RUDYARD KIPLING

LETTERS OF TRAVEL (1892-1913)

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FROM TIDEWAY TO TIDEWAY

1892-95

IN SIGHT OF MONADNOCK

After the gloom of gray Atlantic weather, our ship came to America in a flood of winter sunshine that made unaccustomed eyelids blink, and the New Yorker, who is nothing if not modest, said, 'This isn't a sample of our really fine days. Wait until such and such times come, or go to such and a such a quarter of the city.' We were content, and more than content, to drift aimlessly up and down the brilliant streets, wondering a little why the finest light should be wasted on the worst pavements in the world; to walk round and round Madison Square, because that was full of beautifully dressed babies playing counting-out games, or to gaze reverently at the broad-shouldered, pug-nosed Irish New York policemen. Wherever we went there was the sun, lavish and unstinted, working nine hours a day, with the colour and the clean-cut lines of perspective that he makes. That any one should dare to call this climate muggy, yea, even 'subtropical,' was a shock. There came such a man, and he said, 'Go north if you want weather – weather that *is* weather. Go to New England.' So New York passed away upon a sunny afternoon, with her roar and rattle, her complex smells, her triply over-heated rooms, and much too energetic inhabitants, while the train went north to the lands where the snow lay. It came in one sweep – almost, it seemed, in one turn of the wheels – covering the winter-killed grass and turning the frozen ponds that looked so white under

the shadow of lean trees into pools of ink.

As the light closed in, a little wooden town, white, cloaked, and dumb, slid past the windows, and the strong light of the car lamps fell upon a sleigh (the driver furred and muffled to his nose) turning the corner of a street. Now the sleigh of a picture-book, however well one knows it, is altogether different from the thing in real life, a means of conveyance at a journey's end; but it is well not to be over-curious in the matter, for the same American who has been telling you at length how he once followed a kilted Scots soldier from Chelsea to the Tower, out of pure wonder and curiosity at his bare knees and sporran, will laugh at your interest in 'just a cutter.'

The staff of the train – surely the great American nation would be lost if deprived of the ennobling society of brakeman, conductor, Pullman-car conductor, negro porter, and newsboy – told pleasant tales, as they spread themselves at ease in the smoking compartments, of snowings up the line to Montreal, of desperate attacks – four engines together and a snow-plough in front – on drifts thirty feet high, and the pleasures of walking along the tops of goods wagons to brake a train, with the thermometer thirty below freezing. 'It comes cheaper to kill men that way than to put air-brakes on freight-cars,' said the brakeman.

Thirty below freezing! It was inconceivable till one stepped out into it at midnight, and the first shock of that clear, still air took away the breath as does a plunge into sea-water. A

walrus sitting on a woolpack was our host in his sleigh, and he wrapped us in hairy goatskin coats, caps that came down over the ears, buffalo robes and blankets, and yet more buffalo-robes till we, too, looked like walruses and moved almost as gracefully. The night was as keen as the edge of a newly-ground sword; breath froze on the coat-lapels in snow; the nose became without sensation, and the eyes wept bitterly because the horses were in a hurry to get home; and whirling through air at zero brings tears. But for the jingle of the sleigh-bells the ride might have taken place in a dream, for there was no sound of hoofs upon the snow, the runners sighed a little now and again as they glided over an inequality, and all the sheeted hills round about were as dumb as death. Only the Connecticut River kept up its heart and a lane of black water through the packed ice; we could hear the stream worrying round the heels of its small bergs. Elsewhere there was nothing but snow under the moon – snow drifted to the level of the stone fences or curling over their tops in a lip of frosted silver; snow banked high on either side of the road, or lying heavy on the pines and the hemlocks in the woods, where the air seemed, by comparison, as warm as a conservatory. It was beautiful beyond expression, Nature's boldest sketch in black and white, done with a Japanese disregard of perspective, and daringly altered from time to time by the restless pencils of the moon.

In the morning the other side of the picture was revealed in the colours of the sunlight. There was never a cloud in the sky that rested on the snow-line of the horizon as a sapphire on white

velvet. Hills of pure white, or speckled and furred with woods, rose up above the solid white levels of the fields, and the sun rioted over their embroideries till the eyes ached. Here and there on the exposed slopes the day's warmth – the thermometer was nearly forty degrees – and the night's cold had made a bald and shining crust upon the snow; but the most part was soft powdered stuff, ready to catch the light on a thousand crystals and multiply it sevenfold. Through this magnificence, and thinking nothing of it, a wood-sledge drawn by two shaggy red steers, the unbarked logs diamond-dusted with snow, shouldered down the road in a cloud of frosty breath. It is the mark of inexperience in this section of the country to confound a sleigh which you use for riding with the sledge that is devoted to heavy work; and it is, I believe, a still greater sign of worthlessness to think that oxen are driven, as they are in most places, by scientific twisting of the tail. The driver with red mittens on his hands, felt overstockings that come up to his knees, and, perhaps, a silvery-gray coon-skin coat on his back, walks beside, crying, 'Gee, haw!' even as is written in American stories. And the speech of the driver explains many things in regard to the dialect story, which at its best is an infliction to many. Now that I have heard the long, unhurried drawl of Vermont, my wonder is, not that the New England tales should be printed in what, for the sake of argument, we will call English and its type, but rather that they should not have appeared in Swedish or Russian. Our alphabet is too limited. This part of the country belongs by laws unknown to

the United States, but which obtain all the world over, to the New England story and the ladies who write it. You feel this in the air as soon as you see the white-painted wooden houses left out in the snow, the austere schoolhouse, and the people – the men of the farms, the women who work as hard as they with, it may be, less enjoyment of life – the other houses, well painted and quaintly roofed, that belong to Judge This, Lawyer That, and Banker Such an one; all powers in the metropolis of six thousand folk over by the railway station. More acutely still, do you realise the atmosphere when you read in the local paper announcements of 'chicken suppers' and 'church sociables' to be given by such and such a denomination, sandwiched between paragraphs of genial and friendly interest, showing that the countryside live (and without slaying each other) on terms of terrifying intimacy.

The folk of the old rock, the dwellers in the older houses, born and raised hereabouts, would not live out of the town for any consideration, and there are insane people from the South – men and women from Boston and the like – who actually build houses out in the open country, two, and even three miles from Main Street which is nearly 400 yards long, and the centre of life and population. With the strangers, more particularly if they do not buy their groceries 'in the street,' which means, and is, the town, the town has little to do; but it knows everything, and much more also, that goes on among them. Their dresses, their cattle, their views, the manners of their children, their manner towards their servants, and every other conceivable thing, is reported, digested,

discussed, and rediscussed up and down Main Street. Now, the wisdom of Vermont, not being at all times equal to grasping all the problems of everybody else's life with delicacy, sometimes makes pathetic mistakes, and the town is set by the ears. You will see, therefore, that towns of a certain size do not differ materially all the world over. The talk of the men of the farms is of their farms – purchase, mortgage, and sale, recorded rights, boundary lines, and road tax. It was in the middle of New Zealand, on the edge of the Wild horse plains, that I heard this talk last, when a man and his wife, twenty miles from the nearest neighbour, sat up half the night discussing just the same things that the men talked of in Main Street, Vermont, U.S.A.

There is one man in the State who is much exercised over this place. He is a farm-hand, raised in a hamlet fifteen or twenty miles from the nearest railway, and, greatly daring, he has wandered here. The bustle and turmoil of Main Street, the new glare of the electric lights and the five-storeyed brick business block, frighten and distress him much. He has taken service on a farm well away from these delirious delights, and, says he, 'I've been offered $25 a month to work in a bakery at New York. But you don't get me to no New York, I've seen this place an' it just scares me,' His strength is in the drawing of hay and the feeding of cattle. Winter life on a farm does not mean the comparative idleness that is so much written of. Each hour seems to have its sixty minutes of work; for the cattle are housed and eat eternally; the colts must be turned out for their drink, and the ice broken

for them if necessary; then ice must be stored for the summer use, and then the real work of hauling logs for firewood begins. New England depends for its fuel on the woods. The trees are 'blazed' in the autumn just before the fall of the leaf, felled later, cut into four-foot lengths, and, as soon as the friendly snow makes sledging possible, drawn down to the woodhouse. Afterwards the needs of the farm can be attended to, and a farm, like an arch, is never at rest. A little later will come maple-sugar time, when the stately maples are tapped as the sap begins to stir, and be-ringed with absurd little buckets (a cow being milked into a thimble gives some idea of the disproportion), which are emptied into cauldrons. Afterwards (this is the time of the 'sugaring-off parties') you pour the boiled syrup into tins full of fresh snow, where it hardens, and you pretend to help and become very sticky and make love, boys and girls together. Even the introduction of patent sugar evaporators has not spoiled the love-making.

There is a certain scarcity of men to make love with; not so much in towns which have their own manufactories and lie within a lover's Sabbath-day journey of New York, but in the farms and villages. The men have gone away – the young men are fighting fortune further West, and the women remain – remain for ever as women must. On the farms, when the children depart, the old man and the old woman strive to hold things together without help, and the woman's portion is work and monotony. Sometimes she goes mad to an extent which appreciably affects statistics and is put down in census reports. More often, let us hope, she

dies. In the villages where the necessity for heavy work is not so urgent the women find consolation in the formation of literary clubs and circles, and so gather to themselves a great deal of wisdom in their own way. That way is not altogether lovely. They desire facts and the knowledge that they are at a certain page in a German or an Italian book before a certain time, or that they have read the proper books in a proper way. At any rate, they have something to do that seems as if they were doing something. It has been said that the New England stories are cramped and narrow. Even a far-off view of the iron-bound life whence they are drawn justifies the author. You can carve a nut in a thousand different ways by reason of the hardness of the shell.

Twenty or thirty miles across the hills, on the way to the Green Mountains, lie some finished chapters of pitiful stories – a few score abandoned farms, started in a lean land, held fiercely so long as there was any one to work them, and then left on the hillsides. Beyond this desolation are woods where the bear and the deer still find peace, and sometimes even the beaver forgets that he is persecuted and dares to build his lodge. These things were told me by a man who loved the woods for their own sake and not for the sake of slaughter – a quiet, slow-spoken man of the West, who came across the drifts on show-shoes and refrained from laughing when I borrowed his foot-gear and tried to walk. The gigantic lawn-tennis bats strung with hide are not easy to manoeuvre. If you forget to keep the long heels down and trailing in the snow you turn over and become as a man who fails into

deep water with a life-belt tied to his ankles. If you lose your balance, do not attempt to recover it, but drop, half-sitting and half-kneeling, over as large an area as possible. When you have mastered the wolf-step, can slide one shoe above the other deftly, that is to say, the sensation of paddling over a ten-foot-deep drift and taking short cuts by buried fences is worth the ankle-ache. The man from the West interpreted to me the signs on the snow, showed how a fox (this section of the country is full of foxes, and men shoot them because riding is impossible) leaves one kind of spoor, walking with circumspection as becomes a thief, and a dog, who has nothing to be ashamed of, but widens his four legs and plunges, another; how coons go to sleep for the winter and squirrels too, and how the deer on the Canada border trample down deep paths that are called yards and are caught there by inquisitive men with cameras, who hold them by their tails when the deer have blundered into deep snow, and so photograph their frightened dignity. He told me of people also – the manners and customs of New Englanders here, and how they blossom and develop in the Far West on the newer railway lines, when matters come very nearly to civil war between rival companies racing for the same cañon; how there is a country not very far away called Caledonia, populated by the Scotch, who can give points to a New Englander in a bargain, and how these same Scotch-Americans by birth, name their townships still after the cities of their thrifty race. It was all as new and delightful as the steady 'scrunch' of the snow-shoes and the dazzling silence of the hills.

Beyond the very furthest range, where the pines turn to a faint blue haze against the one solitary peak – a real mountain and not a hill – showed like a gigantic thumbnail pointing heavenward.

'And that's Monadnock,' said the man from the West; 'all the hills have Indian names. You left Wantastiquet on your right coming out of town,'

You know how it often happens that a word shuttles in and out of many years, waking all sorts of incongruous associations. I had met Monadnock on paper in a shameless parody of Emerson's style, before ever style or verse had interest for me. But the word stuck because of a rhyme, in which one was

> … crowned coeval With Monadnock's crest, And my wings extended
> Touch the East and West.

Later the same word, pursued on the same principle as that blessed one Mesopotamia, led me to and through Emerson, up to his poem on the peak itself – the wise old giant 'busy with his sky affairs,' who makes us sane and sober and free from little things if we trust him. So Monadnock came to mean everything that was helpful, healing, and full of quiet, and when I saw him half across New Hampshire he did not fail. In that utter stillness a hemlock bough, overweighted with snow, came down a foot or two with a tired little sigh; the snow slid off and the little branch flew nodding back to its fellows.

For the honour of Monadnock there was made that afternoon an image of snow of Gautama Buddha, something too squat

and not altogether equal on both sides, but with an imperial and reposeful waist. He faced towards the mountain, and presently some men in a wood-sledge came up the road and faced him. Now, the amazed comments of two Vermont farmers on the nature and properties of a swag-bellied god are worth hearing. They were not troubled about his race, for he was aggressively white; but rounded waists seem to be out of fashion in Vermont. At least, they said so, with rare and curious oaths.

Next day all the idleness and trifling were drowned in a snowstorm that filled the hollows of the hills with whirling blue mist, bowed the branches of the woods till you ducked, but were powdered all the same when you drove through, and wiped out the sleighing tracks. Mother Nature is beautifully tidy if you leave her alone. She rounded off every angle, broke down every scarp, and tucked the white bedclothes, till not a wrinkle remained, up to the chine of the spruces and the hemlocks that would not go to sleep.

'Now,' said the man of the West, as we were driving to the station, and alas! to New York, 'all my snow-tracks are gone; but when that snow melts, a week hence or a month hence, they'll all come up again and show where I've been.'

Curious idea, is it not? Imagine a murder committed in the lonely woods, a snowstorm that covers the tracks of the flying man before the avenger of blood has buried the body, and then, a week later, the withdrawal of the traitorous snow, revealing step by step the path Cain took – the six-inch dee-trail of his snow-

shoes – each step a dark disk on the white till the very end.

There is so much, so very much to write, if it were worth while, about that queer little town by the railway station, with its life running, to all outward seeming, as smoothly as the hack-coupés on their sleigh mounting, and within disturbed by the hatreds and troubles and jealousies that vex the minds of all but the gods. For instance – no, it is better to remember the lesson Monadnock, and Emerson has said, 'Zeus hates busy-bodies and people who do too much.'

That there are such folk, a long nasal drawl across Main Street attests. A farmer is unhitching his horses from a post opposite a store. He stands with the tie-rope in his hand and gives his opinion to his neighbour and the world generally – 'But them there Andersons, they ain't got no notion of etikwette!'

ACROSS A CONTINENT

It is not easy to escape from a big city. An entire continent was waiting to be traversed, and, for that reason, we lingered in New York till the city felt so homelike that it seemed wrong to leave it. And further, the more one studied it, the more grotesquely bad it grew – bad in its paving, bad in its streets, bad in its street-police, and but for the kindness of the tides would be worse than bad in its sanitary arrangements. No one as yet has approached the management of New York in a proper spirit; that is to say, regarding it as the shiftless outcome of squalid barbarism and reckless extravagance. No one is likely to do so, because reflections on the long, narrow pig-trough are construed as malevolent attacks against the spirit and majesty of the great American people, and lead to angry comparisons. Yet, if all the streets of London were permanently up and all the lamps permanently down, this would not prevent the New York streets taken in a lump from being first cousins to a Zanzibar foreshore, or kin to the approaches of a Zulu kraal. Gullies, holes, ruts, cobbles-stones awry, kerbstones rising from two to six inches above the level of the slatternly pavement; tram-lines from two to three inches above street level; building materials scattered half across the street; lime, boards, cut stone, and ash-barrels generally and generously everywhere; wheeled traffic taking its chances, dray *versus* brougham, at cross roads; sway-backed

poles whittled and unpainted; drunken lamp-posts with twisted irons; and, lastly, a generous scatter of filth and more mixed stinks than the winter wind can carry away, are matters which can be considered quite apart from the 'Spirit of Democracy' or 'the future of this great and growing country.' In any other land, they would be held to represent slovenliness, sordidness, and want of capacity. Here it is explained, not once but many times, that they show the speed at which the city has grown and the enviable indifference of her citizens to matters of detail. One of these days, you are told, everything will be taken in hand and put straight. The unvirtuous rulers of the city will be swept away by a cyclone, or a tornado, or something big and booming, of popular indignation; everybody will unanimously elect the right men, who will justly earn the enormous salaries that are at present being paid to inadequate aliens for road sweepings, and all will be well. At the same time the lawlessness ingrained by governors among the governed during the last thirty, forty, or it may be fifty years; the brutal levity of the public conscience in regard to public duty; the toughening and suppling of public morals, and the reckless disregard for human life, bred by impotent laws and fostered by familiarity with needless accidents and criminal neglect, will miraculously disappear. If the laws of cause and effect that control even the freest people in the world say otherwise, so much the worse for the laws. America makes her own. Behind her stands the ghost of the most bloody war of the century caused in a peaceful land by long temporising with lawlessness, by letting

things slide, by shiftlessness and blind disregard for all save the material need of the hour, till the hour long conceived and let alone stood up full-armed, and men said, 'Here is an unforeseen crisis,' and killed each other in the name of God for four years.

In a heathen land the three things that are supposed to be the pillars of moderately decent government are regard for human life, justice, criminal and civil, as far as it lies in man to do justice, and good roads. In this Christian city they think lightly of the first – their own papers, their own speech, and their own actions prove it; buy and sell the second at a price openly and without shame; and are, apparently, content to do without the third. One would almost expect racial sense of humour would stay them from expecting only praise – slab, lavish, and slavish – from the stranger within their gates. But they do not. If he holds his peace, they forge tributes to their own excellence which they put into his mouth, thereby treating their own land which they profess to honour as a quack treats his pills. If he speaks – but you shall see for yourselves what happens then. And they cannot see that by untruth and invective it is themselves alone that they injure.

The blame of their city evils is not altogether with the gentlemen, chiefly of foreign extraction, who control the city. These find a people made to their hand – a lawless breed ready to wink at one evasion of the law if they themselves may profit by another, and in their rare leisure hours content to smile over the details of a clever fraud. Then, says the cultured American, 'Give us time. Give us time, and we shall arrive.' The otherwise

American, who is aggressive, straightway proceeds to thrust a piece of half-hanged municipal botch-work under the nose of the alien as a sample of perfected effort. There is nothing more delightful than to sit for a strictly limited time with a child who tells you what he means to do when he is a man; but when that same child, loud-voiced, insistent, unblushingly eager for praise, but thin-skinned as the most morbid of hobbledehoys, stands about all your ways telling you the same story in the same voice, you begin to yearn for something made and finished – say Egypt and a completely dead mummy. It is neither seemly nor safe to hint that the government of the largest city in the States is a despotism of the alien by the alien for the alien, tempered with occasional insurrections of the decent folk. Only the Chinaman washes the dirty linen of other lands.

St. Paul, Minnesota.

Yes, it is very good to get away once more and pick up the old and ever fresh business of the vagrant, loafing through new towns, learned in the manners of dogs, babies, and perambulators half the world over, and tracking the seasons by the up-growth of flowers in stranger-people's gardens. St. Paul, standing at the barn-door of the Dakota and Minnesota granaries, is all things to all men except to Minneapolis, eleven miles away, whom she hates and by whom she is patronised. She calls herself the capital of the North-West, the new North-West, and her citizens wear, not only the tall silk hat of trade, but the soft slouch of the West. She talks in another tongue than the New Yorker, and – sure

sign that we are far across the continent – her papers argue with the San Francisco ones over rate wars and the competition of railway companies. St. Paul has been established many years, and if one were reckless enough to go down to the business quarters one would hear all about her and more also. But the residential parts of the town are the crown of it. In common with scores of other cities, broad-crowned suburbs – using the word in the English sense – that make the stranger jealous. You get here what you do not get in the city – well-paved or asphalted roads, planted with trees, and trim side-walks, studded with houses of individuality, not boorishly fenced off from each other, but standing each on its plot of well-kept turf running down to the pavement. It is always Sunday in these streets of a morning. The cable-car has taken the men down town to business, the children are at school, and the big dogs, three and a third to each absent child, lie nosing the winter-killed grass and wondering when the shoots will make it possible for a gentleman to take his spring medicine. In the afternoon, the children on tricycles stagger up and down the asphalt with due proportion of big dogs at each wheel; the cable-cars coming up hill begin to drop the men each at his own door – the door of the house that he builded for himself (though the architect incited him to that vile little attic tower and useless loggia), and, naturally enough, twilight brings the lovers walking two by two along the very quiet ways. You can tell from the houses almost the exact period at which they were built, whether in the jig-saw days, when if behoved respectability

to use unlovely turned rails and pierced gable-ends, or during the Colonial craze, which means white paint and fluted pillars, or in the latest domestic era, a most pleasant mixture, that is, of stained shingles, hooded dormer-windows, cunning verandas, and recessed doors. Seeing these things, one begins to understand why the Americans visiting England are impressed with the old and not with the new. He is not much more than a hundred years ahead of the English in design, comfort, and economy, and (this is most important) labour-saving appliances in his house. From Newport to San Diego you will find the same thing to-day.

Last tribute of respect and admiration. One little brown house at the end of an avenue is shuttered down, and a doctor's buggy stands before it. On the door a large blue and white label says – ' Scarlet Fever.' Oh, most excellent municipality of St. Paul. It is because of these little things, and not by rowdying and racketing in public places, that a nation becomes great and free and honoured. In the cars to-night they will be talking wheat, girding at Minneapolis, and sneering at Duluth's demand for twenty feet of water from Duluth to the Atlantic – matters of no great moment compared with those streets and that label.

A day later .

'Five days ago there wasn't a foot of earth to see. It was just naturally covered with snow,' says the conductor standing in the rear car of the Great Northern train. He speaks as though the snow had hidden something priceless. Here is the view: One railway track and a line of staggering telegraph poles ending in

a dot and a blur on the horizon. To the left and right, a sweep as it were of the sea, one huge plain of corn land waiting for the spring, dotted at rare intervals with wooden farmhouses, patent self-reapers and binders almost as big as the houses, ricks left over from last year's abundant harvest, and mottled here and there with black patches to show that the early ploughing had begun. The snow lies in a last few streaks and whirls by the track; from sky-line to sky-line is black loam and prairie grass so dead that it seems as though no one year's sun would waken it. This is the granary of the land where the farmer who bears the burdens of the State – and who, therefore, ascribes last year's bumper crop to the direct action of the McKinley Bill – has, also, to bear the ghastly monotony of earth and sky. He keeps his head, having many things to attend to, but his wife sometimes goes mad as the women do in Vermont. There is little variety in Nature's big wheat-field. They say that when the corn is in the ear, the wind, chasing shadows across it for miles on miles, breeds as it were a vertigo in those who must look and cannot turn their eyes away. And they tell a nightmare story of a woman who lived with her husband for fourteen years at an Army post in just such a land as this. Then they were transferred to West Point, among the hills over the Hudson, and she came to New York, but the terror of the tall houses grew upon her and grew till she went down with brain fever, and the dread of her delirium was that the terrible things would topple down and crush her. That is a true story.

They work for harvest with steam-ploughs here. How could

mere horses face the endless furrows? And they attack the earth with toothed, cogged, and spiked engines that would be monstrous in the shops, but here are only speckles on the yellow grass. Even the locomotive is cowed. A train of freight cars is passing along a line that comes out of the blue and goes on till it meets the blue again. Elsewhere the train would move off with a joyous, vibrant roar. Here it steals away down the vista of the telegraph poles with an awed whisper – steals away and sinks into the soil.

Then comes a town deep in black mud – a straggly, inch-thick plank town, with dull red grain elevators. The open country refuses to be subdued even for a few score rods. Each street ends in the illimitable open, and it is as though the whole houseless, outside earth were racing through it. Towards evening, under a gray sky, flies by an unframed picture of desolation. In the foreground a farm wagon almost axle deep in mud, the mire dripping from the slow-turning wheels as the man flogs the horses. Behind him on a knoll of sodden soggy grass, fenced off by raw rails from the landscape at large, are a knot of utterly uninterested citizens who have flogged horses and raised wheat in their time, but to-day lie under chipped and weather-worn wooden headstones. Surely burial here must be more awful to the newly-made ghost than burial at sea.

There is more snow as we go north, and Nature is hard at work breaking up the ground for the spring. The thaw has filled every depression with a sullen gray-black spate, and out on the levels

the water lies six inches deep, in stretch upon stretch, as far as the eye can reach. Every culvert is full, and the broken ice clicks against the wooden pier-guards of the bridges. Somewhere in this flatness there is a refreshing jingle of spurs along the cars, and a man of the Canadian Mounted Police swaggers through with his black fur cap and the yellow tab aside, his well-fitting overalls and his better set-up back. One wants to shake hands with him because he is clean and does not slouch nor spit, trims his hair, and walks as a man should. Then a custom-house officer wants to know too much about cigars, whisky, and Florida water. Her Majesty the Queen of England and Empress of India has us in her keeping. Nothing has happened to the landscape, and Winnipeg, which is, as it were, a centre of distribution for emigrants, stands up to her knees in the water of the thaw. The year has turned in earnest, and somebody is talking about the 'first ice-shove' at Montreal, 1300 or 1400 miles east.

They will not run trains on Sunday at Montreal, and this is Wednesday. Therefore, the Canadian Pacific makes up a train for Vancouver at Winnipeg. This is worth remembering, because few people travel in that train, and you escape any rush of tourists running westward to catch the Yokohama boat. The car is your own, and with it the service of the porter. Our porter, seeing things were slack, beguiled himself with a guitar, which gave a triumphal and festive touch to the journey, ridiculously out of keeping with the view. For eight-and-twenty long hours did the bored locomotive trail us through a flat and hairy land, powdered,

ribbed, and speckled with snow, small snow that drives like dust-shot in the wind – the land of Assiniboia. Now and again, for no obvious reason to the outside mind, there was a town. Then the towns gave place to 'section so and so'; then there were trails of the buffalo, where he once walked in his pride; then there was a mound of white bones, supposed to belong to the said buffalo, and then the wilderness took up the tale. Some of it was good ground, but most of it seemed to have fallen by the wayside, and the tedium of it was eternal.

At twilight – an unearthly sort of twilight – there came another curious picture. Thus – a wooden town shut in among low, treeless, rolling ground, a calling river that ran unseen between scarped banks; barracks of a detachment of mounted police, a little cemetery where ex-troopers rested, a painfully formal public garden with pebble paths and foot-high fir trees, a few lines of railway buildings, white women walking up and down in the bitter cold with their bonnets off, some Indians in red blanketing with buffalo horns for sale trailing along the platform, and, not ten yards from the track, a cinnamon bear and a young grizzly standing up with extended arms in their pens and begging for food. It was strange beyond anything that this bald telling can suggest – opening a door into a new world. The only commonplace thing about the spot was its name – Medicine Hat, which struck me instantly as the only possible name such a town could carry. This is that place which later became a town; but I had seen it three years before when it was even smaller and was

reached by me in a freight-car, ticket unpaid for.

That next morning brought us the Canadian Pacific Railway as one reads about it. No pen of man could do justice to the scenery there. The guide-books struggle desperately with descriptions, adapted for summer reading, of rushing cascades, lichened rocks, waving pines, and snow-capped mountains; but in April these things are not there. The place is locked up – dead as a frozen corpse. The mountain torrent is a boss of palest emerald ice against the dazzle of the snow; the pine-stumps are capped and hooded with gigantic mushrooms of snow; the rocks are overlaid five feet deep; the rocks, the fallen trees, and the lichens together, and the dumb white lips curl up to the track cut in the side of the mountain, and grin there fanged with gigantic icicles. You may listen in vain when the train stops for the least sign of breath or power among the hills. The snow has smothered the rivers, and the great looping trestles run over what might be a lather of suds in a huge wash-tub. The old snow near by is blackened and smirched with the smoke of locomotives, and its dulness is grateful to aching eyes. But the men who live upon the line have no consideration for these things. At a halting-place in a gigantic gorge walled in by the snows, one of them reels from a tiny saloon into the middle of the track where half-a-dozen dogs are chasing a pig off the metals. He is beautifully and eloquently drunk. He sings, waves his hands, and collapses behind a shunting engine, while four of the loveliest peaks that the Almighty ever moulded look down upon him. The landslide that should have

wiped that saloon into kindlings has missed its mark and has struck a few miles down the line. One of the hillsides moved a little in dreaming of the spring and caught a passing freight train. Our cars grind cautiously by, for the wrecking engine has only just come through. The deceased engine is standing on its head in soft earth thirty or forty feet down the slide, and two long cars loaded with shingles are dropped carelessly atop of it. It looks so marvellously like a toy train flung aside by a child, that one cannot realise what it means till a voice cries, 'Any one killed?' The answer comes back, 'No; all jumped'; and you perceive with a sense of personal insult that this slovenliness of the mountain is an affair which may touch your own sacred self. In which case… But the train is out on a trestle, into a tunnel, and out on a trestle again. It was here that every one began to despair of the line when it was under construction, because there seemed to be no outlet. But a man came, as a man always will, and put a descent thus and a curve in this manner, and a trestle so; and behold, the line went on. It is in this place that we heard the story of the Canadian Pacific Railway told as men tell a many-times-repeated tale, with exaggerations and omissions, but an imposing tale, none the less. In the beginning, when they would federate the Dominion of Canada, it was British Columbia who saw objections to coming in, and the Prime Minister of those days promised it for a bribe, an iron band between tidewater and tidewater that should not break. Then everybody laughed, which seems necessary to the health of most big enterprises,

and while they were laughing, things were being done. The Canadian Pacific Railway was given a bit of a line here and a bit of a line there and almost as much land as it wanted, and the laughter was still going on when the last spike was driven between east and west, at the very place where the drunken man sprawled behind the engine, and the iron band ran from tideway to tideway as the Premier said, and people in England said 'How interesting,' and proceeded to talk about the 'bloated Army estimates.' Incidentally, the man who told us – he had nothing to do with the Canadian Pacific Railway – explained how it paid the line to encourage immigration, and told of the arrival at Winnipeg of a train-load of Scotch crofters on a Sunday. They wanted to stop then and there for the Sabbath – they and all the little stock they had brought with them. It was the Winnipeg agent who had to go among them arguing (he was Scotch too, and they could not quite understand it) on the impropriety of dislocating the company's traffic. So their own minister held a service in the station, and the agent gave them a good dinner, cheering them in Gaelic, at which they wept, and they went on to settle at Moosomin, where they lived happily ever afterwards. Of the manager, the head of the line from Montreal to Vancouver, our companion spoke with reverence that was almost awe. That manager lived in a palace at Montreal, but from time to time he would sally forth in his special car and whirl over his 3000 miles at 50 miles an hour. The regulation pace is twenty-two, but he sells his neck with his head. Few drivers cared for the honour of

taking him over the road. A mysterious man he was, who 'carried the profile of the line in his head,' and, more than that, knew intimately the possibilities of back country which he had never seen nor travelled over. There is always one such man on every line. You can hear similar tales from drivers on the Great Western in England or Eurasian stationmasters on the big North-Western in India. Then a fellow-traveller spoke, as many others had done, on the possibilities of Canadian union with the United States; and his language was not the language of Mr. Goldwin Smith. It was brutal in places. Summarised it came to a pronounced objection to having anything to do with a land rotten before it was ripe, a land with seven million negroes as yet unwelded into the population, their race-type unevolved, and rather more than crude notions on murder, marriage, and honesty. 'We've picked up their ways of politics,' he said mournfully. 'That comes of living next door to them; but I don't think we're anxious to mix up with their other messes. They say they don't want us. They keep on saying it. There's a nigger on the fence somewhere, or they wouldn't lie about it.'

'But does it follow that they are lying?'

'Sure. I've lived among 'em. They can't go straight. There's some dam' fraud at the back of it.'

From this belief he would not be shaken. He had lived among them – perhaps had been bested in trade. Let them keep themselves and their manners and customs to their own side of the line, he said.

This is very sad and chilling. It seemed quite otherwise in New York, where Canada was represented as a ripe plum ready to fell into Uncle Sam's mouth when he should open it. The Canadian has no special love for England – the Mother of Colonies has a wonderful gift for alienating the affections of her own household by neglect – but, perhaps, he loves his own country. We ran out of the snow through mile upon mile of snow-sheds, braced with twelve-inch beams, and planked with two-inch planking. In one place a snow slide had caught just the edge of a shed and scooped it away as a knife scoops cheese. High up the hills men had built diverting barriers to turn the drifts, but the drifts had swept over everything, and lay five deep on the top of the sheds. When we woke it was on the banks of the muddy Fraser River and the spring was hurrying to meet us. The snow had gone; the pink blossoms of the wild currant were open, the budding alders stood misty green against the blue black of the pines, the brambles on the burnt stumps were in tenderest leaf, and every moss on every stone was this year's work, fresh from the hand of the Maker. The land opened into clearings of soft black earth. At one station a hen had laid an egg and was telling the world about it. The world answered with a breath of real spring – spring that flooded the stuffy car and drove us out on the platform to snuff and sing and rejoice and pluck squashy green marsh-flags and throw them at the colts, and shout at the wild duck that rose from a jewel-green lakelet. God be thanked that in travel one can follow the year! This, my spring, I lost last November in New Zealand. Now

I shall hold her fast through Japan and the summer into New Zealand again.

Here are the waters of the Pacific, and Vancouver (completely destitute of any decent defences) grown out of all knowledge in the last three years. At the railway wharf, with never a gun to protect her, lies the *Empress of India* – the Japan boat – and what more auspicious name could you wish to find at the end of one of the strong chains of empire?

THE EDGE OF THE EAST

The mist was clearing off Yokohama harbour and a hundred junks had their sails hoisted for the morning breeze, so the veiled horizon was stippled with square blurs of silver. An English man-of-war showed blue-white on the haze, so new was the daylight, and all the water lay out as smooth as the inside of an oyster shell. Two children in blue and white, their tanned limbs pink in the fresh air, sculled a marvellous boat of lemon-hued wood, and that was our fairy craft to the shore across the stillness and the mother o' pearl levels.

There are ways and ways of entering Japan. The best is to descend upon it from America and the Pacific – from the barbarians and the deep sea. Coming from the East, the blaze of India and the insolent tropical vegetation of Singapore dull the eye to half-colours and little tones. It is at Bombay that the smell of All Asia boards the ship miles off shore, and holds the passenger's nose till he is clear of Asia again. That is a violent, and aggressive smell, apt to prejudice the stranger, but kin none the less to the gentle and insinuating flavour that stole across the light airs of the daybreak when the fairy boat went to shore – a smell of very clean new wood; split bamboo, wood-smoke, damp earth, and the things that people who are not white people eat – a homelike and comforting smell. Then followed on shore the sound of an Eastern tongue, that is beautiful or not as you

happen to know it. The Western races have many languages, but a crowd of Europeans heard through closed doors talk with the Western pitch and cadence. So it is with the East. A line of jinrickshaw coolies sat in the sun discoursing to each other, and it was as though they were welcoming a return in speech that the listener must know as well as English. They talked and they talked, but the ghosts of familiar words would not grow any clearer till presently the Smell came down the open streets again, saying that this was the East where nothing matters, and trifles old as the Tower of Babel mattered less than nothing, and that there were old acquaintances waiting at every corner beyond the township. Great is the Smell of the East! Railways, telegraphs, docks, and gunboats cannot banish it, and it will endure till the railways are dead. He who has not smelt that smell has never lived.

Three years ago Yokohama was sufficiently Europeanised in its shops to suit the worst and wickedest taste. To-day it is still worse if you keep to the town limits. Ten steps beyond into the fields all the civilisation stops exactly as it does in another land a few thousand miles further West. The globe-trotting, millionaires anxious to spend money, with a nose on whatever caught their libertine fancies, had explained to us aboard-ship that they came to Japan in haste, advised by their guide-books to do so, lest the land should be suddenly civilised between steamer-sailing and steamer-sailing. When they touched land they ran away to the curio shops to buy things which are prepared for them –

mauve and magenta and blue-vitriol things. By this time they have a 'Murray' under one arm and an electric-blue eagle with a copperas beak and a yellow '*E pluribus unum* ' embroidered on apple-green silk, under the other.

We, being wise, sit in a garden that is not ours, but belongs to a gentleman in slate-coloured silk, who, solely for the sake of the picture, condescends to work as a gardener, in which employ he is sweeping delicately a welt of fallen cherry blossoms from under an azalea aching to burst into bloom. Steep stone steps, of the colour that nature ripens through long winters, lead up to this garden by way of clumps of bamboo grass. You see the Smell was right when it talked of meeting old friends. Half-a-dozen blue-black pines are standing akimbo against a real sky – not a fog-blur nor a cloud-bank, nor a gray dish-clout wrapped round the sun – but a blue sky. A cherry tree on a slope below them throws up a wave of blossom that breaks all creamy white against their feet, and a clump of willows trail their palest green shoots in front of all. The sun sends for an ambassador through the azalea bushes a lordly swallow-tailed butterfly, and his squire very like the flitting 'chalk-blue' of the English downs. The warmth of the East, that goes through, not over, the lazy body, is added to the light of the East – the splendid lavish light that clears but does not bewilder the eye. Then the new leaves of the spring wink like fat emeralds and the loaded branches of cherry-bloom grow transparent and glow as a hand glows held up against flame. Little, warm sighs come up from the moist, warm earth, and the

fallen petals stir on the ground, turn over, and go to sleep again. Outside, beyond the foliage, where the sunlight lies on the slate-coloured roofs, the ridged rice-fields beyond the roofs, and the hills beyond the rice-fields, is all Japan – only all Japan; and this that they call the old French Legation is the Garden of Eden that most naturally dropped down here after the Fall. For some small hint of the beauties to be shown later there is the roof of a temple, ridged and fluted with dark tiles, flung out casually beyond the corner of the bluff on which the garden stands. Any other curve of the eaves would not have consorted with the sweep of the pine branches; therefore, this curve was made, and being made, was perfect. The congregation of the globe-trotters are in the hotel, scuffling for guides, in order that they may be shown the sights of Japan, which is all one sight. They must go to Tokio, they must go to Nikko; they must surely see all that is to be seen and then write home to their barbarian families that they are getting used to the sight of bare, brown legs. Before this day is ended, they will all, thank goodness, have splitting headaches and burnt-out eyes. It is better to lie still and hear the grass grow – to soak in the heat and the smell and the sounds and the sights that come unasked.

Our garden overhangs the harbour, and by pushing aside one branch we look down upon a heavy-sterned fishing-boat, the straw-gold mats of the deck-house pushed back to show the perfect order and propriety of the housekeeping that is going forward. The father-fisher, sitting frog-fashion, is poking at a

tiny box full of charcoal, and the light, white ash is blown back into the face of a largish Japanese doll, price two shillings and threepence in Bayswater. The doll wakes, turns into a Japanese baby something more valuable than money could buy – a baby with a shaven head and aimless legs. It crawls to the thing in the polished brown box, is picked up just as it is ready to eat live coals, and is set down behind a thwart, where it drums upon a bucket, addressing the firebox from afar. Half-a-dozen cherry blossoms slide off a bough, and waver down to the water close to the Japanese doll, who in another minute will be overside in pursuit of these miracles. The father-fisher has it by the pink hind leg, and this time it is tucked away, all but the top-knot, out of sight among umber nets and sepia cordage. Being an Oriental it makes no protest, and the boat scuds out to join the little fleet in the offing.

Then two sailors of a man-of-war come along the sea face, lean over the canal below the garden, spit, and roll away. The sailor in port is the only superior man. To him all matters rare and curious are either 'them things' or 'them other things.' He does not hurry himself, he does not seek Adjectives other than those which custom puts into his mouth for all occasions; but the beauty of life penetrates his being insensibly till he gets drunk, falls foul of the local policeman, smites him into the nearest canal, and disposes of the question of treaty revision with a hiccup. All the same, Jack says that he has a grievance against the policeman, who is paid a dollar for every strayed seaman he

brings up to the Consular Courts for overstaying his leave, and so forth. Jack says that the little fellows deliberately hinder him from getting back to his ship, and then with devilish art and craft of wrestling tricks – 'there are about a hundred of 'em, and they can throw you with every qualified one' – carry him to justice. Now when Jack is softened with drink he does not tell lies. This is his grievance, and he says that them blanketed consuls ought to know. 'They plays into each other's hands, and stops you at the Hatoba' – the policemen do. The visitor who is neither a seaman nor drunk, cannot swear to the truth of this, or indeed anything else. He moves not only among fascinating scenes and a lovely people but, as he is sure to find out before he has been a day ashore, between stormy questions. Three years ago there were no questions that were not going to be settled off-hand in a blaze of paper lanterns. The Constitution was new. It has a gray, pale cover with a chrysanthemum at the back, and a Japanese told me then, 'Now we have Constitution same as other countries, and *so* it is all right. Now we are quite civilised because of Constitution.'

[A perfectly irrelevant story comes to mind here. Do you know that in Madeira once they had a revolution which lasted just long enough for the national poet to compose a national anthem, and then was put down? All that is left of the revolt now is the song that you hear on the twangling *nachettes* , the baby-banjoes, of a moonlight night under the banana fronds at the back of Funchal. And the high-pitched nasal refrain of it is 'Consti-tuci-*oun* !']

Since that auspicious date it seems that the questions have

impertinently come up, and the first and the last of them is that of Treaty Revision. Says the Japanese Government, 'Only obey our laws, our new laws that we have carefully compiled from all the wisdom of the West, and you shall go up country as you please and trade where you will, instead of living cooped up in concessions and being judged by consuls. Treat us as you would treat France or Germany, and we will treat you as our own subjects.'

Here, as you know, the matter rests between the two thousand foreigners and the forty million Japanese – a God-send to all editors of Tokio and Yokohama, and the despair of the newly arrived in whose nose, remember, is the smell of the East, One and Indivisible, Immemorial, Eternal, and, above all, Instructive.

Indeed, it is only by walking out at least half a mile that you escape from the aggressive evidences of civilisation, and come out into the rice-fields at the back of the town. Here men with twists of blue and white cloth round their heads are working knee deep in the thick black mud. The largest field may be something less than two tablecloths, while the smallest is, say, a speck of undercliff, on to which it were hard to back a 'rickshaw, wrested from the beach and growing its clump of barley within spray-shot of the waves. The field paths are the trodden tops of the irrigating cuts, and the main roads as wide as two perambulators abreast. From the uplands – the beautiful uplands planted in exactly the proper places with pine and maple – the ground comes down in terraced pocket on pocket of rich earth to the levels again, and it

would seem that every heavily-thatched farmhouse was chosen with special regard to the view. If you look closely when the people go to work you will see that a household spreads itself over plots, maybe, a quarter of a mile apart. A revenue map of a village shows that this scatteration is apparently designed, but the reason is not given. One thing at least is certain. The assessment of these patches can be no light piece of work – just the thing, in fact, that would give employment to a large number of small and variegated Government officials, any one of whom, assuming that he was of an Oriental cast of mind, might make the cultivator's life interesting. I remember now – a second-time-seen place brings back things that were altogether buried – seeing three years ago the pile of Government papers required in the case of one farm. They were many and systematic, but the interesting thing about them was the amount of work that they must have furnished to those who were neither cultivators nor Treasury officials.

If one knew Japanese, one could collogue with that gentleman in the straw-hat and the blue loincloth who is chopping within a sixteenth of an inch of his naked toes with the father and mother of all weed-spuds. His version of local taxation might be inaccurate, but it would sure to be picturesque. Failing his evidence, be pleased to accept two or three things that may or may not be facts of general application. They differ in a measure from statements in the books. The present land-tax is nominally 2-1/2 per cent, payable in cash on a three, or as some

say a five, yearly settlement. But, according to certain officials, there has been no settlement since 1875. Land lying fallow for a season pays the same tax as land in cultivation, unless it is unproductive through flood or calamity (read earthquake here). The Government tax is calculated on the capital value of the land, taking a measure of about 11,000 square feet or a quarter of an acre as the unit.

Now, one of the ways of getting at the capital value of the land is to see what the railways have paid for it. The very best rice land, taking the Japanese dollar at three shillings, is about £65:10s per acre. Unirrigated land for vegetable growing is something over £9:12s., and forest £2:11s. As these are railway rates, they may be fairly held to cover large areas. In private sales the prices may reasonably be higher.

It is to be remembered that some of the very best rice land will bear two crops of rice in the year. Most soil will bear two crops, the first being millet, rape, vegetables, and so on, sown on dry soil and ripening at the end of May. Then the ground is at once prepared for the wet crop, to be harvested in October or thereabouts. Land-tax is payable in two instalments. Rice land pays between the 1st November and the middle of December and the 1st January and the last of February. Other land pays between July and August and September and December. Let us see what the average yield is. The gentleman in the sun-hat and the loin-cloth would shriek at the figures, but they are approximately accurate. Rice naturally fluctuates a good deal, but it may be

taken in the rough at five Japanese dollars (fifteen shillings) per *koku* of 330 lbs. Wheat and maize of the first spring crop is worth about eleven shillings per *koku*. The first crop gives nearly 1-3/4 *koku* per *tau* (the quarter acre unit of measurement aforesaid), or eighteen shillings per quarter acre, or £3:12s. per acre. The rice crop at two *koku* or £1:10s. the quarter acre gives £6 an acre. Total £9:12s. This is not altogether bad if you reflect that the land in question is not the very best rice land, but ordinary No. 1, at £25:16s. per acre, capital value.

A son has the right to inherit his father's land on the father's assessment, so long as its term runs, or, when the term has expired, has a prior claim as against any one else. Part of the taxes, it is said, lies by in the local prefecture's office as a reserve fund against inundations. Yet, and this seems a little confusing, there are between five and seven other local, provincial, and municipal taxes which can reasonably be applied to the same ends. No one of these taxes exceeds a half of the land-tax, unless it be the local prefecture tax of 2-1/2 per cent.

In the old days the people were taxed, or perhaps squeezed would be the better word, to about one-half of the produce of the land. There are those who may say that the present system is not so advantageous as it looks. Beforetime, the farmers, it is true, paid heavily, but only, on their nominal holdings. They could, and often did, hold more land than they were assessed on. Today a rigid bureaucracy surveys every foot of their farms, and upon every foot they have to pay. Somewhat similar complaints

are made still by the simple peasantry of India, for if there is one thing that the Oriental detests more than another, it is the damnable Western vice of accuracy. That leads to doing things by rule. Still, by the look of those terraced fields, where the water is led so cunningly from level to level, the Japanese cultivator must enjoy at least one excitement. If the villages up the valley tamper with the water supply, there must surely be excitement down the valley – argument, protest, and the breaking of heads.

The days of romance, therefore, are not all dead.

This that follows happened on the coast twenty miles through the fields from Yokohama, at Kamakura, that is to say, where the great bronze Buddha sits facing the sea to hear the centuries go by. He has been described again and again – his majesty, his aloofness, and every one of his dimensions, the smoky little shrine within him, and the plumed hill that makes the background to his throne. For that reason he remains, as he remained from the beginning, beyond all hope of description – as it might be, a visible god sitting in the garden of a world made new. They sell photographs of him with tourists standing on his thumb nail, and, apparently, any brute of any gender can scrawl his or its ignoble name over the inside of the massive bronze plates that build him up. Think for a moment of the indignity and the insult! Imagine the ancient, orderly gardens with their clipped trees, shorn turf, and silent ponds smoking in the mist that the hot sun soaks up after rain, and the green-bronze image of the Teacher of the Law wavering there as it half seems through

incense clouds. The earth is all one censer, and myriads of frogs are making the haze ring. It is too warm to do more than to sit on a stone and watch the eyes that, having seen all things, see no more – the down-dropped eyes, the forward droop of the head, and the colossal simplicity of the folds of the robe over arm and knee. Thus, and in no other fashion, did Buddha sit in the-old days when Ananda asked questions and the dreamer began to dream of the lives that lay behind him ere the lips moved, and as the Chronicles say: 'He told a tale.' This would be the way he began, for dreamers in the East tell something the same sort of tales to-day: 'Long ago when Devadatta was King of Benares, there lived a virtuous elephant, a reprobate ox, and a King without understanding.' And the tale would end, after the moral had been drawn for Ananda's benefit: 'Now, the reprobate ox was such an one, and the King was such another, but the virtuous elephant was I, myself, Ananda.' Thus, then, he told the tales in the bamboo grove, and the bamboo grove is there to-day. Little blue and gray and slate robed figures pass under its shadow, buy two or three joss-sticks, disappear into the shrine, that is, the body of the god, come out smiling, and drift away through the shrubberies. A fat carp in a pond sucks at a fallen leaf with just the sound of a wicked little worldly kiss. Then the earth steams, and steams in silence, and a gorgeous butterfly, full six inches from wing to wing, cuts through the steam in a zigzag of colour and flickers up to the forehead of the god. And Buddha said that a man must look on everything as illusion –

even light and colour – the time-worn bronze of metal against blue-green of pine and pale emerald of bamboo – the lemon sash of the girl in the cinnamon dress, with coral pins in her hair, leaning against a block of weather-bleached stone – and, last, the spray of blood-red azalea that stands on the pale gold mats of the tea-house beneath the honey-coloured thatch. To overcome desire and covetousness of mere gold, which is often very vilely designed, that is conceivable; but why must a man give up the delight of the eye, colour that rejoices, light that cheers, and line that satisfies the innermost deeps of the heart? Ah, if the Bodhisat had only seen his own image!

OUR OVERSEAS MEN

All things considered, there are only two kinds of men in the world – those that stay at home and those that do not. The second are the most interesting. Some day a man will bethink himself and write a book about the breed in a book called 'The Book of the Overseas Club,' for it is at the clubhouses all the way from Aden to Yokohama that the life of the Outside Men is best seen and their talk is best heard. A strong family likeness runs through both buildings and members, and a large and careless hospitality is the note. There is always the same open-doored, high-ceiled house, with matting on the floors; the same come and go of dark-skinned servants, and the same assembly of men talking horse or business, in raiment that would fatally scandalise a London committee, among files of newspapers from a fortnight to five weeks old. The life of the Outside Men includes plenty of sunshine, and as much air as may be stirring. At the Cape, where the Dutch housewives distil and sell the very potent Vanderhum, and the absurd home-made hansom cabs waddle up and down the yellow dust of Adderley Street, are the members of the big import and export firms, the shipping and insurance offices, inventors of mines, and exploiters of new territories with now and then an officer strayed from India to buy mules for the Government, a Government House aide-de-camp, a sprinkling of the officers of the garrison, tanned skippers of the Union and Castle Lines,

and naval men from the squadron at Simon's Town. Here they talk of the sins of Cecil Rhodes, the insolence of Natal, the beauties or otherwise of the solid Boer vote, and the dates of the steamers. The *argot* is Dutch and Kaffir, and every one can hum the national anthem that begins 'Pack your kit and trek, Johnny Bowlegs.' In the stately Hongkong Clubhouse, which is to the further what the Bengal Club is to the nearer East, you meet much the same gathering, *minus* the mining speculators and *plus* men whose talk is of tea, silk, shortings, and Shanghai ponies. The speech of the Outside Men at this point becomes fearfully mixed with pidgin-English and local Chinese terms, rounded with corrupt Portuguese. At Melbourne, in a long verandah giving on a grass plot, where laughing-jackasses laugh very horribly, sit wool-kings, premiers, and breeders of horses after their kind. The older men talk of the days of the Eureka Stockade and the younger of 'shearing wars' in North Queensland, while the traveller moves timidly among them wondering what under the world every third word means. At Wellington, overlooking the harbour (all right-minded clubs should command the sea), another, and yet a like, sort of men speak of sheep, the rabbits, the land-courts, and the ancient heresies of Sir Julius Vogel; and their more expressive sentences borrow from the Maori. And elsewhere, and elsewhere, and elsewhere among the Outside Men it is the same – the same mixture of every trade, calling, and profession under the sun; the same clash of conflicting interests touching the uttermost parts of the earth; the same intimate,

and sometimes appalling knowledge of your neighbour's business and shortcomings; the same large-palmed hospitality, and the same interest on the part of the younger men in the legs of a horse. Decidedly, it is at the Overseas Club all the world over that you get to know some little of the life of the community. London is egoistical, and the world for her ends with the four-mile cab radius. There is no provincialism like the provincialism of London. That big slack-water coated with the drift and rubbish of a thousand men's thoughts esteems itself the open sea because the waves of all the oceans break on her borders. To those in her midst she is terribly imposing, but they forget that there is more than one kind of imposition. Look back upon her from ten thousand miles, when the mail is just in at the Overseas Club, and she is wondrous tiny. Nine-tenths of her news – so vital, so epoch-making over there – loses its significance, and the rest is as the scuffling of ghosts in a back-attic.

Here in Yokohama the Overseas Club has two mails and four sets of papers – English, French, German, and American, as suits the variety of its constitution – and the verandah by the sea, where the big telescope stands, is a perpetual feast of the Pentecost. The population of the club changes with each steamer in harbour, for the sea-captains swing in, are met with 'Hello! where did you come from?' and mix at the bar and billiard-tables for their appointed time and go to sea again. The white-painted warships supply their contingent of members also, and there are wonderful men, mines of most fascinating adventure, who have

an interest in sealing-brigs that go to the Kurile Islands, and somehow get into trouble with the Russian authorities. Consuls and judges of the Consular Courts meet men over on leave from the China ports, or it may be Manila, and they all talk tea, silk, banking, and exchange with its fixed residents. Everything is always as bad as it can possibly be, and everybody is on the verge of ruin. That is why, when they have decided that life is no longer worth living, they go down to the skittle-alley – to commit suicide. From the outside, when a cool wind blows among the papers and there is a sound of smashing ice in an inner apartment, and every third man is talking about the approaching races, the life seems to be a desirable one. 'What more could a man need to make him happy?' says the passer-by. A perfect climate, a lovely country, plenty of pleasant society, and the politest people on earth to deal with. The resident smiles and invites the passer-by to stay through July and August. Further, he presses him to do business with the politest people on earth, and to continue so doing for a term of years. Thus the traveller perceives beyond doubt that the resident is prejudiced by the very fact of his residence, and gives it as his matured opinion that Japan is a faultless land, marred only by the presence of the foreign community. And yet, let us consider. It is the foreign community that has made it possible for the traveller to come and go from hotel to hotel, to get his passport for inland travel, to telegraph his safe arrival to anxious friends, and generally enjoy himself much more than he would have been able to

do in his own country. Government and gunboats may open a land, but it is the men of the Overseas Club that keep it open. Their reward (not alone in Japan) is the bland patronage or the scarcely-veiled contempt of those who profit by their labours. It is hopeless to explain to a traveller who has been 'ohayoed' into half-a-dozen shops and 'sayonaraed' out of half-a-dozen more and politely cheated in each one, that the Japanese is an Oriental, and, therefore, embarrassingly economical of the truth. 'That's his politeness,' says the traveller. 'He does not wish to hurt your feelings. Love him and treat him like a brother, and he'll change.' To treat one of the most secretive of races on a brotherly basis is not very easy, and the natural politeness that enters into a signed and sealed contract and undulates out of it so soon as it does not sufficiently pay is more than embarrassing. It is almost annoying. The want of fixity or commercial honour may be due to some natural infirmity of the artistic temperament, or to the manner in which the climate has affected, and his ruler has ruled, the man himself for untold centuries.

Those who know the East know, where the system of 'squeeze,' which is commission, runs through every transaction of life, from the sale of a groom's place upward, where the woman walks behind the man in the streets, and where the peasant gives you for the distance to the next town as many or as few miles as he thinks you will like, that these things must be so. Those who do not know will not be persuaded till they have lived there. The Overseas Club puts up its collective nose scornfully when

it hears of the New and Regenerate Japan sprung to life since the 'seventies. It grins, with shame be it written, at an Imperial Diet modelled on the German plan and a Code Napoléon à la Japonaise. It is so far behind the New Era as to doubt that an Oriental country, ridden by etiquette of the sternest, and social distinctions almost as hard as those of caste, can be turned out to Western gauge in the compass of a very young man's life. And it *must* be prejudiced, because it is daily and hourly in contact with the Japanese, except when it can do business with the Chinaman whom it prefers. Was there ever so disgraceful a club!

Just at present, a crisis, full blown as a chrysanthemum, has developed in the Imperial Diet. Both Houses accuse the Government of improper interference – this Japanese for 'plenty stick and some bank-note' – at the recent elections. They then did what was equivalent to passing a vote of censure on the Ministry and refusing to vote government measures. So far the wildest advocate of representative government could have desired nothing better. Afterwards, things took a distinctly Oriental turn. The Ministry refused to resign, and the Mikado prorogued the Diet for a week to think things over. The Japanese papers are now at issue over the event. Some say that representative government implies party government, and others swear at large. The Overseas Club says for the most part – 'Skittles!'

It is a picturesque situation – one that suggests romances and extravaganzas. Thus, imagine a dreaming Court intrenched

behind a triple line of moats where the lotus blooms in summer – a Court whose outer fringe is aggressively European, but whose heart is Japan of long ago, where a dreaming King sits among some wives or other things, amused from time to time with magic-lantern shows and performing fleas – a holy King whose sanctity is used to conjure with, and who twice a year gives garden-parties where every one must come in top-hat and frock coat. Round this Court, wavering between the splendours of the sleeping and the variety shows of the Crystal Palace, place in furious but carefully-veiled antagonism the fragments of newly shattered castes, their natural Oriental eccentricities overlaid with borrowed Western notions. Imagine now, a large and hungry bureaucracy, French in its fretful insistence on detail where detail is of no earthly moment, Oriental in its stress on etiquette and punctillo, recruited from a military caste accustomed for ages past to despise alike farmer and trader. This caste, we will suppose, is more or less imperfectly controlled by a syndicate of three clans, which supply their own nominees to the Ministry. These are adroit, versatile, and unscrupulous men, hampered by no western prejudice in favour of carrying any plan to completion. Through and at the bidding of these men, the holy Monarch acts; and the acts are wonderful. To criticise these acts exists a wild-cat Press, liable to suppression at any moment, as morbidly sensitive to outside criticism as the American, and almost as childishly untruthful, fungoid in the swiftness of its growth, and pitiable in its unseasoned rashness.

Backers of this press in its wilder moments, lawless, ignorant, sensitive and vain, are the student class, educated in the main at Government expense, and a thorn in the side of the State. Judges without training handle laws without precedents, and new measures are passed and abandoned with almost inconceivable levity. Out of the welter of classes and interests that are not those of the common folk is evolved the thing called Japanese policy that has the proportion and the perspective of a Japanese picture.

Finality and stability are absent from its councils. To-day, for reasons none can explain, it is pro-foreign to the verge of servility. To-morrow, for reasons equally obscure, the pendulum swings back, and – the students are heaving mud at the foreigners in the streets. Vexatious, irresponsible, incoherent, and, above all, cheaply mysterious, is the rule of the land – stultified by intrigue and counter-intrigue, chequered with futile reforms begun on European lines and light-heartedly thrown aside; studded, as a bower-bird's run is studded with shells and shining pebbles, with plagiarisms from half the world – an operetta of administration, wherein the shadow of the King among his wives, Samurai policemen, doctors who have studied under Pasteur, kid-gloved cavalry officers from St. Cyr, judges with University degrees, harlots with fiddles, newspaper correspondents, masters of the ancient ceremonies of the land, paid members of the Diet, secret societies that borrow the knife and the dynamite of the Irish, sons of dispossessed Daimios returned from Europe and waiting for what may turn up, with ministers of the syndicate who have

wrenched Japan from her repose of twenty years ago, circle, flicker, shift, and reform, in bewildering rings, round the foreign resident. Is the extravaganza complete?

Somewhere in the background of the stage are the people of the land – of whom a very limited proportion enjoy the privileges of representative government. Whether in the past few years they have learned what the thing means, or, learning, have the least intention of making any use of it, is not clear. Meantime, the game of government goes forward as merrily as a game of puss-in-the-corner, with the additional joy that not more than half-a-dozen men know who is controlling it or what in the wide world it intends to do. In Tokio live the steadily-diminishing staff of Europeans employed by the Emperor as engineers, railway experts, professors in the colleges and so forth. Before many years they will all be dispensed with, and the country will set forth among the nations alone and on its own responsibility.

In fifty years then, from the time that the intrusive American first broke her peace, Japan will experience her new birth and, reorganised from sandal to top-knot, play the *samisen* in the march of modern progress. This is the great advantage of being born into the New Era, when individual and community alike can get something for nothing – pay without work, education without effort, religion without thought, and free government without slow and bitter toil.

The Overseas Club, as has been said, is behind the spirit of the age. It has to work for what it gets, and it does not always get what

it works for. Nor can its members take ship and go home when they please. Imagine for a little, the contented frame of mind that is bred in a man by the perpetual contemplation of a harbour full of steamers as a Piccadilly cab-rank of hansoms. The weather is hot, we will suppose; something has gone wrong with his work that day, or his children are not looking so well as might be. Pretty tiled bungalows, bowered in roses and wistaria, do not console him, and the voices of the politest people on earth jar sorely. He knows every soul in the club, has thoroughly talked out every subject of interest, and would give half a year's – oh, five years' – pay for one lung-filling breath of air that has life in it, one sniff of the haying grass, or half a mile of muddy London street where the muffin bell tinkles in the four o'clock fog. Then the big liner moves out across the staring blue of the bay. So-and-so and such-an-one, both friends, are going home in her, and some one else goes next week by the French mail. He, and he alone, it seems to him, must stay on; and it is so maddeningly easy to go – for every one save himself. The boat's smoke dies out along the horizon, and he is left alone with the warm wind and the white dust of the Bund. Now Japan is a good place, a place that men swear by and live in for thirty years at a stretch. There are China ports a week's sail to the westward where life is really hard, and where the sight of the restless shipping hurts very much indeed. Tourists and you who travel the world over, be very gentle to the men of the Overseas Clubs. Remember that, unlike yourselves, they have not come here for the good of their health, and that

the return ticket in your wallet may possibly colour your views of their land. Perhaps it would not be altogether wise on the strength of much kindness from Japanese officials to recommend that these your countrymen be handed over lock, stock, and barrel to a people that are beginning to experiment with fresh-drafted half-grafted codes which do not include juries, to a system that does not contemplate a free Press, to a suspicious absolutism from which there is no appeal. Truly, it might be interesting, but as surely it would begin in farce and end in tragedy, that would leave the politest people on earth in no case to play at civilised government for a long time to come. In his concession, where he is an apologetic and much sat-upon importation, the foreign resident does no harm. He does not always sue for money due to him on the part of a Japanese. Once outside those limits, free to move into the heart of the country, it would only be a question of time as to where and when the trouble would begin. And in the long run it would not be the foreign resident that would suffer. The imaginative eye can see the most unpleasant possibilities, from a general overrunning of Japan by the Chinaman, who is far the most important foreign resident, to the shelling of Tokio by a joyous and bounding Democracy, anxious to vindicate her national honour and to learn how her newly-made navy works.

But there are scores of arguments that would confute and overwhelm this somewhat gloomy view. The statistics of Japan, for instance, are as beautiful and fit as neatly as the woodwork of her houses. By these it would be possible to prove anything.

SOME EARTHQUAKES

A Radical Member of Parliament at Tokio has just got into trouble with his constituents, and they have sent him a priceless letter of reproof. Among other things they point out that a politician should not be 'a waterweed which wobbles hither and thither according to the motion of the stream.' Nor should he 'like a ghost without legs drift along before the wind.' 'Your conduct,' they say, 'has been both of a waterweed and a ghost, and we purpose in a little time to give you proof of our true Japanese spirit.' That member will very likely be mobbed in his 'rickshaw and prodded to inconvenience with sword-sticks; for the constituencies are most enlightened. But how in the world can a man under these skies behave except as a waterweed and a ghost? It is in the air – the wobble and the legless drift An energetic tourist would have gone to Hakodate, seen Ainos at Sapporo, ridden across the northern island under the gigantic thistles, caught salmon, looked in at Vladivostock, and done half a hundred things in the time that one lazy loafer has wasted watching the barley turn from green to gold, the azaleas blossom and burn out, and the spring give way to the warm rains of summer. Now the iris has taken up the blazonry of the year, and the tide of the tourists ebbs westward.

The permanent residents are beginning to talk of hill places to go to for the hot weather, and all the available houses in the resort

are let. In a little while the men from China will be coming over for their holidays, but just at present we are in the thick of the tea season, and there is no time to waste on frivolities. 'Packing' is a valid excuse for anything, from forgetting a dinner to declining a tennis party, and the tempers of husbands are judged leniently. All along the sea face is an inspiring smell of the finest new-mown hay, and canals are full of boats loaded up with the boxes jostling down to the harbour. At the club men say rude things about the arrivals of the mail. There never was a post-office yet that did not rejoice in knocking a man's Sabbath into flinders. A fair office day's work may begin at eight and end at six, or, if the mail comes in, at midnight. There is no overtime or eight-hours' baby-talk in tea. Yonder are the ships; here is the stuff, and behind all is the American market. The rest is your own affair.

The narrow streets are blocked with the wains bringing down, in boxes of every shape and size, the up-country rough leaf. Some one must take delivery of these things, find room for them in the packed warehouse, and sample them before they are blended and go to the firing.

More than half the elaborate processes are 'lost work' so far as the quality of the stuff goes; but the markets insist on a good-looking leaf, with polish, face and curl to it, and in this, as in other businesses, the call of the markets is the law. The factory floors are made slippery with the tread of bare-footed coolies, who shout as the tea whirls through its transformations. The over-note to the clamour – an uncanny thing too – is the soft rustle-down

of the tea itself – stacked in heaps, carried in baskets, dumped through chutes, rising and falling in the long troughs where it is polished, and disappearing at last into the heart of the firing-machine – always this insistent whisper of moving dead leaves. Steam-sieves sift it into grades, with jarrings and thumpings that make the floor quiver, and the thunder of steam-gear is always at its heels; but it continues to mutter unabashed till it is riddled down into the big, foil-lined boxes and lies at peace.

A few days ago the industry suffered a check which, lasting not more than two minutes, lost several hundred pounds of hand-fired tea. It was something after this way. Into the stillness of a hot, stuffy morning came an unpleasant noise as of batteries of artillery charging up all the roads together, and at least one bewildered sleeper waking saw his empty boots where they 'sat and played toccatas stately at the clavicord.' It was the washstand really but the effect was awful. Then a clock fell and a wall cracked, and heavy hands caught the house by the roof-pole and shook it furiously. To preserve an equal mind when things are hard is good, but he who has not fumbled desperately at bolted jalousies that will not open while a whole room is being tossed in a blanket does not know how hard it is to find any sort of mind at all. The end of the terror was inadequate – a rush into the still, heavy outside air, only to find the servants in the garden giggling (the Japanese would giggle through the Day of Judgment) and to learn that the earthquake was over. Then came the news, swift borne from the business quarters below the hill,

that the coolies of certain factories had fled shrieking at the first shock, and that all the tea in the pans was burned to a crisp. That, certainly, was some consolation for undignified panic; and there remained the hope that a few tall chimneys up the line at Tokio would have collapsed. They stood firm, however, and the local papers, used to this kind of thing, merely spoke of the shock as 'severe.' Earthquakes are demoralising; but they bring out all the weaknesses of human nature. First is downright dread; the stage of – 'only let me get into the open and I'll reform,' then the impulse to send news of the most terrible shock of modern times flying east and west among the cables. (Did not your own hair stand straight on end, and, therefore, must not everybody else's have done likewise?) Last, as fallen humanity picks itself together, comes the cry of the mean little soul: 'What! Was *that* all? I wasn't frightened from the beginning.'

It is wholesome and tonic to realise the powerlessness of man in the face of these little accidents. The heir of all the ages, the annihilator of time and space, who politely doubts the existence of his Maker, hears the roof-beams crack and strain above him, and scuttles about like a rabbit in a stoppered warren. If the shock endures for twenty minutes, the annihilator of time and space must camp out under the blue and hunt for his dead among the rubbish. Given a violent convulsion (only just such a slipping of strata as carelessly piled volumes will accomplish in a book-case) and behold, the heir of all the ages is stark, raving mad – a brute among the dishevelled hills. Set a hundred of the world's greatest

spirits, men of fixed principles, high aims, resolute endeavour, enormous experience, and the modesty that these attributes bring – set them to live through such a catastrophe as that which wiped out Nagoya last October, and at the end of three days there would remain few whose souls might be called their own.

So much for yesterday's shock. To-day there has come another; and a most comprehensive affair it is. It has broken nothing, unless maybe an old heart or two cracks later on; and the wise people in the settlement are saying that they predicted it from the first. None the less as an earthquake it deserves recording.

It was a very rainy afternoon; all the streets were full of gruelly mud, and all the business men were at work in their offices when it began. A knot of Chinamen were studying a closed door from whose further side came a most unpleasant sound of bolting and locking up. The notice on the door was interesting. With deep regret did the manager of the New Oriental Banking Corporation, Limited (most decidedly limited), announce that on telegraphic orders from home he had suspended payment. Said one Chinaman to another in pidgin-Japanese: 'It is shut,' and went away. The noise of barring up continued, the rain fell, and the notice stared down the wet street. That was all. There must have been two or three men passing by to whom the announcement meant the loss of every penny of their savings – comforting knowledge to digest after tiffin. In London, of course, the failure would not mean so much; there are many banks in the

City, and people would have had warning. Here banks are few, people are dependent on them, and this news came out of the sea unheralded, an evil born with all its teeth.

After the crash of a bursting shell every one who can picks himself up, brushes the dirt off his uniform, and tries to make a joke of it. Then some one whips a handkerchief round his hand – a splinter has torn it – and another finds warm streaks running down his forehead. Then a man, overlooked till now and past help, groans to the death. Everybody perceives with a start that this is no time for laughter, and the dead and wounded are attended to.

Even so at the Overseas Club when the men got out of office. The brokers had told them the news. In filed the English, and Americans, and Germans, and French, and 'Here's a pretty mess!' they said one and all. Many of them were hit, but, like good men, they did not say how severely.

'Ah!' said a little P. and O. official, wagging his head sagaciously (he had lost a thousand dollars since noon), 'it's all right *now*. They're trying to make the best of it. In three or four days we shall hear more about it. I meant to draw my money just before I went down coast, but – ' Curiously enough, it was the same story throughout the Club. Everybody had intended to withdraw, and nearly everybody had – not done so. The manager of a bank which had *not* failed was explaining how, in his opinion, the crash had come about. This was also very human. It helped none. Entered a lean American, throwing back his waterproof

all dripping with the rain; his face was calm and peaceful. 'Boy, whisky and soda,' he said.

'How much haf you losd?' said a Teuton bluntly. 'Eight-fifty,' replied the son of George Washington sweetly. 'Don't see how that prevents me having a drink. My glass, sirr.' He continued an interrupted whistling of 'I owe ten dollars to O'Grady' (which he very probably did), and his countenance departed not from its serenity. If there is anything that one loves an American for it is the way he stands certain kinds of punishment. An Englishman and a heavy loser was being chaffed by a Scotchman whose account at the Japan end of the line had been a trifle overdrawn. True, he would lose in England, but the thought of the few dollars saved here cheered him.

More men entered, sat down by tables, stood in groups, or remained apart by themselves, thinking with knit brows. One must think quickly when one's bills are falling due. The murmur of voices thickened, and there was no rumbling in the skittle alley to interrupt it. Everybody knows everybody else at the Overseas Club, and everybody sympathises. A man passed stiffly and some one of a group turned to ask lightly, 'Hit, old man?' 'Like hell,' he said, and went on biting his unlit cigar. Another man was telling, slowly and somewhat bitterly, how he had expected one of his children to join him out here, and how the passage had been paid with a draft on the O.B.C. But now … *There* , ladies and gentlemen, is where it hurts, this little suspension out here. It destroys plans, pretty ones hoped for and prayed over, maybe

for years; it knocks pleasant domestic arrangements galleywest over and above all the mere ruin that it causes. The curious thing in the talk was that there was no abuse of the bank. The men were in the Eastern trade themselves and they knew. It was the Yokohama manager and the clerks thrown out of employment (connection with a broken bank, by the way, goes far to ruin a young man's prospects) for whom they were sorry. 'We're doing ourselves well this year,' said a wit grimly. 'One free-shooting case, one thundering libel case, and a bank smash. Showing off pretty before the globe-trotters, aren't we?'

'Gad, think of the chaps at sea with letters of credit. Eh? They'll land and get the best rooms at the hotels and find they're penniless,' said another.

'Never mind the globe-trotters,' said a third. 'Look nearer home. This does for so-and-so, and so-and-so, and so-and-so, all old men; and every penny of theirs goes.' Poor devils!'

'That reminds me of some one else,' said yet another voice, '*His* wife's at home, too. Whew!' and he whistled drearily. So did the tide of voices run on till men got to talking over the chances of a dividend, 'They went to the Bank of England,' drawled an American, 'and the Bank of England let them down; said their securities weren't good enough.'

'Great Scott!' – a hand came down on a table to emphasise the remark – 'I sailed half way up the Mediterranean once with a Bank of England director; wish I'd tipped him over the rail and lowered him a boat on his own security – if it was good enough.'

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.