

CHAPTER III

WE EMBARK

I

ON MY LAST night in England, I went out into the garden. It was a few minutes to twelve. Soon I should hear Big Ben in London chiming midnight, for I had opened the study window and turned on the radio. It was a cold, cloudless night, starlit. A car coming up the Oxford road from Henley caught my chimney in a noose of light from its headlamps; it wavered, shifted suddenly, and left the cottage in darkness again. Despite the wet lawn, for it had been raining all day, I walked round the house, heard a bird cry in the leafless woods, and paused by my garden gate, glancing down the empty lane towards some cottages where lights still burned.

In two weeks from this night, according to plan, I should be in Florida, and instead of this chill damp air in a barren garden I might possibly be enjoying a summer's night filled with the scent of flowers.

For I really was going. A new book was finished and despatched to my publishers, the household accounts had been provided for through the next three months, my portmanteaux were packed, my passport viséd, and I had paid the head tax demanded by the United States Government, which had to be assured that I could read and write, had not come out of an asylum, and had never been in gaol.

In her dock at Southampton the *Princess of Connaught* was waiting to sail at noon. To-night I was sleeping in my own room with its billowy old ceiling, and the dormer window at which I now looked up, set under a single bright star, and framed against the sky, with four poplar trees and a beechwood on a hill for background. There stood the half-finished garden house and sunbathing platform my friend and I had built through the October rain, and which must now wait for completion in the spring. I was to go sunbathing elsewhere, four thousand miles away in the land of palms, not poplar trees.

And, perversely, now that the last hour had come, I was reluctant to go. How cosy the old place was! Through the uncurtained window I looked into my study, lined with the coloured backs of books, soft with shaded lights, gay with the rugs whose patterns I knew. The ornaments, the china hippopotamus and leopard from Copenhagen, the toucan from the Nymphenburg, the carved dog from high Ortisei, the stool from Cortina, the Chelsea china sheperdesses, I knew their shapes and colours, just as I knew the sound of the log fire flickering in the still evening as I read, or did not read, sitting in semi-contemplation while the measured minutes carried life forward in calm content.

This morrow night I should be sleeping in Cabin B46, on a waste of waters, in a strange bed, and for weeks the odd little things one cherishes would be no more in my routine; I should not open the budgerigar's cage after breakfast and hear him go out with a screech of delight on his morning round, first to sit on the portrait of a great-aunt, then to visit the lampshade, and then to sit on a ledge in my study window. For three months I should not hear the postman come down the garden path, the two cow-women talking to Phyl-

lis, Betty, and Lucy, the three reluctant cows they drove out of the shed into the lane, and then in at the field gate. I should not—

Enough, and how ridiculous. I had schemed to go away. I was going of my own free will, and I had nothing but a pleasurable experience before me; moreover, was I not going to old friends, to a land flooded with sunshine and rich with tropical flowers and fruits?

I went indoors and turned the key. For a moment, after I had switched out the lights, I paused in the silent study, listening to the fire settling in the grate, to the clock ticking on the mantelpiece, and to those half-sounds which an old house possesses from its traffic with the centuries.

Then I went up to bed. Adventure was coming with the morning.

II

The taxi carried me to Waterloo Station through a grey old London. My luggage, labelled "Wanted on the Voyage," carried a large "R," which would be needed when it was taken off the ship to the alphabetical sections of the American Customs shed at New York. I contemplated one new bag, and one old bag which had already been four times around America. The new bag looked stiff and slightly self-conscious beside the battered veteran. The latter could boast a knowledge of many lands and races. It had been on steamers and aeroplanes, it had even ridden on an elephant. Black hands, white hands, and yellow hands had carried it up and down gangways, French, Italian, German, Russian, Spanish, Slav, and Greek porters had jerked it up and set it down in trains and taxis across the Old World. It had been lost and discovered ten thousand feet up a Swiss mountain, an-

nexed by an alpinist, and once it had been taken to prison along with its owner, who had driven over the border of a Balkan State without knowing it, and had given four down-at-heel gendarmes a morning's excitement with their capture. The old bag was nearing the end of its days. This was its last transatlantic voyage, I feared. I hoped it would last to end its career in England.

A long line of porters awaited the passengers for the *Princess of Connaught*. They struggled with mountains of luggage, and the first objects I noted, belonging to my fellow-voyagers, were a series of wardrobe trunks, cabin trunks, portmanteaux, bags, and hat-boxes, all shinningly new, all proclaiming to the world, in bright yellow paint, the name of their owner—J. R. M. de Montfort Wellington-Solomon.

Who was it that could own so much luggage and such a name? I counted thirty large pieces; there were odds and ends, cushion cases, folding chairs, golf bags, a gramophone, and three cases of champagne. Four porters' trucks were loaded with the impedimenta of the de Montfort Wellington-Solomons.

I followed behind the Wellington-Solomon possessions, my own porter lost to sight on the further arête of that moving mountain. The platform was crowded, and there was a gaiety of colour and speech in strong contrast with that grim station on this grey morning. The stationmaster was present in his top-hat, a symbol of office he still shares with bank messengers. His hat reminded me with something of a pang that for some months I should no more see the fourteen top-hats, all in a row, resting on the mahogany counter of Lloyds Bank in Pall Mall. Somehow those messengers' top-hats, in a shining immaculate row, give me increased confidence in the stability of my bank. If they wore

soft felt hats it would not be the same; if they wore caps I should withdraw my account. I am loyal to my bank, and the one time I waver is when I have occasion to visit Coutts Bank, in the Strand. There, not only do the messengers wear top-hats, but all the young clerks wear frock-coats. It makes cheque-cashing a solemn and majestic occasion.

The stationmaster's top-hat showed that this was no ordinary departure. Moreover, there stood, talking with him, one who was unmistakably a director of the Transatlantic Shipping Company. He was tall, about sixty, with greying hair, an aristocratic hook nose, an eagle eye, directorial in short. He was well dressed, his brown shoes were 'vintage,' as also his complexion. Long years of conferences, board meetings, and City Company dinners had produced that benign, yet dignified bearing, which epitomised the City, old England, the Empire's trade, the Hear! Hearers on the occasion when the Prime Minister responds to the toast of the evening. I felt safer on my Atlantic crossing because of this representative of the brains and breeding behind the great Line. "Who is that?" I asked the engaging young man from the office, whose business it was to make every passenger feel the company was particularly interested in one.

"That? That's Sir Gerald Holmes, one of our directors," replied the young man with the bundle of papers.

"Is he sailing too?"

"Oh, no, he's going as far as Southampton just to see the ship off."

How very nice of him, I thought. It was, of course, a little outing for him, a pleasant form of business. Probably he would lunch on the boat before it sailed, in which case the Company's champagne would be produced. But even so, it was nice to know a director was seeing us off.

I looked round at my fellow-passengers. We were a mixed lot. The *Princess of Connaught* was taking passengers to Madeira, where they were transferring to the *Princess of India* for a world cruise; hence our route to New York via Madeira. At present one could not distinguish world cruisers from transatlantic passengers.

Just as the young man left me there was a vision walking down the platform that checked all conversation. We all looked, fascinated, feeling it could not possibly be true. Escorted by three Hebraic gentlemen, complete with cigars and stomachs, there came, emerging from a kind of barrel of furs, a short young woman, mounted on mauve shoes that were almost stilts. Her rather too substantial legs were clad in flesh-colour silk stockings and were visible to the fat knee-caps. From the other end of the mink barrel appeared a head on whose platinum-blond hair perched a tiny pill-box hat with a long blue feather erect above. Her face was white, of the flour-dusted texture of a newly baked loaf. Her eyebrows had been plucked, and a black sticky line marked their late foundations. Her eyelashes were clogged with a sooty substance, and her lips were caked with scarlet grease, which seemed to emphasise the yellowness of her teeth when she smiled. In keeping with the current fashion, her finger-nails had been dipped in the blood-tub. She might have come direct from a cannibal feast. She clasped to her furry bosom a bald rat-like dog with a large crimson bow. Every step she took, with a stilted hippy motion, caused the dog's tongue to protrude in an obscene fashion.

We stood paralysed as the escorted lady passed in a cloud of scent and cigar smoke. That, undoubtedly, was the Film Star. Every Atlantic liner carried one. "I wonder what the

girl looks like *washed*," said a voice near me. I wondered what kind of a rim would be left in the bath.

The procession continued. The well-to-do widow; the American commercial traveller; the retired shopkeeper and wife, with new clothes and a slightly nervous air; a large noisy family of three boys, two girls, a tired mother, and a fat governess, which some easy-going man contrived to take about the world; the lean enigmatical fellow who might be collecting flora in Yucatan, or propagating a new religion; they all passed.

And then a lovely vision caught our eyes. Slender, beautifully dressed, with high complexion, dark flashing long-lashed eyes, black hair framing the petite face under its blue beret, she might have been an Andalusian beauty, a Spanish princess. I was quite wrong, I found later. She was an English countess going to Palm Beach.

And where were the de Montfort Wellington-Solomons? Somehow the film star's *corps des Judéens* did not match this luggage; moreover, they were Americans, and the trunks were extremely English. No one I saw seemed to be the probable possessor of all those trunks.

The whistle blew, we all took our seats. The stationmaster raised his glossy hat and bowed gracefully. This could not be to the Director. Either the bow was to the general company departing, or it was to some particular lady? To the film star? I did not like the idea.

The train started, there was a slight pandemonium of blown kisses, fluttered handkerchiefs, and inconsequent last words. I settled in my corner. We were off. The journey had begun. Across the tops of London's smoky roofs and chimney-pots I reflected that I was really going to Florida. A leaden river, glazed by a weak sun, curved away towards

Westminster Bridge and the Houses of Parliament. London stretched and stretched through crowded streets, pinnacled corners of public-houses, dirty upper windows, shanty-barricaded backs of houses, then through patches of despairing gardens, and, finally, the looser pattern of suburbia merging into the Surrey fields.

I opened *The Times* and settled down to read. In the Court News Column two names caught my eye. "Sir Henry Morden left London on Monday to join Lord Overy in his yacht *Bluespar* at Cannes, for a cruise in the Mediterranean. He will be away about four weeks." I knew them both, and could fancy the satisfaction with which Sir Henry had sent this notice to *The Times*.

Well, I did not feel at all envious. I liked Lord Overy, but I did not like his yacht. I feared all yachts—every one of them was forty thousand tons too small for my pleasure. Sir Henry could enjoy himself in the Mediterranean. I could see the *Bluespar* pitching as soon as she headed for the Porquerolles. I recalled Count de R——'s beautiful yacht. Five minutes after I had left Cannes in it I did not care whether it was a coal barge. It became a coffin with a conscious corpse.

The thought of seasickness recalled a recent present from my friend Harry. He knew all I suffered, and in his unflinching kindness had given me a strange device called 'a solar pad.' This, as its name might denote, had nothing to do with astronomy. It was a small cotton-wool pad, with a belt attached, which had to be firmly applied to the solar plexus. With this pad firmly strapped to one's stomach one could not be seasick. Harry knew it was so. He had gone to South Africa and back with this solar pad, and what had always been an ordeal had become a pleasure. Hitherto a

bad sailor, he was now thinking of a cruise, so miraculous was the solar pad. I accepted the gift, but remained incredulous.

For twenty years I had been trying everything, champagne, an apple, vinegar, having a large meal, having no meal, lying down, keeping up, walking to windward, repressing the diaphragm, breathing deep, plugging the ears, and wearing shaded glasses. I had taken dozens of 'cures,' including one that rendered me deaf, one that made me voiceless, and one monstrous 'remedy' that made me temporarily blind. Nor have I yet forgotten or forgiven the man who assured me that a porous plaster on the diaphragm was an infallible cure. Completely gullible in my hope of a cure, I believed the knave. Seasickness in normal conditions is an unspeakable agony, but seasickness with a porous plaster tearing at one during every convulsive spasm is the refinement of cruelty.

I looked at the weather forecast. English Channel, sea moderate to rough. After the Channel came the Bay of Biscay. It seemed improbable that I should see much of my fellow-passengers as far as Madeira; after that, with a fair sea, I might get my sea legs; or would the solar pad do the trick? Bitter experience had not yet cured me of the folly of hope.

III

At noon we reached the dock. The *Princess of Connaught* lay alongside, white, immense, and scrubbed clean. I mounted the gangway, which always reminds me of the run up into the hen coop. The very entrance of a ship is unpleasant. It opens its bowels to you and you enter by the

mid-ribs; great iron plates are flung back and the gangway probes a gaping wound in the ship's side.

The moment one is inside the illusion of perfect content begins. Everyone smiles at you. My first sight was that of a bright young officer backed by two rows of tiny page boys, newly washed and wearing cotton gloves. Why do shipping companies specialise in the smallest variety of page boys? Is it because they can be tucked away at night on spare ledges? Do they fill crevices in between the bunks of heavy members of the crew, or does the Purser keep them in pigeonholes?

The small page allotted to my cabin could just look over the wash basin, and bore the ludicrous name of Mountain. He looked under-nourished, and he amazed me by saying he was nearly sixteen. I thought of my own ward—a year younger, five feet nine, and weighing one hundred and forty pounds, who was still fagging in his House, still beatable by his prefect, and with five or six more years of education before him. Mountain had left school at fourteen, and was now earning a living running along narrow corridors, and sleeping for'ard with five boys in a tiny cabin.

Led by a page, I found my cabin. I was relieved to find I had a proper bed and not one of those coffin boxes which for so long have been maintained by sea traditions. But I had to inform my steward, a depressed little Cockney, just out of hospital, that I could not sleep in a sea bed. He raised very bushy eyebrows and asked what I meant. I showed him.

Who began that preposterous method of folding sheets and blankets which prevails afloat? During the war I became acquainted with it in battleships and cruisers. The

sheets are folded over a blanket, and the consequent pad is laid loose on the top of the bed. One's feet immediately protrude out of the bottom, and since the sheets are not tucked in there are draughts all round. Having made my meaning clear, I departed up on to the deck. My steward was certain he had struck a grand eccentric.

I arrived on the promenade deck, where a crowd had collected, and where half a dozen photographers were busy taking a group. At first I thought the celebrity drawing these black-box manipulators must be the film star. But I was wrong, and in an instant many things I had wondered at were made clear. For there, with the Captain and the Director and the Countess, stood the Duke and Duchess of Perthshire, all smiling, all chattering while the cameras clicked. So that was why the stationmaster's top-hat had come out, and the Director had travelled down to see us safely off.

I knew now, beyond all doubt, that nothing would be omitted that could add to the amenities of our voyage. The chef, the orchestra, the Captain, and the crew would be all tuned up. 'Le snobisme' as the French call it, but which we English prefer to regard as an ordering of life varied by stages of privilege and politeness, would animate the ship down to the hairdresser's assistant and the bath attendant.

Another small page boy asked me my name, and gave me a bundle of telegrams. They were from friends wishing me Bon Voyage, which was very thoughtful of them. No one goes aboard ship without feeling a little lonely. A voyage is something of a plunge into the unknown, however familiar the route. One eats at a strange table, among strange people. One goes to a strange bedroom and a strange

bed. There is no familiar scene, nothing but a waste of water, and all the days seem alike. One is isolated and forgotten—or one thinks so at the beginning. It is comforting, therefore, to learn that one's departure has not been forgotten, even though it has not been advertised in *The Times*.

And also there is the pardonable vanity which comes from standing on the promenade deck of a liner about to sail and opening telegram after telegram. Actresses and opera stars and duchesses have further excitements, and demonstrations from adoring friends. When they have been photographed and have opened sheafs of telegrams, they descend to their staterooms and find mountains of flowers. Sometimes the flowers crowd out the passengers; then they overflow down to the tables in the dining saloon. I did not have a floral send-off, but three well-wishing publishers had sent me parcels of books. I could have read from Southampton to New York had I ever felt fit to read. But it was pleasant to see these new books standing on my dressing-table; and they kept longer than flowers.

I explored the ship. As I anticipated, the Director and some friends were having a quick lunch, with champagne. Visitors thronged the decks and public rooms. I again marvelled at the useless luxury of these ocean liners. Vast saloons, vast lounges, verandah gardens, a vast smoking-room, a large writing-room, a large drawing-room, a swimming pool, a gymnasium, a tea terrace, a cinema theatre, a library, a long gallery of shops, two cocktail bars, lifts, grand staircases, a musicians' gallery, a bank, a hairdresser's shop—one walked and walked, upstairs and downstairs, on A deck and B deck and C deck and D deck. But below, the

ordinary staterooms were boxes just big enough to hold a bed, a wardrobe, and a washbowl; only the most expensive staterooms approached comfortable size.

When will the designers of ocean liners realise that passengers do not want to sit in a lounge two hundred feet long and fifty high, with mural decorations and domed ceilings, or eat in a dining saloon of Pompeian pillars and all the grandeur that was Rome with all the frillings that are French. No one used our large white drawing-room, only two persons ever rode any of the six mechanical horses. Fireplaces that seemed to have come from great baronial halls were surmounted by those nondescript life-sized paintings of princelings holding scrolls against a background of velour curtains falling across an immense column. Everything was too vast, too grandiose, too high, or when one saw the menu, too long. Must one live for five days like a Grand Duke of the Settecento, and sleep like a lackey, in order to cross the Atlantic?

The Purser, who lived his life in this ship, was cooped up in a low, small room lit by two portholes. In this cabin he slept, and was expected to dispense private hospitality. The bunk of the Staff-Captain, such were the exigencies of space, was placed crosswise, port to starboard, so that every time the ship pitched, and he was well for'ard, he rolled from side to side. The stewards, of course, were caged like rabbits, and the deck-hands lay confined in the bows. First-class passengers are not aware of the pressure of space, lost in an expanse of cubic feet, under a canopy of naked goddesses and rosy cherubs tumbling through the blue sky as they empty cornucopias of flowers. A first-class passenger myself, belonging to the pampered section of the floating population, I even used to envy one of those cherubs its ample

space and freedom of movement. Nowhere in my stateroom could I have kicked my limbs freely.

The traditions of the sea die hard. In my own time there has been one surprising death—and I do not like it. One was sternly taught not only that the liner was a lady, but that she had port and starboard sides, as well as a false bottom and bulkheads. To speak of the right or left side of a ship was to draw down upon one the withering contempt of all sea voyagers. I was careful to learn the right application of these terms, and after a confusing struggle, for I always forgot whether port side was right or left, I found a method of getting it clear in my mind. A hoary tradition, impressed on me from boyhood, and which none of us dare infringe, is that at table the port decanter must circulate to the left. If you tried to pass it to your companion on the right he would refuse to accept it, and wonder where you had been educated. A simple application of this tradition to the ship served to fix in my mind that, since port went to the left, port must be the left side of the ship. As for starboard, once I had fixed the port on the left, starboard could be nowhere else but on the right.

And now, after all this ingenuity, when I can shame any land-lubber with my easy and correct reference to port or starboard, the tradition of hundreds of years has been thrown overboard. They now call the port and starboard the left side and right side. I squirm every time some creature talks about the left or right side of a liner. Has the change been made in deference to the ignorance of cruising parties? How long will it be before funnels become chimneys, the anchor the hook, the stern the back end? And why insist on steaming 'knots' when 'miles per hour' dispenses with nautical measure. The sea is losing its traditions—already

our sailors are losing ropecraft. They would be stumped if you asked them to splice the mainbrace. Ropes and sails are passing from their ken.

And I have observed that another tradition, a social one, is passing also. It will be a blow at the category of passengers that likes a clear distinction to be conferred on it from the first meal on board. If you are of importance, if you are famous, or if you wield influence, you are lifted above the common folk who are just told to sit at table seventy-one or table forty-four. The Captain's table is an honour conferred only on those whose titles or talents or purses command pre-eminence. What heart-burnings, what wrecked voyages, there have been owing to Mr. A's or Mrs. B's failure to make the Captain's oval table where the peeress, the baronet, the ex-Governor, and the foreign Royalty, with a leavening of excessive wealth, sit in glory, a kind of ocean Cabinet meeting, with the genial Captain as Prime Minister.

I can still recall the glow of vanity that suffused me on my first Atlantic crossing when, after the second meal at an obscure table in a far corner, the Purser himself approached me, with the Captain's compliments; would I not sit at the Captain's table? Like a prize scholar who had got his remove, I left my former companions, dull and undistinguished, for the wit and glitter of the select few. Actually I found that half the company was dumb if undistinguished, that the Captain did not even know my name, and that, while unfailingly courteous, he was a bore. We had to listen to him droning away, with all the silent deference of sixth-form boys allowed to hear the reminiscences of the headmaster.

I wondered, of course, how the Captain knew that I was on board. That showed some kind of alertness. How was

he, amid all his duties, clever enough to invite just the right people to his table? Had he carefully studied the passenger list beforehand, *Burke's Peerage* and *Who's Who* beside him? But even that did not account for my presence. At that time neither parental accident nor personal effort had lifted me into those self-edited announcements of distinction by birth or brain. True, at that time I had written three books of alleged poetry, but I could not believe that the plethoric Captain was a disciple of my muse. However, here I was, at the Captain's table, with a dowager viscountess on my right—who rumbled ominously—and an admiral's lovely wife on my left.

The food was excellent, the conversation appalling. Sometimes the Captain was absent, and we all relaxed. He was said to be on the bridge. I suspected he was relaxing too, in carpet slippers in his cabin.

I am wiser now. I avoid the Captain's table, and select an obscure one, with a chosen companion, where I can concentrate on the food, if able to eat. I learned to be sorry for the Captain, who was compelled to be affable with a temporary collection of important people, forced upon him by a selected list compiled in the head office. Instructions to the Purser warn him of the eminent people on board. They are marked down for the Captain's table, and also, during the course of the voyage, for that charming invitation to drink cocktails with the Captain, the Staff-Captain, or the Purser, in his cabin. It is all part of the minute vigilance that shipping companies maintain in order that the passenger shall feel the honour of his presence is not overlooked.

This vigilance even extends to the Customs examination. An unknown gentleman approaches you. Are you Mr. B? You reply that you are. A telegraphic look passes to the

Customs inspector. You are a distinguished passenger; your word about your luggage is not to be doubted. It is marked and whisked away by a company's porter. The company's representative wishes you Good day; your luggage reposes in the carriage, and you leisurely walk to your seat while the crowd scrambles and exposes its belongings. That is Service. I have always asserted there is no such thing as a pure democracy. Service will defeat the law of equality every time. With a title or money, or limelight on your name, how slippery is the slope to your Pullman seat!

But the tradition of the Captain's table is vanishing. As liners get larger and larger, the responsibility of the Captain increases. Small tables are now the rule in the dining saloon, and the companies are no longer expecting the Captain to perform social as well as nautical duties. He still asks you on to the bridge, or to have a drink in his cabin, and, doubtless, the Purser is consulted at times, but the Captain's table is vanishing. There is less heart-burning on board. Mrs. Battersby Buchanan-Moult does not feel she has been slighted or lost distinction by her absence from the table of the elect. With the increase of the night-club atmosphere on board ship, with paper streamers, balloons, jazz music, dancing between meals, champagne corks popping, and the small-scale saturnalia which liners now think necessary for the amusement of passengers, social prestige has almost vanished. Mrs. Biltmore P. Checkwad, wearing a Sansculotte paper hat, dancing with Lord Umph, wearing a Punch nose, can no longer be regarded with awe.

IV

I had explored the ship and sent off a few last telegrams, when a steward walked through the public rooms beating

a gong. "All visitors ashore, please!" he called out. The farewells were hurriedly made. The Director and his luncheon party arose, spoke a few words to the Captain, bowed to the Duke saying good-bye to his Duchess, and again to the company gathered on deck, and then walked down the gangway, accompanied by two assistants from the London office. Two telegraph boys were the last to slip down the gangway, which four jerseyed sea-dogs began to haul in. The great iron doors in the ship's side closed with a bang. I mounted to the upper deck, and, peering over the taffrail, looked down on some small tugs nosing into our side. We began to move, so noiselessly that the long dock sheds seemed to glide away. A South African liner at her berth watched us, all the cook's staff gathered at the rail. Some men painting her stern waved their brushes.

Southampton began to diminish. We had left our berth, we swung round, the channel widened. We were rounding the Isle of Wight. In a short time England would fade away. I looked at the grim, cold coast. It was raining, raining so hard that my native land was blotted out.

I descended to eat, but first of all I went to my stateroom and affixed the solar pad. Thus fortified by faith, I ventured into the dining saloon, greeted the Italian head waiter with a few words of his own language, thus making him my friend for the voyage, and meekly went to the table allotted me. It proved a happy choice, for it accommodated a cheerful widow bound for a world cruise, a widely travelled American with a passion for photography, a tough little Canadian Scot, and the Staff-Captain, who slowly revealed a rich experience of human nature garnered from several world cruises.

“You seem to have all the fun at your table!” said an envious fellow-passenger towards the end of the voyage. Certainly we never had a dull moment, and when the stories failed I always had a good view of the pretty Countess, five tables away. In ten days she never repeated her frock.