

LEADING THE GRAND TRUNK LIFE — By Kate Masterson

THOUSANDS of men and women the world over live in their trunks from one year's end to the other; some from necessity, and others, strangely enough, from choice. They chase climates for reasons connected with physical well being, or, through the varying conditions of professional and commercial life, are compelled to be forever on the go, packing and repacking boxes and hampers for cabs, trains, and boats, consulting timetables, telegraphing and telephoning for accommodations, arriving, departing, restlessly pursuing an activity that keeps them, at all events, more youthful and more limber muscled than the humans of settled habitation whose summer jaunting is their only change from home.

When pleasure and excitement are the desires of those who take up the hotel existence, there is of course a constant following after the joys that offer in the way of theaters, drives, shopping, the entertaining of new acquaintances, the furthering sometimes of social ambitions,—which are often fostered oddly by life in a fashionable hotel, where a certain reflected glamour hangs about the man and woman that at home would be quite unimpressive individuals,—after-dinner napping or yawning over the newspaper, studying, dreaming, playing cards, or doing one of the many things that people do to while away the quiet fireside hours, loved by home people as sincerely as they are detested by the typical hotel man and woman, who find life unendurable except under the hard white light of the hotel electric, where anyone who has the price to strut with sufficient whoop-la and a manner of insulting surety may be, perchance, a millionaire.

And yet there is often a pathos under all this flash and shine of the men and women of the big hotel world, like so many carefully made up sunbursts of flesh and blood ranged along the plush and gilt corridors, indulging in canned conversation, while they are kept under the espionage of detectives disguised as society men, scanning the throng passing and repassing, keeping a keen eye out for crooks, many of whom manage to mix and move among this dazzling bunch in the various guises that deceive the easily gulled.

The pathos exists not among the restless seekers after excitement, but among many actually driven to this electric lit life through bereavement, trouble of all kinds, bad health, the thousand and one setbacks that so often make life too heart-searing among the accustomed scenes of home. There are warriors in war paint of satin and broadcloth fighting against death and warding off pecuniary disasters by making a bold appearance in these halls where one is taken for what he seems to be by nine persons out of ten.

This life of hotels has grown up to almost terrible proportions within the last dozen years or so. Thousands of outsiders dine in the onyx halls night after night who after their coffee and liqueurs relapse into apartments of more or less magnificence, grateful for a glimpse of brightness, the taste of attractively served foods, bowing waiters, drifts of music, the sheen and the odors of rich gowns, flowers, the tinkle of women's laughter, the very frou-frou of life itself—life for the moment divested of its tragedies and its inevitable to-morrows.

This terrible growth has produced, as such growths do, a monster, a tremendous system, which we must call the Grand Trunk Life. There is no longer left even a vestige of the oldtime inn. In fact, there is little left of the old fashioned hotel, to which people went only when obliged to do so by the exigencies of travel, which old fashioned folks always avoided by staying with relatives, even when their means made it entirely possible for them to choose any mode of living they preferred when away from their own homes.

The great modern hotel of to-day stands on a different basis. So intensely popular has its mode of existence become that dozens of these gorgeous places rear their electric crowns in all our big cities, along the avenues, the side streets, up town, down town, each presenting its opportunity for an imitation of celluloid domesticity that has no obligations beyond the regular meeting-of-the-weekly-bill and the ordinarily decent behavior required of civilized persons the world over. And no questions asked!

The hotel being a system rather than an inn, it aims in many ways to make an impressive showing. We none of us glory in the old fashioned roadside hostelry except when we travel abroad and find these places so delightfully quaint. But in our own cities we run to noiseless elevators, porcelain, silver, mirrors, brass beds, gorgeous lighting effects, and in-

novations in the way of "conveniences" which fairly take away the breath with their scope and daring, as well as their entire attachment to the system rather than to the individual comfort of the guest.

One of the weirdest of these effects impresses itself upon you now, when the boy, having grasped your traveling bag on your arrival, leads you from the elevator through a dim hallway, where on the carpeted floor, always directly in the way, is stretched a dark, globby, and occasionally convulsive tubing of rubber.

The steam heated air is filled with an ebbing sibilance, and the whole effect is so suggestive of the garden of Eden that if you are a woman you pause in momentary expectation of having an apple handed to you on the end of a forked tongue.

But round the corner you find a man with a hoe apparently scraping the carpet, and you realize that you are in the presence of one of the new air brooms or electric cleaners, of which there are now dozens of varieties to be had.

In hotels, where they seem to be in operation night and day, they are impressive of a high degree of hygienic cleanliness, an effect that never could be approached by a maid with a broom. Strangely enough, the new inventions do not seem to get under the beds any better than the old methods, proving the irresistible power of mind over matter.

Simeon Ford once said that he would rather have



Rushing from the Mountains to Florida or Atlantic City.

a revolver drawn on him than the whisk broom with which the hotel hallboy always greets a male guest. Women miss this polite attention. They are never brushed except when they travel in parlor cars, and even then it is looked on as a rather daring thing to have done. Men, on the contrary, are continually being broomed off a dozen times a day, whether they need it or not.

But women arriving at hotels always used to have the carpet sweeper projected into their lives before they had fairly unpinned their veils. A girl would force an entrance and run one of the machines playfully about in the center of the floor. It was a sacred rite which had to be done in your presence, and it gave you no chance to complain of a badly cared for apartment.

The patent cleaner of to-day has as a symbol almost ousted the carpet sweeper; but the main point is to force the operation upon your intelligence rather than to conduct the cleaning quietly and inoffensively. From Maine to the Gulf throughout the entire hydra-tailed hotel system you trip over the means without particularly luxuriating in any visible result.

Of course the Grand Trunk Livers have more to think of than such trifles as this, rushing as they do from their moose hunting in the mountains to motor

racing in Florida or chair rolling at Atlantic City. They are like the trained dogs of vaudeville, who sit up, beg, roll over, and play dead in time to music.

From the rooms where they may gibber helplessly before the child's-size wardrobes, in which anything longer than a man's waistcoat will trail on the floor under lights fifteen feet up in the air that refuse to shed any glow on the more adjacent territory, with trunks piled up before the one long mirror and the rest of the room full of bed,—fitted, by the way, with some new kind of concrete self-bouncing mattress,—they pass on and down to the dining room, where life becomes imperatively classy.

Whether you are suffering from despised love or dyspepsia, matters little to the personage that now approaches you with a long gliding motion and an ingratiating expression of repressed feeling, while he sizes you up, figuring on your social status, ready money, and tendency to liberality or the reverse.

Max O'Rell sounded the note of this grand entry to an American hotel dining room in his impressions of some years ago when he wrote of the manner in which you are pounced upon and led like a sentenced criminal to the seat the waiter desires you to sit in, rather than one you might prefer. As you go up or down or across the room you must now adjust your gait to that of your leader. If he gallops, you must at least trot; if he be in a nonchalant mood and saunters idly, you can trail along like a pallbearer.

Should you by any chance venture to disapprove of the special chair, facing north, south, or due east, you will be regarded as distinctly eccentric. This is one time—or three times, maybe—in the day of the Grand Trunk Life when what you wish or want or how you feel or in which direction you might care to look or not to look, matters not two whoops.

There are certain foods that the system decrees you should order at certain times of the day. To

depart from this rule, to omit the morning cereal or the evening raw oyster, is to stamp yourself as unfit. Should you object to anything as being undone, improperly hot, or cold plates, decayed or dead foods, there is chaos, and the head waiter with a face wrinkled like an autumn leaf comes hobby-horsing up with a look of accusing reproach which writes you down as "crank" so that all may see.

Now this is the way the woman person alone gets it when she elects to live the Grand Trunk Life. Men possibly can swear and have what they want. A close study of this deplorable masculine custom proves that it is the only way in which certain skulls are reached and the pulpy mass within agitated. If Carolyn Wells or Elbert Hubbard would only invent some nice ladylike curses for hotel use, the woman's cause would be helped some.

Now, while you dally with the hot milk you have not ordered while waiting for the cream you have requested, laughingly observing your coffee growing cold in the cup, inclining your head in grateful recognition of the one-cent slab of butter the omnibus doles out to you as though it was a Pope's blessing, you have leisure to study the ornate gilding of the pillared walls, the chandeliers vibrating from the braying of a band that there is no escape from in the Life. Tumpy—tum! Tumpy—tum!

At the dinner hour, the Grand Trunk woman drapes herself in a "costume," hangs all the available junketry she can reach on her person, makes up as for a theater entrance, and with a certain gorgeous goo-gooing of the head waiter,—a sort of stage business of radiant beauty,—she slides like the Iron Man to her base, a chair well out of reach, with a good lookout both ways and well in view of all parts of the house. Tumpy—tum! Tumpy—tum!

This degree, this perfect hotel manner, is of

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