

**NOTES ON THE ROAD; BY  
A CANADIAN  
"GUERRILLA," ALIAS  
COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER**

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Notes on the road; by a Canadian "Guerilla," alias commercial traveller by Various

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**VARIOUS**

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BY A

CANADIAN "GUERRILLA,"

ALIAS

COMMERCIAL TRAVELLER.

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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

TO

JAMES G. SHEPHERD, Esq.

OF MONTREAL,

AS A TOKEN OF

THE AUTHOR'S ESTEEM.

## NOTES ON THE ROAD.

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It is possible some fastidious Knight of the Bag may feel his dignity aggrieved by the cognomen "Guerilla," applied, as it is, in conjunction with his honorable calling, and such a one may uncork his vial of wrath and pronounce the author a "demn'd vulgah fellah." Well, so mote it be, there are some thin-skinned, would-be aristocratic members of the brotherhood of commercial travelers, *alias* guerillas, whose only recommendation in the useful line is the faithfulness with which they perform the part of a walking advertisement for their tailor, and their acquaintance with the last new thing in the perfumery biz. To fear the displeasure of such, would betray an unnecessary timidity, I therefore, with all due respect, adhere to the *alias*, and thus express the reason of my so doing.

During the late American war, the guerilla troops attached to both armies particularly distinguished themselves by their uncommon activity and their numerous successful raids; the chief characteristic of the class was a cool assumption, and inimitable *sang froid*—always jolly if provender was plenty, and never hesitating on the score of a formal introduction about making a visit. Their intentions were doubtless less honorable and friendly than their Canadian namesake. The latter, however, emulate them in the following accomplishments: A restless activity, keen scent of fat game at unheard-of distances, a presence of mind that nothing can overcome, and a total disregard of danger, as exemplified by the hundreds of miles they travel on the G. T. R., and dare I add, the professional manner in which they deal with liquid samples; in the latter they are immense. I will not include all the fraternity in this remark, for there are several present to my

mind, who swear by ginger wine and lemonade. Poor fellows, ruining their health, or why do they require so often to obtain a medical certificate; once carry that quarter sheet of foolscap in their pocket, bearing the symbolistic letters, "I D,"—they all seem addicted to cramps and *colliwogs* in the abdominal region, demanding instantaneous internal treatment through the medium of a powerful medicine.

I notice the medicine must be of a palatable taste, for, like the urchin who was blessed with a huge supply of sugar previous to taking his powders, fond remembrance of the first instalment generally induces a call for a little more physic.

Another advantage this same written moral reputation confers upon the owner: when asked to "smile," they, with intense satisfaction, produce the magic lines and assert that they don't drink, in fact are temperance men; but feeling a little squeamish, something they eat for dinner not agreeing with them, don't mind if they take a small decoction of brandy, just to settle things. Good presence of mind, my boys, when that same thing will produce brandy every time you are sensible enough to be temperate on all such common drinks as beer, whiskey, etc. These practitioners are old travellers, thoroughly posted on all the *ins* and *outs*; difficult as a weasel to catch asleep; immense in the line of practical jokes; ready at any time to get off the last new thing on an acquaintance, but slippery as an eel if the individual should undertake to retaliate. These guerillas are muchly suspicious, and are as wary to bite as any trout that ever wore out the patience of the angler.

Well, let us clothe such motives with the mantle of charity. If the disease is of a contagious character, there is a danger of our becoming infected, so let us act unto others as we would they should do unto us, if *us* were placed in the same cold-water predicament. And now, while inculcating charity, the author asks from his brother "knights of the road," their kind consideration and lenient judgement upon the contents of this book. Those who commence these pages with the expectation of reading a work of fiction, and following out some cunningly devised plot of romance, will be *muchly* mistaken.

These lines are merely the record of the sober realities of a commercial travellers' every day life, interspersed with anecdotes and



facts as they really occurred. How many score of times I have heard a novice express his admiration of a guerilla's life, and paint with his own imaginative fancy the jolly times he would have, the sights he would see, and the tales he would hear. Verily, young man, thy dreams of the same are pleasant. Continue to indulge in the soothing delusion; but for the sake of romance, never undertake the sober reality. Your humble servant once felt as you feel; imagined the same jolly prospects ahead, but eight years of actual experience rubbed off the gilt, and provoked many a smile at the remembrance of his first impressions.

My first journey was made in the summer of 1859, over the country west of Toronto. All went well while I continued on the line of railroad, but an evil fate seemed to follow me through the back country—tough customers, and still tougher grub (excuse such plain English) were the daily bill of fare, while the loss said in favor of the sleeping accommodation, the more will I show my regard for truth. Feather beds made from straw, crowned with an almost invisible pillow (called such by courtesy), and lined with two sheets; the dampness of which gave me a nightly attack of the ague, and vividly brought to mind the memory of the man who couldn't get warm; "only this and nothing more," such was my nightly experience, once "inside my chamber door." (The ghost of Poe will please excuse the above quotation.)

I can stand fried pork for breakfast, boiled pork to dinner, and pork cold for supper, and comfort myself with the knowledge, that as the landlord has ordered a barrel of pork, there is a reasonable prospect of a change in the bill of fare when next I travel his way, but I never can and never will forgive him for *dousing* me at night in a miniature mill pond. At his own quotation, wood is bought for one hundred and fifty cents per cord; and were he to bless my bed clothes to the extent of a dime's worth of fuel, he may stuff me with pork to his heart's content, and I promise never to grunt dissatisfaction; his wife may pour down my throat a decoction of *yarbs* and call it genuine gunpowder; she may load my plate with dough-nuts that have been fried in cosmopolitan fat, and the prongs of my fork may bend under the weight of a slice of her home-made pies, warranted to do no harm, as she declares, "they are not like those nasty rich things made by your

city cooks." Honest woman, verily you speak the truth; pieology is a science that no two study alike. Thy tea, however, I will drink—excuse me if I decline a second draught, I never take but one cup. Thy dough-nuts I will try to masticate, and the pie, if there is no opportunity to pocket, I will make it disappear otherwise; but, good old soul, reward me for my martyrdom; air well my bed-linen, and don't compel me to nightly sing, "Oh, mother, where's your darling now?" I believe some enthusiastic Irishman advised pouring spirits down to keep the spirits up. Pity the poor unfortunate who, in Canadian back country villages, undertakes to prove the value of the recipe. The pouring down part of the business may be got through with if your wind-pipe is warranted fire-proof, and a very limited quantity of "tangle-leg," will produce a very respectable drunk; but the melancholy reflections of the succeeding morning are such as fearfully overshadow any benefit derived from the artificial hilarity of the previous night. Some, grown desperate in the suffering, go in for a hair of the dog that bit so sharp. Prophets recommend this as a good cure; well, if the patient is copper-lined and bullet-proof, he may stand the treatment for a limited time; but I defy the New Jersey cast iron steam man to stand the treatment for any lengthened period without a fatal termination. This domestic tinkering with liquor, already more than sufficiently tinkered when purchased from the wholesale dealer, is a disgraceful practice, and cannot be too severely exposed. Country tavern keepers may thoroughly understand the manufacture of a "bran mash," yet not be competent to properly distil a healthy sample of "old rye." Cayenne pepper is a useful article of household consumption; but for humanity's sake, don't fill an old woollen stocking with the fiery powder, and drop the same in the bung hole of a forty-gallon barrel of corn whiskey, and swear the same to be genuine "old rye." Spirits of turpentine is a useful mixing medium in the paint trade; but I object on business principles to paint the interior of my domicile with any such inflammable material. Shun as you would the plague, whiskey at two pence a glass. Fight shy of "Old Tom," Holland's and Hennessys brandy at five cents. The drink, if imbibe you must, call for beer, and trust to luck that no fatal consequences will ensue.

After two weeks of back country experience, I drive into Owen Sound with a joyful anticipation of the good things in store, a clean well aired bed, and a healthy bill of fare. Although the Sound is like the places I have just visited, away back in the wilderness, its central position, large trade, and enterprising inhabitants, have combined to build up a town inferior in appearance to no other place of its size in the Province. The accommodation I met with at the hotel was a decided improvement over the previous fourteen days. The comfortable bed I occupied upon the night of my arrival, led me to a lengthened indulgence in the same, not making my appearance before 9 a. m., for which disgraceful conduct I received a broadside at the hands of the landlord, and a grumbling complaint about providing any breakfast for people who were too lazy to come down at the proper hour. A desire to give credit when it is due, leads me to speak favorably of the accommodation met with; but I decidedly object to say one word in favor of the proprietor, or recommend one friend to the hospitalities of his "hostelrie." He is one of those self-conceited, dogmatic specimens of humanity; in their own estimation, always right, prepared to back an opinion with a volley of oaths that would do credit to a South Sea pirate, and for services rendered, is ever ready to inflict a charge, before which, that of the famous Six Hundred pales into insignificance. With him there is but one way to avoid getting floeced—never ask for your bill when leaving, if you know his proper rate yourself. Count up the number of days you have tarried, and tender him the amount from daily experience of this sort of thing. He thoroughly understands the delicate allusion, and like most men of his stamp, when he finds he cannot cheat you, he invariably apes the jolly-good-fellow line of business, anxious to accommodate regardless of expense.

In connection with the above remarks, I introduce no initials, or name the man I have alluded to. He will be known by the above description to every guerilla on the road; to the opinion of the majority of whom I am willing to defer the truthful correctness of my remarks, while his many victims in our ranks, I doubt not, will declare that I have not been sufficiently condemnatory to do justice to his character.

It was on the occasion of my first visit to Owen Sound that I