

Of my own country and my own people you will not expect me—you would not wish me—to say anything disparaging. We are an old and a respectable race, and, by virtue of your descent, you share that age, and you have brought over with you a full measure of the respectability. But in transit you have lost that questionable virtue of extreme conservatism which we retain in every conceivable phase of life. We used to have mail coaches protected against robbers by armed men, properly called guards, and we continue to call our railway servants guards without the slightest reason, save that they seem to be in some fashion successors to the blunderbus-bearers of the eighteenth century. On the other hand, you very properly call the same officials conductors. We still build our railway carriages in compartments fitted to hold six people, confined boxes that are stuffy, inconvenient, wasteful of room, and dangerous, and we do this only because one hundred years ago we built our stage coaches on the same pattern, and we thought, and we continue to think, that by sticking three of these old coaches end to end we must of necessity construct the very best kind of vehicle for railway travelling. Untrammelled by tradition, you have continued to build carriages far more convenient and suitable in every way. You have even sent them over to England for our use some ten years ago, but they had actually to be removed from our railways because the public would not use them.

I might gather further illustrations of this intensely conservative spirit which governs everything English. I might wander into the regions of politics and religion and hundreds of other sources, but I prefer to take one of which I can speak at length and in detail—one upon which I believe, if I read aright the compliment you pay me by asking me to appear here before you, I can speak with some authority.

In my youth the medical education of a British student was not considered complete unless he had made a tour of the schools of France and Germany, and, like others, I felt of myself as was said of Proteus :

“ ’Twould be a great impeachment to his age
In having known no travel in his youth.”