

ROUND BY PROPELLER

Constance Fenimore Woolson (1840-1894)

On either side we saw vessels sailing mysteriously over the meadow; we met them, left them behind, and, presto! there they were again, apparently still in advance of us. Queer little lighthouses, too, were there—solitary towers in the bewitched region; and strange signs, bits of cloth fastened on boughs in the water, or saplings curiously bent as if with a hidden purpose.

We reached Buffalo late on Thursday evening, and drove directly to the dock, with but faint hope of finding our boat advertised, to leave at five o'clock. "Let us give it up, Aunt Ruth, and go to the Tiff House for the night," said my school-girl niece, Persis Wayne, whose thoughts were in Niagara, where we had spent the previous week.

"Give it up Sissy? Never! That's so like a girl," said her brother Morris, a saltwater Freshman.

"Well, at any rate, do not call me Sissy."

"What's in a name, little Persistent? A Wayne by any other name—"

"Now, children," I began, "let us have peace."

"Plagiarism, Aunt Rue," interrupted Morris. "Granted," I replied; "but the principle is the same; let there be a truce to disputes, and let us enjoy the lake trip as much as we can."

When we reached the dock we found the *Columbia* alongside, and a horde of wild men, half-dressed and swarthy, carrying boxes, rolling barrels, pitching bales, and trundling barrows down the plank with grim ferocity. The moon we had expected to find on Lake Erie was obscured by clouds, and a Buffalo breeze was blowing (at home I should have called it gale); but Morris marshaled us on board in high spirits, and led the way up the ladder-like stairs out upon the narrow side deck. "The carriage has gone, our ships are burned behind us, and our faces turned toward the setting sun, Aunt Rue," he said, bringing some little stools from the cabin, and placing them in a row by the railing. Here we sat and watched the scene below—the dusky warehouse, the moving lanterns, and the medley of strange noises, the hurry and bustle of an inland port, one of the five large cities of the freshwater seas. For some time I enjoyed the novelty of the sight, but at length the confusion wearied both eyes and ears, and I proposed to Persis that we should go to our stateroom.

"What, miss the start, Aunt Rue! I am sure the boat will leave in a few moments. See, there is the last barrel."

But after the barrel came staves, and after the staves bags, and after the bags bales. At length I persuaded Persis to accompany me inside; the cabin was deserted, and we went to our stateroom, where my niece accorded me full possession of the so-called double berth below, and climbing up on the upper shelf, soon fell asleep on her perch, with the happy facility of youth.

But after the bales came bar iron, each bar coming down with a clang that seemed to strike through my brain and set all the nerves dancing. Just when longer endurance

became impossible, that noise ceased, and shouting began; then came a quiver, a gentle rocking, a straining, a ting-ting-ting, ting-tinging of a bell, and we were off, the steady motion of the engine pulsating through the floor, and lulling me with a promise of sleep. Alas! When the *Columbia* was fairly outside, and had left the Queen City of the Lakes behind, the Buffalo breeze met her, and a contest began—steam against wind, man against nature. All night we were rolled, pitched, and tossed on the short waves of Lake Erie, and morning dawned over a turbid, roughened expanse, with one forlorn vessel in the distance, beating up under close-reefed canvas.

After a struggling toilet Persis and I went out into the cabin, our thoughts intent on hot coffee. A few pale women sat silently on the red velvet sofas, and watched the steward with hungry eyes as he sped up and down on either side of the long table, laying the plates with mathematical regularity, and bringing the goblets, five in each hand, like a magician. Few came to breakfast, and fewer still ate anything. A group of school-girls from Utica, two gentlemen from Albany, the pale women, and our party formed four oases down the long table, while at the head the bluff captain presided, and did the honors with hearty politeness. A tall young man appeared toward the end of the meal, and carried off relays of tea and toast to a state-room, and an officer in undress uniform came in from the forward deck, and ate his breakfast with military dispatch.

"How do you like being rocked in the cradle of the deep, Aunt Rue? you look rather pale this morning," said Morris, mischievously.

"You had better not say anything," said Persis, with a meaning glance.

"Bread that we've tasted may sometimes return," sang my incorrigible nephew, as he tied down his straw hat before venturing on deck.

Toward dinner time the wind subsided, and the passengers began to show themselves. The tall young man appeared with a little blonde wife; more women, of various ages, sat on the sofas; children made themselves audible, and husbands and fathers stood about at the end of the cabin, all the little stools having been sternly carried off by the steward and his dark satellites. Roast beef, pork and beans, cabbage, potatoes, cornbread, pie, and pudding formed the bill of fare, and the pale women added copious draughts of tea, and fed their babies with beans generously heaped upon their knife blades. A delicate widow opposite attracted our attention by her somewhat *passée* beauty and aristocratic air; we fancied she was a Southerner from her accent; her companions addressed her as "Mrs. Peyton," and treated her with marked deference.

"How do you feel, dear?" said one.

"Very weak," replied Mrs. Peyton, raising her large eyes languidly; "my nerves are quite shattered; I feel scarcely able to raise my head." Then to the waiter, "Roast beef, rare, and a spoonful of beans."

"I was afraid you would suffer; the boat rocked fearfully," said another, leaning forward with a sympathizing glance.

"Yes; I fainted several times, and Theresa was much alarmed. She was obliged to give me chloral," answered Mrs. Peyton, helping herself to cabbage and potatoes, appropriating the biscuit, and glancing languidly toward the butter. "Waiter, I think I could taste a pickle."

"I told Phoebe I knew you would be worn out this morning, said a large man

whom they called "General."

"Worn out? Ah, yes. I have no stamina. I was always so fragile," sighed the widow, securing the butter, and covering the table with an exhaustive glance. "Waiter, I think I will try one of those chops," she murmured, motioning toward the captain's especial dish, and sinking back in her chair until the loaded plate returned.

"Poor thing!" whispered a lady to the general; "she has never recovered from her affliction."

"Do try to taste something more, dear," urged a companion, as we were leaving the table.

"How can you ask me?" murmured the fair sufferer. But she did try, nevertheless—a third cup of tea and some more pudding.

Going out on the forward deck, we seated ourselves at the bows. The *Columbia* was a large propeller, high out of the water in front, and sloping gradually back, so that it was quite like walking up hill to come from the stern forward to the bows. Here a ladder led up to the wheel-house, where a keen-eyed man gazed so fixedly over the water that every time we noticed him we fancied he must see something there and unconsciously found ourselves looking for a water-spout, or at least a mermaid, in the gray expanse ahead. The captain paced up and down enjoying an after-dinner cigar, some of the husbands and fathers sat disconsolately on the anchor, and a restless boy amused himself twirling the capstan round for the sake of hearing the steady clank, clank, which soon became a familiar sound, as, for some inscrutable cause, that capstan was never at rest, but continually being turned on its axis. Now a boy was at it, now a man, now a woman, but always somebody, clank, clank, all day long, until as Morris said, it became a "demnition grind." The *Columbia* rode steadily onward, the southern shore in plain view, a monotonous coast, with nothing in its appearance to convey any intimation of the wealth and agricultural luxuriance of the great State of Ohio. Presently the spires of Cleveland came into sight, a cloud of smoke resting over the city coming from the iron mills and oil refineries crowded together on the marshy flat of the Cuyahoga Valley. The wind had gone down, the lake was calm, and the air much warmer than in breezy Buffalo; the passengers gathered on the forward deck, the school girls responding shyly to the courtesies of the Albany gentlemen, the little blonde, carefully veiled, leaning on her husband's arm, and Mrs. Peyton, in a comfortable armchair, bestowing upon the Forest City the honor of a languid survey.

"What kind of a place is Cleveland, captain?" said an ancient clergyman from Massachusetts, with a patronizing air.

"Good enough place; 'ily, though," replied the captain."

"Ah—yes. Petroleum wells in operation here, I believe?"

The captain looked at the questioner a moment, as if to fathom such a depth of ignorance, but encountering the bland superior smile of the Eastern fossil, he gave it up, and merely said, "No wells in this part of the country, Sir."

"Ah—yes. I remember now. There is, I believe, a tunnel owned by the Free South Pipe Improvement Company, by means of which the crude petroleum is forced to Cleveland, there refined, and exported to Europe direct, by way of the St. Lawrence, in ironclad tank ships built for the purpose."

"You might know that chap was a minister, now," muttered the mate. "He may have uncommon, but he certainly ain't got common sense."

Now the *Columbia* let loose her unearthly double whistle, a high shriek and a deep roar in one dissonant chord, three times repeated; then her head turned in toward shore, and a gang of wild men appeared from the lower regions, and ranged themselves around the capstan. Little tugs flew sputtering in and out of the river, ducking under the bridges, their pipes magically lowered for the purpose, and a vessel heavily loaded with blue barrels swayed slowly aside to let us pass.

"Captain, what are the contents of those barrels?" inquired the Utica schoolmistress who presided over the band of school-girls.

"Ile, marm."

"Captain, pray what is this disagreeable odor?" said Mrs. Peyton, taking out a vinaigrette.

"Ile, marm."

"What makes the water look so funny?" said Curlylocks, one of the school girls, gazing over the side.

"Ile, miss."

The river was narrow and crowded with craft: propellers, vessels, canal-boats, tugs, and one remnant of old times, a fine side-wheel steamer, looking dignified and powerful beside its companions.

"What a splendid boat!" cried Blackeyes, another school-girl.

"Them side-wheelers isn't good for much on these lakes," said the captain. "They make a big show, but they lop over easy in a gale. Give me a tight propeller, and I'll show 'em a clean pair of heels all the way from Buffalo to Chi-care-go."

At length the *Columbia* reached her dock, and was made fast by the wild men, who ran around the capstan at furious speed, while the mate, having cast ashore the coil of small rope, occupied himself in hanging head downward over the side, and bellowing orders to the unseen slaves below.

"How long do we remain here, captain?" asked one of the Albany gentlemen, whom Persis had already named "Mephisto," on account of a satirical something lurking in his calm, handsome face and polished manners, as well as his apparent influence over the fresh-faced youth who accompanied him.

"Until sunset," replied the captain.

And as the afternoon was delightful, parties were hastily formed to see the sights of the Forest City, Mephisto capturing the school-mistress by his studied politeness, thus giving Faust an opportunity to walk with Curlylocks, who seemed nowise opposed to the arrangement. Persis, Morris, and I took a carriage, and after climbing a steep hill, found ourselves in the main business street of the Forest City.

"Where are you going, driver?" asked Morris.

"Up Euclid Avenue, Sir. That's where the big houses are, Sir."

"But I want to see an oil refinery," said Morris.

"Oh, Morris, don't go near that oil; it will give us all headaches; and besides, I want to see the residences," said Persis.

"That's just like a girl. You can see residences anywhere; but Cleveland is a great

oil place; it may be called 'highly refined.' There comes Major Archer. I got acquainted with him this morning on deck. He's a first-rate fellow, and knows all about Cleveland. I am going to ask him." So saying, Morris jumped out and ran toward the officer, who was walking up the hill. After some conversation they approached the carriage door, and Morris introduced the stranger to us. "Major Archer knows all about the refineries, Aunt Rue; he has a friend in the business, and advises us to see the process by all means. I say, major, won't you come with us?"

At first the officer declined, but when, pleased with his manner, I added my request, he accepted the invitation, and directed the driver down to the flats by another road over the Cuyahoga River and the Ohio Canal. The flat was crowded, odoriferous, and smoky, with lumber, oil, and iron; but the oil predominated. Blue barrels met our eyes on every side, huge tanks rose from the ground like fortifications, and a network of pipes, elevated high in the air, ran hither and thither, while over, under, and throughout all the pungent petroleum made itself felt in every breath we drew. On we went, and the smoking chimneys grew into a forest. The railroad tracks on either side held long lines of singular boiler-shaped cars, and trestlework and tramways ran in every direction like arteries from the central steam engines.

"Here is my friend's refinery," said Major Archer. "Would you like to go through the works?"

Owing to Morris's eagerness I assented, and we soon forgot every thing but the interest of the scene.

The crude green petroleum, brought from the oil regions in the boiler-like cars, was carried through a long range of pipes on trestle-work from the car to the huge tank on the hill, from whence it was drawn off as required for the stills. The row of stills, with the great fires under them, boiled the tar out of the oil, and then sent it through pipes coiled in water boxes to the receiving house. Here, running from many little mouths, the oil came into sight as it fell into the receivers below, the naphtha flowing off first, and the purified oil shimmering and shining in rare shades of color—blue, purple, and gold—as different from the turbid green of the crude petroleum as the golden butterfly from the caterpillar.

Into the pipes again went the rainbow water, flowing down to be "treated" and "agitated," like many a human patient. Rows of gigantic jugs appeared imbedded in wooden cases, with their mouths carefully secured. These were the medicines with which the oil was treated, chemicals with long names; and after being dosed with them it was turned into an immense iron caldron, and agitated until all the original sin of mother earth was driven out, exhaling in choking odors which almost converted us to the old farmer's belief in the sulphurous origin of this wonderful production of the nineteenth century. The subdued oil was then washed and rewashed in water, and issued forth odorless and clean to take its place in the round reservoirs, where, by mounting on a staging, we could still see the prismatic tints made in nature's laboratory, which no treatment or agitation could purloin from the imprisoned fluid. Beneath the reservoirs were rows of blue barrels. "Click!" went the automatic faucet, showing that a barrel was full. It was rolled away, a wooden cork dipped in glue driven into place, and behold! the refined oil ready for transportation.

When we had seen the last of the barrel we turned away to visit the tar stills, where

the tar, boiled out of the oil, is transformed into translucent paraffin and dingy coke.

"What a parable this would make!" said Persis. "Coke is the body, and the beautiful paraffin is the soul, freed from its thralldom."

"Oh, come now, Persis," interrupted Morris, "don't you come down on the body in that rarefied style. Bodies are very good things in their way, and I've always noticed that those soulist fellows take precious good care of theirs."

"Is this refining business profitable, Major Archer?" I asked, as we drove away.

"Fortunes are made in it yearly, but the risk from fire and explosion is great. Crude petroleum yields about seventy percent of refined oil, fifteen percent of naphtha and gasoline, and five percent of tar, which, in its turn, produces eighty-five percent of paraffin."

"I have heard that more oil is refined in Cleveland than anywhere else in the country. Is this so?" asked Morris.

"Yes. There is capacity here for stilling fifteen thousand barrels daily; and the daily shipments during the season of navigation, to New York alone, for exportation, amount to five thousand barrels. These figures are rather below than above the truth. It is only a few years since this flat was a prairie, and the Cuyahoga River a dear stream flowing through the long grass; but now, as you see, every foot of soil is occupied, and the river is more petroleum than water. A short time ago it took fire, and the water fairly blazed as it flowed down to the lake. A river on fire is something of a phenomenon."

"I should not like to live here," said Persis.

"Wait a few moments before you judge, Miss Wayne. Once on the plateau above and you will change your opinion. It would be difficult to find, outside of New York, a street so beautiful as Euclid Avenue."

Persis looked incredulous, but when we had crossed the park, which was adorned with a fine statue of Commodore Perry, the hero of Lake Erie, and entered the avenue, she was obliged to acknowledge the justice of Major Archer's praise. Large, costly houses of various styles of architecture succeeded each other for three miles, not in blocks, but each one by itself, in extensive grounds, thus combining the beauties of the city and country. The velvet lawns, conservatories, shrubbery, statues, and fountains of these fine residences, the noble trees and the smooth pavement, brought enthusiastic praise from all of us.

"It is indeed a beautiful street," said Persis, as we drove to another part of the city; "I had no idea there was anything like it on the lakes."

"Westward the star," quoted Morris.

"However," added Persis, as the driver paused on the lake shore to give us a view of the sunset, "I have one fault to find with the avenue of the Forest City." "What is that?" asked the major.

"It should be here overlooking the lake."

As the sunset Slow faded into twilight, the *Columbia* sailed out into the gray expanse of Lake Erie again; the major sat talking with Persis and myself, but as Morris had succeeded in obtaining an introduction to the school-girls, we saw little of him during the remainder of the evening. Mephisto walked up and down with the school-mistress, Miss Key, on his arm.

"Ah, it does my heart good to meet with such fresh enthusiasm as yours, Miss Key," said Mephisto, as they passed us.

"Ridiculous," murmured Persis under her breath.

"Pardon me, Miss Wayne; but let us analyze that adjective," said the major. "Who is ridiculous, the lady or the gentleman?"

"The lady, of course," answered Persis, with the vehement contempt of feminine sixteen for feminine thirty-six.

"Because you think she is too old to walk up and down the deck with a young gentleman? And if she was a married lady, Miss Wayne?"

"Oh, that makes a difference, of course. Married ladies of that age are often very agreeable. They do not show their years as single women do; they are not so prim, so cross—in short, so disagreeable."

"There it is again," said the major, with a smile, "that universal pitying dislike for old maids. I hope you do not think that all the single women you see have entered the sisterhood from necessity?"

"I'm sure this one did," said Persis.

"Oh, Miss Wayne, Miss Wayne! What can you know about it? Some of the noblest heart histories in the world are hidden under the prim exteriors which you ridicule. Years of patient endurance and lonely suffering without a murmur or a sign! We men have not half the fortitude. We cannot sit patiently looking back over the ghost of a lost love; we put it away, and take something, anything, in its place, with all the haste we can."

"And is not that the best way, Major Archer?" I said.

"I do not say no; but there is something very heroic in that eternal loyalty which continues faithful unto and beyond death."

A tinge of sadness had crept into our random talk. I leaned back and looked around the deck. Mephisto was still on duty, while Faust and Curlylocks sat on one side of the anchor, and Morris and Blackeyes on the other. "Ah, shepherdess," I thought, "look to your lambs!"

Presently the tall husband sauntered out from the cabin and began talking with the captain. "There isn't much going on tonight," he said, with a half-yawn.

"Well, no. Yer see, this is the first good night out, and I've always noticed that it takes about that to get used to the moon, and that sort of thing."

"People get tired of the moon in time, I suppose?"

"Mighty tired. The next night it ull be dancing, and the next playing games, and so on. After that you'll see 'em all with books, yawning, and asking me twenty times a day when we shall get to Chi-care-go."

Early the next morning we stood at the bows, watching the entrance to the Detroit River. The beautiful shores and islands charmed us, and the river looked so brimful that it seemed as if a pebble would cause it to flow over its low green banks. Soon after breakfast the *Columbia* reached Detroit, the City of the Straits, and the clear sunshine tempted every body to go ashore—all save the little blonde, who did not "care about these Western towns," and left her husband to wander away drearily by himself, until he fell in with the school-girls, and went off with them to see the old Cass place. The pale women invaded the fancy stores in search of new patterns for worsted work. They regretted that

they did not have time to cross the river and invest in the miraculously cheap goods of Canada. "One of my friends went over, and came back with two hoop-skirts, three shawls, and ever so many gloves, collars, and ribbons, besides a piece of linen, all on her, so as to save duty," related one, with conscious pride.

Mrs. Peyton languidly piloted the general as far as the first confectionery store. We did not see her come out.

We found Detroit a pleasant old town, some of the housing looking quite venerable for a freshwater country. There was a military air about it also, the names of the streets bringing back memories of frontier life, and gay legends of the early French settlers. We passed a beautiful church, the Methodist Central; but our attention was soon concentrated upon the new City Hall, one of the finest buildings in the West. As we stood looking at it the school-girl brigade came into view.

"Young ladies," began Miss Key, as she marched her forces in a row, "this structure is built of the sandstone quarried near Cleveland, Ohio. It is of the Italian order of architecture, fire-proof, two hundred feet long, and one hundred and eighty feet from the ground to the top of the tower. It was built and completely finished, inside as well as outside, within three years, for the sum of six hundred thousand dollars, and is justly considered the pride of the city and State."

The escort, consisting of Mephisto, Faust, Morris, and the wandering husband, murmured their applause, the school-girls took notes in their diaries, and the brigade moved on.

"What a bundle of statistics!" said Persis, shrugging her pretty shoulders. "And do look, Aunt Rue! She positively has on rubbers this warm dry day!"

Major Archer glanced downward at a glove-fitting kid boot tilted forward on a high French heel, with a half-smile. Persis colored, and drew back her foot with lightning rapidity.

"We old people are obliged to guard against rheumatism, Miss Wayne," he said, as we walked on.

"Old!" exclaimed my hasty niece. "Why, how old—" She stopped, abashed by her own audacity.

"Am I?" said Major Archer, finishing her question. "I am thirty-six, Miss Wayne, and I doubt if Miss Key is as old."

"Men are never too old," said Persis, concisely.

We reached the *Columbia* as the captain let loose the whistle, and crossed the plank with our hands on our ears. At the third note of warning the pale women returned, and the general hove into view loaded down with white paper parcels suggestive of confectionery, and supporting Mrs. Peyton upon his free arm. But the school-girls were still absent, and the unearthly whistle sounded its summons two, three, four times in vain. At last they appeared, running down the street, curls flying and eyes dancing with merriment, as Miss Key skipped gracefully in the rear. Faust, Morris, and Mephisto joined in the race, and foremost came the tall husband, waving his hat and laughing like a school-boy. Poor man! it was his last. When he came on deck his wife received him with a stony silence. As Morris said, "He never smiled again."

All day we sailed up the beautiful river. Inside the cabin sat the pale women, intent

on worsted-work. What was the scenery to them? What cared they for the lovely shores and blossoming islands?

A primrose by the river's brim
A yellow promise was to them
And it was nothing more.

After stopping to take on wood the *Columbia* entered the enchanted region of the St. Clair Flats. As there was some obstruction in the canal, the captain, much to our delight, was obliged to take the old channel, and filled with surprise and pleasure, we sat at the bows, eagerly watching the strange scene. On all sides, as far as we could see, the low meadow extended, broken by innumerable channels, a network of silver upon green. The great reeds almost brushed the sides of the boat, and long-legged birds stood in the water and eyed us solemnly as we passed. Suddenly the passage would be barred by a green island, and we were to all appearances completely landlocked. Then the captain would give a rapid order to the men at the wheel above; whir, rattle, went the chains, and veering directly to the right, the *Columbia* would run her slender length in among the grasses of a hidden channel and pass into a new archipelago. On either side we saw vessels sailing mysteriously over the meadow; we met them, left them behind, and, presto! there they were again, apparently still in advance of us. Queer little lighthouses, too, were there—solitary towers in the bewitched region; and strange signs, bits of cloth fastened on boughs in the water, or saplings curiously bent as if with a hidden purpose. On the shore, or what we supposed to be the shore—for we were never sure where the water ended and shore began—stood at intervals small huts without doors. Who they were for, unless mermaids and water-sprites, we could not imagine. Amphibious beings alone could inhabit them. Major Archer suggested that duck hunters were amphibious beings. But Persis rejected the earthly idea, and clung to her water-sprites. . . .

Just at night the *Columbia* passed Fort Gratiot, and sailed out into broad Lake Huron. "It looks wild and weird," said Persis, as, wrapped in shawls, we watched the darkening water and fading shore. The shadow of a fear came over us as the men ran up the mast-head lights, and hurried hither and thither, as though making preparations for a storm.

"Are the prospects favorable for a peaceable passage, mate?" asked the Massachusetts clergyman.

"Wa'al, we may have a shot or two from them clouds in the nor'west; but storm signals wasn't up at Port Huron, so I guess 'twont be much."

The cold air drove us within, and we soon forgot our vague alarm in the merry scene. The tables had been rolled away, and the colored waiters, with their guitars and banjos, formed a vocal and instrumental band.

"Old Huron's long, old Huron's wide,
De engine keep de time;
Leabe de ladies on de side,
And balance in a line—"

sang these lake minstrels in their melodious voices. The floor was crowded with dancers, all formality was laid aside, strangers danced with strangers, and even that relic of the past, the slow waltz, had its devotees. A Virginia reel brought us close upon Sunday morning, and we all retired. Before climbing to her perch, Persis opened the little window of our stateroom. The moon was obscured by clouds, and the lake looked dark, shoreless, and infinite, while the wind rattled the rigging overhead, and the engine seemed to beat through the floor. In the distance we saw a row of lights with a star twinkling above.

"That must be a steamer," said my niece. "But oh, auntie, what is that?"

A huge object towered from the water near by, loomed a moment alongside, and then vanished again in the darkness.

"A vessel, I suppose, my dear."

"A phantom ship, I verily believe, Aunt Rue. What a gruesome night!"

In spite of the "shots from the nor'west," we slept soundly, and were out on deck before breakfast to breathe in the delicious air. The blue water looked deep, deep, fathomless deep, and curled up around the sharp bows in white spray, and on the left a faint shoreline was fast disappearing into a watery horizon.

"Down there is where the fire swept last year," said the mate. "We was coming down then, and we couldn't see a thing for miles, the smoke was so thick. White ashes fell on deck all day, and we couldn't guess where they come from, we was so far from shore. The hull country was afire. It began over Lake Michigan, off Manistee, and we sailed in smoke all day. When we got to the straits we couldn't even find Mackinac. They didn't have any mail there for weeks and nothing come into port but wrecks. The islanders thought the rest of the world must be having a judgment-day."

When we went in to breakfast, glowing and braced by the exhilarating air and vivid sunshine, we found the pale women cowering over a fire, wrapped in shawls. "How are you this morning?" they said to one another, in funereal tones. "I'm almost frozen, I do declare." "Oh, there's that door open again!" "Just feel how much cold air that man brings in with him!" with a reproachful glance at Major Archer as he entered from the deck.

After breakfast we went back into the sunshine. There was a fresh breeze blowing over the pure water of the purest lake in the world, and we sat watching the little waves, or walking up and down the deck, all the morning. We were off Saginaw Bay, out of sight of land, and on all sides we could see the graceful lake craft sailing gayly before the wind with a cloud of canvas set, or beating up against it, close-reefed—schooners, brigs, and lines of lumber barges—while every now and then we passed a steamer, and once we met a propeller of the same line as the *Columbia*, and the unearthly double whistles saluted each other with cordial greeting.

At ten o'clock Dick, the colored waiter, appeared on deck with the great dinner bell in his hand. Stiff was his collar and flaming his tie as, with slow step, he began his promenade around the boat. "Ladies and gemmens, divine service all ready in the cabin." Ding dong, ding dong, ding dong! "Ladies and gemmens, divine service all ready in the cabin."

"I suppose our clerical friend from Massachusetts is about to hold forth," said Major Archer. "Do you wish to join the congregation, Mrs. Varick?"

"No," I replied; "the sky and the lake are sermon enough for me this morning."

Once in a while it does us all good to pass a Sunday out-of-doors. In our busy lives we seldom take the time to consider and admire the beauties of God's beautiful world."

But Miss Key marshaled her pupils inside, and Morris was seized with a strong desire to hear the sermon. It was somewhat singular, too, that when he came out, two hours afterward, he could not even tell me the text.

A few moments before dinner Dick appeared, to collect the stools. "I say, Dick, what are we going to have for dinner?" asked Morris. "This air makes me ravenous."

"Splendid dinner, Sah; ebery ling, Sah; peach s'wang, Sah," replied Dick, bringing out the last phrase with an air of great importance. And so it proved. Sunday was a gala day in the steward's estimation, and course after course appeared, concluding with the "s'wang," which proved to be peach meringue, made in a fashion peculiar to the lakes. Mrs. Peyton did full justice to every dish, and then sank back with a sigh.

"May I hope you will come out on deck for an hour or two this afternoon?" said the general, in a low tone. Poor man! he did his duty at the candy store, and cherished a fond hope of reward.

"Ah, no!" murmured the fair sufferer; "my nerves are not sufficiently braced to endure the breeze. I shall be obliged to rest all the afternoon."

"She will be up without fail in time for a hearty tea," said Persis, scornfully, as the stateroom door closed.

"Now, Sissy, let her alone," said Morris, laughing. "You don't like her just because she is pretty."

"Pretty! Why, she's at least forty."

"What of that? For my part, I rather prefer the mature style of beauty in a woman," said my Freshman nephew with a complacent air.

Going back on deck, we resumed our seats at the bows. The captain was walking up and down, and joined occasionally in our conversation. "Yes, Saginaw Bay is a risky place," he said, in answer to my question. "This time of year it's all fair sailing enough, but later in the season it's full of danger. The water's icy cold and deep here, and if anything happened to the boat, there ain't much chance. Last year, now, the *Coburn* went down not far from here; as good a boat as ever ran these lakes."

"I remember the loss of the *Coburn*," said Major Archer. "There were some army officers on board coming down from the Sault."

"There was a good many passengers lost. The women got kinder dazed like, and wouldn't even come out of their staterooms. I remember their friends were up and down the coast on both sides for weeks, watching for their bodies; but what goes down in Saginaw Bay don't come up again. The water's too deep," concluded the captain, shaking his head.

"I suppose the accident happened on a dark stormy night?" said Persis, with a little shiver.

"Yes, miss. But sometimes accidents happen in the best of weather. Some years ago two fine steamers ran right square into each other on this lake, although they saw each other coming miles back as plain as I see you now, and the sea as smooth as glass. To this day no mortal can tell how it happened. I remember the engineer of one of 'em. He was a fine young fellow, just married, and his wife was with him in the engine room. He

wouldn't leave his post, and she wouldn't leave him, so they went down together."

"After the collision, why didn't they go into one of the boats?" asked Persis.

"Bless your heart, miss, it was all over before you could say Jack Robinson," said the captain, continuing his promenade.

Some time after, the Massachusetts clergymen appeared. "Ah, captain, there seems to be quite a fine breeze," he remarked, with a shivering assumption of enjoyment; "really, quite briny! Can you inform me, now, which side is America, and which British America?"

"Starboard, Canada; port side, Michigan," said the captain laconically.

"Ah, yes; very true. I had become confused by the violence of the waves last night, but it is quite clear to me now. Ahem! I suppose if we should bear off well to the left we should soon be in the great Georgian Bay?"

"Very soon," replied the captain, with sarcastic emphasis, as he walked away.

A little later one of the pale women, shrouded in a hood, peeped out of the door. "Captain, captain, step here a moment, if you please. It's getting so dreadfully cold that most of the passengers is suffering from neuragy. Couldn't you just as well take us to Chicago without going round by the Straits? We don't any of us care about seeing 'em."

"Not very well marm," replied the captain. "There ain't no ship canal through Michigan just at present, marm, and the boat ain't provided with balloons this trip, marm." Exit hood in high indignation.

A short dark man who had been sitting on the anchor reading a paper got up after a while, and looking over the water, said, "Thunder Bay Islands?"

"Yes," answered the captain. "You know these regions, I see."

"I've traveled 'em pretty extensively for a year or two. I am a coal porter, Sir."

"What does he mean?" asked Persis, in an undertone.

"Colporteur, I presume," answered the major.

"A kind of minister, ain't it?" said the captain.

"Not exactly. I distribute books and papers of the Baptist Society among the coast towns and lumber settlements of Michigan."

"And how does religion flourish among these heathen people?" inquired the Massachusetts clergyman, joining in the conversation with a patronizing air.

"Wa'al, not so bad. But they don't care much for sermons, they don't."

"Sad, very sad." said the clergyman, shaking his head solemnly.

"The lumberman say they get enough sawdust week-days, without taking it into the Sabbath too," continued the colporteur, with a twinkle in his eye.

But the New England brother was not to be daunted. Clearing his throat in a dignified way, he began again, "You must have encountered many difficult subjects during your extensive journeyings. I should be pleased to hear the testimony of your experience."

"Wa'al," said the colporteur, slowly, "you're about right, Sir. I should say the most difficult subjects I've encountered have been gates. There's no two alike, and each latch opens a different way. Of course I'm expected to be perlitte and shut them all after me, but more than once I've experienced dreadful temptations to kick 'em to Hinders."

"That little man is the best fellow on board," muttered Morris, as the colporteur sent a twinkling glance after the retreating clergyman. "The rest are puppies."

Surprised at this ebullition, we looked up, and caught sight of Mephisto seated by Miss Blackeyes on the lee side of the boat.

"Ah," said Persis, "there is that Albany gentleman. What a fine-looking man he is!"

"Fine-looking" said Morris, wrathfully. "Why he's forty-five at least!"

"What of that? For my part, I rather prefer the mature style of beauty in a man," quoted Persis, with emphasis. Morris disappeared.

Evening found us again on deck. The breeze had died away; there was not a cloud in the sky, and the full moon threw a glory over the still water. Gradually the passengers assembled on deck, all but the pale women, who still surrounded the stove. Mephisto made a brilliant move by introducing the Massachusetts clergyman to the school-mistress; and the little blonde appeared, shivered, yawned, and disappeared, leaving her wandering sheep of a husband to drift inevitably into danger. He did the best he could, poor man; he examined every rope and chain three times over. But fate was too strong for him and he was soon engulfed in the circle around the school-girls. Music was proposed, and some one began a familiar tune. In a moment every voice joined in, and a full harmonious chorus floated over the water. Another and another followed—all kinds, from the Methodist hymn to the Episcopal "Jerusalem the golden." But the favorites were the Sunday school hymns, those with a ringing chorus and marching time. Then Major Archer sang the solo to "Come, ye disconsolate," his rich voice giving full expression to the beautiful words; and the school-girls, in sweet accord, gave a mariner's hymn:

Star of peace to wanderers weary,
Bright the beams that smile on me,
Cheer the pilot's vision dreary,
Far, far at sea!

Star divine, O safely guide him;
Bring the wanderer home to thee;
Sore temptations long have tried him,
Far, far at sea."

"Who shall say we have not remembered the Sabbath day, Aunt Rue?" said Persis, as the choir finally broke up.

It was eleven o'clock as the *Columbia* passed Bois Blanc light, and we all sat watching the approach to the beautiful island of Mackinac. It rose before us in the moonlight, its high cliffs and bold, dark outlines looking far more romantic and wild than anything we had seen on the freshwater seas. The little fort on the height and the little village on the beach seemed fast asleep; but the *Columbia's* whistle woke them, and a crowd stood on the dock as we came along-side.

"Oh, I must, I must go ashore!" said Persis "It is a fairy island, I am sure."

"It is too late, child; it is almost midnight. You had better come in and go to bed."

"The captain tells me the boat will lie here two hours, Mrs. Varick," said Major Archer, coming toward us. "I know all about the island, as I was once stationed at the fort.

I have a boat engaged, and I should like to row you around to the Fairy Spring."

Now I am a sensible, middle-aged woman, but something in the moonlight bewitched me, and I consented, much to the delight of my niece. In a few moments we were gliding over the silvery water, round the point, and under the dark cliffs crowned with evergreens.

"I do not wish to alarm you, Mrs. Varick, but this is the Devil's Kitchen," said Major Archer, as we landed on the beach near a rocky cave.

"Never mind; it is after twelve now," said Morris, looking at his watch.

We reached the little spring gushing out just above the beach, and stood in a circle around it.

"Now you must each make an offering to the fairy, drink three times from the fountain, and wish," said the major, gravely.

Persis threw in some bluebells, I gave a knot of ribbon, and Morris pinned a ten cent scrip to an overhanging branch."

"Well, major, what do you give?" he said, after we had performed the rites in silence.

"I made my wish some years ago; the fairy never listens twice," he answered, leading the way back to the boat.

"I vote we all tell our wishes; exact truth," said Morris, when we were once more on the silvery water.

After some banter Persis consented. She had wished for a trip to Europe, I had wished for health during the year, and Morris for a million dollars.

"Come major, what did you wish for years ago?" asked Morris.

But the officer was silent. He would not disclose his wish. Just as we reached to dock, however, I overheard him speaking to Persis:

"If you wish so much to know, Miss Wayne, I will tell you. It was for a sudden death."

The next morning we found ourselves at a little wood station on the Michigan shore. Sternly sat the little blonde upon the deck, vigilantly guarding her husband: not again was he to wander from his duty! He wandered no more.

Within the cabin the worsted work was in full play; wonders were accomplished in green roses and blue leaves that day. But the rest of us, idle triflers that we were, strolled up and down the beach, searching for agates, arranging fantastic bouquets of wild flowers, and making friends with the shy, sunburned children of the woodmen, who followed us with naive curiosity. Then we sailed away down among the islands—the Garden, the Foxes, the Beavers, and the Manitous—and by the singular white sand hills on the mainland, passing last of all the Sleeping Bear, a bold headland, in whose shape the early voyagers saw the outlines of old Bruin.

In the afternoon the air grew warmer, and the awning was raised over the forward deck; the breeze, too, was favorable, and the sail was put up, so that we sailed gayly over the green summer sea. Lake Erie was gray, Lake Huron blue, but Lake Michigan green as emerald. Suddenly the man at the wheel called out, "Vessel on fire ahead!" In an instant all was excitement; the passengers crowded on deck, the mate prepared a coil of small rope, and the captain gave orders to steer toward the wreck. It proved to be a schooner low

down in the water, still burning, and the crew, in a small boat, were rowing toward us. The engine was stopped, the rope thrown, and the men soon on board, heroes of the hour. Their vessel had been burning for some hours, and they had labored hard to extinguish the fire; but she was loaded with wood, and they were forced to abandon her and take to the small boat, which leaked so badly that they were afraid every moment she would sink.

"Then there was enough danger to make it a real adventure, Aunt Rue," said Persis, exultingly.

"Do not exult, my dear. There is danger enough on the lakes without courting it," I said quickly.

"Superstitious, Aunt Rue! Who would have suspected it?" cried Morris, gleefully. "You are as bad as the deck hands. Do you know, they won't put a foot on a boat if there is a white horse on board."

But the danger came soon enough in the shape of a fog, dense and continuous, as only a Lake Michigan fog can be. Day gave place to evening, but still the soft cloud filled the air, resting on the water, and making everything as still and weird as dreamland. All night the whistle sounded at regular intervals a dreary, dirge-like note, that kept sleep from our eyes, and filled our minds with visions of possible ships sailing silently across our course in the mist, or unseen propellers bearing swiftly down upon us, with sharp prows pointed against the *Columbia's* sides. Toward morning we fell asleep, and awoke in Milwaukee. The Cream City seemed doubly attractive after our long night in the fog. With one accord the passengers sailed forth on terra firma, surprised and pleased with the beauty of the buildings (mostly of cream-colored brick) and the bright, clean appearance of the streets.

"Since the great Chicago fire Milwaukee has taken her rightful position," said Major Archer, as we paused to admire the Insurance Building, on Wisconsin Street. "She has, in reality, the best harbor on Lake Michigan, and she handles an enormous amount of grain, which increases rapidly with every year. The climate and natural advantages are wonderful, and people are beginning to find it out. The German element in Milwaukee, always slow and sure, may have tended to keep back showy manifestations of wealth, but the city's growth is built upon solid foundations. She is the outlet for all the produce of the great State of Wisconsin on its way eastward."

As we roamed through the city we passed over many bridges crossing the river, crowded with shipping; we saw the new Courthouse, the Opera-house Block, the Plankinton Hotel, and some pleasant residences. Then after tasting Milwaukee's celebrated lager-beer, we took a carriage and drove out to the National Asylum for Disabled Soldiers, an imposing structure, where six hundred helpless men are provided with a home. And a home it is, in real earnest—not a hospital, a prison, or a reform institution presided over by stem and bigoted zealots, but a comfortable home, such as the nation intended. We were agreeably impressed with the cheerful look of the house, which was provided with bathrooms, smoking room, billiard room, card room, and ten-pin alley, in addition to a concert hall and a library of over a thousand volumes. As we read on the walls: "Soldiers are especially informed that this asylum is neither a hospital nor an almshouse; it is not considered a charity. It is a tribute to the brave and deserving, and is their right."

"Of all the lake towns, I like Milwaukee the best," said Persis, looking back upon the high shores, dotted with picturesque residences, as the *Columbia* steamed out of the harbor. "I think I should like to live here. It is not windy like Buffalo, or smoky like Cleveland, or quiet like Detroit, or wicked like Chicago. On the whole, I give the palm to the Cream City"

"One would think you had property there, little sister."

"I wish I had," said Persis.

It was a beautiful warm day, and all the passengers assembled on deck under the awning, to see the last of the *Columbia* and each other. Even the pale women packed their worsted work in satchels, and congratulated each other on the termination of the voyage. In an angle fenced off by the anchor, Faust was ensconced with Curlylocks, while Mephisto sat talking in a low tone to Blackeyes, who listened with downcast eyes and flushing cheeks. The two Albany gentlemen were to go directly from the boat to the cars, en route for San Francisco, and they were evidently trying to leave a deep impression on those two fresh little hearts before the final parting. Why? Pour passer le temps, I suppose. No doubt they expected to leave their track whitened with fair victims all the way across the continent. Miss Key was carrying on an aesthetic conversation with the Massachusetts clergyman, and no doubt its interest caused her to forget her lambs, so that when I happened to catch a glimpse of the sad eyes of Curlylocks and the bent head of Blackeyes, I really felt indignant with the careless shepherdess, and grieved for the little lambs.

"Those gentlemen are only amusing themselves, and those poor children are in earnest," I thought, indignantly.

The *Columbia* neared the end of her journey. A few moments more and her passengers would separate to the four corners of the globe, perhaps never to meet again this side of eternity. Major Archer was on his way to the Indian country, my party was en route for Southern Illinois, while Miss Key and her band were to return eastward by rail.

"I will bid you good-by now captain," I said, as that officer passed us. "We have enjoyed the journey very much. How late do you run?"

"Wa'al, generally up into December, marm. Then we lays up at whichever end of the line we finds ourselves, and goes home for the winter."

"And you like the life?"

"Yes, there ain't any air like the lakes, marm."

"Have you ever been on the ocean, captain?"

"No; nor want to. The ocean's just one big pool, all the same, you know, marm. But here we have all kinds, big and little ponds, rivers, and straits—something new all the time. And as to danger, I should like to see a salt try to navigate this here boat from Buffalo to Chi-care-go! Good-by, marm, and good luck to you all!"

"You see, the freshwater sailors have their esprit de corps," said Major Archer, smiling, as the captain passed on.

The Garden City received us with cordiality; but, in spite of her courage and industry, the track of the great fire was plainly visible. Major Archer spent his last hours with us, as we drove around the city to examine the new buildings, and watch the progress of reconstruction everywhere progressing. It was wonderful to see how much had been done, and we procured photographs to show our Eastern friends how the city was rising

from its ashes.

"Now that the fire is a thing of the past, we can dare to bring up the funny side of it," said Persis. "I wonder who has got that striped shawl, Aunt Rue? It was a joyful moment of my life when the good, useful, but hideous thing was packed for Chicago. I had hated it for years, but never quite dared to give it away."

"I was staying with my brother in Boston at the time," said Major Archer. "John was a good fellow, but he had no taste in dress; and there was one light overcoat among his garments which was an eyesore to his pretty daughter. When the message was brought from house to house, bundles of clothes were hastily prepared and placed in the hall. The wagon came, our contributions were sent out, and John and I went back to the parlor. Suddenly we heard a banging noise coming down the stairs; there was Katie dragging down that over coat, giving it an especial jerk on every stair in token of her abhorrence. 'My child, you are not going to give that nice—' But she was gone before her father could stop her, and we saw her throwing it into the wagon with eager generosity," concluded the major, with a laugh, in which we all joined.

When we got back to the hotel I went into the parlor. There I found Morris deep in conversation with Blackeyes, while Curlylocks was smiling over a bouquet presented by a newly arrived "Cousin Harry" by her side. Where was now that dejection? Where were now those sad eyes? O tempora! O mores! For the first time in my life I realized that I must be growing old. "'No hearts were broken by soft words spoken, only for something to say,' on this trip at least," I thought; and as I watched the innocent gambols of those two perfidious little lambkins in that parlor, I felt that I must have been a very aged and childish old sheep ever to have thought so.

Later in the evening Major Archer came to say goodby; with his departure our journey round by propeller was fairly ended, for the next morning we ourselves left the lake country behind us—it may be forever.

With one exception we have not since seen or heard anything of our fellow passengers on the *Columbia*. Held together for a few days, they have drifted apart again, lost in the infinite multitude of the world's shifting millions, and the one exception brought a pang which we shall not soon forget. It was but a few days ago. My little Persis saw it first, and read it with eyes brimming over with tears: "The Burnt River stage was attacked last week by Indians, and the passengers killed. Among them was Major Charles B. Archer, U.S.A., well known and respected in military life."