

# TRAVELLING SCRAPS.

"Oh, dear! Travelling is so dull when you're alone. No one you know on the cars, and you can't see anything, you go so fast. For my part I hate travelling unless you have some one to talk to all the time."

Now, I often hear these sentiments expressed in various terms, but I do not agree with them one bit. I daresay that constant travellers do get sick of it, almost anything palls upon one when it becomes a daily, hourly tread mill, so I don't include these, although they must see a lot of life, which is better than fossilizing in a hum drum little town, perhaps, as so many do. I just take the ordinary run of people who travel. I have travelled a good deal, by land and sea, and it is seldom I have felt that *ennui* so bitterly complained of, usually by women. I think if people kept their eyes and ears open, and especially if they have a sense of the ridiculous, they can get a fund of amusement out of even a short journey, and, to take a graver view, they can often gain a great deal of information, and insight into character. I seldom care to talk in the cars, as I find it fatigues me more than anything else, although, of course, I am always glad to greet an acquaintance and have a little friendly chat. Not being of the shut-up, oyster temperament which refuses to come out of its shell, I don't always wait for an introduction, either, to a strange fellow traveller, who likes to say a pleasant word or two. However, I am "branching off" so I come now to a few little items which have served me from feeling dull on several short journeys.

Travelling one afternoon not very long ago in a crowded car (a gentleman, by the way, very kindly gave up his seat to me, and stood all the way himself, if he sees this he'll know I don't forget a courteous act), I observed a handsome though somewhat delicate looking man sitting near me on the opposite side of the car. I really could not help looking at him and speculating about him, and my thoughts assumed a touch of romance. That face had capabilities surely! I could imagine it under various emotions. The clear cut profile, the tall, gentlemanly figure all impressed me, pleased my sense of fitness, and so I wove a speculative web round about him. Presently he spoke to a boy, and in a minute or so the youngster appeared with a goblet of water; my interesting friend swiftly and gracefully slipped something into the boy's hand (I suppose a piece of money), then as swiftly, although not quite so gracefully, he put his hand to his mouth, gave a peculiar jerk, forward, then back, and horrors! swallowed (evidently) a digestive pill, or a capsule or something equally commonplace, drank a draught of water and subsided into his former *dolce far niente* attitude! Alas! the charm was over, the spell broken, his clear cut profile could no longer stir me into shadowy, speculative dreams. Somehow romance and a digestive pill don't seem to go together, especially when that same pill is taken in a crowded railway car!

Clouds, drizzle, pouring rain, and excursion day! Surely no fun to be got out of a morning's travel this time. Mistaken again, although I own frankly that to the bedraggled and disappointed ones there is hardly that keen sense of the ludicrous in the situation which comes readily enough to the scribbler who was not caught in the rain (as it did not commence until after starting) and who sits calm and dry, taking mental notes with a cruel bloodthirstiness. We stop at a station where a woe-le-gone group of wet people stand. Children, umbrellas—dripping, shining water-proofs, muddy boots and baskets, all in a tangled, fumbling mass! No picturesque groups here to catch the artist eye—sweet faces, buxom matrons, proud fathers, blooming children—where are they? Even the baskets look forlorn, and as if they wished they could just empty themselves and rundle home again; and as for the umbrellas, "Well," cry they, "we'll stand this as long as we can, but if it blows, we'll strike, and if they don't go home then, we'll blow right inside out, and that will teach these searchers after pleasure to bring us out again on a nasty, wet morning."

Here they come! Those who are already comfortably seated look askance at the hustling crowd of children and women, with a sprinkling of men who look as though they were meekly led to the slaughter, and who usually "slope off" into the smoking car with a friend of like proclivity. Sometimes these tender husbands and fathers come back at decent intervals to see that the major portion of their inter-

esting families are in want of nothing save a fine day! Many a careworn, over-worked mother would have liked better to turn back and go peacefully home, but just think of the youngsters! What is rain to them? Have they not looked forward to this rapturous day of fishing, boating and clothes-spoiling for weeks? They'd rather face a cyclone than live another week of expectation. (We can smile at this in the little ones, but are there not many of us who carry out this dangerous plan, and snatch the present joy unthinkingly and to our cost?)

I suppose the rain dulled me for a few minutes, so I must shake off the moralizing fit.

Gracious, what a fat woman! And after glaring round for a minute, her eye lights upon a small space opposite poor me; she has baskets, wraps (all wet) and an umbrella fairly reeking with rain! A friend of mine had just left that seat for a short time (never do that on excursion day, my friends, if you expect to resume your quarters). I mildly insinuated that the seat was taken, but down she plumped, flushed and ruffled. Says she, "I don't keep no seats for no one, I keeps my own and that's all that can be expected. I've travelled too much not to know what's right. Folk's shouldn't be selfish, they must look after their own seats, I've paid for a seat and I'm goin' to have it." All this with a voluble tongue and a "woman's rights" expression, calculated to drive grim terror into the breast of the listener! This same votary of "unselfishness" dumped her aforesaid "reeking" umbrella into a lady's hitherto dry dress, and upon a remonstrance, snatched it up and laid it in another little spare corner she espied, which must have rendered that spare corner extremely uncomfortable and garment damping (not to say rheumatism catching) to the next unfortunate who sat therein! Such are some of the idiosyncrasies of travellers. To tell the honest truth I fear we all feel a little selfish on a wet day in a crowded car.

A fine morning this time, but here comes a sadder sight than any which the wet day brought. A woman is helped along, and tenderly placed in the seat next to me. I cannot feel selfish now, for I know I am sitting next to death. I make way, with a feeling of mingled sympathy and awe. I wonder sometimes whether she has gone to the great "Beyond?" Surely, yes. She evidently was quite unfit to travel, even that short distance, but I did not enquire the why and wherefore of the journey, doubtless there was good reason, and it was no business of mine to penetrate into her affairs, and certainly not in her hearing. I do not remember ever having seen anyone look so near death and be sitting up. The person with her whispered to me "consumption," but no such information was needed. Alas!

The summer has waned—no more excursions. Plenty of room now, and "plenty of room" shows up a somewhat curious phase of character, if it can be so called. Some, however, seem to utterly lose their self-possession when travelling. Lately I came across a specimen of this class. A stout, fussy-looking lady entered the car and after nervously glancing round, she pounced upon almost the only lady present (myself) and asked "Is this seat taken?" meaning the one next to me. It certainly was not taken, so I couldn't "tell a lie," although I am not a direct descendant of that fabulous boy George Washington. I murmured "No, but there are plenty of seats with more room." No use, the sight of the manly occupants of most of the other seats was enough, apparently. She passed over any number of good, comfortable seats and squeezed in beside me. For my own part, I have always found so much courtesy amongst gentleman travellers, that I do not feel that wild desire to seat myself anywhere so long as it is not near a man. But I love my own sex and am quite convinced there is nothing like it on earth, (in heaven there may be perhaps!) If any one differs with me and would like an "argument," I will forward my card on application.

I felt rather out of temper, I think, at being squeezed up for no earthly reason—so did not invite conversation, but turned to the window, and lo! What a sight! We passed a pretty wooded hollow,—the fall tints are all too plain, but how lovely they are! As I swiftly pass on—more tints, from palest yellow to deepest brown, meet my gaze than I can describe. Now—a bleak-looking, almost leafless tree—then

a bit of vivid green. Presently a rich, warm crimson and a delicate yellow. They all blend into one harmonious whole, and, like a flash, are gone! Fair nature put me into a good temper again, and when the panorama of autumn loveliness had passed, or rather our prosaic train had passed it, I could find it in my heart to turn and speak a pleasant word to my squeezing and nervous fellow "travelleress" (or "travelless"—which word shall I coin?).

\* \* \*

Here comes a big, burly, horsey-looking man, and he greets a quiet looking individual reading a newspaper: "Hello! How are you? Fine morning." Suitable reply on other side; then they set to. I don't think either of them was the American President, the Governor General, or even Premier Abbott or the Hon. Oliver Mowat,—but oh! didn't they just "settle up" the affairs of the nation! "Annexation," "McKinley Bill," "Tariff," "Election," "Policy this and Policy 'tother." I tell you that by the time one of them got off, the whole thing was cut and dried and ready to serve. I rather fancy the horsey, big, burly man had the best of it. He had a good natured, well fed ring in his voice, which would come out finely in "He's a jolly good fellow" and "We won't go home," &c. He seemed perfectly satisfied he had talked the other fellow down—all in good nature though. His adversary had simply less fluency. He had a satisfaction, too, I think. An argument—not too hot, and ending with, "Well, well, maybe your right," is always safe and does not admit too much. Argument, too, sharpens one's wits and makes one think. Many a man persists in his own theories simply because no one dares contradict him. I do love to make some people argue, and I make no doubt that "some people" get an equal amount of satisfaction in combating my opinion likewise. Such is life, and there is no use in taking up space in the dictionary over the word "argument" if every one is to think alike. Existence would be as colourless as it is made to be in that awful book, "Looking Backward." By-the-by, what a dearth of polite and impolite literature there would be if we really ever did become "looking backwardites." No one would have spirit or ambition enough to write anything. Even letters would hardly be needed. Why take the trouble to write when you could press a knob and—hey—presto! see right into your friend's mind, then turn a handle and thus suddenly flood his (or her) understanding with a knowledge of all you wish to say!

Does this come under the head of "Travelling Scraps?" Hardly perhaps; but those even-tempered and most intensely self-satisfied *Marionettes* in "Looking Backward" always set my argument bristles ruffling.

## A June Morning.

Damp with the gentle rain of yester-night,  
As yet unwooded by Phoebus, high in air,  
This mossy path outstretches past my sight,  
And curves with elfish mischief here and there.  
See where the sunlight's richness prodigal  
Is cast in quivering patches on the scene,  
As if 'twere fair immortal day let fall  
Upon these shady haunts of woodland green!

The brambles cling about me, as if loath  
That I should leave them and pass by alone;  
A free full-throated thrush his music forth  
Flings to the silent, listening wood—Ah, gone.  
Why should all lovely things before us flee,  
But such as cannot cleave the circling air,—  
Or why sweet nature's presence may we see,  
And feel between the gulf she fixes there?

But now a troop of nymphs and fawns, I know  
Fled with a swift, wild whirl behind the trees,—  
What else could mean this sudden silence, so  
Apparent? Tell, thou far-wandering breeze.  
I hear them laughing softly . . . Hark! and see  
—Almost, I mean—a gleeful, impish face  
Peering, believe, most cautiously at me  
From the cool depths of yonder leafy space!

I like to think the young god Pan lives still,—  
Though dead to us, alas! that this must be—  
And pipes according to his sovereign will  
To all things wild, and beautiful and free.  
For who can tell—but like the crimson rose,  
Our fair, first mother's gift from Paradise,  
Whose perfume comes to each through life who goes  
Once only—we, the too, too worldly-wise  
Grown wiser in sweet sylvan lore, may chance  
On Pan himself, amongst his merry throng,  
And for one startled moment see the dance  
And listen to the god's immortal song!

KAY LIVINGSTONE.