officer on the bridge closely. When you see him nod his head notice what becomes of these three flags," resumed Mr. Waring, with a warning gesture of his hand.

They had but a moment to wait. The chief officer made a quick inclination of his head. In an instant the three flags plunged to the deck, as swiftly as a deadshot sportsman will bring gay birds of passage quivering to his feet.

A farewell cheer rang out over the port side, and the Lessings of Milltown and the Warings of Castle Wold, already inseparable companions and friends, with the two thousand other human souls wedged so exasperatingly close together upon a great ocean steamer, were speeding swiftly across the mighty sea.

And what a strange and ludicrous study it all is, even this mere surface panorama of human natures' expressive activities, aboard every one of these great palaces which dash toward either the old world or the new.

Two or three meals at farthest sponge the banquet airs from the glittering tables. Fifty plates are now doing the service of five hundred. The flowers have wholly disappeared from the main table in the grand salon, and only here and there tarry like a thin array of hectic ghosts among the shadowy alcoves.

The ship's commander, bland as a bartender in port, has hidden himself from view. The purser's window is hermetically sealed. The ship's doctor, that vealy travesty upon personified medical science, has retired behind strictest interpretation of hours and rules. Room stewards are canaily speculating upon the possibilities of passengers' purses, and the silent stewardesses are as graven images of stones in flaunting frills of white.

Sergeant-at-arms look you over and around, fore and aft, as if to remind you that deck rules must not under any circumstances be infringed; and the bellboys, those little, dried-up commodities of the hallways, libraries and lavatories, regard you from beneath beetling brows, as with savage advance protests against possible favors.

Wander where you may, in your steamer's cabin or on her decks, you find only savagery, pre-occupation or mute despair. The officers and crew are recovering from port excesses. The few passengers still upon their legs are scowlingly contemplating the difference between the songs and the scourges, the literature and the reality, of the unrelenting sea. In fact, the predominating hosts are in the throes of unmitigated, unvanquishable seasickness; a swift compensation for superelation of the excitement and boastfulness on leaving port. For all of us are likely to roar a little along these forgivable heydey lines.

Radiant dudes have lisped beneath their napkins:

"Lying wight dwown on one's back'll do nausea, I fawncy!"

Western packers, loading their plates with repeated swaths of their own boneless ham, have snorted:

"Pshaw! Lake Michigan c'n knock spots off this pond for roughness any time. Nobody ever sick out our way!"

The ladies have repeatedly chorused:

"Dear me! It isn't possible anyone could ever suffer *mal de mer* on this steamer. It's just too lovely for anything!"

The lawyers have been oratoric about it, and have summed up before invisible juries with invisible "Now, sirs," that have temporarily and convincingly settled the whole matter.

The clergymen—bless them for their gentle faith and fancies!—have brought forward the hopeful proposition that, "after all, sea-sickness is no doubt pure and simple, a mere matter of imagination!" while each of the many male passengers with granite heads, brass jaws and iron stomachs have repeatedly closed the repeated discussion explosively with:

"All bosh and nonsense, sir! Have a healthy stomach in your body like me! That's the way to enjoy sea travel, sir!"

But they have all done for now. The dudes are developing their "lying wight dwown" theories; the ladies are gaspingly assorting their adjectives; the packers are comparing the different characteristics of lake and pond in miserable seclusion; the clergymen have been furnished new studies in the vagaries of the imagination; and the men with the iron stomachs are all slipping their cogs as helplessly as though possessing the ordinary mortal diaphragm.

How this scourge of the sea levels up and down among the great, the proud and the humble. The Warings' retiracy was a complete eclipse; but the Lessings' dumb bravery of primitive force held them as a permanent exhibit under the lee awnings, with hundreds, beside them from whom hope, pride, scorn, hauteur and all had flown, like the faded flush of the shriveled flowers in the rocking alcoves below.

Mrs. Lessing was a prominent subject for study. Her false front was displaced. The powder and color had been sponged from one side of her chacteristic face by some over attentive stewardess. Her laces, flounces and silks were dishelved. She even snored with diverting palateal staccatos.

Beside her lay the Lessing family inspiration, paint and powder and bilgewater blended into a pale French gray upon her sentimental countenance. The fog had added a clammy rime to this. Strands of her now waveless hair fluttered stickily within her open mouth, and amid this wreck of Genius there remained but one bit of apparent life. This glowed in her pinky, pointed nose. In a few days more the long suffering cuticle must perforce peel from it in tenacious swirls and curls; and as Helen shall step upon the staging at Liverpool the rude customs inspectors will whisperingly pronounce her an "H'american h'objeck," notwithstanding her highbred company.

Washington Lincoln Lessing, swathed in rugs, could not even "Rah" longer for his famous football team. His luxurious hair stood out pompadour all around. His eyes had apparently gone back into his head an inch, and the clammy head of his faithful stick seemed to have discovered these new receptacles for temporary repose.

Even ordinarily irrepressible Kate was now only a little ball of misery, coiled shiveringly within the good old miller's arms, while he, poor soul, stretched out like a drunkard in his gently wobbling chair, had for days held his two sets of false teeth in his nerveless hand with familiar and wholly anxiousless abandon.

But other days had come—days when, "the banks" being crossed, there was a gradual return to life from the torpor, or horror, of seasickness, and when a majority of the ship's passengers returned to the cabins subdued and chastened for their remorseless retirement.

There had been an averaging up process all around. Crabbed folk, who snapped like turtles at the beginning of the voyage, were now sunny and sweet of spirit. The graciousness of late comers from the staterooms was now something wonderfully genial and admirable. The enforced rest had been a soothing nurse to the common sore and hurt nerve. The ozone of the sea gave its magic of station to all. And from this time on the voyage of the attentive Warings and the apt and grateful Lessings was all too brief period of tenderness, exaltation and delight.

Queenstown was reached; the pretty scene of the departure here of the mails was witnessed, and just as the sun was sinking in the western ocean, its splendor rifting through an almost sky-hid swarm of ghostly, fluttering gulls, the steamer resumed her journey past dreamful old Youghal, where Raleigh and Spencer sulked and dreamed and loved; past fateful Point Carnsore, and as the stars began to glow above the glowing waters, swung into the tideful channel of St. George, and thence into the wilder Irish Sea, coming to anchor at last beside the Mersey's shifting sands at midday, where the deft Warings lessened for their friends the pandemonium which ever rages when the snorting tenders come, and the badgered passengers, with their mountains of luggage, are huddled together like cattle to old Liverpool's landing stage.

"We will all go together to London," said the banker kindly. "I will call a cab for myself and Lady Rivington and will drive to Lime Street Station where we will reserve a first-class compartment."

"Yes, take it leisurely now, dears," added Lady Rivington with reassuring smiles. "It will require about an hour's time to finish the examination of your luggage. Be at the station in just about two hours. Good-by until then, dears!"

"Good-by!" and "Good-by!" it was then cheerily all around, but not without tremuious misgivings on the part of the Lessings, whose novel situation already filled them with anxiety and alarm.

Mr. Lessing and his son, after many repeated pleadings and altercations with the inspectors, gave up completely and sat down upon their luggage helplessly. Mrs. Lessing supported her daughter, as the latter jotted and composed, and Kate, pale and wordless now, sat silent and scowling, as though some unusual storm was brooding behind her pretty eyes. At last Mrs. Lessing approached her husband and asked vexedly:

"Why don't you hurry them men up? I feel just as though I had lost everything when them folks is out of sight!"

"I'll bet a cookey we have!" blurted Kate, marching straight between her father and mother. "Pop Lessing, what was that banker fellow doing with your letters of credit in the library this morning?"

"Why, I—I was jest indorsin' of 'em so he could git 'em cashed by his brothers, the Warings, and save us the exchange!"

"Well, we've just been robbed by those slick ones!" returned Kate very quietly.

"Robbed!" shrieked the remainder of the Lessing family, sinking on their luggage in various attitudes of despair, while the note book of Genius fell idly by Helen's side, and Washington Lincoln Lessing's stick for the first time assumed threatening activities.

"If that pair," remarked an inspector who had noticed the disappearance of the Warings and subsequently keenly regarded the Lessings, as if anticipating some unpleasant denoument, "'ave got anything as belongs to you, you never need worry about gettin' it back. They are the rummest Yankee swindlers as ever played th' H'english lord an' leddy dodge. I truly 'opes you 'ave a few pound left?" he concluded sympathetically.

"Don't go on so, Pop and mom. We're all right. We'll have a lovely time yet!" said Kate cheerily.

"Oh, Lord! How? Ten thousand barrel—"

"John Wesley Lessing, is this a time to fling flour at your suffering family's heads?"

"Just the time; just!" retorted Kate imperatively. "The toll dear old Pop paid me on more than ten thousand barrels for keeping those musty books Kate Lessing has got right along with her this blessed minute, and it will take us all farther than you think!"

They felt upon the brave little sprite with caresses and joyful tears. When she had extricated herself she added spitefully to her mother and sister:

"You can have it and spend it if—" and here she became the personification of unyielding Tyranny—"if you two folks have just got enough of European nobility, and Castle Wolds, and Paddock Woods and Tunbridge Kents and pheasants and hounds and all that sort of beautiful muff and mist!"

"Lord, Kate!—one other condition, do!" pleaded Mr. Lessing, with renewed excitement.

"What's that?"

"No more jottin' an' composin'! An', Kate darling, for conscience sake make it cover Milltown when we git back!" he added in a desperate whisper.

"No more foreign nobility, and no more jotting and composing, now and forever—or, no Milltown flour toll for a good time in Europe!" she promptly added, with exasperating solemnity.

A groan escaped her mother's lips, and a tiny tear trickled down her sister's pinky blistered nose. But Genius has fairly glowed with weaknesses since were opened the eyelids of recorded Time, and it capitulated with a whispered murmur of assent, while the Yale half-back "Rahed" himself hoarse, and the subdued but now united Lessings saw Europe in a gentle calm that gave them receptive, happy eyes, and they are now where the rumblings of their "dear old mills" bring to their hearts only the pleasant and undisturbed repose of life's blessedest content.

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"What do you wish to-day, madam?"

"I wanted to go to the place where you sell dry goods?"

"It is right here, madam. What kind of dry goods do you wish for?"

"Dried apples, mister."

And for once the floor walker was nonpulssed.—Lewiston (Me.) Journal.

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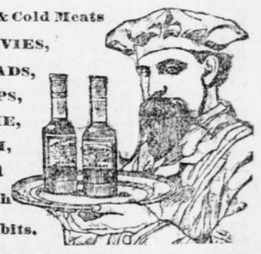

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