

BROOKS CHARLES STEPHEN

HINTS TO PILGRIMS

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Charles Stephen Brooks

Hints to Pilgrims

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WHEN a man's thoughts in older time were set on pilgrimage, his neighbors came forward with suggestions. One of them saw that his boots were freshly tapped. Another was careful that his hose were darned with honest wool – an oldish aunt, no doubt, with beeswax and thimble and glasses forward on her nose. A third sly creature fetched in an embroidered wallet to hold an extra shift, and hinted in return for a true nail from the holy cross. If he were a bachelor, a tender garter was offered him by a lonely maiden of the village, and was acknowledged beneath the moon. But the older folk who had made the pilgrimage took the settle and fell to argument on the merit of the inns. They scrawled maps for his guidance on the hearth, and told him the sights that must not be missed. Here he must veer off for a holy well. Here he must beware a treacherous bog. Here he must ascend a steeple for the view. They cautioned him to keep upon the highway. Was it not Christian, they urged, who was lost in By-path Meadow? Again they talked of thieves and warned him to lay a chair against the door. Then a honey syllabub was drunk in clinking cups, and they made a night of it.

Or perhaps our pilgrim belonged to a guild which – by an agreeable precedent – voted that its members walk with him to the city's gate and present from each a half-penny to support him on the journey. The greasy pockets yield their treasure. He rattles on both sides with generous copper. Here, also, is a salve for man and beast – a receipt for a fever-draught. We may fancy now the pilgrim's mule plowing up the lazy dust at the turn of the road as he waves his last farewell. His thoughts already have leaped the valley to the misty country beyond the hills.

And now above his dusty road the sun climbs the exultant noon. It whips its flaming chariot to the west. On the rim of twilight, like a traveler who departs, it throws a golden offering to the world.

But there are pilgrims in these later days, also, – strangers to our own fair city, script in wallet and staff in hand, – who come to place their heavy tribute on our shrine. And to them I offer these few suggestions.

The double stars of importance – as in Baedeker – mark our restaurants and theatres. Dear pilgrim, put money in thy purse! Persuade your guild to advance you to a penny! They mark the bridges, the shipping, the sharp canyons of the lower city, the parks – limousines where silk and lace play nurse to lap dogs – Bufo on an airing, the precious spitz upon a scarlet cushion. They mark the parade of wealth, the shops and glitter of Fifth Avenue on a winter afternoon. "If this is Fifth Avenue," – as I heard a dazzled stranger comment lately on a bus-top, – "my God! what must First Avenue be like!"

And then there are the electric signs – the mammoth kitten rolling its ball of silk, ginger-ale that forever issues from a bottle, a fiery motor with a flame of dust, the Wrigley triplets correcting their sluggish livers by exercise alongside the Astor roof. Surely letters despatched home to Kalamazoo deal excitedly with these flashing portents. And of the railroad stations and the Woolworth Tower with its gothic pinnacles questing into heaven, what pilgrim words are adequate! Here, certainly, Kalamazoo is baffled and must halt and bite its pen.

Nor can the hotels be described – toppling structures that run up to thirty stories – at night a clatter in the basement and a clatter on the roof – sons of Belial and rich folk from Akron who are spending the profit on a few thousand hot-water bottles and inner tubes – what mad pursuit! what pipes and timbrels! what wild ecstasy! Do we set a noisy bard upon our towers in the hope that our merriment will sound to Mars? Do we persuade them that jazz is the music of the spheres? But at morning in these hotels are thirty stories of snoring bipeds – exhausted trousers across the bed-post,

frocks that have been rumped in the hubbub – tier on tier of bipeds, with sleepy curtains drawn against the light. Boniface, in the olden time, sunning himself beneath his bush and swinging dragon, watching the dust for travelers, how would he be amazed at the advancement of the inn! Dear pilgrim, you must sag and clink for entrance to the temples of our joyous gods. Put money in thy purse and wire ahead!

On these streets there is a roar of traffic that Babylon never heard. Nineveh in its golden age could have packed itself with all its splendid luggage in a single building. Athens could have mustered in a street. Our block-parties that are now the fashion – neighborhood affairs in fancy costumes, with a hot trombone, and banners stretched from house to house – produce as great an uproar as ever arose upon the Acropolis. And lately, when our troops returned from overseas and marched beneath our plaster arches, Rome itself could not have matched the largeness of our triumph. Here, also, men have climbed up to walls and battlements – but to what far dizzier heights! – to towers and windows, and to chimney-tops, to see great Pompey pass the streets.

And by what contrast shall we measure our tall buildings? Otus and Ephialtes, who contracted once to pile Pelion on top of Ossa, were evidently builders who touched only the larger jobs. They did not stoop to a cottage or a bungalow, but figured entirely on such things as arks and the towers of Jericho. When old Cheops sickened, it is said, and thought of death, they offered a bid upon his pyramid. Noah, if he was indeed their customer, as seems likely, must have fretted them as their work went forward. Whenever a cloud appeared in the rainy east he nagged them for better speed. He prowled around on Sunday mornings with his cubit measure to detect any shortness in the beam. Or he looked for knot-holes in the gopher wood. But Otus and Ephialtes could not, with all their sweating workmen, have fetched enough stones for even the foundations of one of our loftier structures.

The Tower of Babel, if set opposite Wall Street, would squat as low as Trinity: for its top, when confusion broke off the work, had advanced scarcely more than seven stories from the pavement. My own windows, dwarfed by my surroundings, look down from as great a height. Indeed, I fancy that if the famous tower were my neighbor to the rear – on Ninth Street, just off the L – its whiskered masons on the upmost platform could have scraped acquaintance with our cook. They could have gossiped at the noon hour from gutter to sink, and eaten the crullers that the kind creature tossed across. Our whistling grocery-man would have found a rival. And yet the good folk of the older Testament, ignorant of our accomplishment to come, were in amazement at the tower, and strangers came in from Gilead and Beersheba. Trippers, as it were, upon a holiday – staff in hand and pomegranates in a papyrus bag – locusts and wild honey, or manna to sustain them in the wilderness on their return – trippers, I repeat, cocked back their heads, and they counted the rows of windows to the top and went off to their far land marveling.

The Bankers Trust Building culminates in a pyramid. Where this narrows to a point there issues a streamer of smoke. I am told that inside this pyramid, at a dizzy height above the street, there is a storage room for gold. Is it too fanciful to think that inside, upon this unsunned heap of metal, there is concealed an altar of Mammon with priests to feed the fire, and that this smoke, rising in the lazy air, is sweet in the nostrils of the greedy god?

There is what seems to be a chapel on the roof of the Bush Terminal. Gothic decoration marks our buildings – the pointed arch, mullions and gargoyles. There are few nowadays to listen to the preaching of the church, but its symbol is at least a pretty ornament on our commercial towers.

Nor in the general muster of our sights must I forget the magic view from across the river, in the end of a winter afternoon, when the lower city is still lighted. The clustered windows shine as if a larger constellation of stars had met in thick convention. But it is to the eye of one who travels in the evening mist from Staten Island that towers of finest gossamer arise. They are built to furnish a fantastic dream. The architect of the summer clouds has tried here his finer hand.

It was only lately when our ferry-boat came around the point of Governor's Island, that I noticed how sharply the chasm of Broadway cuts the city. It was the twilight of a winter's day. A rack of

sullen clouds lay across the sky as if they met for mischief, and the water was black with wind. In the threatening obscurity the whole island seemed a mightier House of Usher, intricate of many buildings, cleft by Broadway in its middle, and ready to fall prostrate into the dark waters of the tarn. But until the gathering tempest rises and an evil moon peers through the crevice, as in the story, we must judge the city to be safe.

Northward are nests of streets, thick with children. One might think that the old woman who lived in a shoe dwelt hard by, with all of her married sisters roundabout. Children scurry under foot, oblivious of contact. They shoot their marbles between our feet, and we are the moving hazard of their score. They chalk their games upon the pavement. Baseball is played, long and thin, between the gutters. Peddlers' carts line the curb – carrots, shoes and small hardware – and there is shrill chaffering all the day. Here are dim restaurants, with truant smells for their advertisement. In one of these I was served unleavened bread. Folk from Damascus would have felt at home, and yet the shadow of the Woolworth Tower was across the roof. The loaf was rolled thin, like a chair-pad that a monstrous fat man habitually sits upon. Indeed, I looked sharply at my ample waiter on the chance that it was he who had taken his ease upon my bread. If Kalamazoo would tire for a night of the Beauty Chorus and the Wrigley triplets, and would walk these streets of foreign population, how amazing would be its letters home!

Our Greenwich Village, also, has its sights. Time was when we were really a village beyond the city. Even more remotely there were farms upon us and comfortable burghers jogged up from town to find the peace of country. There was once a swamp where Washington Square now is, and, quite lately, masons in demolishing a foundation struck into a conduit of running water that still drains our pleasant park. When Broadway was a muddy post-road, stretching for a weary week to Albany, ducks quacked about us and were shot with blunderbuss. Yes, and they were doubtless roasted, with apple-sauce upon the side. And then a hundred years went by, and the breathless city jumped to the north and left us a village in its midst.

It really is a village. The grocer gives you credit without question. Further north, where fashion shops, he would inspect you up and down with a cruel eye and ask a reference. He would linger on any patch or shiny spot to trip your credit. But here he wets his pencil and writes down the order without question. His friendly cat rubs against your bundles on the counter. The shoemaker inquires how your tapped soles are wearing. The bootblack, without lifting his eyes, knows you by the knots in your shoe-strings. I fear he beats his wife, for he has a great red nose which even prohibition has failed to cool. The little woman at the corner offers you the *Times* before you speak. The cigar man tosses you a package of Camels as you enter. Even the four-corners beyond Berea – unknown, remote, quite off the general travel – could hardly be more familiar with the preference of its oldest citizen. We need only a pump, and a pig and chickens in the street.

Our gossip is smaller than is found in cities. If we had yards and gardens we would talk across the fence on Monday like any village, with clothes-pins in our mouths, and pass our ailments down the street.

But we are crowded close, wall to wall. I see my neighbor cooking across the street. Each morning she jolts her dust-mop out of the window. I see shadows on a curtain as a family sits before the fire. A novelist is down below. By the frenzy of his fingers on the typewriter it must be a tale of great excitement. He never pauses or looks at the ceiling for a plot. At night he reads his pages to his patient wife, when they together have cleared away the dishes. In another window a girl lies abed each morning. Exactly at 7.45, after a few minutes of sleepy stretching, I see her slim legs come from the coverlet. Once she caught my eye. She stuck out her tongue. Your stockings, my dear, hang across the radiator.

We have odd characters, too, known to everybody, just as small towns have, who, in country circumstance, would whittle on the bench outside the village store. The father of a famous poet, but himself unknown except hereabouts, has his chair in the corner of a certain restaurant, and he offers

wisdom and reminiscence to a coterie. He is our Johnson at the Mitre. Old M – , who lives in the Alley in what was once a hayloft – now a studio, – is known from Fourth to Twelfth Street for his Indian curry and his knowledge of the older poets. It is his pleasant custom to drop in on his friends from time to time and cook their dinner. He tosses you an ancient sonnet as he stirs the pot, or he beats time with his iron spoon to a melody of the Pathétique. He knows Shakespeare to a comma, and discourses so agreeably that the Madison Square clock fairly races up to midnight. Every morning, it is said – but I doubt the truth of this, for a gossiping lady told me – every morning until the general drouth set in, he issued from the Alley for a toddy to sustain his seventy years. Sometimes, she says, old M – went without tie or collar on these quick excursions, yet with the manners of the Empire and a sweeping bow, if he met any lady of his acquaintance.

A famous lecturer in a fur collar sweeps by me often, with his eyes on the poetic stars. As he takes the air this sunny morning he thinks of new paradoxes to startle the ladies at his matinée. How they love to be shocked by his wicked speech! He is such a daring, handsome fellow – so like a god of ancient Greece! And of course most of us know T – , who gives a yearly dinner at an Assyrian restaurant – sixty cents a plate, with a near-beer extra from a saloon across the way. Any guest may bring a friend, but he must give ample warning in order that the table may be stretched.

The chief poet of our village wears a corduroy suit and goes without his hat, even in winter. If a comedy of his happens to be playing at a little theatre, he himself rings a bell in his favorite restaurant and makes the announcement in true Elizabethan fashion. "Know ye, one and all, there is a conceited comedy this night – " His hair is always tousled. But, as its confusion continues from March into the quieter months, the disarrangement springs not so much from the outer tempest as from the poetic storms inside.

Then we have a kind of Peter Pan grown to shiny middle life, who makes ukuleles for a living. On any night of special celebration he is prevailed upon to mount a table and sing one of his own songs to this accompaniment. These songs tell what a merry, wicked crew we are. He sings of the artists' balls that ape the Bohemia of Paris, of our genius, our unrestraint, our scorn of all convention. What is morality but a suit to be discarded when it is old? What is life, he sings, but a mad jester with tinkling bells? Youth is brief, and when dead we're buried deep. So let's romp and drink and kiss. It is a pagan song that has lasted through the centuries. If it happens that any folk are down from the uptown hotels, Peter Pan consents to sell a ukulele between his encores. Here, my dear pilgrims, is an entertainment to be squeezed between Ziegfeld's and the Winter Garden.

You are welcome at all of our restaurants – our Samovars, the Pig and Whistle, the Three Steps Down (a crowded room, where you spill your soup as you carry it to a table, but a cheap, honest place in which to eat), the Green Witch, the Simple Simon. The food is good at all of these places. Grope your way into a basement – wherever one of our fantastic signs hangs out – or climb broken stairs into a dusty garret – over a contractor's storage of old lumber and bath-tubs – over the litter of the roofs – and you will find artistic folk with flowing ties, spreading their elbows at bare tables with unkept, dripping candles.

Here is youth that is blown hither from distant villages – youth that was misunderstood at home – youth that looks from its poor valley to the heights and follows a flame across the darkness – youth whose eyes are a window on the stars. Here also, alas, are slim white moths about a candle. And here wrinkled children play at life and art.

Here are radicals who plot the reformation of the world. They hope it may come by peaceful means, but if necessary will welcome revolution and machine-guns. They demand free speech, but put to silence any utterance less red than their own.

Here are seething sonneteers, playwrights bulging with rejected manuscript, young women with bobbed hair and with cigarettes lolling limply at their mouths. For a cigarette, I have observed, that hangs loosely from the teeth shows an artistic temperament, just as in business circles a cigar that is tilted up until it warms the nose marks a sharp commercial nature.

But business counts for little with us. Recently, to make a purchase, I ventured of an evening into one of our many small shops of fancy wares. Judge my embarrassment to see that the salesman was entertaining a young lady on his knee. I was too far inside to retreat. Presently the salesman shifted the lady to his other knee and, brushing a lock of her hair off his nose, asked me what I wanted. But I was unwilling to disturb his hospitality. I begged him not to lay down his pleasant burden, but rather to neglect my presence. He thanked me for my courtesy, and made his guest comfortable once more while I fumbled along the shelves. By good luck the price was marked upon my purchase. I laid down the exact change and tip-toed out.

The peddlers of our village, our street musicians, our apple men, belong to us. They may wander now and then to the outside world for a silver tribute, yet they smile at us on their return as at their truest friends. Ice creaks up the street in a little cart and trickles at the cracks. Rags and bottles go by with a familiar, jangling bell. Scissors grinders have a bell, also, with a flat, tinny sound, like a cow that forever jerks its head with flies. But it was only the other day that two fellows went by selling brooms. These were interlopers from a noisier district, and they raised up such a clamor that one would have thought that the Armistice had been signed again. The clatter was so unusual – our own merchants are of quieter voice – that a dozen of us thrust our heads from our windows. Perhaps another German government had fallen. The novelist below me put out his shaggy beard. The girl with the slim legs was craned out of the sill with excitement. My pretty neighbor below, who is immaculate when I meet her on the stairs, was in her mob-cap.

My dear pilgrim from the West, with your ample house and woodshed, your yard with its croquet set and hammock between the wash-poles, you have no notion how we are crowded on the island. Laundry tubs are concealed beneath kitchen tables. Boxes for clothes and linen are ambushed under our beds. Any burglar hiding there would have to snuggle among the moth balls. Sitting-room tables are swept of books for dinner. Bookcases are desks. Desks are beds. Beds are couches. Couches are – bless you! all the furniture is at masquerade. Kitchen chairs turn upside down and become step-ladders. If anything does not serve at least two uses it is a slacker. Beds tumble out of closets. Fire escapes are nurseries. A patch of roof is a pleasant garden. A bathroom becomes a kitchen, with a lid upon the tub for groceries, and the milk cooling below with the cold faucet drawn.

A room's use changes with the clock. That girl who lives opposite, when she is dressed in the morning, puts a Bagdad stripe across her couch. She punches a row of colored pillows against the wall. Her bedroom is now ready for callers. It was only the other day that I read of a new invention by which a single room becomes four rooms simply by pressing a button. This is the manner of the magic. In a corner, let us say, of a rectangular room there is set into the floor a turntable ten feet across. On this are built four compartments, shaped like pieces of pie. In one of these is placed a bath-tub and stand, in another a folding-bed and wardrobe, in a third is a kitchen range and cupboard, and in the fourth a bookcase and piano. Must I explain the mystery? On rising you fold away your bed and spin the circle for your tub. And then in turn your stove appears. At last, when you have whirled your dishes to retirement, the piano comes in sight. It is as easy as spinning the caster for the oil and vinegar. A whirling Susan on the supper table is not more nimble. With this device it is estimated that the population of our snug island can be quadruplicated, and that landlords can double their rents with untroubled conscience. Or, by swinging a fifth piece of pie out of the window, a sleeping-porch could be added. When the morning alarm goes off you have only to spin the disk and dress in comfort beside the radiator. Or you could – but possibilities are countless.

Tom Paine died on Grove Street. O. Henry lived on Irving Place and ate at Allaire's on Third Avenue. The Aquarium was once a fort on an island in the river. Later Lafayette was welcomed there. And Jenny Lind sang there. John Masefield swept out a saloon, it's said, on Sixth Avenue near the Jefferson Market, and, for all I know, his very broom may be still standing behind the door. The Bowery was once a post-road up toward Boston. In the stream that flowed down Maiden Lane, Dutch

girls did the family washing. In William Street, not long ago, they were tearing down the house in which Alexander Hamilton lived. These are facts at random.

But Captain Kidd lived at 119 Pearl Street. Dear me, I had thought that he was a creature of a nursery book – one of the pirates whom Sinbad fought. And here on Pearl Street, in our own city, he was arrested and taken to hang in chains in London. A restaurant now stands at 119. A bucket of oyster shells is at the door, and, inside, a clatter of hungry spoons.

But the crowd thickens on these narrow streets. Work is done for the day and tired folk hurry home. Crowds flow into the subway entrances. The streets are flushed, as it were, with people, and the flood drains to the rushing sewers. Now the lights go out one by one. The great buildings, that glistened but a moment since at every window, are now dark cliffs above us in the wintry mist.

It is time, dear pilgrim, to seek your hotel or favorite cabaret.

The Wrigley triplets once more correct by exercise their sluggish livers. The kitten rolls its ball of fiery silk. Times Square flashes with entertainment. It stretches its glittering web across the night.

Dear pilgrim, a last important word! Put money in thy purse!

I Plan a Vacation

IT is my hope, when the snow is off the ground and the ocean has been tamed by breezes from the south, to cross to England. Already I fancy myself seated in the pleasant office of the steamship agent, listening to his gossip of rates and sailings, bending over his colored charts, weighing the merit of cabins. Here is one amidships in a location of greatest ease upon the stomach. Here is one with a forward port that will catch the sharp and wholesome wind from the Atlantic. I trace the giant funnels from deck to deck. My finger follows delightedly the confusing passages. I smell the rubber on the landings and the salty rugs. From on top I hear the wind in the cordage. I view the moon, and I see the mast swinging among the stars.

Then, also, at the agent's, for my pleasure, there is a picture of a ship cut down the middle, showing its inner furnishing and the hum of life on its many decks. I study its flights of steps, its strange tubes and vents and boilers. Munchausen's horse, when its rearward end was snapped off by the falling gate (the faithful animal, you may recall, galloped for a mile upon its forward legs alone before the misadventure was discovered) – Munchausen's horse, I insist, – the unbroken, forward half, – did not display so frankly its confusing pipes and coils. Then there is another ship which, by a monstrous effort of the printer, is laid in Broadway, where its stacks out-top Trinity. I pace its mighty length on the street before my house, and my eye climbs our tallest tree for a just comparison.

It is my hope to find a man of like ambition and endurance as myself and to walk through England. He must be able, if necessary, to keep to the road for twenty-five miles a day, or, if the inn runs before us in the dark, to stretch to thirty. But he should be a creature, also, who is content to doze in meditation beneath a hedge, heedless whether the sun, in faster boots, puts into lodging first. Careless of the hour, he may remark in my sleepy ear "how the shadows lengthen as the sun declines."

He must be able to jest when his feet are tired. His drooping grunt must be spiced with humor. When stiffness cracks him in the morning, he can the better play the clown. He will not grumble at his bed or poke too shrewdly at his food. Neither will he talk of graves and rheumatism when a rainstorm finds us unprepared. If he snuffle at the nose, he must snuffle cheerfully and with hope. Wit, with its unexpected turns, is to be desired; but a pleasant and even humor is a better comrade on a dusty road. It endures blisters and an empty stomach. A pack rests more lightly on its weary shoulders. If he sing, he should know a round of tunes and not wear a single melody to tatters. The merriest lilt grows dull and lame when it travels all the day. But although I wish my companion to be of a cheerful temper, he need not pipe or dance until the mists have left the hills. Does not the shining sun itself rise slowly to its noonday glory? A companion must give me leave to enjoy in silence my sullen breakfast.

A talent for sketching shall be welcome. Let him produce his pencils and his tablet at a pointed arch or mullioned window, or catch us in absurd posture as we travel. If one tumbles in a ditch, it is but decency to hold the pose until the picture's made.

But, chiefly, a companion should be quick with a smile and nod, apt for conversation along the road. Neither beard nor ringlet must snub his agreeable advance. Such a fellow stirs up a mixed acquaintance between town and town, to point the shortest way – a bit of modest gingham mixing a pudding at a pantry window, age hobbling to the gate on its friendly crutch, to show how a better path climbs across the hills. Or in a taproom he buys a round of ale and becomes a crony of the place. He enlists a dozen friends to sniff outdoors at bedtime, with conflicting prophecy of a shifting wind and the chance of rain.

A companion should be alert for small adventure. He need not, therefore, to prove himself, run to grapple with an angry dog. Rather, let him soothe the snarling creature! Let him hold the beast in parley while I go on to safety with unsoiled dignity! Only when arbitration and soft terms fail shall he offer a haunch of his own fair flesh. Generously he must boost me up a tree, before he seeks safety for himself.

But many a trivial mishap, if followed with a willing heart, leads to comedy and is a jest thereafter. I know a man who, merely by following an inquisitive nose through a doorway marked "No Admittance," became comrade to a company of traveling actors. The play was *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and they were at rehearsal. Presently, at a changing of the scene, my friend boasted to Little Eva, as they sat together on a pile of waves, that he performed upon the tuba. It seems that she had previously mounted into heaven in the final picture without any welcoming trumpet of the angels. That night, by her persuasion, my friend sat in the upper wings and dispensed flutings of great joy as she ascended to her rest.

Three other men of my acquaintance were caught once, between towns, on a walking trip in the Adirondacks, and fell by chance into a kind of sanitarium for convalescent consumptives. At first it seemed a gloomy prospect. But, learning that there was a movie in a near-by village, they secured two jitneys and gave a party for the inmates. In the church parlor, when the show was done, they ate ice-cream and layer-cake. Two of the men were fat, but the third, a slight and handsome fellow – I write on suspicion only – so won a pretty patient at the feast, that, on the homeward ride – they were rattling in the tonneau – she graciously permitted him to steady her at the bumps and sudden turns.

Nor was this the end. As it still lacked an hour of midnight the general sanitarium declared a Roman holiday. The slight fellow, on a challenge, did a hand-stand, with his feet waving against the wall, while his knife and keys and money dropped from his pockets. The pretty patient read aloud some verses of her own upon the spring. She brought down her water-colors, and laying a charcoal portrait off the piano, she ranged her lovely wares upon the top. The fattest of my friends, also, eager to do his part, stretched himself, heels and head, between two chairs. But, when another chair was tossed on his unsupported middle, he fell with a boom upon the carpet. Then the old doctor brought out wine and Bohemian glasses with long stems and, as the clock struck twelve, the company pledged one another's health, with hopes for a reunion. They lighted their candles on the landing, and so to bed.

I know a man, also, who once met a sword-swallower at a county fair. A volunteer was needed for his trick – someone to hold the scarlet cushion with its dangerous knives – and zealous friends pushed him from his seat and toward the stage. Afterwards he met the Caucasian Beauties and, despite his timidity, they dined together with great merriment.

Then there is a kind of humorous philosophy to be desired on an excursion. It smokes a contented pipe to the tune of every rivulet. It rests a peaceful stomach on the rail of every bridge, and it observes the floating leaves, like golden caravels upon the stream. It interprets a trivial event. It is both serious and absurd. It sits on a fence to moralize on the life of cows and flings in Plato on the soul. It plays catch and toss with life and death and the world beyond. And it sees significance in common things. A farmer's cart is a tumbril of the Revolution. A crowing rooster is Chanticleer. It is the very cock that proclaimed to Hamlet that the dawn was nigh. When a cloud rises up, such a philosopher discourses of the flood. He counts up the forty rainy days and names the present rascals to be drowned – profiteers in food, plumbers and all laundrymen.

A stable lantern, swinging in the dark, rouses up a race of giants —

I think it was some such fantastic quality of thought that Horace Walpole had in mind when he commended the Three Princes of Serendip. Their Highnesses, it seems, "were always making discoveries, by accident and sagacity, of things which they were not in quest of: for instance," he writes, "one of them discovered that a mule blind of the right eye had traveled the same road lately, because the grass was eaten on the left side." At first, I confess, this employment seems a waste of time. Sherlock Holmes did better when he pronounced, on finding a neglected whisp of beard, that Doctor Watson's shaving mirror had been shifted to an opposite window. But doubtless the Princes put their deduction to higher use, and met the countryside and village with shrewd and vivid observation.

Don Quixote had this same quality, but with more than a touch of madness. Did he not build up the Lady Tolosa out of a common creature at an inn? He sought knighthood at the hands of its stupid keeper and watched his armor all night by the foolish moon. He tilted against a windmill. I

cannot wholeheartedly commend the Don, but, for an afternoon, certainly, I would prefer his company between town and town to that of any man who carries his clanking factory on his back.

But, also, I wish a companion of my travels to be for the first time in England, in order that I may have a fresh audience for my superior knowledge. In the cathedral towns I wish to wave an instructive finger in crypt and aisle. Here is a bit of early glass. Here is a wall that was plastered against the plague when the Black Prince was still alive. I shall gossip of scholars in cord and gown, working at their rubric in sunny cloisters. Or if I choose to talk of kings and forgotten battles, I wish a companion ignorant but eager for my boasting.

It was only last night that several of us discussed vacations. Wyoming was the favorite – a ranch, with a month on horseback in the mountains, hemlock brouse for a bed, morning at five and wood to chop. But a horse is to me a troubled creature. He stands to too great a height. His eye glows with exultant deviltry as he turns and views my imperfection. His front teeth seem made for scraping along my arm. I dread any fly or bee lest it sting him to emotion. I am point to point in agreement with the psalmist: "An horse is a vain thing for safety." If I must ride, I demand a tired horse, who has cropped his wild oats and has come to a slippered state. Are we not told that the horse in the crustaceous age – I select a large word at random – was built no bigger than a dog? Let this snug and peerless ancestor be saddled and I shall buy a ticket for the West.

But I do not at this time desire to beard the wilderness. There is a camp of Indians near the ranch. I can smell them these thousand miles away. Their beads and greasy blankets hold no charm. Smoky bacon, indeed, I like. I can lie pleasurably at the flap of the tent with sleepy eyes upon the stars. I can even plunge in a chilly pool at dawn. But the Indians and horses that infest Wyoming do not arouse my present interest.

I am for England, therefore – for its winding roads, its villages that nest along the streams, its peaked bridges with salmon jumping at the weir, its thatched cottages and flowering hedges.

"The chaffinch sings on the orchard bough
In England – now!"

I wish to see reapers at work in Surrey fields, to stride over the windy top of Devon, to cross Wiltshire when wind and rain and mist have brought the Druids back to Stonehenge. At a crossroad Stratford is ten miles off. Raglan's ancient towers peep from a wooded hill. Tintern or Glastonbury can be gained by night. Are not these names sweet upon the tongue? And I wish a black-timbered inn in which to end the day – with polished brasses in the tap and the smell of the musty centuries upon the stairs.

At the window of our room the Cathedral spire rises above the roofs. There is no trolley-car or creaking of any wheel, and on the pavement we hear only the fall of feet in endless pattern. Day weaves a hurrying mesh, but this is the quiet fabric of the night.

I wish to walk from London to Inverness, to climb the ghostly ramparts of Macbeth's castle, to hear the shrill cry of Duncan's murder in the night, to watch for witches on the stormy moor. I shall sit on the bench where Johnson sat with Boswell on his journey to the Hebrides. I shall see the wizard of the North, lame of foot, walking in the shade of ruined Dryburgh. With drunken Tam, I shall behold in Alloway Kirk warlocks in a dance. From the gloomy house of Shaws and its broken tower David Balfour runs in flight across the heather. Culloden echoes with the defeat of an outlaw prince. The stairs of Holyrood drip with Rizzio's blood. But also, I wish to follow the Devon lanes, to rest in villages on the coast at the fall of day when fishermen wind their nets, to dream of Arthur and his court on the rocks beyond Tintagel. Merlin lies in Wales with his dusty garments pulled about him, and his magic sleeps. But there is wind tonight in the noisy caverns of the sea, and Spanish pirates dripping with the slime of a watery grave, bury their treasure when the fog lies thick.

Thousands of years have peopled these English villages. Their pavements echo with the tread of kings and poets. Here is a sunny bower for lovers when the world was young. Bishops of the Roman church – Saint Thomas himself in his robes pontifical has walked through these broken cloisters. Here is the altar where he knelt at prayer when his assassins came. From that tower Mary of Scotland looked vainly for assistance to gallop from the north.

Here stretches the Pilgrims' Way across the downs of Surrey – worn and scratched by pious feet. From the west they came to Canterbury. The wind stirs the far-off traffic, and the mist covers the hills as with an ancient memory.

How many thirsty elbows have rubbed this table in the forgotten years! How many feasts have come steaming from the kitchen when the London coach was in! That pewter cup, maybe, offered its eager pledge when the news of Agincourt was blown from France. Up that stairway Tom Jones reeled with sparkling canary at his belt. These cobbles clacked in the Pretender's flight. Here is the chair where Falstaff sat when he cried out that the sack was spoiled with villainous lime. That signboard creaked in the tempest that shattered the Armada.

My fancy mingles in the past. It hears in the inn-yard the chattering pilgrims starting on their journey. Here is the Pardoner jesting with the merry Wife of Bath, with his finger on his lips to keep their scandal private. It sees Dick Turpin at the crossroads with loaded pistols in his boots. There is mist tonight on Bagshot Heath, and men in Kendal green are out. And fancy rebuilds a ruined castle, and lights the hospitable fires beneath its mighty caldrons. It hangs tapestry on its empty walls and, like a sounding trumpet, it summons up a gaudy company in ruff and velvet to tread the forgotten measures of the past.

Let Wyoming go and hang itself in its muddy riding-boots and khaki shirt! Let its tall horses leap upward and click their heels upon the moon! I am for England.

It is my preference to land at Plymouth, and our anchor – if the captain is compliant – will be dropped at night, in order that the Devon hills, as the thrifty stars are dimmed, may appear first through the mists of dawn. If my memory serves, there is a country church with stone-embattled tower on the summit above the town, and in the early twilight all the roads that climb the hills lead away to promised kingdoms. Drake, I assert, still bowls nightly on the quay at Plymouth, with pins that rattle in the windy season, but the game is done when the light appears.

We clatter up to London. Paddington station or Waterloo, I care not. But for arrival a rainy night is best, when the pavements glisten and the mad taxis are rushing to the theatres. And then, for a week, by way of practice and to test our boots, we shall trudge the streets of London – the Strand and the Embankment. And certainly we shall explore the Temple and find the sites of Blackfriars and the Globe. Here, beyond this present brewery, was the bear-pit. Tarlton's jests still sound upon the bank. A wherry, once, on this busy river, conveyed Sir Roger up to Vauxhall. Perhaps, here, on the homeward trip, he was rejected by the widow. The dear fellow, it is recorded, out of sentiment merely, kept his clothes unchanged in the fashion of this season of his disappointment. Here, also, was the old bridge across the Fleet. Here was Drury Lane where Garrick acted. Tender hearts, they say, in pit and stall, fluttered to his Romeo, and sighed their souls across the candles. On this muddy curb link-boys waited when the fog was thick. Here the footmen bawled for chairs.

But there are bookshops still in Charing Cross Road. And, for frivolous moments, haberdashery is offered in Bond Street and vaudeville in Leicester Square.

And then on a supreme morning we pack our rucksacks.

It was a grievous oversight that Christian failed to tell us what clothing he carried in his pack. We know it was a heavy burden, for it dragged him in the mire. But did he carry slippers to ease his feet at night? And what did the Pardoner put inside his wallet? Surely the Wife of Bath was supplied with a powder-puff and a fresh taffeta to wear at the journey's end. I could, indeed, spare Christian one or two of his encounters for knowledge of his wardrobe. These homely details are of interest. The mad Knight of La Mancha, we are told, mortgaged his house and laid out a pretty sum on extra

shirts. Stevenson, also, tells us the exact gear that he loaded on his donkey, but what did Marco Polo carry? And Munchausen and the Wandering Jew? I have skimmed their pages vainly for a hint.

For myself, I shall take an extra suit of underwear and another flannel shirt, a pair of stockings, a rubber cape of lightest weight that falls below the knees, slippers, a shaving-kit and brushes. I shall wash my linen at night and hang it from my window, where it shall wave like an admiral's flag to show that I sleep upon the premises. I shall replace it as it wears. And I shall take a book, not to read but to have ready on the chance. I once carried the Book of Psalms, but it was Nick Carter I read, which I bought in a tavern parlor, fifteen pages missing, from a fat lady who served me beer.

We run to the window for a twentieth time. It has rained all night, but the man in the lift was hopeful when we came up from breakfast. We believe him; as if he sat on a tower with a spy-glass on the clouds. We cherish his tip as if it came from Æolus himself, holding the winds in leash.

And now a streak of yellowish sky – London's substitute for blue – shows in the west.

We pay our bill. We scatter the usual silver. Several senators in uniform bow us down the steps. We hale a bus in Trafalgar Square. We climb to the top – to the front seat with full prospect. The Haymarket. Sandwich men with weary step announce a vaudeville. We snap our fingers at so stale an entertainment. There are flower-girls in Piccadilly Circus. Regent Street. We pass the Marble Arch, near which cut-throats were once hanged on the three-legged mare of Tyburn. Hammersmith. Brentford. The bus stops. It is the end of the route. We have ridden out our sixpence. We climb down. We adjust our packs and shoe-strings. The road to the western country beckons.

My dear sir, perhaps you yourself have planned for a landaulet this summer and an English trip. You have laid out two swift weeks to make the breathless round. You journey from London to Bristol in a day. Another day, and you will climb out, stiff of leg, among the northern lakes. If then, as you loll among the cushions, lapped in luxury, pink and soft – if then, you see two men with sticks in hand and packs on shoulder, know them for ourselves. We are singing on the road to Windsor – to Salisbury, to Stonehenge, to the hills of Dorset, to Lyme-Regis, to Exeter and the Devon moors.

It was a shepherd who came with a song to the mountain-top. "The sun shone, the bees swept past me singing; and I too sang, shouted, World, world, I am coming!"

At a Toy-Shop Window

IN this Christmas season, when snowflakes fill the air and twilight is the pleasant thief of day, I sometimes pause at the window of a toy-shop to see what manner of toys are offered to the children. It is only five o'clock and yet the sky is dark. The night has come to town to do its shopping before the stores are shut. The wind has Christmas errands.

And there is a throng of other shoppers. Fathers of families drip with packages and puff after street cars. Fat ladies – Now then, all together! – are hoisted up. Old ladies are caught in revolving doors. And the relatives of Santa Claus – surely no nearer than nephews (anæmic fellows in faded red coats and cotton beards) – pound their kettles for an offering toward a Christmas dinner for the poor.

But, also, little children flatten their noses on the window of the toy-shop. They point their thumbs through their woolly mittens in a sharp rivalry of choice. Their unspent nickels itch for large investment. Extravagant dimes bounce around their pockets. But their ears are cold, and they jiggle on one leg against a frosty toe.

Here in the toy-shop is a tin motor-car. Here is a railroad train, with tracks and curves and switches, a pasteboard mountain and a tunnel. Here is a steamboat. With a turning of a key it starts for Honolulu behind the sofa. The stormy Straits of Madagascar lie along the narrow hall. Here in the window, also, are beams and girders for a tower. Not since the days of Babel has such a vast supply been gathered. And there are battleships and swift destroyers and guns and armoured tanks. The nursery becomes a dangerous ocean, with submarines beneath the stairs: or it is the plain of Flanders and the great war echoes across the hearth. Château-Thierry is a pattern in the rug and the andirons are the towers of threatened Paris.

But on this Christmas night, as I stand before the toy-shop in the whirling storm, the wind brings me the laughter of far-off children. Time draws back its sober curtain. The snow of thirty winters is piled in my darkened memory, but I hear shrill voices across the night.

Once upon a time – in the days when noses and tables were almost on a level, and manhood had wavered from kilts to pants buttoning at the side – once there was a great chest which was lodged in a closet behind a sitting-room. It was from this closet that the shadows came at night, although at noon there was plainly a row of hooks with comfortable winter garments. And there were drawers and shelves to the ceiling where linen was kept, and a cupboard for cough-syrup and oily lotions for chapped hands. A fragrant paste, also, was spread on the tip of the little finger, which, when wiggled inside the nostril and inhaled, was good for wet feet and snuffles. Twice a year these bottles were smelled all round and half of them discarded. It was the ragman who bought them, a penny to the bottle. He coveted chiefly, however, lead and iron, and he thrilled to old piping as another man thrills to Brahms. He was a sly fellow and, unless Annie looked sharp, he put his knee against the scale.

But at the rear of the closet, beyond the lamplight, there was a chest where playing-blocks were kept. There were a dozen broken sets of various shapes and sizes – the deposit and remnant of many years.

These blocks had once been covered with letters and pictures. They had conspired to teach us. C had stood for cat. D announced a dog. Learning had put on, as it were, a sugar coat for pleasant swallowing. The arid heights teased us to mount by an easy slope. But we scraped away the letters and the pictures. Should a holiday, we thought, be ruined by insidious instruction? Must a teacher's wagging finger always come among us? It was sufficient that five blocks end to end made a railway car, with finger-blocks for platforms; that three blocks were an engine, with a block on top to be a smokestack. We had no toy mountain and pasteboard tunnel, as in the soft fashion of the present, but we jacked the rug with blocks up hill and down, and pushed our clanking trains through the hollow underneath. It was an added touch to build a castle on the summit. A spool on a finger-block was the Duke himself on horseback, hunting across his sloping acres.

There was, also, in the chest, a remnant of iron coal-cars with real wheels. Their use was too apparent. A best invention was to turn playthings from an obvious design. So we placed one of the coal-cars under the half of a folding checkerboard and by adding masts and turrets and spools for guns we built a battleship. This could be sailed all round the room, on smooth seas where the floor was bare, but it pitched and tossed upon a carpet. If it came to port battered by the storm, should it be condemned like a ship that is broken on a sunny river? Its plates and rivets had been tested in a tempest. It had skirted the headlands at the staircase and passed the windy Horn.

Or perhaps we built a fort upon the beach before the fire. It was a pretty warfare between ship and fort, with marbles used shot and shot in turn. A lucky marble toppled the checkerboard off its balance and wrecked the ship. The sailors, after scrambling in the water, put to shore on flat blocks from the boat deck and were held as prisoners until supper, in the dungeons of the fort. It was in the sitting-room that we played these games, under the family's feet. They moved above our sport like a race of tolerant giants; but when callers came, we were brushed to the rear of the house.

Spools were men. Thread was their short and subsidiary use. Their larger life was given to our armies. We had several hundred of them threaded on long strings on the closet-hooks. But if a great campaign was planned – if the Plains of Abraham were to be stormed or Cornwallis captured – our recruiting sergeants rummaged in the drawers of the sewing-machine for any spool that had escaped the draft. Or we peeked into mother's work-box, and if a spool was almost empty, we suddenly became anxious about our buttons. Sometimes, when a great spool was needed for a general, mother wound the thread upon a piece of cardboard. General Grant had carried black silk. Napoleon had been used on trouser-patches. And my grandmother and a half-dozen aunts and elder cousins did their bit and plied their needles for the war. In this regard grandfather was a slacker, but he directed the battle from the sofa with his crutch.

Toothpicks were guns. Every soldier had a gun. If he was hit by a marble in the battle and the toothpick remained in place, he was only wounded; but he was dead if the toothpick fell out. Of each two men wounded, by Hague Convention, one recovered for the next engagement.

Of course we had other toys. Lead soldiers in cocked hats came down the chimney and were marshaled in the Christmas dawn. A whole Continental Army lay in paper sheets, to be cut out with scissors. A steam engine with a coil of springs and key furnished several rainy holidays. A red wheelbarrow supplied a short fury of enjoyment. There were sleds and skates, and a printing press on which we printed the milkman's tickets. The memory still lingers that five cents, in those cheap days, bought a pint of cream. There was, also, a castle with a princess at a window. Was there no prince to climb her trellis and bear her off beneath the moon? It had happened so in Astolat. The princes of the gorgeous East had wooed, also, in such a fashion. Or perhaps this was the very castle that the wicked Kazrac lifted across the Chinese mountains in the night, cheating Aladdin of his bride. It was a rather clever idea, as things seem now in this time of general shortage, to steal a lady, house and all, not forgetting the cook and laundress. But one day a little girl with dark hair smiled at me from next door and gave me a Christmas cake, and in my dreams thereafter she became the princess in my castle.

We had stone blocks with arches and round columns that were too delicate for the hazard of siege and battle. Once, when a playmate had scarlet fever, we lent them to him for his convalescence. Afterwards, against contagion, we left them for a month under a bush in the side yard. Every afternoon we wet them with a garden hose. Did not Noah's flood purify the world? It would be a stout microbe, we thought, that could survive the deluge. At last we lifted out the blocks at arm's length. We smelled them for any lurking fever. They were damp to the nose and smelled like the cement under the back porch. But the contagion had vanished like Noah's wicked neighbors.

But store toys always broke. Wheels came off. Springs were snapped. Even the princess faded at her castle window.

Sometimes a toy, when it was broken, arrived at a larger usefulness. Although I would not willingly forget my velocipede in its first gay youth, my memory of sharpest pleasure reverts to its

later days, when one of its rear wheels was gone. It had been jammed in an accident against the piano. It has escaped me whether the piano survived the jolt; but the velocipede was in ruins. When the wheel came off the brewery wagon before our house and the kegs rolled here and there, the wreckage was hardly so complete. Three spokes were broken and the hub was cracked. At first, it had seemed that the day of my velocipede was done. We laid it on its side and tied the hub with rags. It looked like a jaw with tooth-ache. Then we thought of the old baby-carriage in the storeroom. Perhaps a transfusion of wheels was possible. We conveyed upstairs a hammer and a saw. It was a wobbling and impossible experiment. But at the top of the house there was a kind of race-track around the four posts of the attic. With three wheels complete, we had been forced to ride with caution at the turns or be pitched against the sloping rafters. We now discovered that a missing wheel gave the necessary tilt for speed. I do not recall that the pedals worked. We legged it on both sides. Ten times around was a race; and the audience sat on the ladder to the roof and held a watch with a second-hand for records.

Ours was a roof that was flat in the center. On winter days, when snow would pack, we pelted the friendly milkman. Ours, also, was a cellar that was lost in darkened mazes. A blind area off the laundry, where the pantry had been built above, seemed to be the opening of a cavern. And we shuddered at the sights that must meet the candle of the furnaceman when he closed the draught at bedtime.

Abandoned furniture had uses beyond a first intention. A folding-bed of ours closed to about the shape of a piano. When the springs and mattress were removed it was a house with a window at the end where a wooden flap let down. Here sat the Prisoner of Chillon, with a clothes-line on his ankle. A pile of old furniture in the attic, covered with a cloth, became at twilight a range of mountains with a gloomy valley at the back. I still believe – for so does fancy wanton with my thoughts – that Aladdin's cave opens beneath those walnut bed-posts, that the cavern of jewels needs but a dusty search on hands and knees. The old house, alas, has come to foreign use. Does no one now climb the attic steps? Has time worn down the awful Caucasus? No longer is there children's laughter on the stairs. The echo of their feet sleeps at last in the common day.

Nor must furniture, of necessity, be discarded. We dived from the footboard of our bed into a surf of pillows. We climbed its headboard like a mast, and looked for pirates on the sea. A sewing-table with legs folded flat was a sled upon the stairs. Must I do more than hint that two bed-slats make a pair of stilts, and that one may tilt like King Arthur with the wash-poles? Or who shall fix a narrow use for the laundry tubs, or put a limit on the coal-hole? And step-ladders! There are persons who consider a step-ladder as a menial. This is an injustice to a giddy creature that needs but a holiday to show its metal. On Thursday afternoons, when the cook was out, you would never know it for the same thin creature that goes on work-days with a pail and cleans the windows. It is a tower, a shining lighthouse, a crowded grandstand, a circus, a ladder to the moon.

But perhaps, my dear young sir, you are so lucky as to possess a smaller and inferior brother who frets with ridicule. He is a toy to be desired above a red velocipede. I offer you a hint. Print upon a paper in bold, plain letters – sucking the lead for extra blackness – that he is afraid of the dark, that he likes the girls, that he is a butter-fingers at baseball and teacher's pet and otherwise contemptible. Paste the paper inside the glass of the bookcase, so that the insult shows. Then lock the door and hide the key. Let him gaze at this placard of his weakness during a rainy afternoon. But I caution you to secure the keys of all similar glass doors – of the china closet, of the other bookcase, of the knick-knack cabinet. Let him stew in his iniquity without chance of retaliation.

But perhaps, in general, your brother is inclined to imitate you and be a tardy pattern of your genius. He apes your fashion in suspenders, the tilt of your cap, your method in shinny. If you crouch in a barrel in hide-and-seek, he crowds in too. You wag your head from side to side on your bicycle in the manner of Zimmerman, the champion. Your brother wags his, too. You spit in your catcher's mit, like Kelly, the ten-thousand-dollar baseball beauty. Your brother spits in his mit, too. These things are unbearable. If you call him "sloppy" when his face is dirty, he merely passes you back the insult

unchanged. If you call him "sloppy-two-times," still he has no invention. You are justified now to call him "nigger" and to cuff him to his place.

Tagging is his worst offense – tagging along behind when you are engaged on serious business. "Now then, sonny," you say, "run home. Get nurse to blow your nose." Or you bribe him with a penny to mind his business.

I must say a few words about paper-hangers, although they cannot be considered as toys or play – things by any rule of logic. There is something rather jolly about having a room papered. The removal of the pictures shows how the old paper looked before it faded. The furniture is pushed into an agreeable confusion in the hall. A rocker seems starting for the kitchen. The great couch goes out the window. A chair has climbed upon a table to look about. It needs but an alpenstock to clamber on the bookcase. The carpet marks the places where the piano legs came down.

And the paper-hanger is a rather jolly person. He sings and whistles in the empty room. He keeps to a tune, day after day, until you know it. He slaps his brush as if he liked his work. It is a sticky, splashing, sloshing slap. Not even a plasterer deals in more interesting material. And he settles down on you with ladders and planks as if a circus had moved in. After hours, when he is gone, you climb on his planking and cross Niagara, as it were, with a cane for balance. To this day I think of paper-hangers as a kindly race of men, who sing in echoing rooms and eat pie and pickles for their lunch. Except for their Adam's apples – got with gazing at the ceiling – surely not the wicked apple of the Garden – I would wish to be a paper-hanger.

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