

RADIO HOME-MAKERS

Associated with

THE MAGAZINE OF THE AIR

VOLUME 3

Both Issued by THE NATIONAL RADIO HOME-MAKERS CLUB

NUMBER 10

IDA BAILEY ALLEN, Editor
HERBERT S. HOUSTON, Publisher

DECEMBER 1, 1930

Price 50 Cents Per Year

Ships That Pass

By Ida Bailey Allen

WHEN I first set out from home—oh, just a few years ago!—the entire family gathered around to give me words of warning and, more or less, of wisdom. The general atmosphere of this meeting was one of gloom; and the longest face in the lot was my great-aunt's. Her injunction to me that day, repeated endlessly, was:

"Now, Betty," that's what they all call me, "you must never speak to strangers."

She told me some blood-curdling tales to prove her point; the only illustration I remember was of the lone traveler who gave a tramp a lift in his buggy. They found him next day, his throat slit from ear to ear.

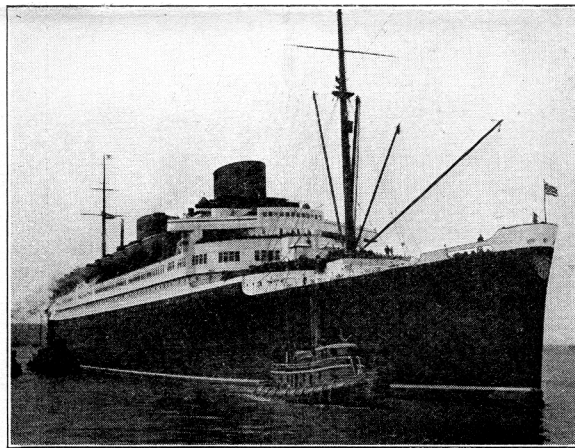
Fortunately for me, I never had to ask myself whether I should be obedient and not speak to strangers, because strangers always very kindly spoke to me. And if I were to be a perfect lady, I could do no more than answer, could I?

The experiences I have had in this way I count among the most important influences of my life. They have brought me ideas, smiles, laughs, and tears. I am continually drawing upon them in my work, and in that struggle every man and woman is making, that eternal attempt to answer the question "Why?"

When I was touring and lecturing during the War, I used to camp with my small family—consisting of my husband and one baby called Tom—in the nearest schoolyard, because I was pretty certain of obtaining water there. I left my husband up the road at a farmhouse to get some food; and one night, begrimed and frazzled, tired to the point of wishing I could stand in the middle of the road and yell, just yell, I drew into the dismal little country schoolyard, we were headed for, peered around, and saw to my dismay that the pump stood broken and useless. At the same moment I discovered what caused even my tired heart to jump up and then thud back.

A sinister group of horses and an evil-seeming wagon were just discernible in the gloaming. And a hulking, grotesque figure lurked near them. I could not move. The unearthly person was making straight for me. And I did not speak when he got within shouting distance.

But he spoke, He was Gypsy John, and he adopted me before I had a chance to summon up my great-aunt's cau-



Ewing Galloway

Potential Friends

thousand stops and wedged himself in. He snatched a single glance at me and began to speak rapidly in English. He poured forth the saddest story I have ever listened to—all about how he had got into some difficulty with his family back in Ohio and they had shipped him off to Europe, to avoid a scandal; he had fallen in love with a Russian girl and she, much older than he, had not only stolen his money but had smashed his faith in women. I am afraid we were both weeping before he had finished.

At another time I was in the basement of a large Paris book-store buying post cards, and a woman with an outlandish hat poked a card at me and said, "Here's a nice one; you can't get this anywhere else in Paris—I know, because I have a collection of five hundred cards." Well, we sipped tea together, and she escorted me to her favorite nooks and corners where sightseers never go; and over a leisurely dinner, she explained her religion, which appeared to me unique! I have adopted a few of its tenets myself.

Just the other morning a raggedy old woman, her feet bound with tatters of cloth and leather, stumbled up to my car that had stopped in a jam near Fifth Avenue; she was playing an old hand-organ, "Jesus, lover of my soul" floated through the traffic noise. She did not speak, in words; but her whole being related a tragic story. I knew that she had come from some little midland town with her husband and family, seeking fortune in the city. They had found the disappointment that many have met here. I shall never forget her, or Gypsy John, or any of the other human ships that passed and yet abode, will always abide with me.

