

Notes and gleanings

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Differences of taste, as we know to our cost, may make travelling with others almost as much of a penance as those medieval pilgrimages that were taken with peas in the shoes. Yet few will deny that travelling only yields its highest pleasure when it is shared with friends, or with fellow-creatures who are friendly. But even the most congenial companions can spoil our travelling if we are always with them. We must somehow contrive to get away from them now and then and be entirely alone to enjoy the luxury of our own thoughts. Periods of silence and solitude are essential to our well-being and we can cling too closely to our closest friends. The art of travelling consists largely in a wise alternating of conversation and contemplation.

It consists, too, in choosing aright what places we shall see. It is natural to visit as many famous cities and scenes as opportunity may give, yet in our desire to see what everyone sees we may only be ministering to our vanity and aiming at being as "well-travelled" as our fellows. Those who are slaves to convention lose the real charm that travelling offers. No one, perhaps, ever got so much delight from travelling as Montaigne; no one knew its real secrets so well. He jogged along on horseback, avoiding all "show places," exploring the by-ways of Italy and watching with observant eyes the lives and habits of men. Though he went alone he was never lonely; he enjoyed his own thoughts and, being a friendly man, he turned strangers into friends on every road and at every inn. He knew how to travel because he knew how to live.

It seems to me that the writer of this article, who obviously agrees with what Ruskin said, is unduly pessimistic. After all, enjoying travelling is a sequence of sensations. It may be interesting and sweet and instructive to study roads, lanes, villages and villagers, towns and hamlets leisurely, observing minute details, exchanging greetings with the people, etc., etc. But aren't these all sensations and experiences? Just the same, I think, as if one travels quickly and studies whole countries, whole countries, not minutely, but as they present themselves to the fast moving traveller. Again, one gets sensations. Imagine a really swift-flying aeroplane. You would then see not individual fields, hills, valleys, etc., you would see various colours only. But the sensations which the view of these various colours would give you might be just as strong as the milder sensation evoked by listening to the babbling brook. Again, from personal experience I have learnt that it is quite possible to travel by motor car and receive a wealth of impressions which, for a day or two, form a mass of rather blurred pictures in one's mind, but which, and this is important, sort themselves out by-and-by, perhaps a week or so after the journey. The mind can be trained that way, I think, and if that is so, then surely travelling quickly, seeing a lot, receiving a host of impressions in a short time—especially when one cannot afford a long time in which to travel—is the better way of doing travel.

We will now look at the opposite. The hermit has done with travelling. He or she as the case may be, wishes to live as a recluse, right away from the rest of the world, in other words, the hermit does not wish to receive any more outside impressions. Such a one forms the subject of the following, from *The Observer*, 15th June:

Hermit's Cell on Alpine Peak.

A modern hermit's cell is just being finished on the Monte Generoso, the beautiful peak in the very heart of the Italian lakes. It is situated about one hundred feet below the top, within six feet of the Swiss-Italian boundary, and can only be approached by the small footpath which leads along the frontier on the narrow crest of the mountain and is only used by the customs officers on their patrols. Otherwise the hermitage answers its purpose splendidly, standing right above a sheer descent of four thousand feet, a place where an eagle might build his eyrie.

Clinging to the bare precipitous rock of the mountain side without any space to walk around, it looks like a swallow's nest. There is a door at the back and a window in front looking down into the abyss, and far upon the lakes and mountains. But it is well furnished and provided with electric current for lighting, cooking and heating purposes. On its side there is a special water tank, in which the rainwater is being gathered.

The future hermit, who is at present staying in the Kulm Hotel of the Monte Generoso, superintending the finishing touches to her cell is a member of the Italian aristocracy, Marchesa Vitaleschi. A Dutch lady by birth, she married the Marchese, who is twenty years older than she. The Generoso was ever her favourite spot. But her husband never accompanied her. The reason for her retirement is her nerves. She is said not to be able to bear human faces and voices. She will not see any-

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one in her cell. Her supplies will be slipped down from the top on a wire cord, up to the hotel by the little railway, and thence carried to the top by mules. This cost money. The total costs of this very modest little dwelling therefore rise to the very considerable sum of 62,000 Lire.

Over the Jura with a Yacht.

Daily Express, 7th June:

The *Daily Express*, it is true, calls it "Over the Alps" but then, the *Daily Express* has a notoriously feeble idea of Swiss Geography. However, here goes:

M. Van Vroegt, a Dutch millionaire, has a summer residence at Montreux, on Lake Geneva.

M. Van Vroegt also has a palatial yacht.

What more natural than that M. Van Vroegt, when he decided to spend a holiday at Montreux, should wish to have his yacht to sail on the waters of the lake?

The yacht, however, was at Rotterdam, in Holland, and between Holland and Switzerland are the Alps.

But many centuries ago Hannibal transported elephants as well as an army over the Alps.

Why, then, should M. Van Vroegt not transport his yacht in like manner?

With his family and friends he set out from Rotterdam, and, following the Rhine, arrived at Basle.

From there he wished to continue the water journey to Ouchy, on Lake Geneva.

When he was told that the Swiss rivers and lakes were not deep enough to carry such a large yacht from the Rhine to Lake Geneva he became rather angry, and insisted that he must have his yacht for his holiday at Montreux.

Finally an arrangement was made between the millionaire and a Swiss railway company to transport the yacht across Switzerland.

As the yacht was too large to go through the tunnels it had to be dismantled, and the pieces were carried on two specially constructed trucks with low wheels.

The transport took place by night, when there was less traffic.

With many shuntings, the yacht, after eleven days' transport, arrived at Ouchy, near Lausanne, and was launched on the lake under the supervision of M. Van Vroegt.

He paid more than £1,000 for the railway transport alone, but then he has the satisfaction of knowing that his is the finest yacht ever seen on Lake Geneva.

I smiled too when reading that the Swiss Lakes "were not deep enough" for that yacht. *Some Yacht!* Some Geneva Correspondent who sent that bit to the *Daily Express*!



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