

On Board
Speed

On board -
Oct 13 1917

Dearcot Pa + Ma: -

Today is pretty rough and cold - and as the impromptu band plays "Over there" and other war songs I sit in the library with many others writing letters to be posted on our arrival.

The voyage has been somewhat trying in the past two days - before that it could not have been smoother. But now a northwest wind that is not cousin to a gale has been blowing for 12^o and the result is a sea that would make landing

life boats the quickest way to become immortal. Such a sea makes the operations of submarines less easy - but we are in the danger zone now and notice has been posted that if you are careless enough to fall overboard the ship won't stop to fish you out - time is too precious.

This is a trip I wouldn't give up for anything - I can't explain why. I never thought I'd see an heroic age - but when you crawl up forward at night and watch the water for you are

ploughing on into for mines or periscopes and see the distant feeble gleam of another ship ahead, or when you see a huge steamer painted gray black yellow and green in huge zebra-lightning patterns so that you can hardly make out any decks or say where it begins or ends - or when several other things occur to you during the day which can't be told about, and in days when the feeble glow of your wrist watch is deemed ~~to~~ ~~be~~ ~~such~~ ~~a~~ ~~mere~~ ~~insufficient~~ ~~cause~~ for keeping off

the deck at night -- you realize that the fabric of things is rather thin in places. There is a certain signal given for life boat drill - and it is noted that in case we strike a mine or rock this signal would usually be preceded by the explosion!

We sleep in clothes tonight and tomorrow, and wear kapok life preservers to lunch etc.

Yesterday a sudden and violent roll of the boat broke enormous amounts of the crockery 1st and 3rd class. and created a most amusing moving picture scene in the lounge and the smokers.

I was in the lounge - a man was playing the violin and two girls were playing checkers, others were reading etc. The accompanist fell off his stool hit the violinist in the knees: they made the rest of the room on their faces with the violin held as high above the general ~~was~~ wreckage as possible. The checker game was hit by a wandering house-palmer and the players spent their time dodging tables and embracing posts. In the smoker all the poker money hurried across the room in

an avalanche followed by beer and
cards crachoirs and finally men
and tables. ~~Once~~ One very fat
lieutenant put all his faith on
the fixedness of a spittoon and stayed
with it faithfully across the hall!

I have read Joseph Vance - for the
first time any De Morgan. I found
it not very interesting - I am not
old enough to appreciate so much
self-pitying retrospection nor the
self-consciousness of it.

The American Express Co's inefficiency
is responsible for my duffle bag's not
being in New York when I arrived
at the wharf - so I shall have
to wait in London till it comes.

The Unit people in Cambridge sh^d have
sent it earlier.

I can think of no more that's
fit to send along.

With love

Alan.