

BITS OF TRAVEL.—II.

FIRST DAY IN THE CONTINENT.

When you leave England at night with the steamer full of passengers, all speaking English, your first idea is that in the morning, on the continent, they will all speak a foreign tongue. Your first recollection is that it was a rough night and that you were sick. When one crosses the Atlantic without missing a meal, he naturally concludes that he can cross the Channel or the German Ocean without committing his heart of hearts to the deep. False and rash conclusions. It was my boast to have done the great ferry pond with glory and my disgrace to be done by the lesser ferry from Harwich to Antwerp. When it is rough weather the thing is natural; when it is fine weather they will tell you the tide is against the vessel. So one never escapes, because the tide is as certain as the existence of the moon. Ours was a beautiful, moonlight night in the middle of August and every one was sick except the captain and his men. The tide was coming in.

The first impression one has of Holland is that there wasn't water enough to cover all the land a foot more would have done it and turned, very literally, all the windmills into water wheels. You appear to sail up in the air—the land down below seems like rafts of timber, only bigger and of a different colour. When the steamer gets somewhat out from the sea into the country, so to speak, you are nearing Antwerp, and that is the only way you can tell. One windmill is very like another and there are no towns.

It is impossible to speak naturally to a foreigner. Either you chop up your sentences or you use out-of-the-way words, and, of course, you talk at the top of your voice. When the Custom House officers will tell their experiences to each other in the next world, they will have many amusing things to relate. Compare the scenes acted every day in Cologne or in Calais. Even on the arrival of the Atlantic steamers, what deception and lying and farce. A good-natured Irishman at Queenstown enquired, in that richest and softest of southern accents, if we had any "cigars, or whiskey, or revolvers," and we hadn't, and we got through without more. In New York there was a declaration, an inventory, a row of officials, a delay, a tip, besides speeches and profanity. An annoying part of this business on the continent is that you may be stopped at any little town on the borders of two countries, and have all your effects displayed before the passengers in the car and the representatives of the two nations. This seems to be the chief use of the standing armies in Belgium and the smaller states of Europe.

Belgium, viewed from a railway, train seems a prosperous country and one where the people are thrifty and comfortable. You often see the field laid off by rows of tall trees in the place of fences. Two cows, tandem fashion, are a yoke of oxen for farming purposes, and I frequently saw women ploughing with them. Dogs, harnessed to small carts, carry a driver and a considerable load just as the little donkeys do in Ireland. What appeared to me highly ridiculous was a very ordinary load of wheat in the sheaf drawn across a level field by two span of strong horses; one French-Canadian pony would have trotted off with it.

The railway carriages and the trains in Europe are small in comparison to ours. The coaches are about the size of a small baggage car or the tender. They are just the size of two or three omnibuses put side by side. Doors on each side of the car let you in and out from the platform, and when the train is going the doors are locked and yourself and six or seven others are then face to face just as in the bus coming from the depot. A clergyman on the ocean steamer who took up a collection to put in new seats in his Sunday-school and who lived riotously thereafter, told me as a joke that the reason he travelled third-class in England was that there was no fourth class. He should go to the continent, though few travellers now go in that way. The second class is certainly as luxurious as the first, and generally the third is well cushioned at the back. I prefer them to the American coaches in every way. In the

German lines the conductor passes the whole length of the train on the outside examining the tickets. There is a board about a foot wide and a hand-rail, but you can fancy being shocked when in a train going forty miles an hour the sash in the door is let down, and a head is thrust in and your ticket scrutinized. The railway officials are a great institution, though they sink before the majestic Customs officers. The latter are ominous for their caps with red bands. A man with three bands on his cap would no more speak to you than he would to a man with a different number of bands from his own. In Prussia the Government controls the railway, and every five minutes the conductor is late there is so much deducted from his salary for that day. They are generally punctual, but the trains do not go very fast. We talk in this country of high railway speed in Europe, but except a few special lines the travel is no faster than with ourselves. Leaving Antwerp in the morning we went on to Mechlin with its renowned church, town and bells to Brussels, and arrived in the evening at Cologne, passing through Louvain with its great university, and Aix-la-Chapelle, famous for many events in history. There were seven in our compartment, an English party going Rhineward, and a German tutor and his sisters returning from England. We were all on the best of terms and chatted sociably; the Englishmen retained their manners of reserve as long as it could be done with the German addressing every one with great volubility. He said that the English left their good manners behind them, and were generally the most illbred of travellers on the Continent. They were noted for that. He then drifted on to educational and linguistic questions and the method of studying a foreign language. He could take a person of intelligence and in three weeks teach him German enough to go through Fatherland. He boasted and talked but he talked well. As we were all packed closely in the car I couldn't observe my next neighbour, who was a young English girl, very well educated and very good looking. The German, without regard to the slow-going qualities of his nature, fell as rapidly in love as if he were a mercurial Frenchman and we on our way to Paris. I never remember a more ridiculous thing, but so it was. In order that the knight may not be unworthy in her eyes, he recounted a number of adventures in which he came off victorious, and indeed with great *clat*. The English girl, who was no village maiden, but was out for several seasons, humoured him, and there is no knowing what romances may have occurred had not we stopped at Verviers, and two women travelling looked in for a seat.

CARLYLE ON THE IRISH QUESTION.

Most of the literary lions and scientific lights of to-day have pronounced judgment on the Irish question, and various endeavours have been made to ascertain the opinions of the distinguished dead. Few celebrated Englishmen, other than politicians, have left on record such an emphatic declaration on the eternal question as is contained in an article written by Carlyle forty years ago. The article was called "Ireland and the British Governor," and appeared in the *Spectator* for May 15th, 1848. Its keynote is struck in the following passage: "By what means, then, are Irish wrongs to be redressed? Fifty thousand armed soldiers—in red coats or in green there are said to be about as many—here is prohibition of Repeal treason, but here is no cure of the disease which produces Repeal and other madneses and treasons among us. There is still no indication how the Irish population is to begin to live on just terms with one another and with ourselves—or, alas! even how it is to continue living at all. . . . That some new existence, deserving a little to be called society, will have to introduce itself there, that, accordingly, a real government, come from where it can, is indispensable for the human beings that inhabit Ireland." The sentiment of this passage is as true to-day as when it was written, although, of course, "the treason of Repeal" has been changed into a constitutional mandate for Home Rule. Yet, so far as we are aware, it has remained unquoted during the present controversy.—*Pall Mall Gazette*.