

**JEROME  
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DIARY OF A PILGRIMAGE

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*Diary of a Pilgrimage:*

# Содержание

MONDAY, 19TH	6
THURSDAY, 22ND	12
FRIDAY, 23RD	20
SATURDAY, 24TH	31
SATURDAY, 24TH – CONTINUED	39
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	45

# Jerome K. Jerome

## Diary of a Pilgrimage

### PREFACE

Said a friend of mine to me some months ago: "Well now, why don't you write a *sensible* book? I should like to see you make people think."

"Do you believe it can be done, then?" I asked.

"Well, try," he replied.

Accordingly, I have tried. This is a sensible book. I want you to understand that. This is a book to improve your mind. In this book I tell you all about Germany – at all events, all I know about Germany – and the Ober-Ammergau Passion Play. I also tell you about other things. I do not tell you all I know about all these other things, because I do not want to swamp you with knowledge. I wish to lead you gradually. When you have learnt this book, you can come again, and I will tell you some more. I should only be defeating my own object did I, by making you think too much at first, give you a perhaps, lasting dislike to the exercise. I have purposely put the matter in a light and attractive form, so that I may secure the attention of the young and the frivolous. I do not want them to notice, as they go on, that they are being instructed; and I have, therefore, endeavoured

to disguise from them, so far as is practicable, that this is either an exceptionally clever or an exceptionally useful work. I want to do them good without their knowing it. I want to do you all good – to improve your minds and to make you think, if I can.

*What* you will think after you have read the book, I do not want to know; indeed, I would rather not know. It will be sufficient reward for me to feel that I have done my duty, and to receive a percentage on the gross sales.

London, *March*, 1891.

# MONDAY, 19TH

My Friend B. – Invitation to the Theatre. – A Most Unpleasant Regulation. – Yearnings of the Embryo Traveller. – How to Make the Most of One's Own Country. – Friday, a Lucky Day. – The Pilgrimage Decided On.

My friend B. called on me this morning and asked me if I would go to a theatre with him on Monday next.

“Oh, yes! certainly, old man,” I replied. “Have you got an order, then?”

He said:

“No; they don't give orders. We shall have to pay.”

“Pay! Pay to go into a theatre!” I answered, in astonishment. “Oh, nonsense! You are joking.”

“My dear fellow,” he rejoined, “do you think I should suggest paying if it were possible to get in by any other means? But the people who run this theatre would not even understand what was meant by a ‘free list,’ the uncivilised barbarians! It is of no use pretending to them that you are on the Press, because they don't want the Press; they don't think anything of the Press. It is no good writing to the acting manager, because there is no acting manager. It would be a waste of time offering to exhibit bills, because they don't have any bills – not of that sort. If you want to go in to see the show, you've got to pay. If you don't pay, you stop outside; that's their brutal rule.”

“Dear me,” I said, “what a very unpleasant arrangement! And whereabouts is this extraordinary theatre? I don’t think I can ever have been inside it.”

“I don’t think you have,” he replied; “it is at Ober-Ammergau – first turning on the left after you leave Ober railway-station, fifty miles from Munich.”

“Um! rather out of the way for a theatre,” I said. “I should not have thought an outlying house like that could have afforded to give itself airs.”

“The house holds seven thousand people,” answered my friend B., “and money is turned away at each performance. The first production is on Monday next. Will you come?”

I pondered for a moment, looked at my diary, and saw that Aunt Emma was coming to spend Saturday to Wednesday next with us, calculated that if I went I should miss her, and might not see her again for years, and decided that I would go.

To tell the truth, it was the journey more than the play that tempted me. To be a great traveller has always been one of my cherished ambitions. I yearn to be able to write in this sort of strain: —

“I have smoked my fragrant Havana in the sunny streets of old Madrid, and I have puffed the rude and not sweet-smelling calumet of peace in the draughty wigwam of the Wild West; I have sipped my evening coffee in the silent tent, while the tethered camel browsed without upon the desert grass, and I have quaffed the fiery brandy of the North while the reindeer

munched his fodder beside me in the hut, and the pale light of the midnight sun threw the shadows of the pines across the snow; I have felt the stab of lustrous eyes that, ghostlike, looked at me from out veil-covered faces in Byzantium's narrow ways, and I have laughed back (though it was wrong of me to do so) at the saucy, wanton glances of the black-eyed girls of Jedo; I have wandered where 'good' – but not too good – Haroun Alraschid crept disguised at nightfall, with his faithful Mesroul by his side; I have stood upon the bridge where Dante watched the sainted Beatrice pass by; I have floated on the waters that once bore the barge of Cleopatra; I have stood where Cæsar fell; I have heard the soft rustle of rich, rare robes in the drawing-rooms of Mayfair, and I have heard the teeth-necklaces rattle around the ebony throats of the belles of Tongataboo; I have panted beneath the sun's fierce rays in India, and frozen under the icy blasts of Greenland; I have mingled with the teeming hordes of old Cathay, and, deep in the great pine forests of the Western World, I have lain, wrapped in my blanket, a thousand miles beyond the shores of human life."

B., to whom I explained my leaning towards this style of diction, said that exactly the same effect could be produced by writing about places quite handy. He said: —

"I could go on like that without having been outside England at all. I should say:

"I have smoked my fourpenny shag in the sanded bars of Fleet Street, and I have puffed my twopenny Manilla in the gilded

balls of the Criterion; I have quaffed my foaming beer of Burton where Islington's famed Angel gathers the little thirsty ones beneath her shadowing wings, and I have sipped my tenpenny *ordinaire* in many a garlic-scented salon of Soho. On the back of the strangely-moving ass I have urged – or, to speak more correctly, the proprietor of the ass, or his agent, from behind has urged – my wild career across the sandy heaths of Hampstead, and my canoe has startled the screaming wild-fowl from their lonely haunts amid the sub-tropical regions of Battersea. Adown the long, steep slope of One Tree Hill have I rolled from top to foot, while laughing maidens of the East stood round and clapped their hands and yelled; and, in the old-world garden of that pleasant Court, where played the fair-haired children of the ill-starred Stuarts, have I wandered long through many paths, my arm entwined about the waist of one of Eve's sweet daughters, while her mother raged around indignantly on the other side of the hedge, and never seemed to get any nearer to us. I have chased the lodging-house Norfolk Howard to his watery death by the pale lamp's light; I have, shivering, followed the leaping flea o'er many a mile of pillow and sheet, by the great Atlantic's margin. Round and round, till the heart – and not only the heart – grows sick, and the mad brain whirls and reels, have I ridden the small, but extremely hard, horse, that may, for a penny, be mounted amid the plains of Peckham Rye; and high above the heads of the giddy throngs of Barnet (though it is doubtful if anyone among them was half so giddy as was I) have I swung in highly-coloured

car, worked by a man with a rope. I have trod in stately measure the floor of Kensington's Town Hall (the tickets were a guinea each, and included refreshments – when you could get to them through the crowd), and on the green sward of the forest that borders eastern Anglia by the oft-sung town of Epping I have performed quaint ceremonies in a ring; I have mingled with the teeming hordes of Drury Lane on Boxing Night, and, during the run of a high-class piece, I have sat in lonely grandeur in the front row of the gallery, and wished that I had spent my shilling instead in the Oriental halls of the Alhambra.”

“There you are,” said B., “that is just as good as yours; and you can write like that without going more than a few hours' journey from London.”

“We will discuss the matter no further,” I replied. “You cannot, I see, enter into my feelings. The wild heart of the traveller does not throb within your breast; you cannot understand his longings. No matter! Suffice it that I will come this journey with you. I will buy a German conversation book, and a check-suit, and a blue veil, and a white umbrella, and suchlike necessities of the English tourist in Germany, this very afternoon. When do you start?”

“Well,” he said, “it is a good two days' journey. I propose to start on Friday.”

“Is not Friday rather an unlucky day to start on?” I suggested. “Oh, good gracious!” he retorted quite sharply, “what rubbish next? As if the affairs of Europe were going to be arranged by

Providence according to whether you and I start for an excursion on a Thursday or a Friday!”

He said he was surprised that a man who could be so sensible, occasionally, as myself, could have patience to even think of such old-womanish nonsense. He said that years ago, when he was a silly boy, he used to pay attention to this foolish superstition himself, and would never upon any consideration start for a trip upon a Friday.

But, one year, he was compelled to do so. It was a case of either starting on a Friday or not going at all, and he determined to chance it.

He went, prepared for and expecting a series of accidents and misfortunes. To return home alive was the only bit of pleasure he hoped for from that trip.

As it turned out, however, he had never had a more enjoyable holiday in his life before. The whole event was a tremendous success.

And after that, he had made up his mind to *always* start on a Friday; and he always did, and always had a good time.

He said that he would never, upon any consideration, start for a trip upon any other day but a Friday now. It was so absurd, this superstition about Friday.

So we agreed to start on the Friday, and I am to meet him at Victoria Station at a quarter to eight in the evening.

## THURSDAY, 22ND

The Question of Luggage. – First Friend's Suggestion. – Second Friend's Suggestion. – Third Friend's Suggestion. – Mrs. Briggs' Advice. – Our Vicar's Advice. – His Wife's Advice. – Medical Advice. – Literary Advice. – George's Recommendation. – My Sister-in-Law's Help. – Young Smith's Counsel. – My Own Ideas. – B.'s Idea.

I have been a good deal worried to-day about the question of what luggage to take with me. I met a man this morning, and he said:

“Oh, if you are going to Ober-Ammergau, mind you take plenty of warm clothing with you. You'll need all your winter things up there.”

He said that a friend of his had gone up there some years ago, and had not taken enough warm things with him, and had caught a chill there, and had come home and died. He said:

“You be guided by me, and take plenty of warm things with you.”

I met another man later on, and he said:

“I hear you are going abroad. Now, tell me, what part of Europe are you going to?”

I replied that I thought it was somewhere about the middle. He said:

“Well, now, you take my advice, and get a calico suit and a

sunshade. Never mind the look of the thing. You be comfortable. You've no idea of the heat on the Continent at this time of the year. English people will persist in travelling about the Continent in the same stuffy clothes that they wear at home. That's how so many of them get sunstrokes, and are ruined for life."

I went into the club, and there I met a friend of mine – a newspaper correspondent – who has travelled a good deal, and knows Europe pretty well. I told him what my two other friends had said, and asked him which I was to believe. He said:

"Well, as a matter of fact, they are both right. You see, up in those hilly districts, the weather changes very quickly. In the morning it may be blazing hot, and you will be melting, and in the evening you may be very glad of a flannel shirt and a fur coat."

"Why, that is exactly the sort of weather we have in England!" I exclaimed. "If that's all these foreigners can manage in their own country, what right have they to come over here, as they do, and grumble about our weather?"

"Well, as a matter of fact," he replied, "they haven't any right; but you can't stop them – they will do it. No, you take my advice, and be prepared for everything. Take a cool suit and some thin things, for if it's hot, and plenty of warm things in case it is cold."

When I got home I found Mrs. Briggs there, she having looked in to see how the baby was. She said: —

"Oh! if you're going anywhere near Germany, you take a bit of soap with you."

She said that Mr. Briggs had been called over to Germany

once in a hurry, on business, and had forgotten to take a piece of soap with him, and didn't know enough German to ask for any when he got over there, and didn't see any to ask for even if he had known, and was away for three weeks, and wasn't able to wash himself all the time, and came home so dirty that they didn't know him, and mistook him for the man that was to come to see what was the matter with the kitchen boiler.

Mrs. Briggs also advised me to take some towels with me, as they give you such small towels to wipe on.

I went out after lunch, and met our Vicar. He said:

“Take a blanket with you.”

He said that not only did the German hotel-keepers never give you sufficient bedclothes to keep you warm of a night, but they never properly aired their sheets. He said that a young friend of his had gone for a tour through Germany once, and had slept in a damp bed, and had caught rheumatic fever, and had come home and died.

His wife joined us at this point. (He was waiting for her outside a draper's shop when I met him.) He explained to her that I was going to Germany, and she said:

“Oh! take a pillow with you. They don't give you any pillows – not like our pillows – and it's *so* wretched, you'll never get a decent night's rest if you don't take a pillow.” She said: “You can have a little bag made for it, and it doesn't look anything.”

I met our doctor a few yards further on. He said:

“Don't forget to take a bottle of brandy with you. It doesn't

take up much room, and, if you're not used to German cooking, you'll find it handy in the night."

He added that the brandy you get at foreign hotels was mere poison, and that it was really unsafe to travel abroad without a bottle of brandy. He said that a simple thing like a bottle of brandy in your bag might often save your life.

Coming home, I ran against a literary friend of mine. He said: "You'll have a goodish time in the train old fellow. Are you used to long railway journeys?"

I said:

"Well, I've travelled down from London into the very heart of Surrey by a South Eastern express."

"Oh! that's a mere nothing, compared with what you've got before you now," he answered. "Look here, I'll tell you a very good idea of how to pass the time. You take a chessboard with you and a set of men. You'll thank me for telling you that!"

George dropped in during the evening. He said:

"I'll tell you one thing you'll have to take with you, old man, and that's a box of cigars and some tobacco."

He said that the German cigar – the better class of German cigar – was of the brand that is technically known over here as the "Penny Pickwick – Spring Crop;" and he thought that I should not have time, during the short stay I contemplated making in the country, to acquire a taste for its flavour.

My sister-in-law came in later on in the evening (she is a thoughtful girl), and brought a box with her about the size of a

tea-chest. She said:

“Now, you slip that in your bag; you’ll be glad of that. There’s everything there for making yourself a cup of tea.”

She said that they did not understand tea in Germany, but that with that I should be independent of them.

She opened the case, and explained its contents to me. It certainly was a wonderfully complete arrangement. It contained a little caddy full of tea, a little bottle of milk, a box of sugar, a bottle of methylated spirit, a box of butter, and a tin of biscuits: also, a stove, a kettle, a teapot, two cups, two saucers, two plates, two knives, and two spoons. If there had only been a bed in it, one need not have bothered about hotels at all.

Young Smith, the Secretary of our Photographic Club, called at nine to ask me to take him a negative of the statue of the dying Gladiator in the Munich Sculpture Gallery. I told him that I should be delighted to oblige him, but that I did not intend to take my camera with me.

“Not take your camera!” he said. “You are going to Germany – to Rhineland! You are going to pass through some of the most picturesque scenery, and stay at some of the most ancient and famous towns of Europe, and are going to leave your photographic apparatus behind you, and you call yourself an artist!”

He said I should never regret a thing more in my life than going without that camera.

I think it is always right to take other people’s advice in matters

where they know more than you do. It is the experience of those who have gone before that makes the way smooth for those who follow. So, after supper, I got together the things I had been advised to take with me, and arranged them on the bed, adding a few articles I had thought of all by myself.

I put up plenty of writing paper and a bottle of ink, along with a dictionary and a few other books of reference, in case I should feel inclined to do any work while I was away. I always like to be prepared for work; one never knows when one may feel inclined for it. Sometimes, when I have been away, and have forgotten to bring any paper and pens and ink with me, I have felt so inclined for writing; and it has quite upset me that, in consequence of not having brought any paper and pens and ink with me, I have been unable to sit down and do a lot of work, but have been compelled, instead, to lounge about all day with my hands in my pockets.

Accordingly, I always take plenty of paper and pens and ink with me now, wherever I go, so that when the desire for work comes to me I need not check it.

That this craving for work should have troubled me so often, when I had no paper, pens, and ink by me, and that it never, by any chance, visits me now, when I am careful to be in a position to gratify it, is a matter over which I have often puzzled.

But when it does come I shall be ready for it.

I also put on the bed a few volumes of Goethe, because I thought it would be so pleasant to read him in his own country. And I decided to take a sponge, together with a small portable

bath, because a cold bath is so refreshing the first thing in the morning.

B. came in just as I had got everything into a pile. He stared at the bed, and asked me what I was doing. I told him I was packing.

“Great Heavens!” he exclaimed. “I thought you were moving! What do you think we are going to do – camp out?”

“No!” I replied. “But these are the things I have been advised to take with me. What is the use of people giving you advice if you don’t take it?”

He said:

“Oh! take as much advice as you like; that always comes in useful to give away. But, for goodness sake, don’t get carrying all that stuff about with you. People will take us for Gipsies.”

I said:

“Now, it’s no use your talking nonsense. Half the things on this bed are life-preserving things. If people go into Germany without these things, they come home and die.”

And I related to him what the doctor and the vicar and the other people had told me, and explained to him how my life depended upon my taking brandy and blankets and sunshades and plenty of warm clothing with me.

He is a man utterly indifferent to danger and risk – incurred by other people – is B. He said:

“Oh, rubbish! You’re not the sort that catches a cold and dies young. You leave that co-operative stores of yours at home, and pack up a tooth-brush, a comb, a pair of socks, and a shirt. That’s

all you'll want.”

\* \* \* \* \*

I have packed more than that, but not much. At all events, I have got everything into one small bag. I should like to have taken that tea arrangement – it would have done so nicely to play at shop with in the train! – but B. would not hear of it.

I hope the weather does not change.

## FRIDAY, 23RD

Early Rising. – Ballast should be Stowed Away in the Hold before Putting to Sea. – Annoying Interference of Providence in Matters that it Does Not Understand. – A Socialistic Society. – B. Misjudges Me. – An Uninteresting Anecdote. – We Lay in Ballast. – A Moderate Sailor. – A Playful Boat.

I got up very early this morning. I do not know why I got up early. We do not start till eight o'clock this evening. But I don't regret it – the getting up early I mean. It is a change. I got everybody else up too, and we all had breakfast at seven.

I made a very good lunch. One of those seafaring men said to me once:

“Now, if ever you are going a short passage, and are at all nervous, you lay in a good load. It's a good load in the hold what steadies the ship. It's them half-empty cruisers as goes a-rollin' and a-pitchin' and a-heavin' all over the place, with their stern up'ards half the time. You lay in ballast.”

It seemed very reasonable advice.

Aunt Emma came in the afternoon. She said she was so glad she had caught me. Something told her to change her mind and come on Friday instead of Saturday. It was Providence, she said.

I wish Providence would mind its own business, and not interfere in my affairs: it does not understand them.

She says she shall stop till I come back, as she wants to see me

again before she goes. I told her I might not be back for a month. She said it didn't matter; she had plenty of time, and would wait for me.

The family entreat me to hurry home.

I ate a very fair dinner – “laid in a good stock of ballast,” as my seafaring friend would have said; wished “Good-bye!” to everybody, and kissed Aunt Emma; promised to take care of myself – a promise which, please Heaven, I will faithfully keep, cost me what it may – hailed a cab and started.

I reached Victoria some time before B. I secured two corner seats in a smoking-carriage, and then paced up and down the platform waiting for him.

When men have nothing else to occupy their minds, they take to thinking. Having nothing better to do until B. arrived, I fell to musing.

What a wonderful piece of Socialism modern civilisation has become! – not the Socialism of the so-called Socialists – a system modelled apparently upon the methods of the convict prison – a system under which each miserable sinner is to be compelled to labour, like a beast of burden, for no personal benefit to himself, but only for the good of the community – a world where there are to be no men, but only numbers – where there is to be no ambition and no hope and no fear, – but the Socialism of free men, working side by side in the common workshop, each one for the wage to which his skill and energy entitle him; the Socialism of responsible, thinking individuals, not of State-

directed automata.

Here was I, in exchange for the result of some of my labour, going to be taken by Society for a treat, to the middle of Europe and back. Railway lines had been laid over the whole 700 or 800 miles to facilitate my progress; bridges had been built, and tunnels made; an army of engineers, and guards, and signal-men, and porters, and clerks were waiting to take charge of me, and to see to my comfort and safety. All I had to do was to tell Society (here represented by a railway booking-clerk) where I wanted to go, and to step into a carriage; all the rest would be done for me. Books and papers had been written and printed; so that if I wished to beguile the journey by reading, I could do so. At various places on the route, thoughtful Society had taken care to be ready for me with all kinds of refreshment (her sandwiches might be a little fresher, but maybe she thinks new bread injurious for me). When I am tired of travelling and want to rest, I find Society waiting for me with dinner and a comfortable bed, with hot and cold water to wash in and towels to wipe upon. Wherever I go, whatever I need, Society, like the enslaved genii of some Eastern tale, is ready and anxious to help me, to serve me, to do my bidding, to give me enjoyment and pleasure. Society will take me to Ober-Ammergau, will provide for all my wants on the way, and, when I am there, will show me the Passion Play, which she has arranged and rehearsed and will play for my instruction; will bring me back any way I like to come, explaining, by means of her guide-books and histories,

everything upon the way that she thinks can interest me; will, while I am absent, carry my messages to those I have left behind me in England, and will bring me theirs in return; will look after me and take care of me and protect me like a mother – as no mother ever could.

All that she asks in return is, that I shall do the work she has given me to do. As a man works, so Society deals by him.

To me Society says: “You sit at your desk and write, that is all I want you to do. You are not good for much, but you can spin out yards of what you and your friends, I suppose, call literature; and some people seem to enjoy reading it. Very well: you sit there and write this literature, or whatever it is, and keep your mind fixed on that. I will see to everything else for you. I will provide you with writing materials, and books of wit and humour, and paste and scissors, and everything else that may be necessary to you in your trade; and I will feed you and clothe you and lodge you, and I will take you about to places that you wish to go to; and I will see that you have plenty of tobacco and all other things practicable that you may desire – provided that you work well. The more work you do, and the better work you do, the better I shall look after you. You write – that is all I want you to do.”

“But,” I say to Society, “I don’t like work; I don’t want to work. Why should I be a slave and work?”

“All right,” answers Society, “don’t work. I’m not forcing you. All I say is, that if you don’t work for me, I shall not work for you. No work from you, no dinner from me – no holidays, no

tobacco.”

And I decide to be a slave, and work.

Society has no notion of paying all men equally. Her great object is to encourage brain. The man who merely works by his muscles she regards as very little superior to the horse or the ox, and provides for him just a little better. But the moment he begins to use his head, and from the labourer rises to the artisan, she begins to raise his wages.

Of course hers is a very imperfect method of encouraging thought. She is of the world, and takes a worldly standard of cleverness. To the shallow, showy writer, I fear, she generally pays far more than to the deep and brilliant thinker; and clever roguery seems often more to her liking than honest worth. But her scheme is a right and sound one; her aims and intentions are clear; her methods, on the whole, work fairly well; and every year she grows in judgment.

One day she will arrive at perfect wisdom, and will pay each man according to his deserts.

But do not be alarmed. This will not happen in our time.

Turning round, while still musing about Society, I ran against B. (literally). He thought I was a clumsy ass at first, and said so; but, on recognising me, apologised for his mistake. He had been there for some time also, waiting for me. I told him that I had secured two corner seats in a smoking-carriage, and he replied that he had done so too. By a curious coincidence, we had both fixed upon the same carriage. I had taken the corner seats near

the platform, and he had booked the two opposite corners. Four other passengers sat huddled up in the middle. We kept the seats near the door, and gave the other two away. One should always practise generosity.

There was a very talkative man in our carriage. I never came across a man with such a fund of utterly uninteresting anecdotes. He had a friend with him – at all events, the man was his friend when they started – and he talked to this friend incessantly, from the moment the train left Victoria until it arrived at Dover. First of all he told him a long story about a dog. There was no point in the story whatever. It was simply a bald narrative of the dog's daily doings. The dog got up in the morning and barked at the door, and when they came down and opened the door there he was, and he stopped all day in the garden; and when his wife (not the dog's wife, the wife of the man who was telling the story) went out in the afternoon, he was asleep on the grass, and they brought him into the house, and he played with the children, and in the evening he slept in the coal-shed, and next morning there he was again. And so on, for about forty minutes.

A very dear chum or near relative of the dog's might doubtless have found the account enthralling; but what possible interest a stranger – a man who evidently didn't even know the dog – could be expected to take in the report, it was difficult to conceive.

The friend at first tried to feel excited, and murmured: "Wonderful!" "Very strange, indeed!" "How curious!" and helped the tale along by such ejaculations as, "No, did he

though?" "And what did you do then?" or, "Was that on the Monday or the Tuesday, then?" But as the story progressed, he appeared to take a positive dislike to the dog, and only yawned each time that it was mentioned.

Indeed, towards the end, I think, though I trust I am mistaken, I heard him mutter, "Oh, damn the dog!"

After the dog story, we thought we were going to have a little quiet. But we were mistaken; for, with the same breath with which he finished the dog rigmorale, our talkative companion added:

"But I can tell you a funnier thing than that – "

We all felt we could believe that assertion. If he had boasted that he could tell a duller, more uninteresting story, we should have doubted him; but the possibility of his being able to relate something funnier, we could readily grasp.

But it was not a bit funnier, after all. It was only longer and more involved. It was the history of a man who grew his own celery; and then, later on, it turned out that his wife was the niece, by the mother's side, of a man who had made an ottoman out of an old packing-case.

The friend glanced round the carriage apologetically about the middle of this story, with an expression that said:

"I'm awfully sorry, gentlemen; but it really is not my fault. You see the position I'm in. Don't blame me. Don't make it worse for me to bear than it is."

And we each replied with pitying, sympathetic looks that

implied:

“That’s all right, my dear sir; don’t you fret about that. We see how it is. We only wish we could do something to help you.”

The poor fellow seemed happier and more resigned after that.

B. and I hurried on board at Dover, and were just in time to secure the last two berths in the boat; and we were glad that we had managed to do this because our idea was that we should, after a good supper, turn in and go comfortably to sleep.

B. said:

“What I like to do, during a sea passage, is to go to sleep, and then wake up and find that I am there.”

We made a very creditable supper. I explained to B. the ballast principle held by my seafaring friend, and he agreed with me that the idea seemed reasonable; and, as there was a fixed price for supper, and you had as much as you liked, we determined to give the plan a fair trial.

B. left me after supper somewhat abruptly, as it appeared to me, and I took a stroll on deck by myself. I did not feel very comfortable. I am what I call a moderate sailor. I do not go to excess in either direction. On ordinary occasions, I can swagger about and smoke my pipe, and lie about my Channel experiences with the best of them. But when there is what the captain calls “a bit of a sea on,” I feel sad, and try to get away from the smell of the engines and the proximity of people who smoke green cigars.

There was a man smoking a peculiarly mellow and unctuous cigar on deck when I got there. I don’t believe he smoked it

because he enjoyed it. He did not look as if he enjoyed it. I believe he smoked it merely to show how well he was feeling, and to irritate people who were not feeling very well.

There is something very blatantly offensive about the man who feels well on board a boat.

I am very objectionable myself, I know, when I am feeling all right. It is not enough for me that I am not ill. I want everybody to see that I am not ill. It seems to me that I am wasting myself if I don't let every human being in the vessel know that I am not ill. I cannot sit still and be thankful, like you'd imagine a sensible man would. I walk about the ship – smoking, of course – and look at people who are not well with mild but pitying surprise, as if I wondered what it was like and how they did it. It is very foolish of me, I know, but I cannot help it. I suppose it is the human nature that exists in even the best of us that makes us act like this.

I could not get away from this man's cigar; or when I did, I came within range of the perfume from the engine-room, and felt I wanted to go back to the cigar. There seemed to be no neutral ground between the two.

If it had not been that I had paid for saloon, I should have gone fore. It was much fresher there, and I should have been much happier there altogether. But I was not going to pay for first-class and then ride third – that was not business. No, I would stick to the swagger part of the ship, and feel aristocratic and sick.

A mate, or a boatswain, or an admiral, or one of those sort of people – I could not be sure, in the darkness, which it was –

came up to me as I was leaning with my head against the paddle-box, and asked me what I thought of the ship. He said she was a new boat, and that this was her first voyage.

I said I hoped she would get a bit steadier as she grew older. He replied: "Yes, she is a bit skittish to-night."

What it seemed to me was, that the ship would try to lie down and go to sleep on her right side; and then, before she had given that position a fair trial, would suddenly change her mind, and think she could do it better on her left. At the moment the man came up to me she was trying to stand on her head; and before he had finished speaking she had given up this attempt, in which, however, she had very nearly succeeded, and had, apparently, decided to now play at getting out of the water altogether.

And this is what he called being a "bit skittish!"

Seafaring people talk like this, because they are silly, and do not know any better. It is no use being angry with them.

I got a little sleep at last. Not in the bunk I had been at such pains to secure: I would not have stopped down in that stuffy saloon, if anybody had offered me a hundred pounds for doing so. Not that anybody did; nor that anybody seemed to want me there at all. I gathered this from the fact that the first thing that met my eye, after I had succeeded in clawing my way down, was a boot. The air was full of boots. There were sixty men sleeping there – or, as regards the majority, I should say *trying* to sleep there – some in bunks, some on tables, and some under tables. One man *was* asleep, and was snoring like a hippopotamus – like

a hippopotamus that had caught a cold, and was hoarse; and the other fifty-nine were sitting up, throwing their boots at him. It was a snore, very difficult to locate. From which particular berth, in that dimly-lighted, evil-smelling place, it proceeded nobody was quite sure. At one moment, it appeared to come, wailing and sobbing, from the larboard, and the next instant it thundered forth, seemingly from the starboard. So every man who could reach a boot picked it up, and threw it promiscuously, silently praying to Providence, as he did so, to guide it aright and bring it safe to its desired haven.

I watched the weird scene for a minute or two, and then I hauled myself on deck again, and sat down – and went to sleep on a coil of rope; and was awakened, in the course of time, by a sailor who wanted that coil of rope to throw at the head of a man who was standing, doing no harm to anybody, on the quay at Ostend.

# SATURDAY, 24TH

Arrival at Ostend. – Coffee and Rolls. – Difficulty of Making French Waiters understand German. – Advantages of Possessing a Conscience That Does Not Get Up Too Early. – Villainy Triumphant. – Virtue Ordered Outside. – A Homely English Row.

When I say I was “awakened” at Ostend, I do not speak the strict truth. I was not awakened – not properly. I was only half-awakened. I never did get fairly awake until the afternoon. During the journey from Ostend to Cologne I was three-parts asleep and one-part partially awake.

At Ostend, however, I was sufficiently aroused to grasp the idea that we had got somewhere, and that I must find my luggage and B., and do something or other; in addition to which, a strange, vague instinct, but one which I have never yet known deceive me, hovering about my mind, and telling me that I was in the neighbourhood of something to eat and drink, spurred me to vigour and action.

I hurried down into the saloon and there found B. He excused himself for having left me alone all night – he need not have troubled himself. I had not pined for him in the least. If the only woman I had ever loved had been on board, I should have sat silent, and let any other fellow talk to her that wanted to, and that felt equal to it – by explaining that he had met a friend and

that they had been talking. It appeared to have been a trying conversation.

I also ran against the talkative man and his companion. Such a complete wreck of a once strong man as the latter looked I have never before seen. Mere sea-sickness, however severe, could never have accounted for the change in his appearance since, happy and hopeful, he entered the railway-carriage at Victoria six short hours ago. His friend, on the other hand, appeared fresh and cheerful, and was relating an anecdote about a cow.

We took our bags into the Custom House and opened them, and I sat down on mine, and immediately went to sleep.

When I awoke, somebody whom I mistook at first for a Field-Marshal, and from force of habit – I was once a volunteer – saluted, was standing over me, pointing melodramatically at my bag. I assured him in picturesque German that I had nothing to declare. He did not appear to comprehend me, which struck me as curious, and took the bag away from me, which left me nothing to sit upon but the floor. But I felt too sleepy to be indignant.

After our luggage had been examined, we went into the buffet. My instinct had not misled me: there I found hot coffee, and rolls and butter. I ordered two coffees with milk, some bread, and some butter. I ordered them in the best German I knew. As nobody understood me, I went and got the things for myself. It saves a deal of argument, that method. People seem to know what you mean in a moment then.

B. suggested that while we were in Belgium, where everybody

spoke French, while very few indeed knew German, I should stand a better chance of being understood if I talked less German and more French.

He said:

“It will be easier for you, and less of a strain upon the natives. You stick to French,” he continued, “as long as ever you can. You will get along much better with French. You will come across people now and then – smart, intelligent people – who will partially understand your French, but no human being, except a thought-reader, will ever obtain any glimmering of what you mean from your German.”

“Oh, are we in Belgium,” I replied sleepily; “I thought we were in Germany. I didn’t know.” And then, in a burst of confidence, I added, feeling that further deceit was useless, “I don’t know where I am, you know.”

“No, I thought you didn’t,” he replied. “That is exactly the idea you give anybody. I wish you’d wake up a bit.”

We waited about an hour at Ostend, while our train was made up. There was only one carriage labelled for Cologne, and four more passengers wanted to go there than the compartment would hold.

Not being aware of this, B. and I made no haste to secure places, and, in consequence, when, having finished our coffee, we leisurely strolled up and opened the carriage door we saw that every seat was already booked. A bag was in one space and a rug in another, an umbrella booked a third, and so on. Nobody was

there, but the seats were gone!

It is the unwritten law among travellers that a man's luggage deposited upon a seat, shall secure that seat to him until he comes to sit upon it himself. This is a good law and a just law, and one that, in my normal state, I myself would die to uphold and maintain.

But at three o'clock on a chilly morning one's moral sensibilities are not properly developed. The average man's conscience does not begin work till eight or nine o'clock – not till after breakfast, in fact. At three a.m. he will do things that at three in the afternoon his soul would revolt at.

Under ordinary circumstances I should as soon have thought of shifting a man's bag and appropriating his seat as an ancient Hebrew squatter would have thought of removing his neighbour's landmark; but at this time in the morning my better nature was asleep.

I have often read of a man's better nature being suddenly awakened. The business is generally accomplished by an organ-grinder or a little child (I would back the latter, at all events – give it a fair chance – to awaken anything in this world that was not stone deaf, or that had not been dead for more than twenty-four hours); and if an organ-grinder or a little child had been around Ostend station that morning, things might have been different.

B. and I might have been saved from crime. Just as we were in the middle of our villainy, the organ-grinder or the child would have struck up, and we should have burst into tears, and have

rushed from the carriage, and have fallen upon each other's necks outside on the platform, and have wept, and waited for the next train.

As it was, after looking carefully round to see that nobody was watching us, we slipped quickly into the carriage, and, making room for ourselves among the luggage there, sat down and tried to look innocent and easy.

B. said that the best thing we could do, when the other people came, would be to pretend to be dead asleep, and too stupid to understand anything.

I replied that as far as I was concerned, I thought I could convey the desired impression without stooping to deceit at all, and prepared to make myself comfortable.

A few seconds later another man got into the carriage. He also made room for himself among the luggage and sat down.

"I am afraid that seat's taken, sir," said B. when he had recovered his surprise at the man's coolness. "In fact, all the seats in this carriage are taken."

"I can't help that," replied the ruffian, cynically. "I've got to get to Cologne some time to-day, and there seems no other way of doing it that I can see."

"Yes, but so has the gentleman whose seat you have taken got to get there," I remonstrated; "what about him? You are thinking only of yourself!"

My sense of right and justice was beginning to assert itself, and I felt quite indignant with the fellow. Two minutes ago, as I

have explained, I could contemplate the taking of another man's seat with equanimity. Now, such an act seemed to me shameful. The truth is that my better nature never sleeps for long. Leave it alone and it wakens of its own accord. Heaven help me! I am a sinful, worldly man, I know; but there is good at the bottom of me. It wants hauling up, but it's there.

This man had aroused it. I now saw the sinfulness of taking another passenger's place in a railway-carriage.

But I could not make the other man see it. I felt that some service was due from me to Justice, in compensation of the wrong I had done her a few moments ago, and I argued most eloquently.

My rhetoric was, however, quite thrown away. "Oh! it's only a vice-consul," he said; "here's his name on the bag. There's plenty of room for him in with the guard."

It was no use my defending the sacred cause of Right before a man who held sentiments like that; so, having lodged a protest against his behaviour, and thus eased my conscience, I leant back and dozed the doze of the just.

Five minutes before the train started, the rightful owners of the carriage came up and crowded in. They seemed surprised at finding only five vacant seats available between seven of them, and commenced to quarrel vigorously among themselves.

B. and I and the unjust man in the corner tried to calm them, but passion ran too high at first for the voice of Reason to be heard. Each combination of five, possible among them, accused

each remaining two of endeavouring to obtain seats by fraud, and each one more than hinted that the other six were liars.

What annoyed me was that they quarrelled in English. They all had languages of their own, – there were four Belgians, two Frenchmen, and a German, – but no language was good enough for them to insult each other in but English.

Finding that there seemed to be no chance of their ever agreeing among themselves, they appealed to us. We unhesitatingly decided in favour of the five thinnest, who, thereupon, evidently regarding the matter as finally settled, sat down, and told the other two to get out.

These two stout ones, however – the German and one of the Belgians – seemed inclined to dispute the award, and called up the station-master.

The station-master did not wait to listen to what they had to say, but at once began abusing them for being in the carriage at all. He told them they ought to be ashamed of themselves for forcing their way into a compartment that was already more than full, and inconveniencing the people already there.

He also used English to explain this to them, and they got out on the platform and answered him back in English.

English seems to be the popular language for quarrelling in, among foreigners. I suppose they find it more expressive.

We all watched the group from the window. We were amused and interested. In the middle of the argument an early gendarme arrived on the scene. The gendarme naturally supported the

station-master. One man in uniform always supports another man in uniform, no matter what the row is about, or who may be in the right – that does not trouble him. It is a fixed tenet of belief among uniform circles that a uniform can do no wrong. If burglars wore uniform, the police would be instructed to render them every assistance in their power, and to take into custody any householder attempting to interfere with them in the execution of their business. The gendarme assisted the station-master to abuse the two stout passengers, and he also abused them in English. It was not good English in any sense of the word. The man would probably have been able to give his feelings much greater variety and play in French or Flemish, but that was not his object. His ambition, like every other foreigner's, was to become an accomplished English quarreller, and this was practice for him.

A Customs House clerk came out and joined in the babel. He took the part of the passengers, and abused the station-master and the gendarme, and *he* abused *them* in English.

B. said he thought it very pleasant here, far from our native shores, in the land of the stranger, to come across a little homely English row like this.

# SATURDAY, 24TH – CONTINUED

A Man of Family. – An Eccentric Train. – Outrage on an Englishman. – Alone in Europe. – Difficulty of Making German Waiters Understand Scandinavian. – Danger of Knowing Too Many Languages. – A Wearisome Journey. – Cologne, Ahoy!

There was a very well-informed Belgian in the carriage, and he told us something interesting about nearly every town through which we passed. I felt that if I could have kept awake, and have listened to that man, and remembered what he said, and not mixed things up, I should have learnt a good deal about the country between Ostend and Cologne.

He had relations in nearly every town, had this man. I suppose there have been, and are, families as large and as extensive as his; but I never heard of any other family that made such a show. They seemed to have been planted out with great judgment, and were now all over the country. Every time I awoke, I caught some such scattered remark as:

“Bruges – you can see the belfry from this side – plays a polka by Haydn every hour. My aunt lives here.” “Ghent – Hôtel de Ville, some say finest specimen of Gothic architecture in Europe – where my mother lives. You could see the house if that church wasn’t there.” “Just passed Alost – great hop centre. My grandfather used to live there; he’s dead now.” “There’s the Royal chateau – here, just on this side. My sister is married to

a man who lives there – not in the palace, I don't mean, but in Laeken.” “That's the dome of the Palais de Justice – they call Brussels ‘Paris in little’ – I like it better than Paris, myself – not so crowded. I live in Brussels.” “Louvain – there's Van de Weyer's statue, the 1830 revolutionist. My wife's mother lives in Louvain. She wants us to come and live there. She says we are too far away from her at Brussels, but I don't think so.” “Leige – see the citadel? Got some cousins at Leige – only second ones. Most of my first ones live at Maestricht”; and so on all the way to Cologne.

I do not believe we passed a single town or village that did not possess one or more specimens of this man's relatives. Our journey seemed, not so much like a tour through Belgium and part of Northern Germany, as a visit to the neighbourhood where this man's family resided.

I was careful to take a seat facing the engine at Ostend. I prefer to travel that way. But when I awoke a little later on, I found myself going backwards.

I naturally felt indignant. I said:

“Who's put me over here? I was over there, you know. You've no right to do that!”

They assured me, however, that nobody had shifted me, but that the train had turned round at Ghent.

I was annoyed at this. It seemed to me a mean trick for a train to start off in one direction, and thus lure you into taking your seat (or somebody else's seat, as the case might be) under

the impression that you were going to travel that way, and then, afterwards, turn round and go the other way. I felt very doubtful, in my own mind, as to whether the train knew where it was going at all.

At Brussels we got out and had some more coffee and rolls. I forget what language I talked at Brussels, but nobody understood me. When I next awoke, after leaving Brussels, I found myself going forwards again. The engine had apparently changed its mind for the second time, and was pulling the carriages the other way now. I began to get thoroughly alarmed. This train was simply doing what it liked. There was no reliance to be placed upon it whatever. The next thing it would do would be to go sideways. It seemed to me that I ought to get up and see into this matter; but, while pondering the business, I fell asleep again.

I was very sleepy indeed when they roused us out at Herbesthal, to examine our luggage for Germany. I had a vague idea that we were travelling in Turkey, and had been stopped by brigands. When they told me to open my bag, I said, "Never!" and remarked that I was an Englishman, and that they had better be careful. I also told them that they could dismiss any idea of ransom from their minds at once, unless they were prepared to take I.O.U.'s, as it was against the principles of our family to pay cash for anything – certainly not for relatives.

They took no notice of my warning, and caught hold of my Gladstone. I resisted feebly, but was over-powered, and went to sleep again.

On awakening, I discovered myself in the buffet. I have no recollection of going there. My instinct must have guided me there during my sleep.

I ordered my usual repast of coffee and rolls. (I must have been full of coffee and rolls by this time.) I had got the idea into my head now that I was in Norway, and so I ordered them in broken Scandinavian, a few words of which I had picked up during a trip through the fiords last summer.

Of course, the man did not understand; but I am accustomed to witnessing the confusion of foreigners when addressed in their native tongue, and so forgave him – especially as, the victuals being well within reach, language was a matter of secondary importance.

I took two cups of coffee, as usual – one for B., and one for myself – and, bringing them to the table, looked round for B. I could not see him anywhere. What had become of him? I had not seen him, that I could recollect, for hours. I did not know where I was, or what I was doing. I had a hazy knowledge that B. and I had started off together – whether yesterday or six months ago, I could not have said to save my life – with the intention, if I was not mistaken, of going somewhere and seeing something. We were now somewhere abroad – somewhere in Norway was my idea; though why I had fixed on Norway is a mystery to me to this day – and I had lost him!

How on earth were we ever to find each other again? A horrible picture presented itself to my mind of our both

wandering distractedly up and down Europe, perhaps for years, vainly seeking each other. The touching story of Evangeline recurred to me with terrible vividness.

Something must be done, and that immediately. Somehow or another I must find B. I roused myself, and summoned to my aid every word of Scandinavian that I knew.

It was no good these people pretending that they did not understand their own language, and putting me off that way. They had got to understand it this time. This was no mere question of coffee and rolls; this was a serious business. I would make that waiter understand my Scandinavian, if I had to hammer it into his head with his own coffee-pot!

I seized him by the arm, and, in Scandinavian that must have been quite pathetic in its tragic fervour, I asked him if he had seen my friend – my friend B.

The man only stared.

I grew desperate. I shook him. I said:

“My friend – big, great, tall, large – is he where? Have you him to see where? Here?”

(I had to put it that way because Scandinavian grammar is not a strong point with me, and my knowledge of the verbs is as yet limited to the present tense of the infinitive mood. Besides, this was no time to worry about grace of style.)

A crowd gathered round us, attracted by the man’s terrified expression. I appealed to them generally. I said:

“My friend B. – head, red – boots, yellow, brown, gold – coat,

little squares – nose, much, large! Is he where? Him to see – anybody – where?”

Not a soul moved a hand to help me. There they stood and gaped!

I repeated it all over again louder, in case anybody on the outskirts of the mob had not heard it; and I repeated it in an entirely new accent. I gave them every chance I could.

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