

CHAPTER XLIV
HOMEWARD BOUND

A sleeper ride from Rome brought us to Genoa. On a previous trip we had caught a hasty glimpse by evening light of Columbus' home town - now we were to have a chance to see it by day. Of course we took a picture of the Statue of Columbus and of the humble home in the heart of old Genoa in which Columbus was born. Of course we visited Genoa's greatest show place - her cemetery. Italian cemeteries are filled with very realistic statues - life-like portraitures of the departed. Here, for example, is a relief of a dying man bidding a last farewell to all his relatives who have gathered at his bedside - all reproduced in life-like sculpture. Here, too, is a life-like size portrait statue of an old woman who sold crullers on the street and hoarded her money until she accumulated \$2,000, with which she erected, during her lifetime, a very life-like statue of herself and her crullers and, according to report, used frequently to go to the cemetery to dance about the statue and feel delighted at the success of her life's endeavor.

As we leave, an Italian funeral arrives - colorful, as funerals in Italy are wont to be, for huge floral pieces are carried in open horse-drawn carriages, the brilliant flowers glistening in the bright Italian sun and the palm branches which form the background of the floral pieces waving in the breeze.

But let us find a more pleasant topic. On our former visit to Genoa, we had driven in from Nice on the upper Cornish Road - one of the world's most famous drives - this time let us drive from Genoa southward along the Italian Riviera. The road leads along the side of the Mediter-

anean with beautiful views of sea and hillside at almost every turn of the road. We go down to Portofino - a little fishing village in a picturesque location, with a comfortable hotel on the hilltop. A couple of weeks later Charles and Miriam, quite unsuspecting that a family party had preceded them, spent a week at this delightful spot.

Toward evening we boarded the S.S. President Wilson of the Dollar Line, for home. Mr. Edgcomb, who ships much lumber over the Dollar Line and who had frequently crossed the Pacific on the Presidents, suggested the President Wilson, one of the largest of the Dollar Line boats. At first glance, the boat did not look impressive beside one of the big Italian liners which lay in the harbor nearby. But once on board, the boat proved very comfortable and home-like, with ample deck space, an outdoor swimming pool which delighted Grace, and an unusually efficient refrigerating service to keep food at its best.

The servants were Chinese and our cabin boy, Ah Lee, at first perplexed and afterward delighted us. "Ah Lee, press this suit for me." "Two o'clock." "You don't mean I cannot have the suit until tomorrow?" "Two o'clock" and at exactly two o'clock the next day the suit returned - but, alas, Grandfather had laid out a pair of trousers which did not match the coat and vest. "Ah Lee, a mistake has been made, just press this pair of trousers and all will be well." "Two o'clock." "You don't mean two o'clock tomorrow?" "Two o'clock." "Oh, come now, Ah Lee, I must have these trousers to match the coat pressed tonight." Next day at two o'clock the pressed trousers were smilingly delivered. "You telle me, then me know; you no telle me, then me don't know," Ah Lee repeatedly explained to us. Nothing could be more literally correct.

"Ah Lee, bring me three oranges every day." "What time?" "Oh,

any time will do." "What time?" "Really, Ah Lee, I am not particular as to the time - suit your convenience." "What time?" "Now, Ah Lee, don't stand there saying 'What time', bring them any time you please." Next morning at six, Ah Lee woke Grandfather up to deliver three oranges. "Ah Lee, you got me wrong, bring the oranges two o'clock." Thereafter you would not have gone wrong if you had set your watch by the time the oranges arrived.

Ah Lee gave us good training in exact English. He spoke "pigeon" English himself. At first Grandmother thought he was talking Chinese. But when Ah Lee filled an order, you then saw exactly what you had said and the importance of really saying what you meant was brought home immediately.

The boat stopped for a day at Marseilles, where all enjoyed the view of the harbor from the hilltop and were pleased with the parks and drives of the city. Then all took life easy until Gibraltar came in view. Soon the historic rock began to fade in the background, the coast of Africa seemed to bid us "Bon Voyage" and we were off for a slow and pleasant trip across the Atlantic, presumably to be featured only by a daily swim, by deck games, by a costume dinner and by oodles of time to sleep and to sit without thinking.

But one afternoon there was great activity - sailors climbed into the rigging, and began hurriedly to lash everything fast to the masts. Others gathered up steamer chairs and tied them tightly against the cabin wall. A West India hurricane was reported coming our way. Soon we were in it - wind 100 miles per hour, waves forty feet high, barometest 28.80 (the lowest except once the Captain in a world-wide experience had ever seen). There was, however, no panic. The captain and crew had seen typhoons in the India Ocean, the passengers were experienced in sea travel, and all took matters calmly, although, as a matter of fact, no boat could have been

launched or could have survived if launched, for the 100 mile gale mowed the tops off the waves and blew the water in a suffocating mist across the sea.

Ervin and Grandfather hastened forward with their cameras to take pictures. Their pictures when developed gave little reality to the height of the waves, but did show how a wave when it started to break over the bow, instead of coming down as in most storm pictures, as a deluge of water on the deck, would be swept through the rigging in a blinding spray. Soon, thoroughly soaked and quite convinced the storm was beyond the power of a home movie camera to reproduce, Ervin and Grandfather retired to their rooms to change clothing. The storm struck about four p.m. and by dinner time its violence seemed past. A considerable number ventured to dinner, including all of Grandfather's party. By the time dinner was over, the ship had passed through the calm center of the cyclone and entered the other side, the wind hitting us 100 miles an hour from the opposite direction.

It seemed best to retire. But, alas, our porthole was open - the spray driven through the porthole by the wind had soaked a suit hanging on the opposite side and had, of course, drenched everything in the room. A press of the button brought Ah Lee. Never had the party known such quick response to bells as on the President Wilson. You could hardly get your finger off the button before Ah Lee would appear. "Alle wet. Alle wet. Didn't know you want your porthole closed. Thought you didn't want your porthole closed. Captain no telle me close porthole up. Clean em alle up." So Grandmother, Grace and Grandfather went to Social Hall while Ah Lee corrected the error of someone having forgotten to tell him to close the porthole.

For a while Grandfather and Grandmother stood just outside the

cabin door watching the waves run "mountain high." While the waves were officially reported at forty feet, one could get the illusion of mountains of water easily enough. For as the boat rode up the side of a wave, it tipped until the top of the next wave seemed almost off the end of its mast, and again as the boat rode down the other side of the wave, you looked squarely against the side of the opposite wave, making it look really mountainous.

It was a thrilling sight, but it seemed the part of better judgment to go inside. So they took seats in Social Hall. Grandfather and Grandmother sat in a built-in seat. Grace seated herself in a very large upholstered chair. At two tables people were playing bridge - everyone else had retired. A venturesome traveler came in. "A section of the rail has been washed away," he reported. "Let's go see where it was." "Let's not," said Grandfather, "we might find it." As a matter of fact, a section of the rail had been taken out near where Grandfather and Grandmother had been standing to view the mountainous waves.

A little later - whang! bang! A big wave hit us. Everything which could move shed into one big pile. Grandfather, Grandmother and Mr. Edgcomb being on a built-in seat could not fall out of anything. Grace, when she felt her chair going, spryly jumped out and landed against the cabin wall. The two card tables went into one big heap of arms, legs, tables and chairs. Everything on the shelves of the "store" next door went on the floor with a bang - a motley assortment of tobaccos, candies and souvenirs. After the humans were sorted out from the chairs and tables, strangely enough, no one was found to be hurt.

It may be said in passing that the steamer Paris, which was in the same area, was hit by the same big wave and that forty people on board were

reported hurt. The wave shattered the glass enclosing the promenade deck and many were out by flying glass.

One man left precipitately and Grandfather and Grandmother decided that Ah Lee had doubtless got the stateroom in order and that they had better go while they could.

Next morning the sun shone brightly on a waveless sea, and a few days later Grandfather, Grandmother and Grace arrived safely at Tenafly, where they found the grandchildren enjoying a large family of recently acquired kittens, and they - the grandchildren - seemed to Grandfather and Grandmother and Grace the most pleasing sight they had seen on all their journey.