



THE "SUN-SKIT" URCHIN AND HIS PLAYTHINGS.

The Zig-Zag Papers.

IV.—MY TRIP TO THE SEASIDE AND WHAT I SAW THERE.

(Continued from last week.)

WHEN I left Toronto, the city had been for a few days so hot and dusty that summer seemed fairly begun. But, as a Yankee woman said on the steambot, "Law sakes, it was only a spell of weather." The sky clouded, rain drizzled, and the weather became so cold that all the people who had been too lazy to take down their stoves, bragged of their foresight in leaving them up.

Wealthy people—who go to the sea-side to show that they are wealthy; gentlefolks—who go for pleasure, and all the rabble, neither wealthy nor gentle, but merely genteel, who wish to be thought swells, staid in town awhile longer. At Malibuic the weather was positively cold. From the sea blew a fresh breeze that told of glittering icebergs. The few ladies who, in advance of the main body of their families, tenanted the cottages down the road, appeared in white jackets of cony skin—surely the prettiest of fur when left free from the abominable black tags that make it a cheap imitation of ermine. Little boys, who rashly tried to swim in the icy water, came out after one plunge, and shivered on their clothing.

Monsieur my host, his house void of visitors, vented his disappointment in an undertoned monologue, that fairly bristled with *sacres*. I walked furiously, fished for trout in every stream for miles, or rowed out on the billowy, half salt water, till my hands were blue and numb. All was no use; ennuï was overwhelming me, and on the third day I desperately resolved to make the acquaintance of my cadaverous companion.

During nine solemn meals, each exactly like the last, we had sadly stowed away the necessary prog. The difficulty of addressing the thin youth increased as the square of the number of meals, whereby any ingenious person may easily calculate exactly how hard it was for me to break the ice. Had other visitors arrived, it is improbable that we, the first arrivals, would have spoken, one to the other, during the season. He was to me, as yet, only S. G. M., a thin youth, possessing a wonderful appetite, and much baggage on which these initials were evident.

Now, I determined to know more of him, and went into the tenth meal smiling in the most engaging manner. I might as well have r tined the stern gravity befitting a correspondent of Grip, for S. G. M. being engaged in the dissection of an unusually large trout, did not look round.

Passing him, I brought my hand down rather quickly on his shoulder. He rose, straddling his chair, as suddenly as if my hand had loosed a spring, and confronted me with surprise.

"It is plain," said I, "that we must shake hands and be friends, or be bored to death."

"Ah yes," he said, extending a hand that felt in mine like a bundle of boiled chicken bones, "yes, very glad, I'm sure. How are you?"

I assured him of my perfect health, and joined his attack on the provisions.

The pleasure of grubbing, in which we both indulged during the meal, added to the flavour of the trout, and detracted from the waxiness of the potatoes.

JEANETTE, on her entrance with the tea-pot, flew back to the kitchen with the information that we were talking quite rationally. *La Virille* opened the door a handsbreadth to satisfy herself of her handmaiden's veracity, and then, with effusion, brought in a double supply of onions, with the air of awarding naughty boys who have suddenly repented.

My new acquaintance informed me that his name was MARLY, but, as he did not mention who his father was, nor refer to any uncles who were prominent personages, I justly conceived an immediate contempt for him as not being a youth of family—a feeling which was the stronger because the peculiar vacancy of his expression had at first led me to believe him a young man brought up in the most distinguished circles of Toronto society.

My curiosity as to the cause of his emaciation somewhat abated, as I became convinced that he was not a person of importance, and it was not till, in the smoking room, I was puffing clouds from a large-bowled meerschaum, with MARLY lolling in a huge-backed, cane-seated rocking chair near the stove, that I questioned him concerning his illness. I was astonished and delighted to hear that he was convalescing from an attack of Syrian fever; astonished because I had fully expected to be told of some vulgar disease, and delighted because it seemed probable that he was, after all my doubts, a patrician youth.

"Caught it at Damascus, you know," he said, "was down with it there for five weeks. Riding knocked me up again. How I got back to England I hardly know."

"You are young," said I, "to have travelled, but I suppose you were with friends, or, perhaps, with a party of Coor's tourists?"

"No," said he, "entirely alone. You see I'm going into business next year. So my father wished me to see the world before I am tied down to the desk. I had letters to his English correspondents. They mapped out my journey and passed me on. With the dragoon I had, there was no difficulty going anywhere. Come up and see some of the things I have brought back."

He had his pile of luggage sent to his room—the best in the house and quite comfortable, in pleasant contrast to my rigid outline of bed and floor, bare, except for a strip of rag carpet.

"You see," said he, pointing to the furniture, "I have some traps of my own here. Can't rough it as I used, you know. These things came down a week before me."

He did not at once proceed to display his acquisitions, and I suspected that he had brought me up from the smoking room as much that he might escape its unwholesome smell and the fumes of my pipe, as that he wished to shew his purchases.

We sat and chatted for a while over some very decent brandy which he produced, I questioning him concerning his journey and he answering as if the things and places he had seen had all been passed by in a dream. It was hard to discover what he had gained by travel.

Fresh from school he should have known native society before seeing the world.

As it was he had no standard of comparison.

It was some time before he proceeded to shew me his treasures. When he did my respect for him very much increased for it was evident that he had not been stinted in money. There were curious eastern weapons, jewels rarely set, diaphanous fabrics of Asiatic looms, all costly and peculiar.

His narrative became quite lively as he recounted each purchase, for he had a capital memory for a commercial transaction. Still he seemed to value the articles very little for the associations connected with them, they were shown with the pride of a collector and not of a traveller. Not till he had finished did he display any enthusiasm, saying:

"You should see the Eastern dresses I have left at home, I shall always so glad to have taken that trip for the sake of those costumes. They will create such a sensation at masquerades on the skating rink."

Think for a moment on the mental condition of a human being, who, after travelling through Asia, was glad that he had done so "because he had acquired some good dresses for masquerades at the skating rink."

Yet do not many tourists pride themselves merely on the fact of their travel—having acquired no more than if they had journeyed with their eyes shut.

This young fellow was neither oppressively instructive nor absurdly vain.

Sometimes you meet people who come back from Rome fancying themselves Popes, at least in their native towns—you see others who, having visited Constantinople, are ready with any quantity of information as to the creed of JALAX, and look mysterious and wise, when the Eastern Difficulty is mentioned—saying "Ah, I've been there."

(To be continued.)