

## A NIGHT IN A "SLEEPING CAR."

ONE of the undisputed privileges of a Briton, inherited with Magna Charta and Habeas Corpus, is the prescriptive immunity he enjoys to grumble to his heart's content, providing he does it in the open and manly English manner, and can show the faintest shadow of excuse why he should do it at all. Everybody detests your everlasting grumbler, who intensifies present misfortune, and foretells its future visits; who turns his back on a fine sunset to grumble at a cloud in the East, who keeps his home in hot water, and insures his company dyspepsia and headache, and whose aptitude for complaining has acquired perfection by the frequency of his practice—such a grumbler we abhor: but no one can really throw the first stone at one who grumbles a grumble which makes the greater part of the world kin. When the learned *Varro* computed nearly three hundred different solutions of "Happiness," one of them was "to have no discontentment," but very different would be a healthy Briton's view of felicity, as he esteems grumbling to be one of his national and historical rights, and feels sure his summit of misery would be attained if the world was ever to possess such perfection in laws, politics, and the necessities of man, that Utopia would be no longer fabulous, and there would be nothing left to grumble at. Quite contented people are as scarce as quite patient ones: discontent preceded disobedience in Eden; and it is true, that the very rarest virtues this side of heaven are the patience of Job, and the content of St. Paul.

Having thus proven the antiquity of this privilege and the recognized franchise of all British subjects to indulge in it, I proceed to take advantage of my prerogative and mutter the grumble of my soul; and would you believe, it's all about snoring in sleep!

Six weeks ago I had to travel by the night train as far west as Kingston, and feeling rather drowsy about ten o'clock, I engaged a lower berth in the car tantalizingly named "Sleeping," with hopes of obtaining a refreshing snooze. Knowing from experience the aberrations of mind peculiar to travellers roused from sleep, I secured my traps against the contingencies liable to baggage unchecked, and creeping into the back of the sepulchral shelf, called a bed—like *Somnus'* dark cave—though mine didn't prove as somniferous—I enveloped myself, after the fashion of Egyptian mummies, in the very limited supply of covering doled out to us, and fell asleep fancying I saw *Morpheus* on guard, while angels in crinoline and waterfalls, and with very familiar faces, hovered around my pillow, whispering of moonlight excursions up and down harbours, of music and dancing and flirtations,—pleasant, wasn't it?

I don't know if the noise and concussion of the cars excites the same sort of dreams in every one's cranium as it does in mine, but it invariably produces in my brain mental phenomena of a *pugnacious* character. This particular night our corps was pitching into the Fenians, giving it to them hot and heavy, through the beggars' skulls into their abominable abdominal regions and "No Quarter!" It felt the most thoroughly splendid thing I ever enjoyed, and it was glorious to see the way our little "Vics" went into it as if they were at Lacrosse. *Bang!* roared a piece of artillery, as I thought, close to my ear, down went the Fenians like a flash, and I awoke to find it all a dream—alas! alas!—and the noise of the cannon to be nothing but one of those peculiar, sharp, gurgling snorts produced during inspiration in the larynx of a snoring gentleman who had been billeted on my bed during my sleep. I had got one of my arms out from under the covering, and found I had "cut-left" directly upon the Roman proboscis of my friend, a passage of arms that considerably accelerated his breathing, and awoke him to the fact that there was something unusually heavy on the end of his nose,—perhaps, for all I know, causing a nightmare, and making him believe he had been metamorphosed into an elephant and hadn't got accustomed to the trunk. Feeling convinced,

however, that he was too sleepy to appreciate apologies I turned my back on him and endeavoured to sleep, soothing myself with the reflection that such accidents were only the fortuitous results of two in a bed. But my friend began to snore, and the most unchristian kind of snoring I ever had inflicted upon me—a medley of snuffing, snorting and sneezing, while to add to this trio of the inspiration, there was in each expiration a sort of a fiendish neigh. At first I thought I had got the very old chap himself for a bed-fellow, but I managed to see his hands and they seemed clawless, and he wore boots. I was now thoroughly awake and found myself the victim of a perfect chorus of snorers from one end of the car to the other, making a concatenation of hideous noises only to be equalled in a menagerie; though to give the devil his due, a cage full of wild animals would never make such an uproar when they're asleep: in fact, about two weeks afterwards I saw over thirty car-loads of live swine at the Kingston depot, packed in tiers, and closer than peas in a pod, and I honestly declare they were better behaved and made less noise than the snorers in our sleeping-car. It's well-known, when one's ears prick up at night, and find the slightest noise an antidote to slumber, how, after much tossing and turning, tired nature will finally succumb from sheer exhaustion; how she even conquers the howling of moon-struck dogs and the caterwauling of enamoured cats; but I'd defy any midnight noise ever perpetrated to beat the snoring in that car, attested to, as it was, in the morning by many other travellers who, like myself, didn't sleep even forty winks. There seemed, too, to be a sympathy among the snorers, for it was only those who didn't snore who didn't sleep, and we sleepless ones felt much inclined to express an opinion that they who did sleep were unfeeling beasts; but it seemed unjust, after all, to resent what the poor sinners had no power to prevent, though I once heard of a case of disagreeable snoring cured by clipping off the uvula which hung flabbily and resting on the base of the tongue produced the snoring during inspiration—now, if I was a snorer I'd submit to the experiment from a feeling of pity for those who abhor snoring.

The varieties of sound were so peculiarly ridiculous, that at first I found it quite jolly to lie awake and laugh, listening to the performance—and I assure you it needed no auscultation to hear it; but when I found I couldn't go to sleep when sufficiently enlivened, I felt quite grumpy, and swore I'd "write to the *Times*"—another of John Bull's privileges. A musical ear might have practised itself by classifying the intonations. The war-whooping snore of my bed-fellow tamed itself into a deep and mellow bass, but one gets tired of deep and mellow bass when one wants to go to sleep. To the right of us, on the lower shelf, was some one giving us all the variations of treble on every imaginable pitch—his was an inconstant *fulsetto*, both in sound and cadence. Above him, snored one as if he had a metallic accordion reed in his larynx, that opened with each inhalation. I shall call his snore a brassy alto: while the tenors were distributed at such distances as to convey to our ears—at least to mine—all the harmony of a band of fifes and bag-pipes playing different airs—every one on his own hook. There were snores that beggar description; but I cannot forget one overhead, which was a jerky croak, sounding at intervals of half a minute, as if it had retired on half-pay, and longed to get back into active service. It occurred to me, when I heard occasionally a very good harmony between the bass of my bed-fellow and the tenor of a snorer adjacent, that if some Julien could take snorers into training, and only manage to make them snore in concert and by note,

"In perfect phalanx to the Dorian mood,  
Of flutes and soft recorders,"

that we would have a novel kind of performance some of these days, and one that would be well patronized. None of us would have grumbled in the car, had the snorers but snored in time: if it had even been constant, like the noise of a mill, or a cataract, it would eventually have sent us to sleep, but it was those discordant

grunts and vibratory snorts that destroyed our midnight peace.

I abhor statistics; but, as I laid awake that blessed night, I made a little mental arithmetic of my own misery, which I would ask you to read. The average number of inspirations in a minute is fifteen,—remember snoring is an act of inspiration: the number of hours I laid awake was six. Now 15 snores a minute make 900 an hour; multiply 900 by 6—the number of hours snored—and you have 5400, the amount done by each individual. Now there were at the very lowest estimation twelve distinct snorers. Multiply 5400 by 12, and you have 64,800 snores—not including the neighs—perpetrated in that car from about 11 o'clock P.M. to 5 the next morning!

Several times I was tempted to shunt my bass-snorer off the bed, or twig his Roman nose. I'd have tickled it, if I'd had a feather or a straw, but it would have kept me busy all night, and then there were the other eleven going it as if in defiance, and what could I do to stop them? I thought I would make some horrible noise between a cough and a crow, and say, if any one complained of it, that it was my way of snoring; but this would be too much exertion to be profitable: I could only submit like a Stoic,—(Query? Would a Stoic submit to it?),—and endure what I couldn't cure, determining, however, that rather than ever be entrapped into a "sleeping" (?) car again, I would improvise a roost in one of the others, where few snorers are ever found.

Sancho Panza would never have had cause to ejaculate, "God bless the man who first invented sleep," had Don Quixote been a snorer, such as my friend of the Roman nose; and we may infer from Sancho's ejaculation, that the Don slept quietly. There is nothing vulgar in snoring, for Chesterfield snored, and Plutarch tells us the Emperor of Otho snored; so did Cato, so did George the Second, so do members of parliament in their seats and sinners in church; but no matter who does it, its always a nuisance. Position has nothing to do with it, as there is an instance on record of a soldier *standing* asleep in his sentry-box, and who would have escaped detection, had it not been for his sonorous snoring. We may be sure Alain Chartier did not snore when Margaret of Scotland stooped down and kissed him while he was asleep, or young John Milton, when the high-born Italian beauty won a pair of gloves from him; though it didn't lessen Paddy's ardour when he sang outside of his true love's window: "I know by the length of your snore you're awake."

We fancy it would destroy the sweetest charm of winning gloves, were the sleeping beauty to give a rousing snore as you kissed her; but I really don't know if women do snore. Paddy may have exaggerated, or been sarcastic, because jealous, perhaps. I know that only male frogs croak!

In conclusion, I may say I don't object to a man snoring under his own vine and fig-tree, but I think when three dozen quiet sleepers are caged with one dozen snorers, the former, if only by right of their majority, should have some consideration. There's no use of punching a snorer, or waking him up and appealing to his compassion, for if you punch him he may misinterpret your designs, and "lay on" too; if you appeal to him, he will probably apologize, and possibly may swear at you, and turn over and snore worse than ever. The Fabian policy of trusting to time for a remedy need not be tried with any hopes of success; for just as sure as a snorer continues to breathe, he will continue to snore till he awakens. But there is a balm in Gilead, better and safer than chloroform, nitrous oxide, or any local stimulant, and that is to have a separate car attached to every night train, to be called the "snoring car," where those who snore may do so in fraternal companionship, to the great comfort of those who don't; and let it be understood that should any snorer, by foul means or fair, occupy a berth in the "sleeping car," he shall be carried out bodily the moment he proves himself to be a snorer.

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