

Paint as hard as I may all day, I have always the long evenings, when I must either write, read or do nothing.

"So I am beginning this evening, exactly a fortnight after my return from Chester. I purchased the caravan there from a morose individual, with one eye, who had it built with a view to the exhibition of a Wild Man of Patagonia; but said wild man having taken it into his head to return to County Cork, where he was born, and the morose individual having no definite idea of a novelty to take his place, the caravan came into market. Having secured this travelling palace, duly furnished with window-blinds, a piece of carpet, a chair bedstead, a table, a stove, cooking utensils, not to speak of my own artistic paraphernalia, I sent over to Mulrany, County Mayo, for my old servant, Tim-na-Chalraig, or Tim o' the Ferry—otherwise Tim Linney; and with his assistance, when he arrived, I purchased a strong mare at Chester Fair. All these preliminaries being settled, we started one fine morning soon after day-break, duly bound for explorations along the macadamized highways and byways of North Wales.

"I am pleased to say that Tim, after he had recovered the first shock of seeing a peripatetic dwelling house, took to the idea wonderfully. 'Sure it's just like the old cabin at home,' he averred, 'barri'u' the wheels and the windies and the chimley and the baste to pull it along'; and I think the resemblance would have been complete in his eyes if there had only been two or three pigs to trot merrily behind the back door. As for myself, I took to the nomad life as naturally as if I had never in my life been in a civilized habitation. To be able to go where one pleases, to dawdle as one pleases, to stop and sleep where one pleases, was certainly a new sensation. My friends, observing my sluggish ways, had often compared me to that interesting creature, the snail, now the resemblance was complete, for I was a snail, indeed, with my house comfortably fixed on my shoulders, crawling tranquilly along.

"Of course the caravan has its inconveniences. Inside, to quote the elegant simile of our progenitors, there is scarcely room enough to swing a cat in, and when my bed is made and Tim's hammock is swung just inside the door, the place forms the tiniest of sleeping chambers. Then our cooking arrangements are primitive, and, as Tim has no idea whatever in the culinary art, beyond being able to boil potatoes in their skins, and make very doubtful 'stirabout,' there is a certain want of variety in our repasts. To break the monotony of this living, I endeavor whenever we come to a town with a decent hotel in it to take a square meal away from home.

"Besides the inconveniences which I have mentioned, but which were, perhaps, hardly worth chronicling, the Caravan has social drawbacks, more particularly embarrassing to a modest man like myself. It is confusing, for example, on entering a town, or good-sized village, to be surrounded by the entire juvenile population, who cheer us vociferously, under the impression that we constitute a 'show,' and, afterwards, on ascertaining their mistake, pursue us with opprobrious jeers; and it is distressing to remark that our mode of life, instead of inviting confidence, causes us to be regarded with suspicion by the Vicar of the parish and the local policemen. We are exposed, moreover, to ebullitions of bucolic humor, which have taken the form of horse-play on more than one occasion. Tim has had several fights with the Welsh peasantry, and has generally come off victorious; though, on one occasion, he would have been overpowered by numbers if I had not gone to his assistance. Generally speaking, nothing will remove from the rural population an idea that the caravan forms an exhibition of some sort. When I airily alight and stroll through a village, sketch book in hand, I have invariably at my heels a long attendant train of all ages, obviously under the impression that I am looking for a suitable 'pitch,' and am going to 'perform.'

"To avoid these and similar inconveniences we generally halt in some secluded spot—some roadside nook or outlying common. But there is a fatal attraction in the caravan; it seems to draw spectators, as it were, out of the very bowels of the earth. No matter how desolate the place we have chosen, we have scarcely made ourselves comfortable when an audience gathers, and stragglers drop in, amazed and open-mouthed. I found it irksome at first to paint in the open air, with a gaping crowd at my back making audible comments on my work as it progressed; but I soon got used to it, and, having discovered certain good 'subjects' here and there among my visitory, I take the publicity now as a matter of course. Even when busy inside I am never astonished to see strange noses flattened against the windows—strange faces peeping in at the door. The human temperament accustoms itself to anything. When all is said and done, it is flattering to be an object of such public interest; and I do believe that when I return to civilization, and find no one caring in the least what I do, I shall miss the worldly tribute which is now my daily due.

"I begin this record in the Island of Anglesea, where I have arrived after our fortnight's wanderings in the more mountainous districts of the mainland. Anglesea, I am informed, is chiefly famous for its pigs and its wild ducks. So far as I have yet explored it, I find it flat and desolate enough; but I have been educated in Irish landscapes, and don't object to flatness when combined with desolation. I like these dreary meadows, these bleak stretches of melancholy moorland, these wild lakes and lagoons.

(To be continued.)

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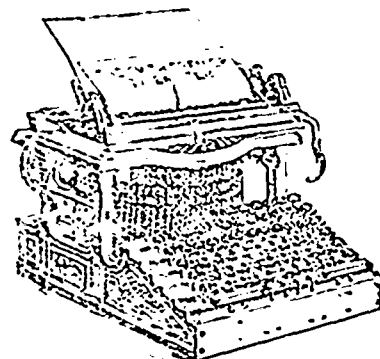
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