

Already

by Charles Baudelaire
translated by Aleister Crowley

*Originally published in the December
1915 edition of Vanity Fair.*

A hundred times already the sun had sprung radiant or saddened from that vast basin of the sea whose shores scarce let themselves be seen; a hundred times already it had plunged again, sparkling or morose, into its immense evening bath. For many days we were able to contemplate the other side of the firmament and decipher the celestial Alphabet of the Antipodes, and each of the passengers grumbled and scolded.

One would have said that getting near to land increased their suffering.

"When then," they cried, "shall we cease to sleep a sleep that is shaken by the wave, disturbed by a wind that snores louder than we? When shall we be able to digest our dinners in motionless chairs?"

Some of them thought of their fireside, regretted their faithless and sullen wives, their squalling offspring. They were all obsessed by the image of the absent land. At last we sighted the shore, and as we approached, behold, it was a land magnificent and dazzling; it seemed that all the harmonious sounds of life came from it in a vague murmur, and that from this coast, rich in every sort of greenery, there exhaled to a distance of many leagues a delicious odor of fruits and flowers.

Immediately everyone was joyful, and illhumor departed; all quarrels were forgotten, all wrongs pardoned.

I alone was sad, inconceivably sad.

I could not without heart-breaking bitterness tear myself from this sea so monstrously seductive, from this sea so infinitely varied in its terrifying simplicity; this sea

which seems to contain in itself and to represent by its play, its enticements, its rages and its smiles, the dispositions, the agonies and the ecstasies of every soul that hath ever lived, that now lives, that ever shall live.

As I bade farewell to its incomparable beauty I felt myself smitten down, even to death, and whenever one of my companions cried "At last!" I was only able to cry "Already!"

And yet it was land; land with its noises, its passions, its conveniences, its festivals; a rich and magnificent country full of fair promise, which sent to us a mysterious perfume of rose and musk, and whence, in an amorous murmur, came to us all the music of life.