

## A NERVOUS TRAVELER.

THOSE of you who had the pleasure of living in England 26 years ago know how remarkably hot the weather was. Flies and wasps, bees and spiders, struggling for their lives in an ocean of tepid cream, tea kettles boiling without being put on the fire, haystacks burning of their own accord—these were some of the horrors which characterized the summer of 1868.

But if England was hot, Russia was hotter. The temperature was often so high that India was left, speaking literally, in the shade. It was dangerous to venture out in the sun in the middle of the day; it was spontaneous liquefaction to put one foot before the other. When you tried to put your boots on, you found them full of beetles, which had gone there for the sake of a little shelter. When you had got them on, you called, with the little voice you had left, for two men and a bootjack to pull them off again. All the world stood still, or lay still, and gave itself up to its fate. You had not the energy to abuse even the mosquito which perched itself on the end of your celestial nose. If you brushed it away, it returned in a moment or two with several lively friends, who converted your face into a battle-field and dug trenches, soon to be filled with human gore and their own shattered remains.

And so you may imagine that I found it no pleasant prospect, in the midst of these annoyances, to contemplate a railway journey from St. Petersburg to Berlin. Moreover, as I was just recovering from a severe illness—brought on by drinking incautiously some of the detestable river water—I was not in the most charming temper or in the highest spirits. Behold me, however, seated on a four-wheeled drosky, without springs, with a large trunk behind me and a small hat-box before me, speeding toward the railway station, the strong, wiry, little Russian horses pulling with a will, in spite of the fierce glare of the sun, the driver emitting oaths, mingled with a strong odor of onions, Russian leather, sheepskin and stale tobacco, the passenger holding on for his life, of which he had not much left. At last the station is reached; porters rushed forward; away goes the drosky on its return passage, the driver suspecting that change will be asked for. There being only two trains during the day which run through to Berlin, you may imagine that they were usually well filled with passengers. After taking my ticket, I took a survey of the compartments. They were all occupied. Just as I had decided upon going into one of them which held four persons, I was asked in French by a man, evidently excited and hurried, whether this was the train for the continent. I replied in the affirmative, and he, a friend of his and myself took our seats. The whistle sounds and we start.

Let me here explain to you the construction of the carriages, which differ from those of both England and America. A door opens in the middle of the side of the carriage. On entering this door, you go straight forward for about a yard; to the right and left of you are two other passages, at the ends of each of them being a door. The doors open into compartments extending the whole width of the carriage and capable of seating eight persons each. Facing the main entrance

is a small coupe to hold four people. You will understand, then, that supposing the middle compartments to be empty, persons occupying the two end compartments are separated from one another by two doors and a long passage—this renders it impossible to overhear what is said or done in the other place. If you will keep this in mind, you will readily understand what I am about to relate you.

I examined my two companions over the top of a newspaper. One was a fair, tall, strongly built man, with moustache and a beard; the other, dark, with rather the air of a Frenchman about him. Both were well yet plainly dressed, but with an amazing profusion of rings on their fingers, set with diamonds of great value, or else of no value at all.

The survey was on the whole, then, satisfactory, and I buried myself in my paper once more, when, to my astonishment, I heard the dark man say to his friend in plain, unmistakable English, "I am fortunate that we have secured a compartment with so much room in it." I cannot tell you how pleased I was once more to have the opportunity of speaking a little English, and I soon joined in the conversation. They seemed at first affable, but soon, no doubt, felt the natural distrust which is so characteristic of John Bull on his travels. However, it turned out that, although they spoke English, it was here and there interspersed with a slight smattering of "Artemus Wardism." They both belonged to the Northern States, and our reserve soon wore off as we argued out the respective claims of Federals and Confederates. I need not tell you that both my companions had travelled a great deal. I never knew an American who had not.

They had gone to the very extremity of the line of rail which was then being laid down from Moscow to the East. They had slept with the workmen in the open air, and snored away quite calmly among a horde of semi-barbarians. Of course, one of them had been to Jerusalem to see how they were getting on with the excavations there. We got on well together, and were on sufficiently intimate terms at the end of the day to agree to sleep in the same carriage.

The windows were double, and only half of the double window would open; the seats were thickly cushioned. The sun had been shining in through the double glass upon our unfortunate heads, so that we were only too glad to solace ourselves with iced beer and claret at the few stations we saw. For miles and miles we went on through thick forests and without seeing a single house. And then the evening came; and after the sun had set the air seemed almost as sultry as before. We dined together and then adjourned to an end compartment of another carriage. A lamp had been lighted, and there was a curtain which, when drawn over the lamp, rendered the carriage almost dark.

Soon after we had left the station where we had dined, a sudden glare of light burst upon us; we felt the train quicken its speed, and, in a moment or two, we were overpowered by a suffocating smoke. We closed the windows and found the forest on each side of us was in flames. Long tongues of fire darted out here and there and scorched the carriages. If I were only an adept at word painting, I would attempt to describe the scene, but it was far beyond anything I could make

you feel or understand. A quarter of mild or so of this and we left the first behind us, only too thankful to have escaped so easily.

And now we began to make preparation for going to sleep. My two fellow travelers were evidently old hands at this sort of thing. They took off their coats and folded them into pillows; their collars and ties were neatly pinned to the wall of the carriage; slippers replaced their boots, and, after spreading a large silk handkerchief over their coats by way of pillow cases and getting out their travelling rugs, they were ready for bed. In the netting over my head, was placed a small carpet-bag belonging to the larger man of the two, whom I will call Douglas. He and Brookes, his companion, lay down on the seat opposite to me, thus leaving me the other seat all to myself; Brookes with his head next to the window and his face turned towards me, and I with my face turned toward him, so close that I could almost have touched him. Douglas lay on the opposite seat, with his head next the other window and also facing me.

This prolix statement is necessary to make you understand my story. Under my head was an overcoat, in the pocket of which reposed a six-barrelled revolver, an old travelling companion, so that by merely putting my hand under my head I could place my finger on the trigger. However, scarcely a feeling of suspicion crossed my mind. Douglas asked me if I objected to having the curtain drawn over the lamp. "Of course not." This done, we could just see one another, but very indistinctly. Then he lay down again. There was a dead silence.

The train went on and on, not a house to be seen through the thick forests. Suddenly a thought flashed upon me: "What would be easier than to rob a man and throw him out of the window? He would lie in the forest and soon the wolves would find him and disperse all traces of him, eating his sealskin waistcoat with as much relish as his carcass." I laughed to myself. "How absurd this is!" said I. "I have no reason for suspecting these men. True, they have been whispering together and their rings are rather too numerous. But what a fool I am. I will go to sleep. At any rate, I am tired enough."

I had scarcely closed my eyes when in the stillness I heard a sharp, quick sound—"click." I held my breath and listened, every nerve strained to the utmost. "That sounded to me very much like the sound of a pistol being cocked. Absurd! no one carries pistols now. Americans, especially, always carry revolvers." Again I click. "This is the second time," I thought. Still not a trace of any movement. The rug under which Douglas was sleeping at the other end of the carriage, and from which the sound came, did not move. I noiselessly passed my hand under my head and felt for my six-shooter. Thank God! it was there. I grasped it and laid my hand on the trigger; and, thinking of the favorite plan of shooting a man through one's pocket, I turned the muzzle of my trusted friend toward Douglas. All this without speaking a word.

"He will have the first shot, at any rate," thought I; "but I shall be able to return it before he has fired a second. But alone with two men who are doubtless armed I shall have a poor chance. I cannot tell you the rapidity with which