

ROBATHAN ON HIS TRAVELS

Budget of Incident and Anecdote Concerning the Old Country.

SOME QUEER ENGLISH MANNERS

Abominable Lack of Conveniences in the Matter of Luggage Transportation—Railway Compartments That Resemble Prison Cells—Swansea and Its Peculiarities—Evils of the Tipping Nuisance—Other Sprightly Notes of Travel.

For the Scranton Tribune.

That first impressions are not lasting can truthfully be said. If they were I would be the most disappointed individual in Scranton today. For four days previous to my starting on my recent trip to Europe I lived in a state of anticipation. It is said that half of our life is spent in anticipation. How few of them become realizations! Twenty years ago I visited Europe and the continent with my parents. Being a child I was unable to form an intelligent idea of the customs and habits and appreciate the scenery and places of interest in the old world. For the past ten years it has been my greatest desire to again cross the Atlantic and view the sights through eyes that have had the advantage of twenty years more of experience. I went, I saw, I am satisfied. After getting my baggage out of the custom house at Liverpool the morning of my arrival I took a cab and drove to Lime street station where I was to book, as they call it there, for Swansea, at which place I intended to spend Sunday. I reached there ten minutes before it was time for my train to start and after procuring my ticket I started to look for my trunk which had preceded me.

PLEASURES OF TRAVELING

I was prepared to put up with some inconvenience as regards the checking of my baggage for I had been informed before leaving here that the system was much different, but I was hardly prepared for the trouble that was in store for me. After some difficulty I finally located my baggage out on the sidewalk in the rear of the station. It was surrounded by a group of half a dozen men who gazed on it with as much amazement as I would at a three-headed horse. Rushing up to them, for my time now was becoming limited, I said to one of the group: "I want this trunk put on the Swansea train."

"You will have to get a porter, sir," was the response.

Two minutes and my trunk would be gone, and the porter was many yards away. At last I managed to reach him and told him I wanted my trunk put on the train.

"Can't now, sir. I'm busy with this lady's grip."

"But I have only got half a minute before my train will start."

"Can't help it, sir; can't do two things at once, sir. Get one of those other fellows, sir."

ONE CASE OF NECESSITY. I was desperate. That train I had to catch. I was under engagement to attend divine service the following morning at the leading church in South Wales and was to be the guest of the minister; that trunk I must have for it contained the only respectable bit of clothes I had in my name. Heroic measures must be adopted. I spied a boy standing near. He was my only salvation. Running up to him like one who has lost his reason, I shouted in accents loud and clear:

"Do you want to make a quarter?"

He looked at me with astonishment and said in an alarmed voice:

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"Do you want to earn a quarter? Come, help me with my trunk."

"Earn a what, sir?"

"Why a quarter. I mean—I mean—a sixpence—a shilling."

ANOTHER DILEMMA. The bell was ringing and the guard was waving his flag as we rushed up to the luggage van and threw in my trunk. The baggage man looked at it for a minute and then said:

"Where for, sir?"

"For Swansea," I shouted.

"You will have to get it labelled, sir," he replied.

I shoved a shilling into the hand of the man who had so nobly come to my rescue in carrying my trunk and told him to run and get me a label. He returned in a few seconds with that very essential article and after handing it to the baggage man I jumped into the railway carriage as the shrill whistle of the locomotive sounded and the train started out. I was all perspiration and straining every muscle to their utmost tension. I glanced around to see what kind of a place I had got into, and found that I was shut up in a little compartment, four by six, and had for my companions in misery nine other unfortunate victims, two of whom claimed allegiance to the Stars and Stripes.

We sat facing each other, five on a seat. I mustered up courage enough to ask one of the gentlemen how long it would take to run to Swansea, and thought that both my heart and back would break when he replied:

"Eight hours."

I was sure I would die before I reached my destination, and was wondering what the verdict of the coroner's jury would be as to the cause of death. Making the best, however, of what I considered up to this time to be a very bad bargain, I drew forth a good cigar and resolved to make myself as comfortable as surroundings would permit. The thought of being cramped up in that compartment for eight long hours was indeed anything but pleasant, and had it not been for the magnificent scenery through which we passed—the rugged hills, beautiful valleys and streams, the meadows and hedges, all of which served to draw my mind from my uncomfortable position—it is hard to tell what rash deed I might have been tempted to commit.

FIRST GLIMPSE OF SWANSEA. When I reached Swansea it was dark and raining hard. Being Saturday, there were thousands out doing their shopping for Sunday, the majority of whom were walking in the middle of the street. Street lamps were conspicuous by their absence. Sidewalks that were about the width of our curb stones could be seen but were not used. They were evidently more for adornment than for use. As I trudged along in the wet and dirt I was the most discontented individual it is possible for you to imagine, and my first impressions of Wales, I can assure you, were anything but charming. A good dose of Welsh hospitality, a splendid supper and a most excellent bed completely changed my mind.

Swansea is an antique old city of about the same population as Scranton. Its streets, in the heart of the city, are narrow and its buildings old-fashioned in design. This, however, does not apply to the new section of the city, where more modern styles of architecture can be found and streets as wide as any we have in home. It is situated on Swansea bay, which is by all means one of the finest bays in the world, not even excepting that of Naples. Its commercial interests are something enormous. Being a seaport city, it has business relations with every part of the globe, and it is, however, as in fact do all cities of Europe, the hustle and activity that are so prevalent in American cities.

THE SEDATE BRITISH TRADESMAN.

The business man of Europe is more methodical and careful in his every-day life than is his Yankee cousin. He takes his life as he comes and gets a small return on his money invested. Health and comfort are his ideals of what a fortune should consist of, and he laughs to think of his foolish American scrambling and fighting to accumulate wealth, and then, when he has made out "glibly with parasites or heart failure and have a large funeral. He is a philosopher. He reasons that it is better to go slow and take part in enjoying the comforts that can be derived from a small fortune and live to a ripe old age, than to labor and toil to the death in a few years, and then die and leave it to the law courts to decide who is the rightful heir. His philosophy is sound and it would be well if some of our would-be millionaires would follow his example. If they did, the coming generation would have a strong and more healthy race of young men and women.

Probably what surprised me more than anything else during my visit was the account of drinking that is done there. Everybody drinks, from the smallest child to the gray-haired old grandfather, and it is thought perfectly proper, long as you keep within the lines of common reason. During the first week I was there I was invited to take dinner with a gentleman of position and wealth, who had an interesting family, two of whom were young ladies, aged 19 and 25 years respectively. At dinner the servant went to each person and asked him what he would have to drink. Some had sherry, others claret. Coming from a city where so recently there had been a crusade against the saloons, I took water, but the young lady of 19 took my breath away when she said, "Scotch whisky, please." She drank it with the same ease and enjoyment that a Scotchman would drink soda water; and before the meal was over had the dose repeated. It is doing them but justice, though, to say that the amount of whisky they drink does them less injury than the amount drunk here, for they always dilute it, adding equally as much water as whisky.

THE CUSTOM OF TIPPING.

Probably the worst feature of European life that an American traveler has to contend with, is their system of tipping. At the hotel the employes from the "moids," who shine the corridors for your palatial exteriors, to the head steward, who looks after the affairs of the hotel, all expect you to tip them before you leave; and in case you are absent-minded and forget that very important duty, they are not too modest to remind you of it. The railway porter who puts your trunk in the baggage van, the guard who looks you in the railway carriage, the pretty barmaid who waits on you at the "pub," the driver who you hire to drive the horse and trap if you take a ride, all expect you to pay tribute to them by giving a shilling or sixpence. It is part of the fact that it was served by a charming young English girl. When I was through I asked her for my bill, and happened to have the exact change in my pocket. I handed it to her, reached for my overcoat and umbrella, and started for the door, when she called me back.

"Have you not forgotten something, sir?" she said.

"No, I guess not; I have my coat, gloves and umbrella," I replied.

"But attendance, sir?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon. In the country that I come from a young lady would consider it an insult if I attempted to offer her a tip, and I thought the same rule prevailed here," I said, handing her sixpence.

"Oh, no, sir; we take all we can get."

SOME ENGLISH SUPERIORITY.

With these inconveniences and peculiar mode of living no doubt you wonder why so many Americans visit Europe yearly. It is not to be wondered at after you have once made the trip. While it is true that their customs seem strange to us and their facilities for enjoying life appear crude, they nevertheless have many virtues that we do not. While their railway coaches are not as well adapted for comfort as ours, they have railroads that are far superior to ours. It may take them longer to carry you a hundred miles, but a collision or a derailed train is a very rare occurrence. They have not got the massive buildings and beautiful design in architecture, but they have ancient castles and abbeys that take your mind back into early ages. They may have more rainy days but you never hear of a death by sunstroke. So that, take it all in all, there are as many commendable features and as good opportunities for enjoying life in England as we have. Space will not permit me to write my observations concerning the principal government, the condition of the laboring classes, the effect of the passage of the Wilson bill on the tin industry, and their old ruins. Do I hear some one ask if I would like to live there? In reply, I would say that the salary of a congressman would have to be increased.

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