

(For the Canadian Illustrated News.)

EXPERIENCES OF "A COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER."

BY "ONE OF THEM."

Owen Sound, March 7th.—"Hiring a team" is one of the most vexatious pieces of business that comes within the scope of a "Commercial's" duties. Ignorant, as he too often is, of what constitutes good horse-flesh, he is entirely at the mercy of the liveryman, and as the horse-business is proverbially ruinous to a man's conscience, the hapless "Commercial" gets sold oftener than he gets value for his money. If there are any of the craft who are so fortunate as never to have required four-footed assistance in their travels, but who may at some future day stand in need of it, let me give them a word of advice—never listen to the offer of a porter of the hotel to get you a team, for if you do, you will surely rue it. A porter who professes you his assistance is never disinterested—in fact, it is not in the nature of these gentry to do so. The team hired through this "medium" comes from some liveryman whose hacks are so thoroughly worn-out and rigs so rickety that he is compelled to have recourse to an organised system of bribery and corruption to procure custom, and the hotel-porters are by him made the recipients of these bribes, to compensate for which he generally "tucks it on" to the victimised customer. If you want a team go to the proprietor of the hotel, or consult one of your customers, some one who you think will do this best for you. I remember not many years ago hiring a team in Barrie to drive me to Penetanguishene, and placing faith in a porter who had pocketed many of my "quarters" for real and imaginary services performed. But, alas! I leant on a broken reed. The team, a scraggy pair of broken-down greys, for whom Richard would have been very sorry to have bartered his kingdom, were round in the morning betimes, accompanied by its hard-visaged owner. Seeing me rather sceptical as to the travelling qualities of his beasts, he adopted an injured air, and actually made me feel that I had grievously wronged him and his property. Unfortunately, however, the truth of my first impressions was made evident when I had driven some five miles out of the town. I had been furnished with a whip, or, rather, an apology for one, which, by considerable stretching of the body and arms, could just be made to reach the latter ends of the "noble steeds." But as it lacked lash, and consequently sting, its application resulted in nothing farther than a contemptuous whisk of their tails. If "time was made for slaves" they, evidently, were not slaves, for they exhibited as much of a contempt for "the old man of the scythe" as they did for my whip. Finding I could make no impression on them, I resigned myself to the situation, which resulted in my reaching Wyebridge, thirty miles from Barrie, at dusk, while with any ordinary horses I should have reached there about noon. I was not alone, for I had succeeded in persuading a Hamilton man to accompany me, a Highland Scotchman, and a fine generous fellow, but who vented the direst anathemas on the horses, the man who hired them to us, and all connected with him. And as the first stage of our journey passed so passed the wearisome whole, and not till the evening of the third day did we return to Barrie; and when we reached there, not content with foisting his wretched nags on us, our livery friend wanted to charge us what would have been an exorbitant price for a good turn-out, for we had been guilty of the foolishness of not making a bargain with him beforehand, affording him an opportunity for "beating" us he was not slow to take advantage of. After considerable haggling, and an appeal to the landlord, we succeeded in slightly abating his demands, although we still felt we had been swindled, and mentally resolved that the horse-gentleman would see no more of our money, a vow which I myself have kept religiously. But I digress—taught by bitter experience when hiring a team in Orillia on this occasion, I made cautious enquiries previously, and was rewarded by getting a fine pair of horses, and, what was equally desirable, a driver who knew and minded his own business. Drivers are generally a pest and a necessary nuisance; you sit on the same seat with them for so many long hours together that a sort of forced friendship springs up between you, and they are wanting in sufficient discernment to know how far that friendship may go, so that when you arrive at your destination they keep up their display of sociability till it becomes offensive, intruding upon you at all sorts of inauspicious times, shoving open the door of your sample-room when there is a customer in with you, and enquiring "if you ain't ready to start yet?" then persistently remaining in the sample-room, in spite of all your nods and frowns, and listening, with mouth agape (as if to help his ears), to all that passes. Next, frequently, will he leave till he is actually ordered out, a termination that you feel will make things unpleasant for you when you get under way again. Fortunately this driver was blessed with a large amount of common sense, his only objectionable trait being his taciturnity, which verged on sullenness, his answers to my questions and comments on my remarks being strictly confined to monosyllables; but as I had so much experience of over-talkative drivers, I welcomed this man as a pleasing change.

Called as I was at the unreasonable hour of half-past six on a February morning, and leaving Orillia breakfastless, I did not feel in the best of humours at the start. On coming downstairs, I found our Yankee friend ahead of me, a feat he was disposed to crow over me for, until I told him I supposed he had got up early to start his day's drinking betimes—a supposition the truth of which he gave me ample proof of before I left the house that morning. Once started on our way my spirits soon rose, stimulated by the clear winter morning air and the swift pace at which we flew along; for the roads were exceptionally good. About six miles out of the town we passed a sleigh-load of "free and independents," and among them Cockburn, the winning man, who was being brought down by them in triumph to Orillia. As they passed us they raised a "howl" of "Hurrah for Cockburn!" which, from its character, I judged was as much stimulated by strong waters as by enthusiasm for the so-called Reform cause. Washago was at length reached, a place at which we did not stop, but drove on two miles farther to Severn Bridge, so called from a large wooden bridge that spans the river Severn here. Stopping at the hotel, kept by a Mr. McKenna, for some breakfast, I soon found by the disgust he expressed at the result of the election, that Cockburn was not "his man." The bar-room was full of his retainers, and glum they looked as they bemoaned the fact that they had "lost their votes," as they styled it. Having occasion to walk over to the shed

where the horses were tied, I was greatly puzzled by a confused and muffled hum overhead, as nearly like the noise made by an angry swarm of bees as anything else. Enquiring from the driver how the anomaly of a swarm of bees in winter time came about, I was laughingly informed that the sound proceeded from a school situated in the loft over the driving-shed—rather an odd locality, so it struck me, for teaching the young idea how to shoot. However, I expect it was more the result of necessity than choice.

There, too, I became acquainted with the irrepressible M. P. P. for South Simcoe, Mr. D'Arcy Boulton, whose Conservative ardour was nothing damped by his last defeat. In truth, this gentleman deserves credit for his indomitable pluck—reverses only seem to spur him on to fresh exertions. *Nil Desperandum* is his motto.

Leaving Severn Bridge, after a good substantial breakfast, we drove on twelve miles further to Gravenhurst, to which the Northern will be extended this summer, and which for a time will be its terminus. Here the fun was still going "fast and furious;" the successful candidate had made this his head-quarters, and had celebrated his victory by a midnight supper after the result was practically certain. To this supper his henchmen had been invited, while the great Reform public had been entertained through the "wee sma' hours" with Reform whiskey at a Reform bar, and, to judge by its results, I should say Reform whiskey possesses just about the same properties as Conservative whiskey. "Ructions" had been many and fierce the day before, and while there I was witness to a disgraceful and brutal scene. A big, burly Orangeman chose to find fault with the religious opinions, mildly expressed, of another and, of course, much smaller and weaker man, and to enforce his own religious views (save the mark!) knocked the man who presumed to differ with him down, and then proceeded to administer a most brutal kicking. It is doubtful if the man would ever have survived to receive the doctrines of this Orange crusader, had not three or four dragged him away from his victim. Speaking of the Canadian style of fighting, nothing so disgusts an old-countryman as the cowardly way in which men fight in Canada. Pity it is that such a way of settling quarrels should be resorted to at all, but as it unfortunately is, let the combatants remember that "fairplay's a jewel." It may seem incredible to some of my readers, but it is nevertheless a fact, that in some parts of Canada, particularly in some backwoods districts north of Toronto, it is a common thing to see men horribly disfigured by the loss of a nose or an ear, bitten off in some bar-room fight. Can anything be more frightful? Cannibalism is not nearly so bad, as the poor wretches who practise it have had the practice handed down to them through ages. Another favourite style of mutilation among these semi-barbarians is eye-gouging, it being often esteemed quite an honour to be answerable for the loss of an enemy's optic. In Canadian country fighting the old and chivalrous law of "never hit a man when he's down" is entirely disregarded, and for it is substituted, "when a man's down jump on him, and don't let him up again." But I expect this subject is no more pleasing to my readers than it is to me. Leaving Gravenhurst shortly after dinner, we drove on to our ultimate destination—Bracebridge. This latter part of the road is by far the most picturesque, abounding in rock and hill and dale scenery which only lacked the charm of summer to make it most romantic. Within three miles of Bracebridge we crossed the beautiful Muskoka Falls, which, with their rapids, have a total fall of nearly 160 feet. The bridge on which we crossed spans the river at a point but a few feet above the largest fall, and from the sleigh we had a magnificent view of its beauties, to which winter had added a charm by spanning it with a gorgeous rainbow (for I can call it nothing else) of ice, that glistened and glittered in the sun with all the varied hues of a genuine rainbow.

From the sublime to the ridiculous is but a step—we had hardly left the Muskoka Falls behind, when I was attracted by a low, squalid-looking log-house—I say the log-house attracted me, but I am wrong, what attracted me was a shining brass plate on its rickety door, and which bore in large characters the imposing name, "GOSCHEN LODGE." Anything more incongruous I don't think I ever saw. The nearest parallel I could think of was the Sandwich Islander, who thought his attire complete when he had equipped himself with a new shirt-collar and a pair of spurs, at the same time being in a state of native nudity.

Arrived at length at Bracebridge, I must leave my experiences there to another paper, having already protracted this one much beyond its usual limits.

WAYFARER.

SCRAP.

It is stated that the Emperor of Morocco will visit England next summer.

The Mennonites of the United States and Canada have already raised \$20,000 to aid their Russian brethren.

Folly and the Republic have one striking point of similarity, says the Paris *Figaro*—they both wear the Phrygian cap.

An exchange advises ladies when they attend evening parties to "dress so that no one will remember what you don't have on."

An amateur exhibition of pictures painted by officers of the army and navy will be opened shortly at the Albert Hall, London.

Manchester, alarmed at the high price of coals, has opened an exhibition of appliances for the diminution of waste in the consumption of fuel.

A French railway company have engaged in a law-suit with Millie Christine, the "double" lady, the point in dispute being whether she (or they) ought to travel with one or two tickets.

A curious sale took place recently in London—the sale of the clothes and jewelry of the notorious bank forgers, Macdonald and Bidwell. Their seal-skin coats brought more than £40 apiece.

It appears that passengers on a crowded railroad train may occupy seats in the palace car without paying extra for them if there are no other vacant seats. Such is the decision of a New York court.

This is a very good world to live in,
To spend or to lend or to give in;
But to beg or to borrow or to get a man's own,
It is the very worst world that ever was known.

A not uncommon trick in Paris is for a person with a bad cigar to stop a gentleman having a good one to solicit permission to light, and in the handing back manage to substitute the inferior weed.

France pays her ambassadors fairly. Her new minister to London, the Duc de Rochefoucauld-Bisaccia, gets \$40,000 a-year, the highest sum paid to any diplomatist except the ambassador to St. Petersburg, who receives \$50,000. The ambassador at Vienna receives \$34,000; the one at Berlin \$28,000.

A proposal has been made that foreigners residing in France who are not subject to military service in their own countries shall be incorporated in the French army, in the reserve, or even in the active force. This proposal, it is added, has been taken into consideration by the Committee of Initiative.

The *Spensersche Zeitung* announces that the Genevan authorities have determined to restore to the reigning Duke of Brunswick all the art treasures bequeathed to the city by his late eccentric brother. This valuable collection includes the celebrated onyx, and the equally famous gem which once formed part of Mary Stuart's signet-ring.

A big bunch of black Hamburg grapes, weighing thirteen pounds and four ounces, was raised at Lambton Castle, the seat of the Earl of Durham, and was exhibited at Manchester, England, last September. The vine bore last year seven bunches besides the one mentioned above, the lightest weighing over four pounds. This productive vine was started from an eye in 1869.

Propos of the "light fantastic," the Rev. H. W. Beecher makes this reply to a query as to whether it is wicked to dance: "It is wicked when it is wicked, and not wicked when it is not wicked. In itself it has no more moral character than walking, wrestling, or rowing. Bad company, untimely hours, evil dances, may make the exercise evil; good company, wholesome hours, and home influences may make it a very great benefit."

The "tree pumpkin," a new species of vegetable, is announced from the Jardin d'Acclimatation at Paris. Its mode of growth, instead of being trailing, is in erect tufts, with numerous fruits of a depressed spherical shape, from five to eight inches in diameter. These are said to be of excellent quality. The chief merit of the plant is, that from its mode of growth it occupies very little space in cultivation. It is a native of Buenos Ayres.

Lord John Russell was once accused in the House of Commons of falling back on the "cant of patriotism." The accuser was a man who, having originally been a Liberal, had deserted his party and turned Tory. Russell, in the course of his reply, coldly said, "I quite agree with the honourable baronet that the 'cant of patriotism' is a bad thing, but I hardly need remind him that there is something worse—the re-cant of patriotism."

Literary Notes.

Mr. George Alfred Townsend purposes to write a biography of Mr. Sumner, entitled "The Life and Friends of Chas. Sumner."

A double story is "in circulation to the effect that the *Revolution* is to be revived, with Laura Curtis Bullard and Susan B. Anthony as editors.

Smiles's "Self Help" translated into Japanese, and an illustrated Anglo-Japanese Dictionary, were the chief prizes given away by the Empress of Japan at a native girls' school.

The number of books found in the Roman convents, which were confiscated by the Italian government, reaches 608,018 volumes. It is to be hoped that they will be combined together in one great collection.

During the Tichborne trial the circulation of the leading daily penny papers of London increased 40,000 copies. The interesting calculation has been made that people have wasted in reading the reports of this trial time enough for them to have acquired a couple of languages, or read the best classic works of English literature.

The *Movimento* of Genoa publishes the following as the text of a curious autograph of Tasso, belonging to the collection of the Marquis of Villanova: "March 23, 1870. The undersigned acknowledges the receipt from Mr. Abraham Levi of twenty-five lire, for which he leaves in pledge a sword of the same value, six shirts, four sheets and two napkins. Torquato Tasso."

An English snob wants an edition of Dickens's Works brought out in classical English, as the words used in the author's works are extremely disagreeable to read, and the language of the lower orders ought never to appear in print. The *Athenaeum* suggests that he should confine his reading to the "Spanish Armada." Mr. Puff was "not for making slavish distinctions, and giving all the fine language to the upper sort of people."

An eminent medical writer is of the opinion that paralysis, which caused the death of Dickens, was due almost exclusively to his public readings. He states that on leaving the platform after reading "Copperfield," so laborious, earnest, and pathetic were the exertions made by Dickens, his whole soul being thrown into the work, that the pulsations of his heart numbered 98, being 24 in excess of the ordinary pulse, 72; after "Marigold," 99; "Sikes and Nancy," 118; "Oliver Twist," 124.

The new library of the city of Paris occupies a portion of the Hôtel Carnavalet, in the Rue Sévigné. Though but a poor substitute for the splendid collection of 125,000 volumes which was destroyed, it already contains 28,000 volumes or pamphlets, and 15,000 engravings. About 8,000 of the books and 12,000 of the engravings have been presented to the library; the rest have been purchased. Only about one hundred volumes of the old library remain, these having been lent before the fire, and thus preserved.

DICKENS-COLLINS.—On several occasions, as is well-known, Dickens and Wilkie Collins wrote a short story together. "On one of these occasions," said Mr. Collins recently, "we agreed to exchange styles, so as to puzzle the critics; Mr. Dickens was to adopt my style, and I was to imitate his. The plan succeeded perfectly, and it was amusing to see the reviewers point out a passage of mine as an example of Dickens's peculiar vein, and in the next sentence comment on a paragraph of Dickens's as a sample of Wilkie Collins's sensational style."

The London *Orchestra* says: "The poet Laureate committed two blunders in his 'Welcome' to the Princess Alexandrovna. The first is historical, making 'England's Harold' give Russia's throne a wife. It was not England's Harold but England's Harold's papa, Earl Godwin, who furnished a bride for the Muscovite prince of the period. But there was not much Russia in those days. Mr. Tennyson's second mistake is writing Alexandrovna with a *v* instead of *u*. There is no *v* in the word at all. The Russian letter is the Greek beta now pronounced *vet*, and its exact equivalent in English is our *u*."

M. Pierre Véron gives a concise sketch of how some contemporaneous authors worked. Damas the elder was wont to take up his pen without knowing what he was going to write, but the contact of paper aroused him. Alfred de Musset never felt himself in proper humour to write until he had covered five or six sheets of paper with fanciful designs, and perhaps taken more abstruse than was good for him. Prosper Mérimée usually commenced his stories at the end, and, after having made a collection of *dénouements*, sketched in the beginning. Victor Hugo had an original method. He mapped out things while walking the streets of Paris, or rambling about the rocks of Guernsey. After pondering the thing for a year he would suddenly set himself at work, and finish, as it were, at a sitting. Each of his dramas was written in less than a fortnight, and at times he would write an act in a day.