O'Rell Max

A Frenchman in America: Recollections of Men and Things

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I

Departure – The Atlantic – Demoralization of the "Boarders" – Betting – The Auctioneer – An Inquisitive Yankee

On board the "Celtic," Christmas Week, 1889.

In the order of things the *Teutonic* was to have sailed to-day, but the date is the 25th of December, and few people elect to eat their Christmas dinner on the ocean if they can avoid it; so there are only twenty-five saloon passengers, and they have been committed to the brave little *Celtic*, while that huge floating palace, the *Teutonic*, remains in harbor.

Little *Celtic*! Has it come to this with her and her companions, the *Germanic*, the *Britannic*, and the rest that were the wonders

and the glory of the ship-building craft a few years ago? There is something almost sad in seeing these queens of the Atlantic dethroned, and obliged to rank below newer and grander ships. It was even pathetic to hear the remarks of the sailors, as we passed the *Germanic* who, in her day, had created even more wondering admiration than the two famous armed cruisers lately added to the "White Star" fleet.

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I know nothing more monotonous than a voyage from Liverpool to New York.

Nine times out of ten – not to say ninety-nine times out of a hundred – the passage is bad. The Atlantic Ocean has an ugly temper; it has forever got its back up. Sulky, angry, and terrible by turns, it only takes a few days' rest out of every year, and this always occurs when you are not crossing.

And then, the wind is invariably against you. When you go to America, it blows from the west; when you come back to Europe, it blows from the east. If the captain steers south to avoid icebergs, it is sure to begin to blow southerly.

Doctors say that sea-sickness emanates from the brain. I can quite believe them. The blood rushes to your head, leaving your extremities cold and helpless. All the vital force flies to the brain, and your legs refuse to carry you. It is with sea-sickness as it is with wine. When people say that a certain wine goes up in the

head, it means that it is more likely to go down to the feet.

There you are, on board a huge construction that rears and kicks like a buck-jumper. She lifts you up bodily, and, after well shaking all your members in the air several seconds, lets them down higgledy-piggledy, leaving to Providence the business of picking them up and putting them together again. That is the kind of thing one has to go through about sixty times an hour. And there is no hope for you; nobody dies of it.

Under such conditions, the mental state of the boarders may easily be imagined. They smoke, they play cards, they pace the deck like bruin pacing a cage; or else they read, and forget at the second chapter all they have read in the first. A few presumptuous ones try to think, but without success. The ladies, the American ones more especially, lie on their deck chairs swathed in rugs and shawls like Egyptian mummies in their sarcophagi, and there they pass from ten to twelve hours a day motionless, hopeless, helpless, speechless. Some few incurables keep to their cabins altogether, and only show their wasted faces when it is time to debark. Up they come, with cross, stupefied, pallid, yellow-green-looking physiognomies, and seeming to say: "Speak to me, if you like, but don't expect me to open my eyes or answer you, and above all, don't shake me."

Impossible to fraternize.

The crossing now takes about six days and a half. By the time you have spent two in getting your sea legs on, and three more in reviewing, and being reviewed by your fellow-passengers, you

will find yourself at the end of your troubles – and your voyage.

No, people do not fraternize on board ship, during such a short passage, unless a rumor runs from cabin to cabin that there has been some accident to the machinery, or that the boat is in imminent danger. At the least scare of this kind, every one looks at his neighbor with eyes that are alarmed, but amiable, nay, even amicable. But as soon as one can say: "We have come off with a mere scare this time," all the facial traits stiffen once more, and nobody knows anybody.

Universal grief only will bring about universal brotherhood. We must wait till the Day of Judgment. When the world is passing away, oh! how men will forgive and love one another! What outpourings of good-will and affection there will be! How touching, how edifying will be the sight! The universal republic will be founded in the twinkling of an eye, distinctions of creed and class forgotten. The author will embrace the critic and even the publisher, the socialist open his arms to the capitalist. The married men will be seen "making it up" with their mothers-in-law, begging them to forgive and forget, and admitting that they had not been always quite so-so, in fact, as they might have been. If the Creator of all is a philosopher, or enjoys humor, how he will be amused to see all the various sects of Christians, who have passed their lives in running one another down, throw themselves into one another's arms. It will be a scene never to be forgotten.

Yes, I repeat it, the voyage from Liverpool to New York is monotonous and wearisome in the extreme. It is an interval in

one's existence, a week more or less lost, decidedly more than less.

One grows gelatinous from head to foot, especially in the upper part of one's anatomy.

In order to see to what an extent the brain softens, you only need look at the pastimes the poor passengers go in for.

A state of demoralization prevails throughout.

They bet. That is the form the disease takes.

They bet on anything and everything. They bet that the sun will or will not appear next day at eleven precisely, or that rain will fall at noon. They bet that the number of miles made by the boat at twelve o'clock next day will terminate with 0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, or 9. Each draws one of these numbers and pays his shilling, half-crown, or even sovereign. Then these numbers are put up at auction. An improvised auctioneer, with the gift of the gab, puts his talent at the service of his fellow-passengers. It is really very funny to see him swaying about the smoking-room table, and using all his eloquence over each number in turn for sale. A good auctioneer will run the bidding so smartly that the winner of the pool next day often pockets as much as thirty and forty pounds. On the eve of arrival in New York harbor, everybody knows that twenty-four pilots are waiting about for the advent of the liner, and that each boat carries her number on her sail. Accordingly, twenty-four numbers are rolled up and thrown into a cap, and betting begins again. He who has drawn the number which happens to be that of the pilot who takes the

steamer into harbor pockets the pool.

I, who have never bet on anything in my life, even bet with my traveling companion, when the rolling of the ship sends our portmanteaus from one side of the cabin to the other, that mine will arrive first. Intellectual faculties on board are reduced to this ebb.

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The nearest approach to a gay note, in this concert of groans and grumblings, is struck by some humorous and good-tempered American. He will come and ask you the most impossible questions with an ease and impudence perfectly inimitable. These catechisings are all the more droll because they are done with a *naïveté* which completely disarms you. The phrase is short, without verb, reduced to its most concise expression. The intonation alone marks the interrogation. Here is a specimen.

We have on board the *Celtic* an American who is not a very shrewd person, for it has actually taken him five days to discover that English is not my native tongue. This morning (December 30) he found it out, and, being seated near me in the smoke-room, has just had the following bit of conversation with me:

"Foreigner?" said he.

"Foreigner," said I, replying in American.

"German, I guess."

"Guess again."

"French?"
"Pure blood."
"Married?"
"Married."
"Going to America?"
"Yes – evidently."
"Pleasure trip?"
"No."
"On business?"
"On business, yes."
"What's your line?"
"H'm – French goods."
"Ah! what class of goods?"
"*L'article de Paris.*"
"The what?"
"The *ar-ti-cle de Pa-ris*."
"Oh! yes, the *arnticle of Pahrriss*."
"Exactly so. Excuse *my* pronunciation."
This floored him.

"Rather impertinent, your smoke-room neighbor!" you will say.

Undeceive yourself at once upon that point. It is not impertinence, still less an intention to offend you, that urges him to put these incongruous questions to you. It is the interest he takes in you. The American is a good fellow; good fellowship is one of his chief characteristic traits. Of that I became perfectly

convinced during my last visit to the United States.

CHAPTER II

Arrival of the Pilot – First Look at American Newspapers

Saturday, January 4, 1890.

We shall arrive in New York Harbor to-night, but too late to go on shore. After sunset, the Custom House officers are not to be disturbed. We are about to land in a country where, as I remember, everything is in subjection to the paid servant. In the United States, he who is paid wages commands.

We make the best of it. After having mercilessly tumbled us about for nine days, the wind has graciously calmed down, and our last day is going to be a good one, thanks be. There is a pure atmosphere. A clear line at the horizon divides space into two immensities, two sheets of blue sharply defined.

Faces are smoothing out a bit. People talk, are becoming, in fact, quite communicative. One seems to say to another: "Why, after all, you don't look half as disagreeable as I thought. If I had only known that, we might have seen more of each other, and killed time more quickly."

The pilot boat is in sight. It comes toward us, and sends off in a rowing-boat the pilot who will take us into port. The arrival of

the pilot on board is not an incident. It is an event. Does he not bring the New York newspapers? And when you have been ten days at sea, cut off from the world, to read the papers of the day before is to come back to life again, and once more take up your place in this little planet that has been going on its jog-trot way during your temporary suppression.

The first article which meets my eyes, as I open the New York *World*, is headed "High time for Mr. Nash to put a stop to it!" This is the paragraph:

Ten days ago, Mrs. Nash brought a boy into existence. Three days afterward she presented her husband with a little girl. Yesterday the lady was safely delivered of a third baby.

"Mrs. Nash takes her time over it" would have been another good heading.

Here we are in America. Old World ways don't obtain here. In Europe, Mrs. Nash would have ushered the little trio into this life in one day; but in Europe we are out of date, *rococo*, and if one came over to find the Americans doing things just as they are done on the other side, one might as well stay at home.

I run through the papers.

America, I see, is split into two camps. Two young ladies, Miss Nelly Bly and Miss Elizabeth Bisland, have left New York by opposite routes to go around the world, the former sent by the New York *World*, the latter by the *Cosmopolitan*. Which will be back first? is what all America is conjecturing upon. Bets have been made, and the betting is even. I do not know Miss Bly, but

last time I came over I had the pleasure of making Miss Bisland's acquaintance. Naturally, as soon as I get on shore, I shall bet on Miss Bisland. You would do the same yourself, would you not?

I pass the day reading the papers. All the bits of news, insignificant or not, given in the shape of crisp, lively stories, help pass the time. They contain little information, but much amusement. The American newspaper always reminds me of a shop window with all the goods ticketed in a marvelous style, so as to attract and tickle the eye. You cannot pass over anything. The leading article is scarcely known across the "wet spot"; the paper is a collection of bits of gossip, hearsay, news, scandal, the whole served *à la sauce piquante*.

Nine o'clock.

We are passing the bar, and going to anchor. New York is sparkling with lights, and the Brooklyn Bridge is a thing of beauty. I will enjoy the scene for an hour, and then turn in.

We land to-morrow morning at seven.

CHAPTER III

Arrival – The Custom House – Things Look Bad – The Interviewers – First Visits – Things Look Brighter – "O Vanity of Vanities."

New York Harbor; January 5.

At seven o'clock in the morning the Custom House officers came on board. One of them at once recognizing me, said, calling me by name, that he was glad to see me back, and inquired if I had not brought Madame with me this time. It is extraordinary the memory of many of these Americans! This one had seen me for a few minutes two years before, and probably had had to deal with two or three hundred thousand people since.

All the passengers came to the saloon and made their declarations one after another, after which they swore in the usual form that they had told the truth, and signed a paper to that effect. This done, many a poor pilgrim innocently imagines that he has finished with the Custom House, and he renders thanks to Heaven that he is going to set foot on a soil where a man's word is not doubted. He reckons without his host. In spite of his declaration, sworn and signed, his trunks are opened and searched with all the dogged zeal of a policeman who believes

he is on the track of a criminal, and who will only give up after perfectly convincing himself that the trunks do not contain the slightest dutiable article. Everything is taken out and examined. If there are any objects of apparel that appear like new ones to that scrutinizing eye, look out for squalls.

I must say that the officer was very kind to me. For that matter, the luggage of a man who travels alone, without Madame and her *impedimenta*, is soon examined.

Before leaving the ship, I went to shake hands with Captain Parsell, that experienced sailor whose bright, interesting conversation, added to the tempting delicacies provided by the cook, made many an hour pass right cheerily for those who, like myself, had the good fortune to sit at his table. I thanked him for all the kind attentions I had received at his hands. I should have liked to thank all the employees of the "White Star" line company. Their politeness is above all praise; their patience perfectly angelical. Ask them twenty times a day the most absurd questions, such as, "Will the sea soon calm down?" "Shall we get into harbor on Wednesday?" "Do you think we shall be in early enough to land in the evening?" and so on. You find them always ready with a kind and encouraging answer. "The barometer is going up and the sea is going down," or, "We are now doing our nineteen knots an hour." Is it true, or not? It satisfies you, at all events. In certain cases it is so sweet to be deceived! Better to be left to nurse a beloved illusion than have to give it up for a harsh reality that you are powerless against. Every one is grateful

to those kind sailors and stewards for the little innocent fibs that they are willing to load their consciences with, in order that they may brighten your path across the ocean a little.

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Everett House. Noon.

My baggage examined, I took a cab to go to the hotel. Three dollars for a mile and a half. A mere trifle.

It was pouring with rain. New York on a Sunday is never very gay. To-day the city seemed to me horrible: dull, dirty, and dreary. It is not the fault of New York altogether. I have the spleen. A horribly stormy passage, the stomach upside down, the heart up in the throat, the thought that my dear ones are three thousand miles away, all these things help to make everything look black. It would have needed a radiant sun in one of those pure blue skies that North America is so rich in to make life look agreeable and New York passable to-day.

In ten minutes cabby set me down at the Everett House. After having signed the register, I went and looked up my manager, whose bureau is on the ground floor of the hotel.

The spectacle which awaited me was appalling.

There sat the unhappy Major Pond in his office, his head bowed upon his chest, his arms hanging limp, the very picture of despair.

The country is seized with a panic. Everybody has the influenza. Every one does not die of it, but every one is having it. The malady is not called influenza over here, as it is in Europe. It is called "Grippe." No American escapes it. Some have *la grippe*, others have *the grippe*, a few, even, have *the la grippe*. Others, again, the lucky ones, think they have it. Those who have not had it, or do not think they have it yet, are expecting it. The nation is in a complete state of demoralization. Theaters are empty, business almost suspended, doctors on their backs or run off their legs.

At twelve a telegram is handed to me. It is from my friend, Wilson Barrett, who is playing in Philadelphia. "Hearty greetings, dear friend. Five grains of quinine and two tablets of antipyrine a day, or you get *grippe*." Then came many letters by every post. "Impossible to go and welcome you in person. I have *la grippe*. Take every precaution." Such is the tenor of them all.

The outlook is not bright. What to do? For a moment I have half a mind to call a cab and get on board the first boat bound for Europe.

I go to my room, the windows of which overlook Union Square. The sky is somber, the street is black and deserted, the air is suffocatingly warm, and a very heavy rain is beating against the windows.

Shade of Columbus, how I wish I were home again!

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Cheer up, boy, the hand-grasps of your dear New York friends will be sweet after the frantic grasping of stair-rails and other ship furniture for so many days.

I will have lunch and go and pay calls.

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Excuse me if I leave you for a few minutes. The interviewers are waiting for me downstairs in Major Pond's office. The interviewers! a gay note at last. The hall porter hands me their cards. They are all there: representatives of the *Tribune*, the *Times*, the *Sun*, the *Herald*, the *World*, the *Star*.

What nonsense Europeans have written on the subject of interviewing in America, to be sure! To hear them speak, you would believe that it is the greatest nuisance in the world.

A Frenchman writes in the *Figaro*: "I will go to America if my life can be insured against that terrific nuisance, interviewing."

An Englishman writes to an English paper, on returning from America: "When the reporters called on me, I invariably refused to see them."

Trash! Cant! Hypocrisy! With the exception of a king, or the prime minister of one of the great powers, a man is only

too glad to be interviewed. Don't talk to me about the nuisance, tell the truth, it is always such a treat to hear it. I consider that interviewing is a compliment, a great compliment paid to the interviewed. In asking a man to give you his views, so as to enlighten the public on such and such a subject, you acknowledge that he is an important man, which is flattering to him; or you take him for one, which is more flattering still.

I maintain that American interviewers are extremely courteous and obliging, and, as a rule, very faithful reporters of what you say to them.

Let me say that I have a lurking doubt in my mind whether those who have so much to say against interviewing in America have ever been asked to be interviewed at all, or have even ever run such a danger.

I object to interviewing as a sign of decadence in modern journalism; but I do not object to being interviewed, I like it; and, to prove it, I will go down at once, and be interviewed.

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Midnight.

The interview with the New York reporters passed off very well. I went through the operation like a man.

After lunch, I went to see Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, who had shown me a great deal of kindness during my first visit

to America. I found in him a friend ready to welcome me.

The poet and literary critic is a man of about fifty, rather below middle height, with a beautifully chiseled head. In every one of the features you can detect the artist, the man of delicate, tender, and refined feelings. It was a great pleasure for me to see him again. He has finished his "Library of American Literature," a gigantic work of erudite criticism and judicious compilation, which he undertook a few years ago in collaboration with Miss Ellen Mackay Hutchinson. These eleven volumes form a perfect national monument, a complete cyclopædia of American literature, giving extracts from the writings of every American who has published anything for the last three hundred years (1607-1890).

On leaving him, I went to call on Mrs. Anna Bowman Dodd, the author of "Cathedral Days," "Glorinda," "The Republic of the Future," and other charming books, and one of the brightest conversationalists it has ever been my good fortune to meet. After an hour's chat with her, I had forgotten all about the *grippe*, and all other more or less imaginary miseries.

I returned to the Everett House to dress, and went to the Union League Club to dine with General Horace Porter.

The general possesses a rare and most happy combination of brilliant flashing Parisian wit and dry, quiet, American humor. This charming *causeur* and *conteur* tells an anecdote as nobody I know can do; he never misses fire. He assured me at table that the copyright bill will soon be passed, for, he added, "we have now

a pure and pious Administration. At the White House they open their oysters with prayer." The conversation fell on American society, or, rather, on American Societies. The highest and lowest of these can be distinguished by the use of *van*. "The blue blood of America put it before their names, as *Van Nicken*; political society puts it after, as *Sullivan*."

O Van-itas Van-itatum!

Time passed rapidly in such delightful company.

I finished the evening at the house of Colonel Robert G. Ingersoll. If there had been any cloud of gloom still left hanging about me, it would have vanished at the sight of his sunny face. There was a small gathering of some thirty people, among them Mr. Edgar Fawcett, whose acquaintance I was delighted to make. Conversation went on briskly with one and the other, and at half-past eleven I returned to the hotel completely cured.

To-morrow morning I leave for Boston at ten o'clock to begin the lecture tour in that city, or, to use an Americanism, to "open the show."

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There is a knock at the door.

It is the hall porter with a letter: an invitation to dine with the members of the Clover Club at Philadelphia on Thursday next, the 16th.

I look at my list of engagements and find I am in Pittsburg

on that day.

I take a telegraph form and pen the following, which I will send to my friend, Major M. P. Handy, the president of this lively association:

Many thanks. Am engaged in Pittsburg on the 16th. Thank God, cannot attend your dinner.

I remember how those “boys” cheeked me two years ago, laughed at me, sat on me. That’s my telegram to you, dear Cloverites, with my love.

CHAPTER IV

Impressions of American Hotels

Boston, January 6.

Arrived here this afternoon, and resumed acquaintance with American hotels.

American hotels are all alike.

Some are worse.

Describe one and you have described them all.

On the ground floor, a large entrance hall strewed with cuspidores for the men, and a side entrance provided with a triumphal arch for the ladies. On this floor the sexes are separated as at the public baths.

In the large hall, a counter behind which solemn clerks, whose business faces relax not a muscle, are ready with their book to enter your name and assign you a number. A small army of colored porters ready to take you in charge. Not a salute, not a word, not a smile of welcome. The negro takes your bag and makes a sign that your case is settled. You follow him. For the time being you lose your personality and become No. 375, as you would in jail. Don't ask questions; theirs not to answer; don't ring the bell to ask for a favor, if you set any value on your time.

All the rules of the establishment are printed and posted in your bedroom; you have to submit to them. No question to ask – you know everything. Henceforth you will have to be hungry from 7 to 9 A.M.; from 1 to 3 P.M.; from 6 to 8 P.M. The slightest infringement of the routine would stop the wheel, so don't ask if you could have a meal at four o'clock; you would be taken for a lunatic, or a crank (as they call it in America).

Between meals you will be supplied with ice-water *ad libitum*.

No privacy. No coffee-room, no smoking-room. No place where you can go and quietly sip a cup of coffee or drink a glass of beer with a cigar. You can have a drink at the bar, and then go and sit down in the hall among the crowd.

Life in an American hotel is an alternation of the cellular system during the night and of the gregarious system during the day, an alternation of the penitentiary systems carried out at Philadelphia and at Auburn.

It is not in the bedroom, either, that you must seek anything to cheer you. The bed is good, but only for the night. The room is perfectly nude. Not even "Napoleon's Farewell to his Soldiers at Fontainebleau" as in France, or "Strafford walking to the Scaffold" as in England. Not that these pictures are particularly cheerful, still they break the monotony of the wall paper. Here the only oases in the brown or gray desert are cautions.

First of all, a notice that, in a cupboard near the window, you will find some twenty yards of coiled rope which, in case of fire, you are to fix to a hook outside the window. The rest

is guessed. You fix the rope, and – you let yourself go. From a sixth, seventh, or eighth story, the prospect is lively. Another caution informs you of all that you must not do, such as your own washing in the bedroom. Another warns you that if, on retiring, you put your boots outside the door, you do so at your own risk and peril. Another is posted near the door, close to an electric bell. With a little care and practice, you will be able to carry out the instructions printed thereon. The only thing wonderful about the contrivance is that the servants never make mistakes.

Press once	for ice-water.
Press twice	for hall boy.
Press three times	for fireman.
Press four times	for chambermaid.
Press five times	for hot water.
Press six times	for ink and writing materials.
Press seven times	for baggage.
Press eight times	for messenger.

In some hotels I have seen the list carried to number twelve.

Another notice tells you what the proprietor's responsibilities are, and at what time the meals take place. Now this last notice is the most important of all. Woe to you if you forget it! For if you should present yourself one minute after the dining-room door is closed, no human consideration would get it open for you. Supplications, arguments would be of no avail. Not even money.

"What do you mean?" some old-fashioned European will

exclaim. “When the *table d’hôte* is over, of course you cannot expect the *menu* to be served to you; but surely you can order a steak or a chop.”

No, you cannot, not even an omelette or a piece of cold meat. If you arrive at one minute past three (in small towns, at one minute past two) you find the dining-room closed, and you must wait till six o’clock to see its hospitable doors open again.

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When you enter the dining-room, you must not believe that you can go and sit where you like. The chief waiter assigns you a seat, and you must take it. With a superb wave of the hand, he signs to you to follow him. He does not even turn round to see if you are behind him, following him in all the meanders he describes, amid the sixty, eighty, sometimes hundred tables that are in the room. He takes it for granted you are an obedient, submissive traveler who knows his duty. Altogether I traveled in the United States for about ten months, and I never came across an American so daring, so independent, as to actually take any other seat than the one assigned to him by that tremendous potentate, the head waiter. Occasionally, just to try him, I would sit down in a chair I took a fancy to. But he would come and fetch me, and tell me that I could not stay there. In Europe, the waiter asks you where you would like to sit. In America, you ask him where you may sit. He is a paid servant, therefore a master in

America. He is in command, not of the other waiters, but of the guests. Several times, recognizing friends in the dining-room, I asked the man to take me to their tables (I should not have dared go by myself), and the permission was granted with a patronizing sign of the head. I have constantly seen Americans stop on the threshold of the dining-room door, and wait until the chief waiter had returned from placing a guest to come and fetch them in their turn. I never saw them venture alone, and take an empty seat, without the sanction of the waiter.

The guests feel struck with awe in that dining-room, and solemnly bolt their food as quickly as they can. You hear less noise in an American hotel dining-room containing five hundred people, than you do at a French *table d'hôte* accommodating fifty people, at a German one containing a dozen guests, or at a table where two Italians are dining *tête-à-tête*.

The head waiter, at large Northern and Western hotels, is a white man. In the Southern ones, he is a mulatto or a black; but white or black, he is always a magnificent specimen of his race. There is not a ghost of a savor of the serving man about him; no whiskers and shaven upper lips reminding you of the waiters of the Old World; but always a fine mustache, the twirling of which helps to give an air of *nonchalant* superiority to its wearer. The mulatto head-waiters in the South really look like dusky princes. Many of them are so handsome and carry themselves so superbly that you find them very impressive at first and would fain apologize to them. You feel as if you wanted to thank them

for kindly condescending to concern themselves about anything so commonplace as your seat at table.

In smaller hotels, the waiters are all waitresses. The "waiting" is done by damsels entirely – or rather by the guests of the hotel.

If the Southern head waiter looks like a prince, what shall we say of the head-waitress in the East, the North, and the West? No term short of queenly will describe her stately bearing as she moves about among her bevy of reduced duchesses. She is evidently chosen for her appearance. She is "divinely tall," as well as "most divinely fair," and, as if to add to her importance, she is crowned with a gigantic mass of frizzled hair. All the waitresses have this coiffure. It is a livery, as caps are in the Old World; but instead of being a badge of servitude it looks, and is, alarmingly emancipated – so much so that, before making close acquaintance with my dishes, I always examine them with great care. A beautiful mass of hair looks lovely on the head of a woman, but *one* in your soup, even if it had strayed from the tresses of your beloved one, would make the corners of your mouth go down, and the tip of your nose go up.

A regally handsome woman always "goes well in the landscape," as the French say, and I have seen specimens of these waitresses so handsome and so commanding-looking that, if they cared to come over to Europe and play the queens in London pantomimes, I feel sure they would command quite exceptional prices, and draw big salaries and crowded houses.

...

The thing which strikes me most disagreeably, in the American hotel dining-room, is the sight of the tremendous waste of food that goes on at every meal. No European, I suppose, can fail to be struck with this; but to a Frenchman it would naturally be most remarkable. In France, where, I venture to say, people live as well as anywhere else, if not better, there is a horror of anything like waste of good food. It is to me, therefore, a repulsive thing to see the wanton manner in which some Americans will waste at one meal enough to feed several hungry fellow-creatures.

In the large hotels, conducted on the American plan, there are rarely fewer than fifty different dishes on the *menu* at dinner-time. Every day, and at every meal, you may see people order three times as much of this food as they could under any circumstances eat, and, after picking it and spoiling one dish after another, send the bulk away uneaten. I am bound to say that this practice is not only to be observed in hotels where the charge is so much per day, but in those conducted on the European plan, that is, where you pay for every item you order. There I notice that people proceed in much the same wasteful fashion. It is evidently not a desire to have more than is paid for, but simply a bad and ugly habit. I hold that about five hundred hungry people could be fed out of the waste that is going on at such large hotels as

the Palmer House or the Grand Pacific Hotel of Chicago – and I have no doubt that such five hundred hungry people could easily be found in Chicago every day.

•••

I think that many Europeans are prevented from going to America by an idea that the expense of traveling and living there is very great. This is quite a delusion. For my part I find that hotels are as cheap in America as in England at any rate, and railway traveling in Pullman cars is certainly cheaper than in European first-class carriages, and incomparably more comfortable. Put aside in America such hotels as Delmonico's, the Brunswick in New York; the Richelieu in Chicago; and in England such hotels as the Metropôle, the Victoria, the Savoy; and take the good hotels of the country, such as the Grand Pacific at Chicago; the West House at Minneapolis, the Windsor at Montreal, the Cadillac at Detroit. I only mention those I remember as the very best. In these hotels, you are comfortably lodged and magnificently fed for from three to five dollars a day. In no good hotel of England, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, would you get the same amount of comfort, or even luxury, at the same price, and those who require a sitting-room get it for a little less than they would have to pay in a European hotel.

The only very dear hotels I have come across in the United

States are those of Virginia. There I have been charged as much as two dollars a day, but never in my life did I pay so dear for what I had, never in my life did I see so many dirty rooms or so many messes that were unfit for human food.

But I will just say this much for the American refinement of feeling to be met with, even in the hotels of Virginia, even in the "lunch" rooms in small stations, you are supplied, at the end of each meal, with a bowl of water – to rinse your mouth.

CHAPTER V

My Opening Lecture – Reflections on Audiences I Have Had – The Man who Won't Smile – The One who Laughs too Soon, and Many Others

Boston, January 7.

Began my second American tour under most favorable auspices last night, in the Tremont Temple. The huge hall was crowded with an audience of about 2500 people – a most kind, warm, keen, and appreciative audience. I was a little afraid of the Bostonians; I had heard so much about their power of criticism that I had almost come to the conclusion that it was next to impossible to please them. The Boston newspapers this morning give full reports of my lecture. All of them are kind and most favorable. This is a good start, and I feel hopeful.

The subject of my lecture was "A National Portrait Gallery of the Anglo-Saxon Races," in which I delineated the English, the Scotch, and the American characters. Strange to say, my Scotch sketches seemed to tickle them most. This, however, I can explain to myself. Scotch "wut" is more like American humor than any kind of wit I know. There is about it the same dryness, the same quaintness, the same preposterousness, the

same subtlety.

My Boston audience also seemed to enjoy my criticisms of America and the Americans, which disposes of the absurd belief that the Americans will not listen to the criticism of their country. There are Americans and Americans, as there is criticism and criticism. If you can speak of people's virtues without flattery; if you can speak of their weaknesses and failings with kindness and good humor, I believe you can criticise to your heart's content without ever fearing to give offense to intelligent and fair-minded people. I admire and love the Americans. How could they help seeing it through all the little criticisms that I indulged in on the platform? On the whole, I was delighted with my Boston audience, and, to judge from the reception they gave me, I believe I succeeded in pleasing them. I have three more engagements in Boston, so I shall have the pleasure of meeting the Bostonians again.

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I have never been able to lecture, whether in England, in Scotland, in Ireland or in America, without discovering, somewhere in the hall, after speaking for five minutes or so, an old gentleman who will not smile. He was there last night, and it is evident that he is going to favor me with his presence every night during this second American tour. He generally sits near the platform, and not unfrequently on the first row. There is a

horrible fascination about that man. You cannot get your eyes off him. You do your utmost to "fetch him" – you feel it to be your duty not to send him home empty-headed; your conscience tells you that he has not to please you, but that *you* are paid to please him, and you struggle on. You would like to slip into his pocket the price of his seat and have him removed, or throw the water bottle at his face and make him show signs of life. As it is, you try to look the other way, but you know he is there, and that does not improve matters.

Now this man, who will not smile, very often is not so bad as he looks. You imagine that you bore him to death, but you don't. You wonder how it is he does not go, but the fact is he actually enjoys himself – inside. Or, maybe, he is a professional man himself, and no conjuror has ever been known to laugh at another conjuror's tricks. A great American humorist relates that, after speaking for an hour and a half without succeeding in getting a smile from a certain man in the audience, he sent some one to inquire into the state of his mind.

"Excuse me, sir, did you not enjoy the lecture that has been delivered to-night?"

"Very much indeed," said the man, "it was a most clever and entertaining lecture."

"But you never smiled – "

"Oh, no – I'm a liar myself."

...

Sometimes there are other reasons to explain the unsmiling man's attitude.

One evening I had lectured in Birmingham. On the first row there sat the whole time an old gentleman, with his umbrella standing between his legs, his hands crossed on the handle, and his chin resting on his hands. Frowning, his mouth gaping, and his eyes perfectly vacant, he remained motionless, looking at me, and for an hour and twenty minutes seemed to say to me: "My poor fellow, you may do what you like, but you won't 'fetch' me to-night, I can tell you." I looked at him, I spoke to him, I winked at him, I aimed at him; several times even I paused so as to give him ample time to see a point. All was in vain. I had just returned, after the lecture, to the secretary's room behind the platform, when he entered.

"Oh, that man again!" I cried, pointing to him.

He advanced toward me, took my hand, and said:

"Thank you very much for your excellent lecture, I have enjoyed it very much."

"Have you?" said I.

"Would you be kind enough to give me your autograph?" And he pulled out of his pocket a beautiful autograph book.

"Well," I said to the secretary in a whisper, "this old gentleman is extremely kind to ask for my autograph, for I am certain he

has not enjoyed my lecture."

"What makes you think so?"

"Why, he never smiled once."

"Oh, poor old gentleman," said the secretary; "he is stone deaf."

Many a lecturer must have met this man.

It would be unwise, when you discover that certain members of the audience will not laugh, to give them up at once. As long as you are on the platform there is hope.

I was once lecturing in the chief town of a great hunting center in England. On the first row sat half a dozen hair-parted-in-the-middle, single-eye-glass young swells. They stared at me unmoved, and never relaxed a muscle except for yawning. It was most distressing to see how the poor fellows looked bored. How I did wish I could do something for them! I had spoken for nearly an hour when, by accident, I upset the tumbler on my table. The water trickled down the cloth. The young men laughed, roared. They were happy and enjoying themselves, and I had "fetched" them at last. I have never forgotten this trick, and when I see in the audience an apparently hopeless case, I often resort to it, generally with success.

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There are other people who do not much enjoy your lecture: your own.

Of course you must forgive your wife. The dear creature knows all your lectures by heart; she has heard your jokes hundreds of times. She comes to your lectures rather to see how you are going to be received than to listen to you. Besides, she feels that for an hour and a half you do not belong to her. When she comes with you to the lecture hall, you are both ushered into the secretary's room. Two or three minutes before it is time to go on the platform, it is suggested to her that it is time she should take her seat among the audience. She looks at the secretary and recognizes that for an hour and a half her husband is the property of this official, who is about to hand him over to the tender mercies of the public. As she says, "Oh, yes, I suppose I must go," she almost feels like shaking hands with her husband, as Mrs. Baldwin takes leave of the Professor before he starts on his aerial trip. But, though she may not laugh, her heart is with you, and she is busy watching the audience, ever ready to tell them, "Now, don't you think this is a very good point? Well, then, if you do, why don't you laugh and cheer?" She is part and parcel of yourself. She is not jealous of your success, for she is your helpmate, your kind and sound counselor, and I can assure you that if an audience should fail to be responsive, it would never enter her head to lay the blame on her husband; she would feel the most supreme contempt for "that stupid audience that was unable to appreciate you." That's all.

But your other own folk! You are no hero to them. To judge the effect of anything, you must be placed at a certain distance,

and your own folks are too near you.

One afternoon I had given a lecture to a large and fashionable audience in the South of England. A near relative of mine, who lived in the neighborhood, was in the hall. He never smiled. I watched him from the beginning to the end. When the lecture was over he came to the little room behind the platform to take me to his house. As he entered the room I was settling the money matters with my *impresario*. I will let you into the secret. There was fifty-two pounds in the house, and my share was two-thirds of the gross receipts, that is about thirty-four pounds. My relative heard the sum. As we drove along in his dog-cart he nudged me and said:

"Did you make thirty-four pounds this afternoon?"

"Oh, did you hear?" I said. "Yes, that was my part of the takings. For a small town I am quite satisfied."

"I should think you were!" he replied. "If you had made thirty-four shillings you would have been well paid for your work!"

Nothing is more true to life than the want of appreciation the successful man encounters from relatives and also from former friends. Nothing is more certain than when a man has lived on terms of perfect equality and familiarity with a certain set of men, he can never hope to be anything but "plain John" to them, though by his personal efforts he may have obtained the applause of the public. Did he not rub shoulders with them for years in the same walk of life? Why these bravos? What was there in him more than in them? Even though they may have gone so

far as to single him out as a "rather clever fellow," while he was one of theirs, still the surprise at the public appreciation is none the less keen, his advance toward the front an unforgivable offense, and they are immediately seized with a desire to rush out in the highways and proclaim that he is only "Jack," and not the "John" that his admirers think him. I remember that, in the early years of my life in England, when I had not the faintest idea of ever writing a book on John Bull, a young English friend of mine did me the honor of appreciating highly all my observations on British life and manners, and for years urged me hard and often to jot them down to make a book of. One day the book was finished and appeared in print. It attracted a good deal of public attention, but no one was more surprised than this man, who, from a kind friend, was promptly transformed into the most severe and unfriendly of my critics, and went about saying that the book and the amount of public attention bestowed upon it were both equally ridiculous. He has never spoken to me since.

A successful man is very often charged with wishing to turn his back on his former friends. No accusation is more false. Nothing would please him more than to retain the friends of more modest times, but it is they who have changed their feelings. They snub him, and this man, who is in constant need of moral support and *pick-me-up*, cannot stand it.

...

But let us return to the audience.

The man who won't smile is not the only person who causes you some annoyance.

There is the one who laughs too soon; who laughs before you have made your points, and who thinks, because you have opened your lecture with a joke, that everything you say afterward is a joke. There is another rather objectionable person; it is the one who explains your points to his neighbor, and makes them laugh aloud just at the moment when you require complete silence to fire off one of your best remarks.

There is the old lady who listens to you frowning, and who does not mind what you are saying, but is all the time shaking for fear of what you are going to say next. She never laughs before she has seen other people laugh. Then she thinks she is safe.

All these I am going to have in America again; that is clear. But I am now a man of experience. I have lectured in concert rooms, in lecture halls, in theaters, in churches, in schools. I have addressed embalmed Britons in English health resorts, petrified English mummies at hydropathic establishments, and lunatics in private asylums.

I am ready for the fray.

CHAPTER VI

A Connecticut Audience – Merry Meriden – A Hard Pull

From Meriden, January 8.

A Connecticut audience was a new experience to me. Yesterday I had a crowded room at the Opera House in Meriden; but if you had been behind the scenery, when I made my appearance on the stage, you would not have suspected it, for not one of the audience treated me to a little applause. I was frozen, and so were they. For a quarter of an hour I proceeded very cautiously, feeling the ground, as it were, as I went on. By that time, the thaw set in, and they began to smile. I must say that they had been very attentive from the beginning, and seemed very interested in the lecture. Encouraged by this, I warmed too. It was curious to watch that audience. By twos and threes the faces lit up with amusement till, by and by, the house wore quite an animated aspect. Presently there was a laugh, then two, then laughter more general. All the ice was gone. Next, a bold spirit in the stalls ventured some applause. At his second outburst he had company. The uphill work was nearly over now, and I began to feel better. The infection spread up to the circles and the gallery,

and at last there came a real good hearty round of applause. I had "fetched" them after all. But it was tough work. When once I had them in hand, I took good care not to let them go.

•••

I visited several interesting establishments this morning. Merry Meriden is famous for its manufactories of electro-plated silverware. Unfortunately I am not yet accustomed to the heated rooms of America, and I could not stay in the show-rooms more than a few minutes. I should have thought the heat was strong enough to melt all the goods on view. This town looks like a bee-hive of activity, with its animated streets, its electric cars. Dear old Europe! With the exception of a few large cities, the cars are still drawn by horses, like in the time of Sesostris and Nebuchadnezzar.

•••

On arriving at the station a man took hold of my bag and asked to take care of it until the arrival of the train. I do not know whether he belonged to the hotel where I spent the night, or to the railroad company. Whatever he was, I felt grateful for this wonderful show of courtesy.

"I heard you last night at the Opera House," he said to me.

"Why, were you at the lecture?"

"Yes, sir, and I greatly enjoyed it."

"Well, why didn't you laugh sooner?" I said.

"I wanted to very much!"

"Why didn't you?"

"Well, sir, I couldn't very well laugh before the rest."

"Why didn't you give the signal?"

"You see, sir," he said, "we are in Connecticut."

"Is laughter prohibited by the Statute Book in Connecticut?" I remarked.

"No, sir, but if you all laugh at the same time, then – "

"I see, nobody can tell who is the real criminal."

The train arrived. I shook hands with my friend, after offering him half a dollar for holding my bag – which he refused – and went on board.

In the parlor car, I met my kind friend Colonel Charles H. Taylor, editor of that very successful paper, the Boston *Globe*. We had luncheon together in the dining car, and time passed delightfully in his company till we reached the Grand Central station, New York, when we parted. He was kind enough to make me promise to look him up in Boston in a fortnight's time, when I make my second appearance in the City of Culture.

CHAPTER VII

A Tempting Offer – The Thursday Club – Bill Nye – Visit to Young Ladies' Schools – The Players' Club

New York, January 9.

On returning here, I found a most curious letter awaiting me. I must tell you that in Boston, last Monday, I made the following remarks in my lecture:

"The American is, I believe, on the road to the possession of all that can contribute to the well-being and success of a nation, but he seems to me to have missed the path that leads to real happiness. To live in a whirl is not to live well. The little French shopkeeper who locks his shop-door from half-past one, so as not to be disturbed while he is having his dinner with his wife and family, has come nearer to solving the great problem of life, 'How to be happy,' than the American who sticks on his door: 'Gone to dinner, shall be back in five minutes.' You eat too fast, and I understand why your antidyspeptic pill-makers cover your walls, your forests even, with their advertisements."

And I named the firm of pill-makers.

The letter is from them. They offer me $1000 if I will repeat the phrase at every lecture I give during my tour in the United

States.

You may imagine if I will be careful to abstain in the future.

•••

I lectured to-night before the members of the Thursday Club – a small, but very select audience, gathered in the drawing-room of one of the members. The lecture was followed by a *conversazione*. A very pleasant evening.

I left the house at half-past eleven. The night was beautiful. I walked to the hotel, along Fifth Avenue to Madison Square, and along Broadway to Union Square.

What a contrast to the great thoroughfares of London! Thousands of people here returning from the theaters and enjoying their walks, instead of being obliged to rush into vehicles to escape the sights presented at night by the West End streets of London. Here you can walk at night with your wife and daughter, without the least fear of their coming into contact with flaunting vice.

•••

Excuse a reflection on a subject of a very domestic character. My clothes have come from the laundress with the bill.

Now let me give you a sound piece of advice.

When you go to America, bring with you a dozen shirts. No more. When these are soiled, buy a new dozen, and so on. You will thus get a supply of linen for many years to come, and save your washing bills in America, where the price of a shirt is much the same as the cost of washing it.

•••

January 10.

I was glad to see Bill Nye again. He turned up at the Everett House this morning. I like to gaze at his clean-shaven face, that is seldom broken by a smile, and to hear his long, melancholy drawl. His lank form, and his polished dome of thought, as he delights in calling his joke box, help to make him so droll on the platform. When his audience begins to scream with laughter, he stops, looks at them in astonishment; the corners of his mouth drop and an expression of sadness comes over his face. The effect is irresistible. They shriek for mercy. But they don't get it. He is accompanied by his own manager, who starts with him for the north to-night. This manager has no sinecure. I don't think Bill Nye has ever been found in a depot ready to catch a train. So the manager takes him to the station, puts him in the right car, gets him out of his sleeping berth, takes him to the hotel, sees that he is behind the platform a few minutes before the time announced for the beginning of the lecture, and generally looks after his

comfort. Bill is due in Ohio to-morrow night, and leaves New York to-night by the Grand Central Depot.

"Are you sure it's by the Grand Central?" he said to me.

"Why, of course, corner of Forty-second Street, a five or ten minutes' ride from here."

You should have seen the expression on his face, as he drawled away:

"How – shall – I – get – there, I – wonder?"

•••

This afternoon I paid a most interesting visit to several girls' schools. The pupils were ordered by the head-mistress, in each case, to gather in the large room. There they arrived, two by two, to the sound of a march played on the piano by one of the under-mistresses. When they had all reached their respective places, two chords were struck on the instrument, and they all sat down with the precision of the best drilled Prussian regiment. Then some sang, others recited little poems, or epigrams – mostly at the expense of men. When, two years ago, I visited the Normal School for girls in the company of the President of the Education Board and Colonel Elliott F. Shepard, it was the anniversary of George Eliot's birth. The pupils, one by one, recited a few quotations from her works, choosing all she had written against man.

When the singing and the recitations were over, the mistress

requested me to address a few words to the young ladies. An American is used from infancy to deliver a speech on the least provocation. I am not. However, I managed to congratulate these young American girls on their charming appearance, and to thank them for the pleasure they had afforded me. Then two chords were struck on the piano and all stood up; two more chords, and all marched off in double file to the sound of another march. Not a smile, not a giggle. All these young girls, from sixteen to twenty, looked at me with modesty, but complete self-assurance, certainly with far more assurance than I dared look at them.

Then the mistress asked me to go to the gymnasium. There the girls arrived and, as solemnly as before, went through all kinds of muscular exercises. They are never allowed to sit down in the class rooms more than two hours at a time. They have to go down to the gymnasium every two hours.

I was perfectly amazed to see such discipline. These young girls are the true daughters of a great Republic: self-possessed, self-confident, dignified, respectful, law-abiding.

I also visited the junior departments of those schools. In one of them, eight hundred little girls from five to ten years of age were gathered together, and, as in the other departments, sang and recited to me. These young children are taught by the girls of the Normal School, under the supervision of mistresses. Here teaching is learned by teaching. A good method. Doctors are not allowed to practice before they have attended patients in

hospitals. Why should people be allowed to teach before they have attended schools as apprentice teachers?

I had to give a speech to these dear little ones. I wish I had been able to give them a kiss instead.

In my little speech I had occasion to remark that I had arrived in America only a week before. After I left, it appears that a little girl, aged about six, went to her mistress and said to her:

"He's only been here a week! And how beautifully he speaks English already!"

•••

I have been "put up" at the Players' Club by Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman, and dined with him there to-night.

This club is the snuggest house I know in New York. Only a few months old, it possesses treasures such as few clubs a hundred years old possess. It was a present from Mr. Edwin Booth, the greatest actor America has produced. He bought the house in Twentieth Street, facing Gramercy Park, furnished it handsomely and with the greatest taste, and filled it with all the artistic treasures that he has collected during his life: portraits of celebrated actors, most valuable old engravings, photographs with the originals' autographs, china, curios of all sorts, stage properties, such as the sword used by Macready in *Macbeth*, and hundreds of such beautiful and interesting souvenirs. On the second floor is the library, mostly composed of works connected

with the drama.

This club is a perfect gem.

When in New York, Mr. Booth occupies a suite of rooms on the second floor, which he has reserved for himself; but he has handed over the property to the trustees of the club, who, after his death, will become the sole proprietors of the house and of all its priceless contents. It was a princely gift, worthy of the prince of actors. The members are all connected with literature, art, and the drama, and number about one hundred.

CHAPTER VIII

The Flourishing of Coats-of-Arms in America – Reflections Thereon – Forefathers Made to Order – The Phonograph at Home – The Wealth of New York – Departure for Buffalo

New York, January 11.

There are in America, as in many other countries of the world, people who have coats-of-arms, and whose ancestors had no arms to their coats.

This remark was suggested by the reading of the following paragraph in the New York *World* this morning:

> There is growing in this country the rotten influence of rank, pride of station, contempt for labor, scorn of poverty, worship of caste, such as we verily believe is growing in no country in the world. What are the ideals that fill so large a part of the day and generation? For the boy it is riches; for the girl the marrying of a title. The ideal of this time in America is vast riches and the trappings of rank. It is good that proper scorn should be expressed of such ideals.

American novelists, journalists, and preachers are constantly upbraiding and ridiculing their countrywomen for their love of

titled foreigners; but the society women of the great Republic only love the foreign lords all the more; and I have heard some of them openly express their contempt of a form of government whose motto is one of the clauses of the great Declaration of Independence: "All men are created equal." I really believe that if the society women of America had their own way, they would set up a monarchy to-morrow, in the hope of seeing an aristocracy established as the sequel of it.

President Garfield once said that the only real coats-of-arms in America were shirt-sleeves. The epigram is good, but not based on truth, as every epigram should be. Labor in the States is not honorable for its own sake, but only if it brings wealth. President Garfield's epigram "fetched" the crowd, no doubt, as any smart democratic or humanitarian utterance will anywhere, whether it be emitted from the platform, the stage, the pulpit, or the hustings; but if any American philosopher heard it, he must have smiled.

A New York friend who called on me this morning, and with whom I had a chat on this subject, assured me that there is now such a demand in the States for pedigrees, heraldic insignia, mottoes, and coronets, that it has created a new industry. He also informed me that almost every American city has a college of heraldry, which will provide unbroken lines of ancestors, and make to order a new line of forefathers "of the most approved pattern, with suitable arms, etc."

Addison's prosperous foundling, who ordered at the second-

hand picture-dealer's "a complete set of ancestors," is, according to my friend, a typical personage to be met with in the States nowadays.

•••

Bah! after all, every country has her snobs. Why should America be an exception to the rule? When I think of the numberless charming people I have met in this country, I may as well leave it to the Europeans who have come in contact with American snobs to speak about them, inasmuch as the subject is not particularly entertaining.

What amuses me much more here is the effect of democracy on what we Europeans would call the lower classes.

A few days ago, in a hotel, I asked a porter if my trunk had arrived from the station and had been taken to my room.

"I don't know," he said majestically; "you ask that gentleman."

The gentleman pointed out to me was the negro who looks after the luggage in the establishment.

In the papers you may read in the advertisement columns: "Washing wanted by a lady at such and such address."

The cabman will ask, "If you are the *man* as wants a *gentleman* to drive him to the *deepo*."

During an inquiry concerning the work-house at Cambridge, Mass., a witness spoke of the "ladies' cells," as being all that should be desired.

Democracy, such is thy handiwork!

•••

I went to the Stock Exchange in Wall Street at one o'clock. I thought that Whitechapel, on Saturday night, was beyond competition as a scene of rowdyism. I have now altered this opinion. I am still wondering whether I was not guyed by my pilot, and whether I was not shown the playground of a madhouse, at the time when all the most desperate lunatics are let loose.

After lunch I went to Falk's photograph studio to be taken, and read the first page of "Jonathan and His Continent," into his phonograph. Marvelous, this phonograph! I imagine Mr. Falk has the best collection of cylinders in the world. I heard a song by Patti, the piano played by Von Bülow, speeches, orchestras, and what not! The music is reproduced most faithfully. With the voice the instrument is not quite so successful. Instead of your own voice, you fancy you hear an imitation of it by Punch. All the same, it seems to me to be the wonder of the age.

After paying a few calls, and dining quietly at the Everett House, I went to the Metropolitan Opera House, and saw "The Barber of Bagdad." Cornelius's music is Wagnerian in aim, but I did not carry away with me a single bar of all I heard. After all, this is perhaps the aim of Wagnerian music.

What a sight is the Metropolitan Opera House, with its boxes

full of lovely women, arrayed in gorgeous garments, and blazing with diamonds! What luxury! What wealth is gathered there!

How interesting it would be to know the exact amount of wealth of which New York can boast! In this morning's papers I read that land on Fifth Avenue has lately sold for $115 a square foot. In an acre of land there are 43,560 square feet, which at $115 a foot would be $5,009,400 an acre. Just oblige me by thinking of it!

•••

January 12.

Went to the Catholic Cathedral at eleven. A mass by Haydn was splendidly rendered by full orchestra and admirable chorus. The altar was a blaze of candles. The yellow of the lights and the plain mauve of two windows, one on each side of the candles, gave a most beautiful crocus-bed effect. I enjoyed the service.

In the evening I dined with Mr. Lloyd Bryce, editor of the *North American Review*, at the splendid residence of his father-in-law, Mr. Cooper, late Mayor of New York. Mrs. Lloyd Bryce is one of the handsomest American women I have met, and a most charming and graceful hostess. I reluctantly left early so as to prepare for my night journey to Buffalo.

CHAPTER IX

Different Ways of Advertising a Lecture – American Impresarios and Their Methods

Buffalo, January 13.

When you intend to give a lecture anywhere, and you wish it to be a success, it is a mistake to make a mystery of it.

On arriving here this morning, I found that my coming had been kept perfectly secret.

Perhaps my impresario wishes my audience to be very select, and has sent only private circulars to the intelligent, well-to-do inhabitants of the place – or, I said to myself, perhaps the house is all sold, and he has no need of any further advertisements.

I should very much like to know.

•••

Sometimes, however, it is a mistake to advertise a lecture too widely. You run the risk of getting the wrong people.

A few years ago, in Dundee, a little corner gallery, placed at the end of the hall where I was to speak, was thrown open to the

public at sixpence. I warned the manager that I was no attraction for the sixpenny public; but he insisted on having his own way.

The hall was well filled, but not the little gallery, where I counted about a dozen people. Two of these, however, did not remain long, and, after the lecture, I was told that they had gone to the box-office and asked to have their money returned to them. "Why," they said, "it's a d – swindle; it's only a man talking."

The man at the box-office was a Scotchman, and it will easily be understood that the two sixpences remained in the hands of the management.

•••

I can well remember how startled I was, two years ago, on arriving in an American town where I was to lecture, to see the walls covered with placards announcing my lecture thus: "He is coming, ah, ha!" And after I had arrived, new placards were stuck over the old ones: "He has arrived, ah, ha!"

In another American town I was advertised as "the best paying platform celebrity in the world." In another, in the following way: "If you would grow fat and happy, go and hear Max O'Rell to-night."

One of my Chicago lectures was advertised thus: "Laughter is restful. If you desire to feel as though you had a vacation for a week, do not fail to attend this lecture."

I was once fortunate enough to deal with a local manager who,

before sending it to the newspapers, submitted to my approbation the following advertisement, of which he was very proud. I don't know whether it was his own literary production, or whether he had borrowed it of a showman friend. Here it is:

Two Hours of Unalloyed Fun and Happiness

Will put two inches of solid fat even upon the ribs of the most cadaverous old miser. Everybody shouts peals of laughter as the rays of fun are emitted from this famous son of merry-makers.

I threatened to refuse to appear if the advertisement was inserted in the papers. This manager later gave his opinion that, as a lecturer, I was good, but that as a man, I was a little bit "stuck-up."

When you arrive in an American town to lecture, you find the place flooded with your pictures, huge lithographs stuck on the walls, on the shop windows, in your very hotel entrance hall. Your own face stares at you everywhere, you are recognized by everybody. You have to put up with it. If you love privacy, peace, and quiet, don't go to America on a lecturing tour. That is what your impresario will tell you.

•••

In each town where you go, you have a local manager to "boss

the show"; as he has to pay you a certain fee, which he guarantees, you cannot find fault with him for doing his best to have a large audience. He runs risks; you do not. Suppose, for instance, you are engaged, not by a society for a fee, but by a manager on sharing terms, say sixty per cent. of the gross receipts for you and forty for himself. Suppose his local expenses amount to $200; he has to bring $500 into the house before there is a cent for himself. You must forgive him if he goes about the place beating the big drum. If you do not like it, there is a place where you can stay – home.

•••

An impresario once asked me if I required a piano, and if I would bring my own accompanist. Another wrote to ask the subject of my "entertainment."

I wrote back to say that my lecture was generally found entertaining, but that I objected to its being called an entertainment. I added that the lecture was composed of four character sketches, viz., John Bull, Sandy, Pat, and Jonathan.

In his answer to this, he inquired whether I should change my dress four times during the performance, and whether it would not be a good thing to have a little music during the intervals.

Just fancy my appearing on the platform successively dressed as John, Sandy, Pat, and Jonathan!

...

A good impresario is constantly on the look out for anything that may draw the attention of the public to his entertainment. Nothing is sacred for him. His eyes and ears are always open, all his senses on the alert.

One afternoon I was walking with my impresario over the beautiful Clifton Suspension Bridge. I was to lecture at the Victoria Hall, Bristol, in the evening. We leaned on the railings, and grew pensive as we looked at the scenery and the abyss under us.

My impresario sighed.

"What are you thinking about?" I said to him.

"Last year," he replied, "a girl tried to commit suicide and jumped over this bridge; but the wind got under her skirt, made a parachute of it, and she descended to the bottom of the valley perfectly unhurt."

And he sighed again.

"Well," said I, "why do you sigh?"

"Ah! my dear fellow, if you could do the same this afternoon, there would be 'standing room only' in the Victoria Hall to-night."

I left that bridge in no time.

CHAPTER X

Buffalo – The Niagara Falls – A Frost – Rochester to the Rescue of Buffalo – Cleveland – I Meet Jonathan – Phantasmagoria

Buffalo, January 14.

This town is situated twenty-seven miles from Niagara Falls. The Americans say that the Buffalo people can hear the noise of the water-fall quite distinctly. I am quite prepared to believe it. However, an hour's journey by rail and then a quarter of an hour's sleigh ride will take you from Buffalo within sight of this, perhaps the grandest piece of scenery in the world. Words cannot describe it. You spend a couple of hours visiting every point of view. You are nailed, as it were, to the ground, feeling like a pigmy, awestruck in the presence of nature at her grandest. The snow was falling thickly, and though it made the view less clear, it added to the grandeur of the scene.

I went down by the cable car to a level with the rapids and the place where poor Captain Webb was last seen alive; a presumptuous pigmy, he, to dare such waters as these. His widow keeps a little bazaar near the falls and sells souvenirs to the visitors.

It was most thrilling to stand within touching distance of that great torrent of water, called the Niagara Falls, in distinction to the Horseshoe Falls, to hear the roar of it as it fell. The idea of force it gives one is tremendous. You stand and wonder how many ages it has been roaring on, what eyes besides your own have gazed awestruck at its mighty rushing, and wonder if the pigmies will ever do what they say they will; one day make those columns of water their servants to turn wheels at their bidding.

We crossed the bridge over to the Canadian side, and there we had the whole grand panorama before our eyes.

It appears that it is quite a feasible thing to run the rapids in a barrel. Girls have done it, and it may become the fashionable sport for American girls in the near future. It has been safely accomplished plenty of times by young fellows up for an exciting day's sport.

On the Canadian shore was a pretty villa where Princess Louise stayed while she painted the scene. Some of the pretty houses were fringed all round the roofs and balconies in the loveliest way, with icicles a yard long, and loaded with snow. They looked most beautiful.

On the way back we called at Prospect House, a charming hotel which I hope, if ever I go near Buffalo again, I shall put up at for a day or two, to see the neighborhood well.

Two years ago I was lucky enough to witness a most curious sight. The water was frozen under the falls, and a natural bridge, formed by the ice, was being used by venturesome people to

cross the Niagara River on. This occurs very seldom.

•••

I have had a fizzle to-night. I almost expected it. In a hall that could easily have accommodated fifteen hundred people, I lectured to an audience of about three hundred. Fortunately they proved so intelligent, warm, and appreciative that I did not feel at all depressed; but my impresario did. However, he congratulated me on having been able to do justice to the *causerie*, as if I had had a bumper house.

I must own that it is much easier to be a tragedian than a light comedian before a $200 house.

•••

Cleveland, O., January 15.

The weather is so bad that I shall be unable to see anything of this city, which, people tell me, is very beautiful.

On arriving at the Weddell House, I met a New York friend.

"Well," said he, "how are you getting on? Where do you come from?"

"From Buffalo," said I, pulling a long face.

"What is the matter? Don't you like the Buffalo people?"

"Yes; I liked those I saw. I should have liked to extend my love

to a larger number. I had a fizzle; about three hundred people. Perhaps I drew all the brain of Buffalo."

"How many people do you say you had in the hall?" said my friend.

"About three hundred."

"Then you must have drawn a good many people from Rochester, I should think," said he quite solemnly.

In reading the Buffalo newspapers this morning, I noticed favorable criticisms of my lecture; but while my English was praised, so far as the language went, severe comments were passed on my pronunciation. In England, where the English language is spoken with a decent pronunciation, I never once read a condemnation of my pronunciation of the English language.

I will not appear again in Buffalo until I feel much improved.

•••

En route to Pittsburg, January 16.

The American railway stations have special waiting rooms for ladies – not, as in England, places furnished with looking-glasses, where they can go and arrange their bonnets, etc. No, no. Places where they can wait for the trains, protected against the contamination of man, and where they are spared the sight of that eternal little round piece of furniture with which the floors of the whole of the United States are dotted.

At Cleveland Station, this morning, I met Jonathan, such as he is represented in the comic papers of the world. A man of sixty, with long straight white hair falling over his shoulders; no mustache, long imperial beard, a razor-blade-shaped nose, small keen eyes, and high prominent cheek-bones, the whole smoking the traditional cigar; the Anglo-Saxon indianized – Jonathan. If he had had a long swallow-tail coat on, a waistcoat ornamented with stars, and trowsers with stripes, he might have sat for the cartoons of *Puck* or *Judge*.

In the car, Jonathan came and sat opposite me. A few minutes after the train had started, he said:

"Going to Pittsburg, I guess."

"Yes," I replied.

"To lecture?"

"Oh, you know I lecture?"

"Why, certainly; I heard you in Boston ten days ago."

He offered me a cigar, told me his name – I mean his three names – what he did, how much he earned, where he lived, how many children he had; he read me a poem of his own composition, invited me to go and see him, and entertained me for three hours and a half, telling me the history of his life, etc. Indeed, it was Jonathan.

•••

All the Americans I have met have written a poem

(pronounced *pome*). Now I am not generalizing. I do not say that all the Americans have written a poem, I say *all the Americans I have met*.

•••

Pittsburg (same day later).

I lecture here to-night under the auspices of the Press Club of the town. The president of the club came to meet me at the station, in order to show me something of the town.

I like Pittsburg very much. From the top of the hill, which you reach in a couple of minutes by the cable car, there is a most beautiful sight to contemplate: one never to be forgotten.

On our way to the hotel, my kind friend took me to a fire station, and asked the man in command of the place to go through the performance of a fire-call for my own edification.

Now, in two words, here is the thing.

You touch the fire bell in your own house. That causes the name of your street and the number of your house to appear in the fire station; it causes all the doors of the station to open outward. Wait a minute – it causes whips which are hanging behind the horses, to lash them and send them under harnesses that fall upon them and are self-adjusting; it causes the men, who are lying down on the first floor, to slide down an incline and fall on the box and steps of the cart. And off they gallop. It

takes about two minutes to describe it as quickly as possible. It only takes fourteen seconds to do it. It is the nearest approach to phantasmagoria that I have yet seen in real life.

CHAPTER XI

A Great Admirer – Notes on Railway Traveling – Is America a Free Nation? – A Pleasant Evening in New York

In the vestibule train from Pittsburg to New York, January 17.

This morning, before leaving the hotel in Pittsburg, I was approached by a young man who, after giving me his card, thanked me most earnestly for my lecture of last night. In fact, he nearly embraced me.

"I never enjoyed myself so much in my life," he said.

I grasped his hand.

"I am glad," I replied, "that my humble effort pleased you so much. Nothing is more gratifying to a lecturer than to know he has afforded pleasure to his audience."

"Yes," he said, "it gave me immense pleasure. You see, I am engaged to be married to a girl in town. All her family went to your show, and I had the girl at home all to myself. Oh! I had such a good time! Thank you so much! Do lecture here again soon."

And, after wishing me a pleasant journey, he left me. I was glad to know I left at least one friend and admirer behind me in Pittsburg.

•••

I had a charming audience last night, a large and most appreciative one. I was introduced by Mr. George H. Welshons, of the Pittsburg *Times*, in a neat little speech, humorous and very gracefully worded. After the lecture, I was entertained at supper in the rooms of the Press Club, and thoroughly enjoyed myself with the members. As I entered the Club, I was amused to see two journalists, who had heard me at the lecture discourse on chewing, go to a corner of the room, and there get rid of their *wads*, before coming to shake hands with me.

•••

If you have not journeyed in a vestibule train of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, you do not know what it is to travel in luxurious comfort. Dining saloon, drawing room, smoking room, reading room with writing tables, supplied with the papers and a library of books, all furnished with exquisite taste and luxury. The cookery is good and well served.

The day has passed without adventures, but in comfort. We left Pittsburg at seven in the morning. At nine we passed Johnstown. The terrible calamity that befell that city two years ago was before my mind's eye; the town suddenly inundated, the

people rushing on the bridge, and there caught and burnt alive. America is the country for great disasters. Everything here is on a huge scale. Toward noon, the country grew hilly, and, for an hour before we reached Harrisburg, it gave me great enjoyment, for in America, where there is so much sameness in the landscapes, it is a treat to see the mountains of Central Pennsylvania breaking the monotony of the huge flat stretch of land.

The employees (I must be careful not to say "servants") of the Pennsylvania Railroad are polite and form an agreeable contrast to those of the other railway companies. Unhappily, the employees whom you find on board the Pullman cars are not in the control of the company.

•••

The train will reach Jersey City for New York at seven to-night. I shall dine at my hotel.

About 5.30 it occurred to me to go to the dining-room car and ask for a cup of tea. Before entering the car I stopped at the lavatory to wash my hands. Some one was using the basin. It was the conductor, the autocrat in charge of the dining car, a fat, sleek, chewing, surly, frowning, snarling cur.

He turned round.

"What do you want?" said he.

"I should very much like to wash my hands," I timidly ventured.

"You see very well I am using the basin. You go to the next car."

I came to America this time with a large provision of philosophy, and quite determined to even enjoy such little scenes as this. So I quietly went to the next lavatory, returned to the dining-car, and sat down at one of the tables.

"Will you, please, give me a cup of tea?" I said to one of the colored waiters.

"I can't do dat, sah," said the negro. "You can have dinnah."

"But I don't want *dinnah*," I replied; "I want a cup of tea."

"Den you must ask dat gem'man if you can have it," said he, pointing to the above mentioned "gentleman."

I went to him.

"Excuse me," said I, "are you the nobleman who runs this show?"

He frowned.

"I don't want to dine; I should like to have a cup of tea."

He frowned a little more, and deigned to hear my request to the end.

"Can I?" I repeated.

He spoke not; he brought his eyebrows still lower down, and solemnly shook his head.

"Can't I really?" I continued.

At last he spoke.

"You can," quoth he, "for a dollar."

And, taking the bill of fare in his hands, without wasting any

more of his precious utterances, he pointed out to me:

"Each meal one dollar."

The argument was unanswerable.

I went back to my own car, resumed my seat, and betook myself to reflection.

What I cannot, for the life of me, understand is why, in a train which has a dining car and a kitchen, a man cannot be served with a cup of tea, unless he pays the price of a dinner for it, and this notwithstanding the fact of his having paid five dollars extra to enjoy the extra luxury of this famous vestibule train.

After all, this is one out of the many illustrations one could give to show that whatever Jonathan is, he is not the master in his own house.

The Americans are the most docile people in the world. They are the slaves of their servants, whether these are high officials, or the "reduced duchesses" of domestic service. They are so submitted to their lot that they seem to find it quite natural.

The Americans are lions governed by bull-dogs and asses.

They have given themselves a hundred thousand masters, these folks who laugh at monarchies, for example, and scorn the rule of a king, as if it were better to be bullied by a crowd than by an individual.

In America, the man who pays does not command the paid. I have already said it; I will maintain the truth of the statement that, in America, the paid servant rules. Tyranny from above is bad; tyranny from below is worse.

Of my many first impressions that have deepened into convictions, this is one of the firmest.

When you arrive at an English railway station, all the porters seem to say: "Here is a customer, let us treat him well." And it is who shall relieve you of your luggage, or answer any questions you may be pleased to ask. They are glad to see you.

In America, you may have a dozen parcels, not a hand will move to help you with them. So Jonathan is obliged to forego the luxury of hand baggage, so convenient for long journeys.

When you arrive at an American station, the officials are all frowning and seem to say: "Why the deuce don't you go to Chicago by some other line instead of coming here to bother us?"

This subject reminds me of an interesting fact, told me by Mr. Chauncey M. Depew on board the *Teutonic*. When tram-cars were first used in the States, it was a long time before the drivers and conductors would consent to wear any kind of uniform, so great is the horror of anything like a badge of paid servitude. Now that they do wear some kind of uniform, they spend their time in standing sentry at the door of their dignity, and in thinking that, if they were polite, you would take their affable manners for servility.

•••

Everett House, New York. (Midnight.)

So many charming houses have opened their hospitable doors to me in New York that, when I am in this city, I have soon forgotten the little annoyances of a railway journey or the hardships of a lecture tour.

After dining here, I went to spend the evening at the house of Mr. Richard Watson Gilder, the poet, and editor of the *Century Magazine*, that most successful of all magazines in the world. A circulation of nearly 300,000 copies – just think of it! But it need not excite wonder in any one who knows this beautiful and artistic periodical, to which all the leading *littérateurs* of America lend their pens, and the best artists their pencils.

Mrs. Richard Watson Gilder is one of the best and most genial hostesses in New York. At her Fridays, one meets the cream of intellectual society, the best known names of the American aristocracy of talent.

To-night I met Mr. Frank R. Stockton, the novelist, Mr. Charles Webb, the humorist, Mr. Frank Millet, the painter, and his wife, and a galaxy of celebrities and beautiful women, all most interesting and delightful people to meet. Conversation went on briskly all over the rooms till late.

The more I see of the American women, the more confirmed I become in my impression that they are typical; more so than the men. They are like no other women I know. The brilliancy of their conversation, the animation of their features, the absence of affectation in their manners, make them unique. There are no women to compare to them in a drawing-room.

There are none with whom I feel so much at ease. Their beauty, physically speaking, is great; but you are still more struck by their intellectual beauty, the frankness of their eyes, and the naturalness of their bearing.

I returned to the Everett House, musing all the way on the difference between the American women and the women of France and England. The theme was attractive, and, remembering that to-morrow would be an off-day for me, I resolved to spend it in going more fully into this fascinating subject with pen and ink.

CHAPTER XII

Notes on American Women – Comparisons – How Men Treat Women and Vice Versa – Scenes and Illustrations

New York, January 18.

A man was one day complaining to a friend that he had been married twenty years without being able to understand his wife. "You should not complain of that," remarked the friend. "I have been married to my wife two years only, and I understand her perfectly."

The leaders of thought in France have long ago proclaimed that woman was the only problem it was not given to man to solve. They have all tried, and they have all failed. They all acknowledge it – but they are trying still.

Indeed, the interest that woman inspires in every Frenchman is never exhausted. Parodying Terence, he says to himself, "I am a man, and all that concerns woman interests me." All the French modern novels are studies, analytical, dissecting studies, of woman's heart.

To the Anglo-Saxon mind, this may sometimes appear a trifle puerile, if not also ridiculous. But to understand this feeling, one

must remember how a Frenchman is brought up.

In England, boys and girls meet and play together; in America and Canada, they sit side by side on the same benches at school, not only as children of tender age, but at College and in the Universities. They get accustomed to each other's company; they see nothing strange in being in contact with one another, and this naturally tends to reduce the interest or curiosity one sex takes in the other. But in France they are apart, and the ball-room is the only place where they can meet when they have attained the age of twenty!

Strange to reflect that young people of both sexes can meet in ball-rooms without exciting their parents' suspicions, and that they cannot do so in class-rooms!

When I was a boy at school in France, I can well remember how we boys felt on the subject. If we heard that a young girl, say the sister of some school-fellow, was with her mother in the common parlor to see her brother, why, it created a commotion, a perfect revolution in the whole establishment. It was no use trying to keep us in order. We would climb on the top of the seats or of the tables to endeavor to see something of her, even if it were but the top of her hat, or a bit of her gown across the recreation yard at the very end of the building. It was an event. Many of us would even immediately get inspired and compose verses addressed to the unknown fair visitor. In these poetical effusions we would imagine the young girl carried off by some miscreant, and we would fly to her rescue, save her, and throw ourselves at her

feet to receive her hand as our reward. Yes, we would get quite romantic or, in plain English, quite silly. We could not imagine that a woman was a reasoning being with whom you can talk on the topics of the day, or have an ordinary conversation on any ordinary subject. To us a woman was a being with whom you can only talk of love, or fall in love, or, maybe, for whom you may die of love.

This manner of training young men goes a long way toward explaining the position of woman in France as well as her ways. It explains why a Frenchman and a Frenchwoman, when they converse together, seldom can forget that one is a man and the other a woman. It does not prove that a Frenchwoman must necessarily be, and is, affected in her relations with men; but it explains why she does not feel, as the American woman does, that a man and woman can enjoy a *tête-à-tête* free from all those commonplace flatteries, compliments, and platitudes that badly-understood gallantry suggests. Many American ladies have made me forget, by the easiness of their manner and the charm and naturalness of their conversation, that I was speaking with women, and with lovely ones, too. This I could never have forgotten in the company of French ladies.

On account of this feeling, and perhaps also of the difference which exists between the education received by a man and that received by a woman in France, the conversation will always be on some light topics, literary, artistic, dramatic, social, or other. Indeed, it would be most unbecoming for a man to start a very

serious subject of conversation with a French lady to whom he had just been introduced. He would be taken for a pedant or a man of bad breeding.

In America, men and women receive practically the same education, and this of course enlarges the circle of conversation between the sexes. I shall always remember a beautiful American girl, not more than twenty years of age, to whom I was once introduced in New York, as she was giving to a lady sitting next to her a most detailed description of the latest bonnet invented in Paris, and who, turning toward me, asked me point-blank if I had read M. Ernest Renan's "History of the People of Israel." I had to confess that I had not yet had time to read it. But she had, and she gave me, without the remotest touch of affectation or pedantry, a most interesting and learned analysis of that remarkable work. I related this incident in "Jonathan and his Continent." On reading it, some of my countrymen, critics and others, exclaimed: "We imagine the fair American girl had a pair of gold spectacles on."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.