



Tales of the Road

By
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WITH BEST
CHRISTMAS
AND NEW YEAR
WISHES

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Tales of the Road

IN HARVEST TIME



HERE is no music sweeter than the rhythmic beat of horse hoofs on a prairie trail, with the occasional sharp click as an iron shoe strikes a rare stone. A soft west wind is blowing in your face, and brings to you the wonderful sweet and pungent odors of golden rod, and wild Bergamot. The road sides are lined with masses of these flowers, and black-eyed Susans, wild sun-flowers, blue wind-flowers, purple thistles and a score of others familiar and innumerable, interspersed with wild roses gay now with scarlet haws.

As you pass into the open country, to the song of the hoof-beats is added the rustling and whispering of the wheat, which stretches as far as the eye can see on either side, broken only by bluffs of trees and comfortable farm homes, with splendid barns painted a gay red, that add delightful patches of color in the yellowing wheat fields. On the left purple

shadows of the Riding Mountains, giving an additional beauty to the scene.

On you go, mile after mile, and your ears, that were weary with the clatter of asphalt pavements, the click of telegraph instruments, the whir of telephone bells, drink in the soft, sweet sounds of the country, and you can feel the tension relax and tired nerves are soothed and quieted. If you get out to have a nearer view of a field of wheat, ten chances to one your foot presses a bed of wild mint and the spicy fragrance rises like wine to your brain.

The question comes home, why, oh why, do we live in cities? Because we cannot help it, I suppose, but, oh, the country is good!

RAIN, RAIN

A rainy day in the country, marooned at the Commercial Hotel, Gilbert Plains, but it is no desert island. In company with a gorgeous parrot, with body of green, wings of red and head of blue, have put in a luxuriously idle morning, reading, writing and talking. The parrot is a gentleman of few words, but they are usually much to the point. At present the weather is rather getting on his spirits and every few minutes he extends a black claw through the bars of his cage to shake hands. Somewhere from the regions below comes the most delicious odor of freshly preserved raspberries. It's a good world, even if it does rain in harvest, and already to the westward the clouds are breaking.

ON A FREIGHT CABOOSE

There is no better coign of vantage from which to see the country than the tower of a freight caboose, and though I am prepared to testify that the Canadian Northern Railway has the worst roadbed and the most erratic train service it has ever been my misfortune to encounter, I am equally prepared to aver that no road in or out of Christendom has more courteous freight conductors and brakemen. It is a test of manners, when after delivering way freight over a distance of sixty miles, in a pouring rain, to be told at 2 a.m. that a woman wants to board your caboose, and not say anything stronger than "darn 'all." But when in addition to that you give "the woman" the most comfortable chair, make up a fire to take off the dank chill, and tell her she is quite welcome and it's no trouble, there, indeed, you have found the true gentleman.

It was not always 2 a.m. and raining. It was a jolly ride from Grand View to Togo, when Conductor McQuigg raided the boarding car at Roblin gravel pit and carried off two excellent pies, which we ate still hot out of the pan.

Conductor McQuigg is the envy of his brethren of the road, as he has the newest and best caboose. He has it fitted up to make a comfortable little home; the big stove is radiant in aluminum paint, the spotless windows have pretty cretonne curtains, there are flower-

ing plants, pictures and numerous little touches that go to show a man of taste and refinement.

Another pleasant run was from Kamsack to Canora. This crew had an old car, for whose appearance they felt called to apologize, but it was very tidy, and when I climbed down from the tower after watching the sun set over seas of wheat, there was a jolly fire to warm up by and much pleasant talk between stations.

"THE INTELLIGENT FOREIGNER"

We use that phrase often in a half sneering way. Karl was a fair-haired son of the Fatherland, who drove me, in admirable style, over many miles of atrocious mud roads. He had left home in order to avoid military duty, and had spent two years in the United States and three in Canada. Canada was more like the old home in North Germany. His English was fluent and pure, with an occasional quaint idiom and one bit of slang that was very funny, this was "I don't think."

He owned 320 acres, but had come to drive for the livery barn while the crop grew. "This (with a wave of his whip) good crop, I don't think; but I have ninety acres oats the prettiest you ever saw."

Karl would go back to reap the oats aforesaid. "I like not the town; there is too much drink. It is all right for a man to take glass of whiskey or beer, but every man should have

It was small and painfully new, with rough boards for seats, but the service opened with the 23rd Psalm, and after the reading of scripture and a plain, earnest sermon, delivered in a full clear voice, with a trace of Highland accent, it closed with "Oh! God of Bethel."

We came out into the afterglow of a wonderful prairie sunset, and did not seem so far from home after all.

BATTLEFORD FERRY

You leave that nightmare of new towns, North Battleford, and with much jingling of harness and cracking of whips are rushed down to the ferry. The hills on the north are steep and you are swept round curves and ever downward at breakneck speed.

At the ferry new surprises await you. On drives the first load, horses are unhitched and backed into corners, rigs packed together with poles over the edge—fourteen horses and rigs have been bestowed, when down comes a prairie schooner with three horses attached and drives on last of all. Judging by the row, the horses are using most profane language, but up goes the gang plank and we are off down stream. The Saskatchewan is full and rapid and in fifteen minutes we are at the south bank.

While you draw a long breath, horses are hitched, drivers call for their passengers, in we scramble, and then the fun begins. There

is only twenty minutes to drive up hill to old, historic Battleford and back to the ferry before the boat goes out for the last time that night.

The driving of Jehu, the son of Nimshi, was not in it with that wild gallop, and in ten minutes you alight at the open door of the Windsor, mighty glad to find all your bones in their right places and your head still on your shoulders. Small wonder that one of the party of Philadelphia editors exclaimed last year, "The whole 175 of us here and no bones broken—it is marvellous—I will pay all the expenses of one of your men to New York and back and give you \$50 to boot if you will go back with me and give an exhibition of such driving there." Oh! Battleford Ferry as an experience to remember.

CHARMING BATTLEFORD

Most charming of Western towns is Battleford, the erstwhile capital of the Northwest of other days, before the new provinces were dreamed of. The junction of the Saskatchewan and Battle rivers forms a peninsula that is an ideal site for a city. Just now it has been flouted by the Canadian Northern, and North Battleford was built with a view of eclipsing the old town.

A million dollar bridge spans the rapid Saskatchewan from the north town, but serene and unafraid Old Battleford continues to grow and do business, secure in her position, knowing that ultimately, when competition between

transcontinental roads is really established, that costly bridge will have to be abandoned and one erected nine miles below the old town, where it should have been in the first place.

Social life in the old town has had time to develop and mellow, and there are few places where it is more delightful to visit. Mayor Prince is truly a prince of good fellows, and the stranger within the gates is given a royally good time. The scenery around Battleford is superb and everyone, rich or poor, seems to have a garden.

The Hon. The Hudson Bay Co. is still a great factor in the life of the town. Just across the Battle River stands the Indian Industrial School, the main classroom of which was the first legislative chamber of the Northwest Territories, and upstairs is the room where the Duke of Argyle slept when he was the guest of Governor Laird, in the by-gone days. From the cupola of the building is a most glorious panoramic view of Battleford and surroundings.

FORDING THE VERMILLION

The last few days of the trip were full of incident, the most exciting of which was the fording of the Vermillion River. I was driven forth to "view the landscape o'er," by a gentleman who was supposed to know all about the country, and particularly where the good roads were. When we had been driving some hours he suggested that we ford the

Vermillion River to get a better view of the country. Now, fording rivers is not to my taste. I have tried it once or twice without any serious mishap, but still the sight of the water with no solid bridge intervening fills me with apprehension. This time my apprehensions were well founded. We drove down to the ford and drove in. The river is narrow, and by the time we were in mid-stream the water was rushing into the buggy and in another moment my suit case was floating gracefully down stream. With one or two plunges we landed on the further bank, very wet and uncomfortable. My escort had to wade in nearly up to his waist to get the suit case, and when finally it was brought to land, there we were, ten or twelve miles from anywhere, with a bright sun, truly, but a keen wind blowing. However, we were not drowned, which was something. After wringing our garments to the best of our ability and emptying the water out of suit case, we proceeded on our journey.

I could see that my escort was most unhappy in his mind. He had visions of the guying that awaited him when the truth leaked out, that he, a land guide, forsooth, should have happened with such an accident. I suggested that we make for the nearest hotel, get our things dried and say nothing about it. His look of relief was instant, but, alas for the best laid schemes! He had with him a leather case with entry papers, and this was not opened until he entered the room at Manville

to do business with a number of new settlers who awaited him. When the bag was opened every paper was soaking, and the whole thing was given away. There was nothing left but to confess and take the inevitable jollying, which I must say he did with a good grace.

Three days later, at Vegreville, my driver informed me we could save several hours by fording the Vermillion, but a half drowned cat dreads the water as much as a burnt child dreads the fire, and I declared, firmly if unclassically, "not for mine."

EDMONTON THE BEAUTIFUL

"Beautiful for situation," the joy of the whole West is Edmonton, if I may be pardoned the paraphrasing of scripture. Seated high on rolling hills above the wide Saskatchewan, its wide tree shaded streets and gardens, proclaims a city of homes in the making, while the splendid buildings along business thoroughfares are the legitimate sequence of the big fur trading post of the Hudson Bay Company, more than a century ago, for Edmonton is one of the natural distributing centres of the country, and even its present prosperity is but a faint foreshadowing of good times to come.

THE JIM MAH WAH

This is the quaintest and most comfortable little Oriental cafe in Edmonton, Alberta. It is a sort of headquarters for the Nomad Club

of that capital, and while I was there Miss Hughes, of the Edmonton Bulletin, who is a member, extended the honors of the Jim Mah Wah to me. There I had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Ellen Synge, at one time private physician to the Emperor of Corea, and Miss Fitzmorice, a daughter of the Emerald Isle, who has circumnavigated the globe, and as a trained nurse in South Africa has seen much of life in strange places. Charming women they were all three, and the little hour stands out as a bright spot in memory.

It seems such an advantage to new cities like Edmonton to have women of wide travel and of culture settle in them. It is a marked feature of so many of the towns along the line of the Canadian Northern that they have attracted both men and women of this class. Their numbers may be small in any one community, but they are a strong bulwark against the purely materialistic spirit which is so apt to be a prominent factor in rapidly growing communities. Of course, Edmonton, as a town has an old, old history, and has always had its circle of cultured people, but Edmonton the city is another proposition, and it is well that it also is attracting those who make for something beside the mere accumulation of wealth.

CALGARY

"Calgary, Sept. 10th. snowing hard," was the entry in my diary. Calgary always treats me abominably in the line of weather, so I shake the snow from my feet and ho for Winnipeg.