

To Mr Pound who likes an envelope  
almost as well as I liked Duke Louisa!  
Isabel Ecclestone Mackay.

## THE TIMELESS TRAVELLERS

BY ISABEL ECCLESTONE MACKAY

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**I**T was rather cheery, as the Imperial Limited steamed out, to find that nothing had been forgotten save a time table.

"And a time table," I said, "can always be obtained from the porter."

"It can," agreed Una, "but let's not obtain it. Let us be timeless—'timeless and content', that's a quotation from something."

It sounded restful.

"Besides," continued Una, "I see already, half-way down the car, my old friend the Obliging Traveller. Wherever I have been I have never yet failed to meet him. His pockets gape with guide books and his lips smile with smiles. If I am not mistaken we shall not only achieve information, but have much information thrust upon us."

"As a perfect stranger he can't—"

"But he can. Also he can talk about the scenery. He will talk about it in a loud voice. Did I tell you that I do not intend to look at the scenery? I hope you don't mind my telling you just how I feel about it."

"Why should I? It's not *my* scenery."

"There! I knew you would be huffy. For, of course, it's your scenery. Your own beautiful made-in-B.C. scenery. That's why I am not to look at it. The doctor has ordered me to avoid all excitement."

"Then perhaps you will move and let me sit next the window."

"No. I can't do that—sorry! I need a good light for my knitting. Besides, I may be able to allow myself to glance up occasionally."

"In that case I shall retire to the observation car—"

"And I can put my work-bag on your seat, thanks so much. As for berths, I will take the upper one, because—well, just because."

"You may take the upper one," I agreed kindly, "but not because you are slimmer. You are not slimmer, don't dream it!"

It may be guessed from the foregoing that Una and I, in setting out across the continent, had decided to ignore the more hampering courtesies. We had agreed to be cheerfully selfish. Unselfishness en route is a strain under which any companionship may crumble. I have Una's word for this. She says she tried it once.

The observation car was not yet full and, thoughtfully avoiding the Obliging Traveller, who had preceded me, I sat down beside a pleasant elderly woman—the comfortable kind which still wear bonnets and black silk. We smiled at each other; that smile which is the beginning of one of those traveller's-sample friendships which belong to the pleasant chances of the road. Mrs. Smith (we found later that she belonged to the goodly fellowship of the Smiths) was knitting a sock, and at once I noticed that it was different from the sock knitted by Una. I noticed too that, while it occupied her fingers, her eyes were free to follow