

ican shipping company which was able to charge prohibitive prices on the strength of American cruises which came there in the summer. His voice became witheringly scornful as he described the publicity methods of a race which seems to be hated more by Frenchmen than by any other nation.

From La Libertad we steamed on to San Jose in Guatemala and thence to Acajutla and Champerico. At each one we remained outside in the roads, and at each the Grace Line charged the same absurd price of D2.50 for going ashore. All the coast-line in these parts had a desolate beauty, full of mountains that looked like volcanoes, and barren deserted shores. Champerico was our last port of call before Los Angeles, and since then we have had to fall back on the small varieties provided by the sea. Our course took us far from the coast of Mexico and South California, that long peninsula which is divided from the mainland by the Gulf of California, a narrow and harbourless stretch of water. Long before I was sent to America I wanted to visit South California - which, despite its name, belongs to Mexico - but I am told now that it is uninhabited save for a few anthropologists who, dressed as aboriginal natives, hopefully stalk one another.

The Gulf of California is known locally as the Vermilion Gulf, owing to the colour assumed by the sea as the sun sets. On the evening we approached it long striated clouds gathered in the west, very different from the piled-up splendour of the sunsets farther south. As the sun sank, the clouds glittered like tongues of flame which curled and licked the sky far up towards its zenith; and when the sun dipped into the sea, a glorious pool of orange light shone round it on the waves. But the sunset the night after was even more wonderful. Then, long after the sun had gone down, the whole western sky flamed out in a moment and the sea glowed a sullen red as if reluctant to assume so strange a colour.

During the last few days several whales have been seen - but not by me. Also a school of more than a hundred porpoises - again not by me. And also a number of albatross. But at San Jose I saw a shark. People have been eager to see a shark ever since the voyage began, but have been constantly disappointed. So this was a great event and I ran in and called the other passengers, who rushed to the side of the ship with field-glasses. There was the long dark body and the triangular fin I had so often read about. Everybody was duly impressed and congratulated me on having noticed it. But then, instead of decently disappearing, the wretched creature was joined by another of its kind. Two sharks were possible, but when four or five more appeared - some inconveniently near to the ship - there began to be doubts. It was also remarked that they vanished beneath the waves from time to time and reappeared; in fact, they plunged in and out of them. Soon the disgusted cry was raised, "Dolphins!" Stubbornly, but with declining conviction, I argued in favour of sharks, pointing to their great length (they were quite ten feet long) and their narrow bodies. But at the same time I got involved in a subsidiary argument with Herr Wohlgemuth, who did not know the difference between sharks and whales, and so many of the creatures had now appeared so near the ship, and were so unmistakeably large dolphins, that I was utterly defeated. The cry went all against me, and even then the faithless fish would not disappear - not, at least, until I ran down to get my camera.

As we near America the talk has all turned to that country, and American magazines and newspapers have appeared in shoals. They make me terribly depressed. Even the best ones are marred by the worst forms of vulgarity and sensationalism, and by a naivete which it was easy to laugh at in England but is now alarmingly close and real. I have a pamphlet about Los

Angeles which the captain has lent me. For pages and pages it exults in the mere size of the place, and after that in the immensity of its industrial output. Pictures of important buildings show an incongruous mixture of the Spanish and American styles, and everywhere a love of ostentation. At last, right at the end, we find a small section headed "A cultural center". The writer begins diffidently "there is evidence that here man's interest is not entirely centred on material things"; but after an unconvincing list of museums and libraries he warms to his task. "Beautiful churches of all denominations", he says, "are generously sprinkled throughout the County. As the communities have expanded, old outgrown buildings have given way to new modern structures." Finally in a burst of enthusiasm he exclaims, "The spiritual atmosphere of this territory is above the ordinary."

There is growing excitement on board. Voluminous customs declarations have been issued and there is hot discussion as to what must and need not be entered on them. I find myself consulted as an authority not only on the exact interpretation of English words, but on the methods by which the Customs can be most easily passed; although, as Anne and Roger know, no one could be more hopelessly incompetent than I. If I could not take charge for them of one box of cigarettes, how can I help the Caros with the contents of their twenty-three suitcases and trunks, and their thirteen enormous crates in the hold?

Bernard is the only passenger who has nothing to do, and he has just recovered from an illness. His father discovered one morning that he had pains in his ear. Immediately he was in a panic. In all seriousness he calculated the length of time that an aeroplane would take to reach the ship with medical help, although he confused miles and kilometres so often that the figures would have been useless even if needed. The next morning

Bernard appeared for breakfast. Herr Wohlgemuth suggested to me a likely reason for this alarmism: that M. Caro is afraid lest the Immigration Authorities should raise difficulties over his Honduran passport, and refuse to accept its validity. And indeed it savours of fraud to have offered nothing but a distant salute to one of the volcanos of one's native country, and never once to have set foot on its shores. The other day M. Caro said to me with pretended seriousness, "The principal exports of Honduras are coffee, gold, mahogany - and passports." While laughing heartily at his joke, I told him that it would be little appreciated in America.

There is plenty of laughter like this to be heard, but it scarcely covers the unhappiness beneath. To travel on this ship is to realize something of the misery of exile. All its passengers, except the Aulds and myself, have been driven out of their countries, while the Wohlgemuths have also had to leave the country to which they fled. They go from country to country, but can acknowledge none as home; no sense of security is left to them, and no anchorage for their loyalties. Terrified of the shrinkage of freedom in Europe, and the perilous state of the remaining democracies, they seek a refuge in America which is so large that almost everyone has friends he can go to. Their attitude to Germany is much less embittered than I should have expected, and this makes their occasional stories the more damning. They are ready to acknowledge the material benefits which Hitler has rendered to his country; but when they speak of their friends' total disappearance, and shrug their shoulders, it is terrifying. M. Caro thinks, as I suppose most people do, that the regime is bound to break down in the next ten years or so; the Germans, he says, are a people whose ambitions always outrun their powers. Herr Wohlgemuth is remarkably well informed about all English matters, and this is the more surprising because he is not widely read and could

not possibly be called a man of culture. But by assiduously reading the Manchester Guardian Weekly with the aid of a dictionary for some years he has amassed an astonishing amount of knowledge. When, for instance, we were talking about English law, I ^{found} ~~find~~ that he knew roughly the provisions of the new Marriage Act, the number of divorce judges exactly and the antecedents of the two just appointed. He is also well informed on parliamentary debates and questions in the House, and knows quite a lot even about the second rank of English politicians.

To-day it has gradually been getting rougher and rougher, and now there is more movement than when we first put to sea. My walking practice then has proved its value, and I can now adjust myself without thinking about it to the swing of the boat. The rough sea and brilliant sunshine make ideal weather, but less agreeable is the temperature which has fallen about 20 degrees F. in the last two days. Although almost out of sight of the Mexican coast, the ship is followed by flocks of gulls, which swerve and wheel in marvellously graceful flight, and as they just keep up to our speed, it is possible to watch them as if we were flying ourselves. In the late afternoon I went and stood in the stern, round which most of the gulls clustered so close that with field-glasses I could see every feather on their wings and follow every glance of their beady eyes. In the wake of the gulls, as befitted more aristocratic birds, came two albatross, and I watched their flight with intense pleasure. A mere tremor of the wings was sufficient to send them darting from side to side at many times their speed of the ship. Then they would skim downwards, turning upon their sides, so that one wing-tip practically struck the rough surface of the wave - and so up again, high in the air with effortless wings outspread, curved back in majestic flight. Although they were much farther away, and only a dull brown in col-

our, nobody would look again at the gulls who had once seen them. Even as I watched it grew rougher, and the stern, heaving up out of the water and slowing down into it again, threw up clouds of fine spray. The level beams of the sun, shining through these clouds, made a rainbow which started from the foamy wake and curved round sometimes as much as a semicircle against the sky. To-night the sun has set behind an impenetrable cloud, and will not be beautiful any more. It is our last night at sea, for to-morrow we shall lie at anchor in the harbour of San Pedro, coming in to shore early on Monday morning.

My thoughts turn back involuntarily to the day in December when O'Brien asked me how long it would take me to get ready to go to America. I answered, "About two weeks", and could have done it - but owing to the company's mistake about the labour permit it was two months before I was able to sail. It was on that day that I first saw Mr. Goetz. He lived, I was told, in splendid isolation, and could only be communicated with by telephone calls and written memoranda. O'Brien, Don Cameron and I were gathered in the office, and O'Brien reverently clicked the appropriate lever of ~~him~~ the loud-speaking telephone on his desk. Only a secretary spoke. "Mr. Goetz will buzz you", she said. O'Brien turned to us with a face wreathed in smiles. "Mr. Goetz will buzz us", he said. A hush fell on the room. It was deep as the silence of Remembrance Day, or of those minutes at a seance when a voice is soon expected from another world. Then the maroon sounded, the trumpet emitted its squawking voice. Mr. Goetz spoke. The accents of Bowery, mingled with those of Jerusalem and still further distorted by the instrument, grated harshly into the room. The words were commonplace, illiterate, but of course the words of a great man. O'Brien's voice was clothed in a rich silkiness such as even he can seldom have attained, as he purred back into

the machine. He spoke slowly and very distinctly and almost pleadingly -- as a traveller in a far country might address one of the local gods of whose support he was extremely uncertain and whose language he did not properly know; or, looking down instead of up, as a stranger might speak to a very small child. After that I was led into the presence of Mr. Goetz, but as I have told most of you about that interview I won't repeat the story. Then in a daze I came back to O'Brien's office, where several of the higher executives, when they had been told of my destiny, asked "Aren't you just crazy to go to Hollywood?" But I couldn't bring myself to say that I was crazy, and so I answered that I was anxious or keen, or even eager. This of course disappointed them. And one of them, a solitary Englishman, was much distressed at the faintness of my enthusiasm. "Why", he said, "Even I have never been to Hollywood". And as he spoke a dreamy, far-away look came into his eyes as if he were hearing in imagination the Wurlitzer playing over those Elysian fields.

And then my mind strays forward to the last time I visited the M.G.M. offices, the day before I left England. It was a farewell visit and Cameron, whose kindness is infinite, had got ready for me a large number of introductory letters to friends whose occupations interested me. He had so often said, "I'm sure there are thousands of questions you want to ask me", when I had vainly racked my mind to think of one, that this time I had prepared a number which he was delighted to answer, though I have mostly forgotten what he said. But I know I asked him whether I should be allowed to go "onto the set" in my spare time, and he replied "Yes, of course, whenever and wherever you want to"; then, remembering something, his voice dropped to a respectful murmur and he said, "But naturally not the Garbo set". I marvelled at the power of a woman who could cause voices to be dropped at the mere mention

of her name in an office six thousand miles away. I felt as a pagan visitor to Jerusalem in ancient times might have done, when someone pointed out to him the Holy of Holies and told ~~him~~ him that Jehovah Himself dwelt there. In a few days, I suppose, someone will point out to me a similar but much larger plain square building and I shall know that Garbo Herself dwells there. It makes it much easier when you think of them as gods and goddesses. But it is disconcerting to find that here, upon the verge of America, the wildest absurdities wear the appearance of the real.

I have been reading through these pages to correct mistakes, and am disappointed to discover that what I have written has neither the informality of conversation nor the style of a properly written piece. I suppose this is because I have thought it out roughly in my head and then typed it as fast as possible - whatever the reason, the result ^{is} is the same. So I want all of you to write and tell me honestly whether or not you are bored by the account. Of course each section from America won't be nearly so long as this one, but it will probably amount to twenty pages every fortnight. If even a few of you are interested, I will continue, as in the Biblical story, as before, recommending the others to skip. If none are interested, I will write less. But I want your honest opinions.

You may well wonder why it is that I write so much, and enjoy doing it when it is to be read by you. I think the reason is - and this is easier to write than say - that I like to follow the thread of all your lives as far as I can continuously, taking it up whenever I meet you and hearing what has happened since I saw you last. To take just one example. I want to hear from Roger the details of all the cases he is engaged in, and when he says, "Speaking as the horse, I have an absolutely cast-iron case. My opponent, the traction-engine, simply hasn't a leg to stand on", the absurd disputants

spring to life and I follow the details as far as my ignorance of law allows, hoping for Roger's success as if it were my own. And so with all of you, seeing that you take such an intense interest in all that you do. In writing this journal I suppose I have felt, not from pride but without thinking, that you regarded me in the same light. But it is quite natural that you should not do so, and many friends do not so regard one another.

It was a terrible wrench to break so many separate threads of existence at once. I can see you all, stopped like film in a projector, at the moment when I saw you last: Roger and Anne waving from different trains to Oxford, Verdon at the entrance to Trafalgar Square tube, John and Alan and Kathleen at Waterloo. Thence run as many threads, though for the first time for years I can see nothing of them. It is hard to be out of England when the Spring is there. In imagination I trace the walks through Kent and Sussex and Dorset which I went with Dinah last year; and before that the walks in Oxfordshire and Somerset with friends; and again I walk through the streets of London, Bath and Oxford, some of which I know so well that I can look into the shop-windows as I pass. I shall not forget these things in the excitement of American life.

To-night at dinner the talk turned on immigration, and the officers told many lurid stories of people who had been turned back. M. Caro was in great good humour. He begged the Chief Engineer to treat the authorities to a glass of his rum at breakfast on Monday, to make them "un peu joyeux". But, we said, supposing in their merriment they asked him the name of the President of Honduras? This stumped him for a moment, then he said he would answer "Senor Rodriguez Fernandez" with a broad and rapid Spanish accent, and if found out, would plead that his native land must have suffered a revolution and change of government during the voyage. We told him that he

It to have hired a canoe at La Union and rowed himself across to the Honduran shore. But he thought it would have sufficed if he had bought some Honduran earth from the Consulate in Paris, and carried it with him in a coffin, Chinese-fashion, to show to the American authorities.

MARCH 27, 1938.

So the long voyage comes to an end, a longer voyage than I hope ever to undertake again. But perhaps I have complained about it unjustly. After all, for the sum of £40, I have not merely been carried the 6,000 miles from London to Los Angeles, but have been carried by a far longer route and have stopped at many interesting places. During this month I have had no expenses whatever, and have been provided with room to sleep by myself and food of excellent quality. Against this must be set a number of petty annoyances: the noises, the insects, the sanitation. But when the goal is Los Angeles, Stevenson's maxim about travelling may well apply; and latterly at least, I have tried to regard this long blank of the journey philosophically. The hardest thing about it is knowing nothing of your doings for so long.

Now it is evening again. My suit-cases are packed and set ready for the Customs to-morrow morning. In a few hours I shall see the lights of Los Angeles. A new life will begin.
