

THE REST CURE

Nobody Needs to Believe a Word of This

By SAM RAY

I'M not, generally speaking, a summer boarder. I am a Stock Broker. My habitat is in Toronto, where I carry on a constant endeavour to resemble one of those awful Wall Street beasts, sometimes bull and sometimes bear. Up until this summer I had never had a vacation, and if I'm spared long enough I hope to die before I have another.

Of course, my wife, better known socially as Mrs. Parks-Gurney, always leaves the city for the summer season, but it has been my practice to move to my club when she leaves town. About July 14th, of last summer, I made a lucky strike in munitions and my better half wrote me that I ought to take a vacation as my health was failing—she knew it was. When wife takes it into her head that my health is failing, why it's got to fail; so I began at once to read the advertisements of quiet summer resorts.

I don't know whether it is because we are made from dust that we have the back-to-the-land bent, or whether I'm particularly susceptible because my father started life as office boy in a farms-on-installment company. At any rate, I decided that the proper place to rest was on a farm where fresh butter and eggs could be had. Moreover, I had been reading Addison's "Spectator," and had a longing to become one. What better place, therefore, could one choose to spectate than on a farm? This explains the ease with which I was interested when I spied an innocent little advertisement stating that boarders would be "taken in" at a certain farm about sixty miles north of the city.

Had I only stopped with the reading of the advertisement to ask myself how I might be "taken in," what an experience I should have had escaped! But a perusal of it showed me that at this farm I would have fresh honey, for they kept bees. Now honey is a favourite dish of mine, and I liked the word bees—a favourite when used in poetry have such a restful drone sound! And what could be a better subject for speculation than a busy bee improving each shining hour? On the next page of the paper I again caught the word honey! Here it was used in a filler at the bottom of the page, which stated that honey cures cold. That settled it for me. The weather had been of the collar-wilting variety, and "cold" whether cured in honey or salted down was what I was after.

The next day saw me descend the steps of the only passenger coach of the mixed train properly accoutred, as I thought, for a summer outing. An ancient individual in the proverbial overalls, and with a wisp of whisker such as is popularly supposed to decorate the chin of Uncle Sam awaited my arrival, while his horse leaned against the station and regarded me with a look of hostility which would have made the ancient mariner's cold and glittering eye look soft and tear-dimmed in comparison.

"Are you the fellah that sent me this here telegram?" he enquired, the farmer, I mean, not the horse.

"Why, I do admit the soft impeachment," I made answer, quoting from some one in my most winning tones as I removed my gaze forcibly from the afore-said quadruped.

"Then you may as well shell out a quarter," he went on. "That's what they charged me for delivering it at my place."

So, after I had handed him a quarter, along with fifteen dollars for my first week's board, for it was a pay-as-you-enter affair, I proceeded toward a springless buckboard which seemed to be attached to the aforementioned horse.

"You're not goin' home in that rigout, are you?" he enquired in amazement.

"Why not?" I asked as sarcastically as I could, for I had spent considerable thought in equipping myself.

"Well, first off my men would probably tar and feather anyone found on the farm dressed like that, and, second, my old nag would kick in the dashboard if you was to try and ride behind her."

His arguments sounded convincing, so I humbly asked what I could do about it. Farmer Tuffnut, for such was his name, guided me to where, over against the station, a tumbledown store displayed its wares. A pair of khaki-coloured trousers, bearing the legend, "\$3.00 each while they last," caught my attention. I

admit that a lively gray check or a cream flannel suits my taste better than khaki, but when in Rome do as the Romans do, you know, so presently I was inside the general emporium pointing out the trousers of my choice.

"Seeks dollars, please," said the man behind the counter as he handed me the parcel.

"But," I protested, "they are marked three."

"Sure, that ees right, three dollars a pant. or seeks a pair."

He was one of the chosen race, so as I was slightly acquainted with the business methods of these sons of Isaac I picked up the parcel and laid down three dollars.

"Oh! It is robbery," he shrieked. "Show those pants to anyone who knows pants, and if he not say they are worth seeks dollars I'll cut my head off."

However, as he saw I was not disposed to give more he calmed down sufficiently to load me up with short-sleeved shirts, red neckties, canvas shoes and incidentals at prices enough to keep himself and family comfortably for the summer on garlic or whatever the Israelites may exist on.

WHEN I was climbing into the buckboard, Mr. Tuffnut explained that as his mare had a colt at home she would likely be in a hurry getting there. This may have been an explanation, but it was certainly no excuse for the pace at which the old mare tore up the road.

"Hold onto your hat," yelled the farmer in my ear, "we're coming to a piece of corduroy road."

At this I metaphorically leaned back among the cushions in relief (I was prevented from doing this actually by the fact that there were neither back nor cushions to the seat) for my impression was that corduroy resembled velvet. I know differently now. At last, I thought, we were about to strike something smooth. Then we struck it. Smooth? It was about as smooth as riding down the rocky road to Dublin barebacked on a rawboned pacer afflicted with stringhalt. By the time I reached the farm I was certainly in need of a vacation.

During my first meal at the farm (my very first, mark you, this is important, as it no doubt had an evil influence over the rest of my trip) a maiden lady of fifty-eight or thereabout, who was about two-thirds paint and one-third wig, lured me into promising to row her about a nearby lake that afternoon. The experience of that afternoon is burned into my harassed brain in letters of tan. The sun beat down on me mercilessly as hatless, sleeveless, aching, perspiring, I rowed the maiden lady, who sat underneath a green parasol the while, over a sheet of liquid fire. In the shade they were holding icebergs to the thermometer to keep the mercury from boiling, and I was in a decidedly shadeless position.

As the afternoon wore away so did my temper. When finally, the maiden lady, reaching for a lily, tipped the boat and made a heroic effort to swallow the lake, I couldn't forbear offering thanks to a kindly providence which had saved my life. My life, however, was saved at the expense of my complexion, for when I got splashed with water the sun took a fresh hold upon me, and before bedtime came I had cooked to a beautiful tomato red.

When I went up to bed that night I felt depressed. My first day's vacation had somehow not been up to expectations. My bones ached from the unwonted exercise of rowing, and my arms and face fried and frizzled from heat, which they had stood during my boat trip. My room was up next the roof, and was hot, to say the least. At last I finished the painful task of removing my garments and lowered myself into bed. Here a surprise awaited me. For the more I lowered myself the deeper I sank into the bed. It was composed of feathers! The feathers closed over me and well-nigh suffocated me. My sore bones

rebelled against lying on the floor, so I lay on my back buried in the bed while the perspiration trickled into my eyes. I could not sleep. The silence was oppressive. I wished something would break the uncanny silence. A cat fight started under my window and I wished for silence again.

The second day of my vacation broke with a crash at about 2 a.m. as I gracefully sank through the ancient four-poster to the hard floor

four feet below. Though my fall was largely softened by the deep feathers, this softening was accomplished at the expense of the bed, for I had no sooner been rudely awakened by my sudden descent than I was threatened of being metaphorically put to sleep by feathers which escaped from the mattress which had burst like a toy balloon. After things settled down enough so that I could go to sleep again a chorus of roosters started a crowing competition so that I couldn't.

It was next afternoon. At noon Farmer Tuffnut had prophesied that the bees would likely begin to swarm that day. I resolved to be on deck when the bees swarmed. I wanted to see the farm hands stung. Somehow I left myself out of the reckoning. I had been stung by bees (and others) individually but not collectively, and was moreover fortified by the philosophy that if you are not afraid of bees they will not touch you. So here I was comfortably seated on an old milk-stand beneath a tree and overlooking the bee-yard. As yet nothing had happened, and no one was in sight. The fascinating female had betaken herself to the village store, and I had foiled all her attempts to include me in the party. Cream had been rubbed on my blistered neck and arms. A great peace stole over my careworn soul.

I must have fallen asleep, for presently I was on the far-away shores of Hawaii. The smell of meadows was in my nostrils, and a dreamy Hawaiian air was wafted to my ears. This music changed slowly to the drumming on some tin instrument of the tune usually played outside the tent containing the wild man from Borneo. An eerie feeling came over me, a feeling of impending woe. A whirring sound as of an aeroplane broke upon my hearing in a roaring crescendo, while I sat powerless. This, I thought, is but the roaring of my heart, for I am about to meet a violent death at the hands of the heathen cannibals which are doubtless about.

A HAND was laid on my shoulder, at first lightly, then heavier. The hand produced ticklish sensations as if the flesh thereof crept. The end had come. I opened my eyes to see the worst. Close by, mine host beat vociferously upon a tin pan. At the same time he implored me to keep my nerve. I glanced shoulderward to see whose hand rested there. Horrors! There upon my left shoulder writhed a whole swarm of angry excited bees. Hold my nerve, indeed! I realized that this was no time to hold one's nerve. Whatever may have been my family tree I am sure it was not a bee tree. With the age-long homing instinct natural to animal nature universal I broke for Toronto, followed by bees and curses from the farmer. The cat shot past with a smaller string of bees following her.

But the bees would not allow me to shake them so easily. As many as could, hung onto my shoulder or crawled down my neck. My hair was full of them. They filled every pore in my face with their stings. A long line of them trailed in the rear, for I was running off with their Queen. I wish here to disclaim any ulterior motive in running off. I didn't want their queen. I assure you that any attraction between us was all on her part. I make this disclaimer for the greater satisfaction of Mrs. Parks-Gurney, who is rather inclined to be jealous of her good-looking husband. However, the queen refused to depart from me.

I rushed through the yard in a straight line. Not far away the family cat performed similar manoeuvres. I turned circles, I cut figures of eight. Always the bees followed as if in a hilarious game of follow-the-leader or crack-the-whip. The stings were maddening. My eyes were fast closing as I turned my feet in the general direction of the house and used my best hundred yards form. Bump! Bang!! Crash!!! I fell down the outside steps into the