

RANDOM SKETCHES ON THE ROAD.

NUISANCES.

Nuisances to us, I mean—to us whose business it is to go up and down the land like—I will not finish the comparison. Now is the season when Township and County Fairs do most abound, and a malison on them, say I! Election contests, civic holidays, cattle shows and funerals; all these are nuisances, and if the Commercial Traveller had his way he would abolish them, even to the last named. And Court days—I had almost forgotten Court days. A Court day in a town is an occasion on which we are made to feel the smallness of our pretensions, and the infinite inferiority of our business to the legal profession. The hotel we have always been accustomed to put up at is monopolised by them. The Judge, in dignified seclusion befitting his position, exercises supreme dominion over the best section of the house. We have no evidence that he is in the hotel other than hearsay, for, if he were to expose himself to the gaze of crowds of curious bucolics, it would detract greatly from the awe-inspiring effect his appearance on the Bench creates. There, clad in all the imposing paraphernalia of his office and surrounded by his satellites, he strikes terror into their unsophisticated bosoms; but to divest himself of these attributes, and appear as a common mortal, perhaps even to "take a drink" at the bar, would be to lessen the weight of his words and to dim the lustre of his majesty.

Next in order to the Judge come those Legal lights, whose very name is a tower of strength to the cause they espouse, and happy is the now neglected Commercial if he can follow in the wake of these, and if these are the only ones who take precedence of him in the matter of accommodation. Too often, they are followed, and he is preceded, by a swarm of lesser luminaries—budding barristers, lawyer's clerks and all the aspiring striplings drawn thence to allay the insane thirst for litigation that has animated the infatuated client. Alas! and alas! for the poor drummer; not only has he to submit to be stowed anywhere and to eat anything he can get, but when, with a heart full of misgivings, he steps outside to do his business, he finds that those of his customers who have not got a case on hand (and they are few who have not,) are either on the jury, or subpoenaed as witnesses, or else, actuated by a prurient curiosity superior to business concerns, they have gone to Court to gloat over the particulars of a murder or seduction case.

Sick of waiting, weary of fruitless drumming, as a last resort he drops over to the Court himself, there to find to his infinite disappointment that the spicy evidence in the seduction case is over, and having once got in, he is so jammed that he can't get out again, and is compelled to listen to the dull harangue of some sleepy country advocate, or the dry and monotonous summing-up of the judge. Escaping at last from the heat and suffocating effluvia of the Court room, he returns to the hotel where noise, crowding, fighting, drunkenness, and all the other pleasant concomitants of a country tavern on Court day, are now holding high carnival. A crowd of country litigants disputing over the merits of a case is not the most amiable lot of mortals to consort with, and when they are all crowded into a small dining-room, clamorous for grub, their company is still less acceptable, for the babel of tongues is distracting and the reeking odours of the stable and the bar that emanate from them are anything but appetising.

Fairs are a most fruitful source of misery. Large and small, from the Provincial to the Township show, they cause us trouble and annoyance. And what an amount of profanity has been occasioned this year by that intolerable contrivance, the Centennial? Go where we would, we were sure to find some customer "doing the Centennial." A man might be on the eve of bankruptcy, his creditors might be clamoring at his door for him to "pay up," but these considerations were as nothing in the scale—go to the Centennial he would! Many a time during this last summer have I called at a merchant's place of business, and on enquiring for him, received the curt reply "away at the Centennial." Presenting a past due account to his deputy who vouchsafes the information—"Can't pay it, sir, can't pay it just now, money's too scarce" is his cool answer, as much as to say "got to keep all our money this year for the Centennial, yeu know."

Well, perhaps their philosophy is sound, and they are right; they probably reflect that this will be their only opportunity of doing the big show, and they can fail any number of times between now and the next one.

Then, those whom we do not find away at the Centennial, are at the Provincial or the London Exhibition, or the Guelph Fair, or else, at some wretched little cattle show, or Township Fair in an adjacent village. And then most exquisite nuisance of all—to drive into the "adjacent village," blissfully ignorant of the fact that the show is in full blast, till our eyes undeceive us. Happy moment!—words fail to convey, etc. Abandoning the place to the ravages of fat cattle and ponderous pigs, monster pumpkins, and many-eyed potatoes, we drive to the next village, there to find that the two storekeepers, attracted by the "novelty" of the neighbouring Fair have gone off in hot haste to see it. "Curses not loud but deep" are drawn from us. Reckless and despairing we turn back for once to do a Township Fair ourselves. Again, arrived there, we find the fun now fast and furious; it is a German Fair, and "de bully lager bier" is

flowing freely into the goodly paunches of "Mynheer" and his "vrow." "Wee gates" and "Soon tight," two German terms, "how are you" and "Good health" fly about and around you with every fresh glass of "lager" or "Schnapps." (The erudite reader will bear in mind that, not being a German scholar, I have spelt these two greetings exactly as they are pronounced, being haunted by no fear of an angry Teuton visiting the vials of his wrath upon me for mangling the etymology of his mother tongue). German girls, buxom and healthy, with cheeks like Spitzbergen apples, are there in groups and couples, or accompanied by their not over-attentive swains. Gorgeous is their apparel, many-hued as the plumage of the peacock, streaming with fiery ribbons, and displaying an incongruity in colours that is positively appalling. The shops are full. Now is when the man in the harness shop gets a couple of trestles and rigs up a hideous representation of the skeleton of a horse and forthwith proceeds to deck it out with his holiday set of harness, garnished with nickel trimmings, forming a hideous caricature calculated to strike the beholder with awe. Fearfully and wonderfully is it made.

I have been dwelling on Court Days and Fair Days, and in larger place, Civic holiday, are a great source of annoyance during the summer months. If all the towns and cities in Canada were to hold them on one and the same day, like our national holidays, it would obviate all this. But can any one conceive a more worrying thing than to be losing a day in every week for six or eight weeks during the summer, on account of the caprice of one town jealously fixing its annual holiday on another day than the neighboring town? Then we have those travelling nuisances, the circuses, and it is wonderful how one of these ancient abominations will cling to you for days together, till it becomes a nightmare and an incubus, foiling your designs continually, for the average country merchant has an exasperating habit of letting the Commercial traveller and his business wait upon every other petty interest, even to the serving of an old countryman with a five-cent plug of tobacco and a clay pipe.

But besides these graver nuisances, time-wasters as they are, we have a number of minor grievances to complain of. Sample-rooms without locks, locks without keys, windows without blinds, so that lazy hangers-on can gape all day at you and your goods. And why does not that merchant put a sign above his door? I do not expect him to care anything for the annoyance the omission occasions me, but surely it would be to his own interest to "hang out a shingle," and let people know that he has got a name. I have been in places where on two-thirds of the stores there was no indication whatever of the name of the occupant, and it deprives a traveller of an immense amount of confidence to be unable to address a possible customer by his name. It is like trying to turn a pump without a handle. (I trust the nameless ones will forgive the comparison).

Early trains are another nuisance prolific of trouble and misery to us unfortunates. We are not as a class partial to early rising and to be hauled out of bed in the middle of a deep and refreshing sleep is not conducive to good temper, nor calculated to increase the suavity of our dispositions towards our customers during the day. I had almost forgotten Toll-gates. Yes, the Toll-gate system—that relic of a barbarous age; fifty years hence, the world will wonder how a previous generation could, for so long, tolerate such an absurd, annoying and insignificant imposition, for imposition it is and no inconsiderable one, I know. I have, unfortunately, a personal and unpleasant acquaintance with a toll-road, between Ingersoll and Port Burwell, some 32 miles, and where the tolls actually amount to more than Railway fare for the same distance! And a wretched, jerky, break-neck road it is, a road that, with any sort of a load, is not safe to drive on at a faster rate than a walk, or if you are bold enough to do so, it is at the imminent risk of your neck. And yet they charge an exorbitant toll! I now come to my last nuisance, and nuisance it is, and a most burdensome one. I mean simply the *Gratuity System*. At the risk of being considered mean, I here stigmatise it as a most intolerable nuisance. To the mean man it is of course no nuisance, as he never gives anything he can avoid, and gratuities, I grant, can be avoided, but to the man who is disposed to be open-handed and to "do in Rome as the Romans do," it is an imposition most unjust. To my mind, there is no reason why paid servants should look for remuneration outside of their employers. Paid servants in other walks of life do not, and I can consider it as nothing but a custom imported from the old Land, a very foolish custom and a very troublesome and—yes, I will say it, a very costly one.

With which explosion, I drop my pen and say good-night.

WAYFARER.

VARIETIES.

NEWSPAPER EXPENSE.—The *Times* is now going to a prodigious expense with its telegraphic news. It has no fewer than three correspondents at Paris. The chief of them is a M. Oppert de Blowitz, a naturalized Frenchman, who is a chevalier of the Legion of Honour and a friend of M. Thiers and the Duke Decazes. Associated with him are Mr. Williams who was formerly a journalist at Birmingham, and Mr. Alger.

JUDIC.—*La Belle Hélène* has been reproduced at the Variétés with Madame Judic as the chief character, originally played by Mlle. Schneider. The new personator of the title part was eminently successful. One of the great effects of the evening occurred in the second act, in the Olympian couplets.

"Dis-moi, Venus, quel plaisir trouves-tu
A faire ainsi cascader ma vertu?"

The fair singer rendered these lines with so much grace and spirit, and with so charming an expression, that the whole house broke out into applause. The verses were encored, and then encored a second time. Madame Judic repeated them to frantic cheering, and the audience seemed likely to be never satisfied. The applause was renewed when in one of her replies she exclaims, *Maintenant me voilà forte*. The allusion was caught up at once, and from that moment the *Belle Hélène* had nothing to fear from any one. The other parts were very efficiently enacted, so that the piece is likely to have a good number of representations.

TOOLE'S LATENT.—Mr. E. L. Blanchard writes:—About ten days ago a distinguished capitalist, well known as the proprietor of the Gaiety Theatre in the Strand, was in his private box enjoying the performances at the large theatre at Brussels. Between the acts the box-keeper introduced an apparent foreigner in full travelling costume, with long hair, and a heavy moustache, as a gentleman on pressing business. After some general conversation, prefaced by profound apologetic regrets for the intrusion, conveyed in exceedingly bad French, a request was made for the loan of "deux napoleons" to meet a temporary pecuniary difficulty. Surprise at such a request from a perfect stranger was followed by a burst of indignation and a summons by the box-keeper to eject the obtrusive individual forthwith. The importunities and gesticulations of the foreign-looking gentleman became more rabid than ever, and quite a crowd collected in the lobby to witness this new scene of excitement which had occurred at the end of the first piece. "I never saw this person before!" exclaimed the incensed capitalist. "Nevare saw me before!" cried the foreign-looking gentleman: "that is von leetle feeb—vot you call von leetle tarradiddle—for you have seen me as Mr. Spriggins in the popular farce of 'Ici on Parle Français';" and returning his wig and moustache to his pocket, and turning down the collar of his travelling coat, Mr. J. L. Toole stood revealed to the amazement of Mr. L., who had been baffled by a disguise suddenly assumed on passing from the stalls below to try the possibility of a visitor to Brussels making himself utterly unknown to his most intimate. The fullest proof of the completeness of the deception is to be found in the circumstance that the interview lasted half an hour without the slightest suspicion of the harmless illusion practised.

PROF. HUXLEY.—The eminent English scientist Professor Huxley, made but a short stay in New York, but his arrival was the cause of a conversation between one of the city's amateurs who is an enthusiastic admirer of Huxley, and he spoke so extravagantly about him that his friend finally became curious, and asked, "Who in thunder is Huxley, anyway?" "You don't mean to say you have not heard about Professor Huxley, the great scientist?" "Yes, I do though—never heard his name before. What has he done?" "Why, man, Huxley made the important discovery about protoplasm." "About what?" "Protoplasm." "And what the dickens is protoplasm?" "Now look here—you don't mean to sit there and me you don't know what protoplasm is!" "That's just it. Nary protoplasm." "Well—protoplasm is what we may call the life-principle." "Anything to do with insurance?" "Oh, nonsense! The life-principle is nature; the starting point of vital action, so to speak." "He discovered that, did he?" "Yes, a few years ago in England." "And what good is it going to do?" "Good! A great deal of good. It expands the circle of human knowledge, and is valuable in bearing out the theory of evolution. It is a noble contribution to science, and it has made Huxley one of the few immortal names that were not born to die." "So Huxley knows all about the life-principle, does he?" "Yes, all about it." "And the starting-point of final action?" "Exactly." "Well, see here now: can he take some of that protoplasm and go to work and make a man or a horse or an elephant with it?" "Oh, no, he couldn't do that." "Can he take it and make anything at all of it, even a gnat or a fly?" "I guess not." "Well, then, he may just go to thunder with his protoplasm. I don't believe it's worth ten cents a pound anyhow. 'Pears to me these scientific fellows put on a big lot of airs about very little. Protoplasm, eh! Shouldn't wonder if Huxley came over here to get up a company to work it. Did you say the mine is in England?" It is almost needless to say that the scientist gave up his friend in despair.

MR. BRADLAUGH AS A WRESTLER.—Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant have been lecturing at Congleton under the auspices of what is known as the Progressive Club. On one night Mrs. Besant lectured on freedom of thought and speech, Mr. Bradlaugh being in the chair. The lecturer was proceeding to denounce Christianity when one of the audience shouted, "Put her out." Mr. Bradlaugh intimated that the first man who interrupted would be put out, whereupon Mr. Burberry, a local tradesman and a well-known wrestler, invited Mr. Bradlaugh to attempt it. Mr. Bradlaugh at once left the platform and closed with his opponent. They fell over a form together, and a

scuffle ensued, and the excitement in the room was intense. The supporters of Mr. Bradlaugh cheered, while their opponents booed, and a crowd outside smashed the windows of the building. Mr. Bradlaugh had succeeded in pushing his antagonist half way down the room, when the latter was rescued by his friends and induced to retire.

A NEW DRAMATIST.—Paris has one crumb of comfort just now. She has been presented with a new tragedy and a new dramatic writer. *Rome Vaincue* is the name of the first, and M. Parodi responds to the second. A successful play-writer is more thought of in France than an able minister. The latter disappears like dynasties, but a good drama survives the fall of cabinets and thrones. Ten years ago, M. Parodi arrived in Paris from Smyrna with nothing in his pocket but a manuscript for the theatres. He wore out several pairs of shoes calling on managers, but without success. Being an Italian-Greek he gave lessons in these languages, and as if he had not enough of misery he says he "married in despair." But then he obtained his reward. It was his little son, as messenger, that succeeded in placing the manuscript of his papa in the hands of the manager of the Theatre-Français, which was accepted, and during the rehearsal of the play the little fellow, aged eight, constituted the *claque* for the *habitués* of the green-room. The first thing M. Parodi did on learning the enthusiasm with which his play was received was to burn two dozen tapers to the Virgin. We have modern tragedy, all that is now required is a new Talma and Rachel.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL PHENOMENON.—A curious psychological phenomenon has been reported by a medical man in Bordeaux. A woman, Felida X., has for sixteen years been undergoing an alteration of memory, which has all the appearance of a doubling of life. There is amnesia, or loss of memory, with regard to periods of variable duration which have gradually been enlarged. The memory, passing over these second states, connects together at the period of the normal state, so that Felida has, as it were, two existences—the one ordinary, composed of all the periods of the normal state, connected by memory; the other secondary, comprising all the periods of the two states—that is, the whole-life. The forgetfulness is complete and absolute, but refers only to what has happened during the second condition; it effects neither anterior motions nor general ideas. Besides amnesia, Felida manifests, in the periods of attack of the malady, changes in character and sentiments. The alteration of memory and accompanying phenomena have for cause (the author says) a diminution in the quantity of blood conveyed to the part of the brain, still unknown, where memory is localised. The momentary contraction of vessels, which is the instrument of this diminution, is caused by the state of hysteria.

The *Daily Telegraph* also has three correspondents. The chief is Mr. Campbell Clarke, one of the few Englishmen who have received the Legion of Honour, and he is an accomplished dramatist, who adapted for the English stage *Giroflé-Girofla* and *Rose Michel*. Next to him is Mr. Hanlon, and associated with them is the late Paris correspondent of the *Hour*. Mr. Bowes is the correspondent of the *Standard*. Mr. George Crauford, known by his long white beard, represents the *Daily News*.

DION BOUCICAULT.—Mr. Boucicault has been interviewed by a French journalist. He stated that he was born in 1822, and that his education at first was devoted chiefly to mathematics. He wrote his first play when he was 16; it was called *The Old Guard of Napoleon*. It was not till he was 30 that he appeared on the stage, and he was prompted to do so not by love of the drama, but by the love of a young actress who is now his wife. According to Mr. Boucicault, it is not necessary to begin acting young, nor is it needful to be good-looking or well made, for one of the greatest actresses of our time, Rachel, was very plain. Boucicault said he had written between three and four hundred plays, many of them adaptations merely. That latter style of work was not to his mind, but he was obliged to do it in order to live. He had translated as many as 50 pieces in a single year, for the directors of the London theatres found it cheaper to pay £12 or £15 for a French piece which had been approved at Paris than to pay Bulwer, for instance, £600 for a piece which might fail. Mr. Boucicault attributed the decay of the English drama to the invasion of French dramas between the years 1844 and 1850. He has a low opinion of French plays and actors at the present time. He says the French have now nothing else but mechanical skill, and though the Parisian dramatist can write passionate dialogue, he cannot develop his characters. This is the coolest thing that has been said for many a day, but it recoils upon the writer with all the force that can be given to it by the unanimous adverse opinion of every man and woman in England of any claim to taste and refinement.

THE HORSE'S PLEA.

Going up hill, whip me not;
Coming down hill, hurry me not;
On level ground, spare me not;
Loose in stable, forget me not.

Of hay and corn rob me not;
Of clean water stint me not;
With sponge and water neglect me not;
Of soft, dry bed, deprive me not.

Tired or hot, wash me not;
If sick or old, chill me not;
With bit or reins, oh, jerk me not;
And when you are angry, strike me not.