

FOLDING BEDOUINS

or ADRIFT in a TRAILER

HOWARD VINCENT O'BRIEN





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FOLDING
BEDOUINS



And so, early of a cold and gray Sunday . . .

FOLDING BEDOUINS

or, ADRIFT IN A TRAILER

By HOWARD VINCENT O'BRIEN

Illustrations by ROBERT MILLS



WILLETT, CLARK & COMPANY

CHICAGO NEW YORK

1936

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Manufactured in The U. S. A. by The Plimpton Press
Norwood, Mass.-La Porte, Ind.

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JUN 27 1936

To

HAL O'FLAHERTY

WHO STARTED IT ALL

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FOLDING
BEDOUINS



So, dear and comfortable reader — hail and farewell!



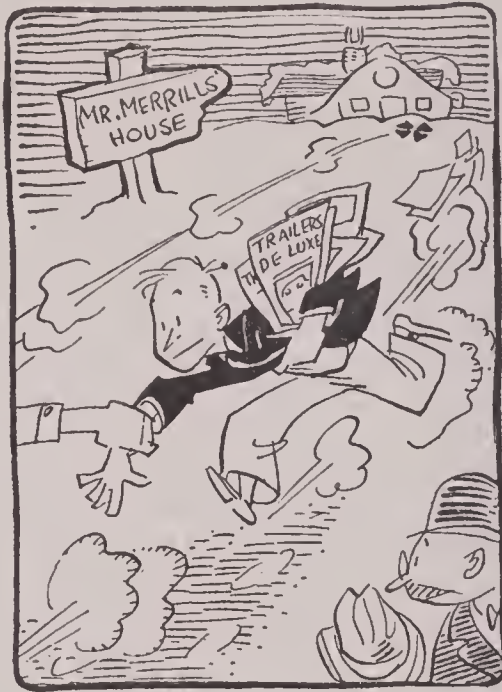
“NO MORE HOUSE CATS!”

A casual observer would say that the thing began only last night; but as I look back on it I realize that the touch-off was down in Texas, months ago. The beach at Corpus Christi was lined with tourist cabins, with signs on many of them proclaiming “No More Vacancies.” This was noteworthy in itself, but when I saw a placard, “No More House Cats,” I decided that congestion must be extreme. Things were certainly crowded when there wasn’t even room for another kitten! On investigation, however, I discovered that part of the sign had been washed away. What it really said was: “No More House *Cars*.”

Thus began my interest in the motor trailer, and for several days I discussed the rosy future of this newcomer in the field of transport. Then my mind drifted to other matters, and I thought no more of homes on wheels.

Last night we dined at the home of a newspaper editor who belongs to the temerarious clan of O’Flaherty. Among the guests were an eminent globe-trotter and journalist; a famous inventor; and a plain but energetic business man.

In the course of conversation, the subject of trailers came up, or was *brought* up by some impish spirit. Anyway, it was like a lighted match in a bucket of benzine. My consort burst suddenly



into flame. Half dazed, I was whisked to a neighbor's house to get a circular about trailers. When we returned with it, we found the whole company blazing like a prairie fire. With the characteristic impetuosity of his tribe the O'Flaherty was on the telephone, calling up a dealer in trailers. Newspaper editors, as you must have noticed in the movies, work fast. Without a second's hesitation, they can dispatch a man to Ethiopia, or have him in a trailer, bound for Florida.

Desperately, I pointed out that it was late Saturday night, and that the trailer-man's place would

be closed. Alas, I did not know the nature of the trailer business. Not only was the dealer there, but he was hot as mustard. In five minutes, all arrangements were concluded.

I now discovered that I had a more venturesome wife and daughter than I had supposed. Things had moved rapidly, but I thought that I could halt them when the speed went too high. Not so. The seed I had myself carelessly sown had germinated like a sunflower. All my musings on the delights of travel by trailer had come back to plague me. Never was a man so hoist by his own petard. I pleaded. I stormed. I brought up every fearsome possibility I could think of, but all to no avail. And so, early of a cold and gray Sunday, prodded on by my family and marching between two sadistic journalists, I was taken to see my fate.

There were all sorts of variations on the main theme in the dealer's establishment, but my family would consent to nothing but the largest. My own preference was for something small — something, indeed, which could be hauled aboard the power car, if need be. My preference there was consulted no more than any of my other preferences in the whole business. In a few minutes I had signed the papers attaching me to an ambulant house, and the blacksmith was busily at work riveting on the hooks. The blows of his sledge still echo in my aging heart!

The financial details were interesting. It ap-

pears that you can rent a portable villa, sleeping four persons (I will be able to report later whether they really sleep or not), for \$4 a day. The deluxe outfit, considerably larger, costs \$2.66 a day more. In either case, the rental can be applied on the purchase price of \$395 or \$795. The dealer assured me that practically every renter becomes so enamored of trailer-travel that purchase immediately follows the first trip. As to that, also, I shall know more later.

The place that I shall call home for the next month now stands outside the door, the target for the gapes of the neighborhood. In and out skip my wife and daughter, stevedoring coal, water, blankets, linen, cutlery, assorted foodstuffs, and enough miscellaneous baggage for the flight of a Tartar tribe. They are jubilant at the prospect of playing gypsy. They chirrup merrily and clap hands at the enterprise of those three fine fellows who set the ball rolling last night.

Who ever said that women were conservative?

While the labors of embarkation go forward, I sit in the house (the stationary one) feeling as Lindbergh must have felt just before he started for Paris. The telephone rings constantly, with well-wishers telling me what happened to a friend who once tried trailer-travel. They tell me that this is no time to travel, anyway. The roads are washed out. The Ohio is rising. There may be hurricanes.

I begin to feel that a place by a hot radiator, listening to the radio, would be more fun than being whipped over icy roads in a covered wagon. There is, however, nothing that will save me now. My blood may have cooled, but that of my women-folk has not. And I am putty in their hands. So, dear and comfortable reader — hail and farewell.



ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME

This morning, aided by the postman, who saved us from beginning our voyage with a knocked-off lamppost, and cheered by friends who brought assorted canned and bottled goods, we cast off for the south.

During the first hour I got a stiff neck trying to see if the trailer was still with us. After that we thought no more about it. One dismal augury is, therefore, exploded. The trailer isn't hard to handle. Proceeding timidly at first, and acutely conscious that our appendage was six inches wider than the car, we soon picked up confidence and speed. So far, our maximum speed has been sixty miles an hour, but I have no doubt that the trailer can be hauled nearly as fast as the car can go. But I also have no doubt that we shall not try it.

As we roll through the wintry landscape I have time to study the interior of our portable mansion. It is a triumph of ingenuity. To one side, in front, is a couch which can be expanded into a double bed. On the other side is a compartment for what are politely called "facilities."

In this compartment is a pump, drawing water

from a thirty-gallon tank. On the floor is a drain, permitting the use of a shower. For sissies who can't take their baths cold, the recommended technique calls for a hot-water bottle, held over the head with one hand, while the soaping is done



with the other. I am assured that this trick has been performed by a 300-pound man. Maybe so, but for the present we are simply doing without baths.

Amidships of our land-going yacht is a sink, also with a pump; underneath, a china cabinet and drawers for linen. Opposite are a coal stove for heat, and a gasoline range for cooking. So far we have been unable to buy the low-test gasoline required, and have managed on canned heat.

Aft of the galley is a pair of Pullman seats, with

a table between. When it comes time for bed-die-by, the combination becomes another double bed.

The trailer is fitted with a double lighting system, one set of lights being attached to the battery of the hauling car, the other being plugged into any outside circuit available. A long cable is supplied for this latter purpose. Electric light, heat and cooking are thus possible during halts.

Numerous windows and an aperture in the roof afford ventilation. All openings are provided with screens and curtains. And that reminds me that I forgot to mention the icebox which holds enough ice for three days.

There are countless drawers and cupboards, and a radio aerial. We haven't yet reached any agreement as to the purpose of these receptacles, and one's spirit is tried by such things as finding his pajamas in a drawer with the tire chains and what is left of a chocolate cake. But these, of course, are trifling vexations, due to inexperience.

Not altogether true, I find, is the notion that travelers in a covered wagon can halt whenever they feel like it. The modern concrete highway does not encourage roadside stops. They are, in fact, illegal. After vainly seeking a wide place in the road, we tried a farmyard. This proved unsatisfactory on two counts: (a) we were nearly stalled in its mud; (b) the farmer was actively out of sympathy with the idea. The lunching place

finally selected was in the heart of a busy town, directly in front of the courthouse.

If the surroundings were not as sylvan as motor gypsying is supposed to demand, the halt proved a great boost for travel by trailer. Everything was fresh and clean, and three people had all they could eat for less than a single restaurant tip. The meal did, however, lack something in privacy. Most of the town gathered to peer through our curtained windows and comment freely on the nature of persons who would elect to fare so far from home in such a conveyance. We felt as insects must feel when being examined under a microscope.

As the sun sank to rest our thoughts turned to the problems of landing for the night. There had been no sign of the luxurious tourist camps about which we had read. Our inquiries elicited only sympathy and blank stares. Most of the camps we passed were closed. The few that were open were dejected collections of unpainted shacks, adrift in a sea of mud. It began to seem that the only alternative to one of these establishments would be the driveway of a coal mine. We tried one, but the coal miners objected — after all, they had to get their trucks out. Finally, when darkness and dismay had overtaken us, we found refuge in the back yard of a gas station.

This stands at the crossing of two main highways, heavily patronized by motor caravans. Prac-

tically all of them, it appears, stop at our station for gas. Most of the drivers do without cutouts. All of them are both conversational and curious. Our covered wagon interests them enormously. It is plain that we are not going to have a very tranquil night.



TWINGES OF NOSTALGIA

One thing is sure — there is no monotony to life in a trailer. Little things keep you constantly amused. If it isn't forgetting to take the top off the smokestack, or hunting for your sock in the icebox, there's some other little domestic detail to keep you occupied all through the day.

The trouble is that one may also be occupied all through the night. In theory, you sleep under the trees, with nothing but the twitter of birds to disturb your slumbers. In practice, you rest if, when and where you can. Last night, after a vain search for a suitable retreat, we again had to resort to a gas station — this time in the heart of a city in Tennessee.

There being nothing to visit except tobacco warehouses, we retired early, hopeful that peace would soon settle on the fretful world. It did not settle soon. In fact, it did not settle at all. We were moored about a yard from an all-night lunch-room which boasted an all-night radio. A continuous stream of trucks roared down the main street, just athwart our rear window. And all through the night the gas station did a lively business. Added to those distractions, and the voices

of natives, a foot from our ears, in hot discussion of our conveyance and our probable characters, there was a busy railroad yard only a stone's throw away.

All this could be endured as a mere passing inconvenience, for, of course, one is not obliged to



park in a main-street gas station. There are cross-roads gas stations. But candor compels me to report that our trailer beds are not as good as the best hotel beds. On the other hand, they are better than bad hotel beds, and at least we have the comfort of knowing who slept in them the night before.

Dressing in a trailer is an art in itself. It is distinctly on the nudist side, and persons of abnormal delicacy might find a trip in a trailer of great psy-

chological benefit. There is nothing like it for the removal of inhibitions. It is also beneficial for those who have become unduly dependent on creature comfort. It is true, of course, that our traveling home has more modern conveniences than have most of the dwellings we pass on the road. But it is also true that when a family eats and sleeps and pecks at the typewriter in a space of something like ninety square feet, one thinks soberly of that adage about two being company and three a crowd.

Only two days out, but I am already convinced that travel by trailer is the coming thing. Most of the people I question along the road agree with me about this. It is equally clear to me, however, that the trailer has been developed to a point considerably higher than the facilities for taking care of it. I hope the great gas companies are alive to their opportunity. A large volume of new business awaits them if they will extend their service by providing bath and toilet facilities, electric current, suitable parking space and commissaries for the sale of ice, coal and other supplies.

In some parts of the country, I am told, this development has taken place. I have seen no evidence that anything more than the rudiments of it have appeared in Indiana, Kentucky or Tennessee. In these regions the trailer is, to a large extent, the problem which the horseless carriage was to the livery stable.

I think it probable that the cheaper hotels will feel the competition of the trailer. The trailer is certainly the most economical method of travel. And its mobility will appeal to many who can afford even the best hotels. They will be willing to sacrifice some comfort for the freedom of movement which the traveling house permits.

However, when I hunt for my razor and find it tucked away in the china cabinet with the stove lid, and then try to shave in a compartment two feet square while my consort uses the pier glass on the other side of the door, my thoughts turn longingly to the white-tiled elegance of a hotel bathroom. Obviously, the years have softened me. I have become a Sybarite. I needed this revision of standards, this discarding of the nonessential. It is undoubtedly good for me, but I can't help casting an envious glance or two as at twilight we flit past hotels all aglow with cheerful light, and search for a landing field not too close to a switchyard or an all-night beanery.

It is perhaps the vengeance of heaven. To think that only a few weeks ago I occupied a suite in a Park Avenue hostelry with two tubs and a shower — and used none of them! Well, life is like that.



DEVELOPING A TECHNIQUE

Last night, for a consideration of four bits, a well-advertised old gentleman named Uncle Joe let us drop anchor in the yard of his Georgia tourist camp; and for the first time we slept in a silence broken only by the lowing of kine and the crowing of cocks.



Uncle Joe is a student of travel. He began his service to the wayfarer with a rooming house. Then he tried cabins. For a time the latter went begging. "Seems like people was ashamed of

cabins," says Uncle Joe. Then the picture changed. People took to cabins. Now they come, more and more, in trailers. Uncle Joe's problem now is to get enough land for the accommodation of house cars. "There's a fellow down Macon way puts up fifteen or twenty of 'em a night," he says enviously.

The road begins to show signs of trailer-consciousness. This awakening is definite in Georgia. Billboards advertising anchorage for land-going yachts become more numerous. Here, for the first time, we make the acquaintance of the roadside ice dispenser: "Ice — Day and Night," his sign proclaims.

Slowly we develop a technique of putting on and removing clothes. This involves some compromise with ordinary concepts of privacy, and it demands both physical agility and adaptation to environment. Only with practice is it possible for one to brush one's teeth in what we playfully refer to as our bathroom. To a novice this feat would seem difficult if not impossible. However, it can be done quite neatly once you get the hang of it. You first remove the overshoes and the typewriter from underfoot, and, if you are the sort of person that insists on a surplus of room, the garbage can and the box of stove coal. After this you take the sack of tangerines and the bundle of kindling wood from the washbasin, and you are then all set for a go at your ivories. First, however, you

must remove toilet implements from the shelf and fold the shelf up out of the way. Otherwise you would not be able to get your face over the basin. Even after folding up the shelf you will find your nose to be considerably in the way. You cannot brush your teeth full on; you have to do it with your face sideways. This necessitates projecting your legs into the main body of the house and interferes with whomever is trying to use the mirror on the other side of the door. The problem is not insuperable, however, and working on it helps develop the character.

While such operations are possible while the trailer is in motion, they are not recommended. Our daughter prepared an excellent lunch, the work including the slicing of tomatoes, while we scooted over the landscape at better than fifty miles an hour. She did it without cutting herself with the bread knife or being bounced off the stove. I performed the much lesser feat of typing one of these chapters while on the wing. We are agreed, however, that cookery and composition are best done while we are in port.

During the first days of this voyage our equipment was the object of extreme curiosity. The folk of the frozen north are not familiar with houses on wheels. As one proceeds southward, however, the trailer becomes a commonplace. During this morning's run we counted a dozen. Many of them seemed to be of home manufacture.

All of them were going in the opposite direction. This year the "sunny south" seems to have been a figure of speech.

These discouraged travelers may have given up too soon. The sun shines bright, the grass is green and overcoats have disappeared. The sidewalks are gay with colorful open-air fruit markets. Though we are only half way to our destination, it is as much June hereabouts as it is likely to be in Miami. Already we are wearing dark glasses and have begun to consider the problem of keeping cool.



I begin to think of possible improvements in our outfit. One would be telephonic communication between its two elements. The need for this was demonstrated yesterday. One of the party

wished to withdraw to the trailer for a nap. After allowing a reasonable time for her to get aboard, we started. The time, however, was not reasonable enough. She was not safely aboard, and if we had not heard her frantic shouts, we might have rolled on for an hour before discovering the shrinkage in our crew.

Things like this keep us entertained. And even so commonplace a misadventure as befell us this morning — leaving my watch at Uncle Joe's — is considerably magnified when traveling by trailer. The oversight was quickly discovered, but turning around with a trailer is not easy. It is best to proceed in a continuing direction. So we went around the block. Only it wasn't a block, and instead of finding ourselves back at Uncle Joe's, we found ourselves on the other side of the railroad track, with no crossroad in sight.

All this led to extended discussion of my mentality, which filled the time pleasantly until we halted for lunch beside the very house where Jeeters of *Tobacco Road* might have lived. The contrast made our habitation seem luxurious, indeed.



VARIATION ON AN OLD THEME

I suppose I could charge it to Mr. Roosevelt's wife, but *my* wife, supported by our daughter, has a simpler explanation. During the afternoon they had had a long and (to them) interesting discussion of intelligence. They debated the phenomenon of persons who were bright in some ways and not so bright in others. Their conversation was illustrated with reminiscences of the things I had done.

I found it a rather tiresome conversation, and I was glad when we came to rest in the Log Cabin Camp — “where good food abounds and fellowship thrills,” W. H. Cunningham, Prop. — an establishment highly recommended by the Royal Cafe, where we had paused for refreshment. Idle talk about the frailties of my character had now to be superseded by the stern labors of bedding down.

The electric light circuit into which we were supposed to plug being conveniently located at the top of a twelve-foot pole, we used the current supplied by our car to provide light for the communal undressing. This is an important point, the reasons for which will be apparent later.

While the ladies were occupied with this task I

sat in the car, improving my mind by listening to a discussion of the Youth Movement, presided over by Mrs. Roosevelt. It was very interesting and instructive, and when it was over I lingered on with Ed Wynn, a most comical fellow, at whose antics I laughed heartily. When I had had my fill of edification and entertainment and the trailer no longer creaked with the movement of the ladies as they made ready for repose, I turned off the radio and went back to what we refer to as our little home.

How cozy it all is, I thought, as I entered upon my nightly struggle for a fair and decent share of the blankets. We were moored in a field well off the highway and there was hardly a sound to mar the perfect stillness of the night. A soft breeze, laden with the scent of near-by pines, drifted in through the open windows, and from far away came the music of a hound baying at the moon.

On the morrow, refreshed by a good night's rest, we would rise with the sun, warm our peripatetic cottage with a brisk fire of pine knots, drink some delicious coffee and be on our way to the land of the orange and the realtor while less fortunate mortals were ringing for the porter to fetch their satchels to a taxi. Dreaming thus, I fell asleep.

Next morning the first thing I learned was that we were now on eastern time, and so an hour behind schedule. The next thing I learned was that

pine knots burn with an aromatic but dense and pitchy smoke, especially when one has forgotten to open the damper. Several other things happened. The lid lifter had disappeared somewhere among the cutlery. I dropped the hot stovelid on my bare toes, and then burned my fingers trying to pick it up with a pair of pliers. Also the cream was sour, and the cookstove had run out of gas.

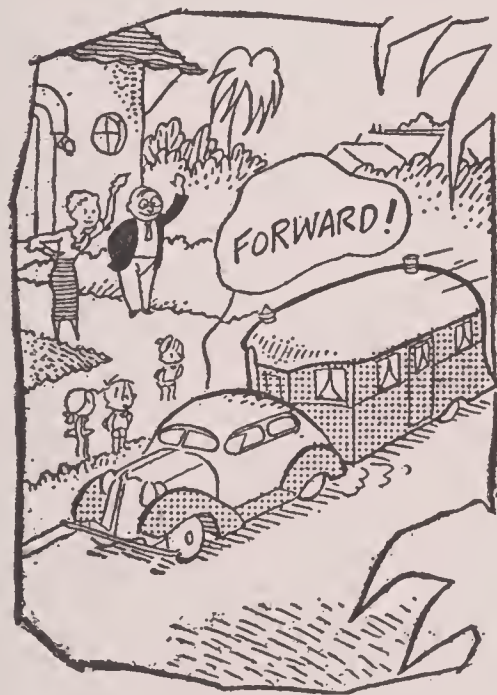
These, however, were trifles — of no consequence to such seasoned campers as we had become. We passed them off with jolly quip and jest, in the true spirit of the pioneer. Feasting on bread and water, we made things shipshape and stowed ourselves in the motorcar, ready for another lap on our race to reach Florida before snow flew.

And here, friends, is where Mrs. Roosevelt comes in! I had been so hypnotized by her dulcet voice that I had forgotten to turn out the lights. As shown by the electric clock, the exhausted battery had died at exactly 4:46 A.M.

There I was in the middle of a field, with two helpless women and a deceased battery. Things looked dark indeed. But hold! Back into the story comes Mr. Cunningham, riding on a truck with his friend, Dick Reeves. A search of the Cunningham heirlooms produced a piece of chain, and, with all hands heaving, we managed to get our combined rolling stock into a ditch from which not even the truck could get it out.

Things now looked even darker. It was clear that for one thing we must make our first attempt at unhitching the trailer. The instruction book says this can be done easily in a minute or two. Maybe so, but when you can't find the jack and are mired in a swamp it takes longer.

Well, we finally got unhooked, and in a shower of mud from the spinning wheels of Mr. Cunningham's truck reached solid ground. Then, after a tow of a few miles, our engine came to life, and we were ready to move on.



The bill for our stay at Log Cabin Camp was 25 cents. The services of Mr. Cunningham and Mr. Reeves were gratis. It was with great difficulty that I prevailed on them to accept a small recompense for our mutilation of the camp

grounds. Anyone who doubts the reality of southern hospitality is invited to communicate with me.

And now, as we bowl along again, my women folk have resumed the theme of yesterday. With complete absence of conjugal loyalty or filial piety, they sink even to the use of such words as "bone-head."

I sit in dignified silence, cracking pecans and thinking of Mrs. Roosevelt.



NOT ALL PLAY

Last evening we gave some friends of ours in St. Petersburg, Florida, a shock by dropping in for dinner. It was apparently the first time a trailer had ever appeared on their quiet street, and all the children of the neighborhood gathered to gape while the "folding Bedouins," as Eugene Field prophetically described us, changed into civilized clothes.

It was a rare treat to sit at ease in a dining room that seemed as large as a cathedral, and which neither swayed nor creaked. Our friends urged us to spend the night with them, but if there was any weakness of spirit in our crew, it was in the minority. Resisting the temptation of real beds, we repaired to the All States Tourist Camp, an establishment on the outskirts of the city, covering several acres. There we found no fewer than seventy-nine trailers already in residence. Ours took the last space available.

For sixty cents, paid in advance, we had access to electricity, with our own meter, free garbage collection, hot water, toilet facilities, and a variety of entertainment, ranging from lectures on the Townsend plan to shuffleboard and bridge tour-

naments, with handsome prizes donated by the management. There were also a well-equipped filling station and a general store.

Few of those enjoying the facilities of this extraordinary place were transients like ourselves — here tonight and gone tomorrow. The others were there for long stays. Some had even achieved such a degree of permanence as to have flower beds around their trailers. Many had screened porches, or sat outdoors at tables with colored parasols over them. These partial nomads paid from \$2 to \$3 a week for the choicer parking lots on the shore.

Morning in a trailer camp is a busy time. Papa, in his old sweater and well-worn pants, scurries about building fires and fetching water, while mamma cooks the breakfast, washes the dishes and hangs out the laundry. Children and dogs frisk everywhere, and the smell of bacon and coffee and hot suds mingles with the scent from near-by orange groves.

The people are a friendly lot, eager to learn all about you, and no less eager to tell all about themselves. One is reminded of life on shipboard. Reserve quickly melts, and the fact that one man's car carries license plates from the same state as that of his neighbor is sufficient ground for immediate intimacy.

Hotel proprietors look with jaundiced eyes upon the growing vogue of the house car. They consider it a threat to their existence. I am inclined to believe, however, that their fears are

exaggerated. The trailer will not destroy the hotel business. What it will do, I think, is raise the standard of hotel-keeping, and therefore be of benefit to the *good* hotels.



People who can afford to patronize hotels and restaurants of the first class are not likely to travel by trailer except in those remote regions where good stopping places are rare. Any general use of trailers will be confined to that large element of the population whose incomes have hitherto either prohibited any travel at all, or have necessitated the endurance of inferior hotel accommodations. The net effect of the trailer, therefore, will be to stimulate travel, to create new markets for all who cater to the tourist, and to make life harder for the sort of tavern and eating place whose only appeal is on a basis of price.

In my opinion, after a week of trailer life, the only hotel that will really be hurt by the trailer is the sort of hotel that has no excuse for existence, anyway.

Life in a trailer is not all play — especially for the women. Food and ice and necessary supplies are not always easily accessible. They can't be ordered by telephone and conveniently delivered to the back door. Fires must be built and ashes disposed of. Toilet arrangements constitute a special problem. Electric light is not always available and oil lamps must be cleaned. Foodstuffs must be bought in small quantities because the space for their storage is rigorously limited. And the labors of cooking, dishwashing, garbage disposal, laundering, bed-making and the care of clothes are considerably more arduous than they are at home.

A trip in a trailer is only a partial vacation for the housewife. I suspect that in more than one of the house cars that pass us on the road, homeward bound, is a woman whose heart sings at the prospect of return to gas ranges, electric refrigerators and hot running water. Papa may be sad at getting back to the dull monotony of store or office, but to mamma there must be a new sweetness in the refrain of Home, Sweet Home. So, one way or another, the trailer is a blessing. Even if it does no more than increase the charm of home, its contribution to human happiness is great.



FIGURING THE COST

Anyone figuring on a motor trip south will do well to take into account the cost of toll bridges and ferries. On this voyage of ours we have thus far spent for getting over rivers and other bodies of water, almost half as much as we have spent for oil and gas.

It cost \$1.25 to get into St. Petersburg, via the Gandy bridge, and \$2.60 to get out, via the Bradentown ferry. Both of these charges could, of course, have been avoided, but only at the expense of many extra miles on the road.

The island of Captiva, on which we have at last come to rest, is a bit of shell reef lying nearly four miles off Fort Myers, on the west coast. Its only means of transport to the mainland is the ferry. There are no telephones, and, according to the promotional literature of its leading hotel, the chief diversions are the sunsets and the variety of the sea shells along its shore.

It is said to have got its name from its use by the pirate, Gasparilla, as a storage place for his prisoners. Few visitors come here — certainly not many trailers. After the job of getting ours on the ferry, I found it easy to understand why few trail-

ers have ever come this way. And after jolting for fifteen miles over the washboard road from the ferry landing to our final anchorage, I began to suspect that even though an occasional trailer may stray this far, it is problematical if it will ever get back to tell the tale. There are moments when the uneasy feeling assails me that we are here for good.

Now that we are, in a manner of speaking, settled down, it may be in order to spend a few leisure minutes in examination of the account book.

The speedometer shows us to be 1,414 miles from home. To cover this distance we used 104 gallons of gas, at an average cost of slightly over twenty-three cents a gallon. We averaged 13.6 miles to the gallon, or about eleven per cent more gas than the normal of our car for extended trips. (The car is a 6 cylinder Oldsmobile coach.) The trailer, therefore, does not require nearly as much power as its bulk would suggest.

The smallest item of expense on this trip was that for landing fields. The total for five nights was \$1.60; the price range from nothing to sixty cents.

Bridge and ferry tolls came to \$9, with \$6.61 for "miscellaneous" — that catchall covering everything from a couple of movies to a thank-offering for being towed out of innocuous desuetude when our battery expired.

We spent \$10.80 for food and household sup-

plies, including fuel for both stoves, and \$9.75 went to restaurants for meals we took outside. The total cost of food and accessories for three persons for six days was \$20.55. No small part of this total, it may be said, constitutes a capital investment. That is, it went for permanent equipment.

It is obvious that we have not traveled by trailer as cheaply as it can be done. In the first place, our outfit is rented, and it is a de luxe outfit. In the



second place, we dined out every evening. Our trip has therefore cost just about what it would have cost had we traveled by car and stayed in small hotels (figuring \$6.50 a day for rooms), and eating in the more modest beaneries.

If, however, we *owned* our trailer, the story would be different. Assuming its cost to be \$1,000

(this is high, for an outfit practically as good as ours can be had for a trifle over \$400), the interest, depreciation and maintenance charges would come to not over one dollar a day. On such a basis the cost of taking three people to Florida by trailer would be less than half the cost of taking them by any other means. Once on the ground, people can live in a trailer for only a small fraction of what it would cost to live in even the cheapest of hotels or boarding houses. And as far as the quality of the victuals is concerned, people can certainly live much better.

In all these comparisons of the trailer with other forms of transport and habitation, it is important that the same standards of measurement be used. It is simple idiocy to compare the best of trailers with a compartment on the Dixie Flyer and a suite at the Breakers. The trailer is not, and I doubt if it ever will be, a substitute for fast trains and first-class hotels. On the other hand, there can be no question that it is a distinct improvement on the sort of accommodations hitherto available to people with slender purses.

And now to collect sea shells and look at the sunset. . . .



UNWELCOME GUESTS

It is slowly becoming apparent even to our blunted sensibilities that in almost any place except those which cater to them as a business, trailers are about as popular as a well-defined case of leprosy.

Everyone here has asked us how we got our trailer across on the ferry. There seems to be general mystification at our getting over. We have only just discovered the reason for the universal surprise. It appears that the skipper of the ferryboat, Captain Leon Crumpler, has an active distaste for trailers. He all but refuses to carry them. Fortunately for us, however, one of the other customers objected to having our trailer on board. He was afraid it would sink the boat. This so outraged the skipper's professional pride that it overcame his animosity for trailers.

When we began planning to visit this place we arranged to stay at the hotel. It was our thought that we should doze through the long afternoons, forgetful of the world as we listened to the whisper of the waves and feasted on a variety of succulent fish. Near the hotel, as we understood it, was the

home of a friend, who lives on Captiva because of its almost complete isolation from tourists.

When we arrived, dragging our semi-detached villa behind us, our friend came out to extend the greeting of the community. He looked more than



a little bewildered by what he saw, and there was something hollow in the laugh with which he asked where the elephants were. We had wired him that we were arriving by trailer, but, as we see now, there can be no real preparation for trailers. They are like earthquakes. You can read about them and see them in the movies, but until you have actually experienced one — had it draw up at your front door — its full possibilities cannot be grasped.

Our friend's arrangements for taking care of it

collapsed when he saw it. New arrangements had to be made. We could not settle directly on the beach, because, if we did, we could never get away. Obviously, no one wanted to consider that hideous possibility. It was equally obvious that we could not get into the jungle. By a process of elimination we reached the only possible parking place — the lawn in front of our friend's house.

Our choice of site was complicated by the fact that it really wasn't our friend's lawn. He rented it from a retired sea captain, who lived next door. The latter was complacent, however, and accepted the demolition of his shrubbery with the philosophic resignation of a man who has learned that there is no end to surprises.

So here we are, as conspicuous and as difficult of disposal as a stranded whale. We are more pestiferous than if we had actually invaded the repose of our friend as uninvited house guests. Then we could at least have been stowed away out of sight. As it is we are the most prominent feature of the landscape. There are no overt acts, but we can easily imagine the feelings of the people whose view of the sea we have so successfully obstructed. It is not difficult to put ourselves in their places and imagine *our* emotions if a trailer full of strangers suddenly rolled up to drop anchor on *our* front yard.

Occasionally one of the neighbors stops to inquire if we need butter or ice, or merely to watch

as we busy ourselves adding to the scenery by hanging up a colorful array of wet bathing suits. I can see them wince when we comment enthusiastically on the beauty of the sky or the pleasant softness of the breeze from the gulf. It is obvious that they fear we may be so captivated by Captiva that we will stay on indefinitely. I suspect that they go home to pray for a stiff norther — even a hurricane. Fortunately for them it has been a rainy winter, and there is an abnormal number of mosquitoes to mar an otherwise charming symphony of nature. One of these days we shall pull up anchor and leave the shells and the sunsets for some tourist camp where we can be among our own kind.

We toy with the whimsical thought of invading Palm Beach. Like the nomads of Attila, the Hun, we would roll down from the west, devastating that sanctuary of sophistication and convention. There is probably no place in the world where a trailer would find a chillier welcome than in that sheltered retreat of the very rich. I can picture the consternation of a Palm Beach butler at seeing one of these movable houses unhitch in one of the exclusive demesnes, smoke from its stove drifting up the royal palms and its washing hanging out behind.

We shall be pariahs there, of course. But it is clear now that we are pariahs everywhere, except in the tourist camps. Strangers in white flannels

and panama hats will stare at us icily, and our friends will be patiently polite, hopeful that if they speak softly and do nothing to annoy us we shall soon yield again to the wanderlust and be on our way to somebody else's lawn.

The trailer is such a new thing that people are not yet armed against it. It takes them by surprise. It overpowers them. A man may fancy that his home is his castle, but let a trailer appear and his stronghold is like Rome before the Goths. I think I shall fly the Jolly Roger from the smoke-stack of our trailer. I begin to feel like Gasparilla himself. Captiva has fallen. Not even Palm Beach can stand against us.



EATING AND BEING EATEN

To the Master of the Show there must be something at once pathetic and ridiculous in man's egoistic assumption that he is the only pebble on the beach. It is so plain that man is only one form of life; a relatively new form, too, and perhaps not permanent.

Captiva is a primitive place. There is no golf, no tennis, no telephone, and, except for an occasional private generating plant, no electricity. One is remote from most of the things that constitute what we call civilization. Four miles of water and a road that is worse than anything on a motorcar manufacturer's proving ground, keep this island in the state of isolation that its inhabitants like. Save for the fishing — which in season is ranked with the world's best — there is nothing much for the visitor to do but drift in and out of the sea and meander up and down the beach.

A stroll on the beach is disturbing to the vanity. In the first place, it isn't properly a beach at all. What sand there is isn't really sand, but pulverized sea shells. The island itself is one mass of shells. And it makes one feel singularly small and inconsequential to reflect that every one of these innu-

merable shells was once the habitation of a living creature.

Sooner or later one takes to collecting shells. We have been here only a few days, but already our trailer begins to resemble a museum of marine life.



We have picked up the jargon of the shell fanciers and speak knowingly of *pelecypoda* and *gastropoda*, which, as you may or may not know, are the *mollusca* — the bivalves and the univalves; the shells with two parts, and the shells with only one.

We wander along the shore, chirruping happily as we stumble upon the homes of such quaintly named creatures as Keyhole Limpet, Bleeding Tooth, Tiger's Eye, Lady's Ear, Scotch Bonnet and Noah's Ark. (Some of these shells are probably not found here; but if they aren't, they should

be.) At first all the shells look alike. Presently you begin to see differences in shape, structure, fineness of texture, material and color. The more you look the greater the range of variety. And the show changes with each shift in the wind, with each fall in the tide, as new examples are brought on the stage, and the dead actors are washed back into the sea.

A neighbor of ours — Edward P. Burch, a consulting engineer from Minneapolis — has gone scientifically at the work of collecting shells, and has already acquired what I am told is a noteworthy assortment. I sat with him among his pans and buckets this afternoon and watched him feed bits of mullet to what looked like a piece of old mop. It seemed to like the victuals and opened what was apparently its mouth for more. A curious creature, this — a shellfish without a shell, its only protection seeming to be its repulsive appearance.

Poking about this way, peering under the surface of nature, one comes to have an indulgent smile for the earnest sentimentalists who talk about "peace." There is no peace in nature. Every form of life preys on some other form, and there is no device of protective armament so ingenious that some form of attack has not been developed to overcome it. One would think that the mollusks, of all creatures, were safe behind their granite walls, but there are other mollusks equipped with

filelike tongues which can drill quickly through the hardest stone. What is more, these invaders are a form of automatic machinery. They attach themselves to their victims, and wait patiently while the movement of the water does the work. Anyone who has ever pried open the shell of an oyster would be humiliated by the ease with which the starfish does it. He wraps himself around the shell, fixes his vacuum-cup feelers to it, puts on the power, and presto! the doors of the oyster's castle swing open as if they were on ball-bearing hinges.

Coming up from the beach I paused to gape at the sight of a palmetto, like Laocoön among the serpents, twisted and tortured in the strangling arms of a rubber plant. Life seems to be largely a business of eating and being eaten. And I might add that, at this moment, that singing sadist, the mosquito, seems to have lost all sense of ordinary sportsmanship. He seems to think that life is exclusively a business of eating. Either he will die of indigestion or I shall run out of blood for him to drink.



TALL TALE

The sun, with tropic abruptness, had disappeared in the direction of Mexico, and our beach gleamed in the moonlight like polished silver. We sat in the after cabin, or deckhouse, of the trailer, and our friend, the Ancient Mariner, his weather-beaten face buried in a beaker of Carioca rum, was in a mood for reminiscence. Ordinarily a taciturn man, as are all those who follow the sea, his tongue had loosened under the benevolent impact of the New Orleans nectar, and he spun one yarn after another — of the skulls and bones of buried pirates, of Spanish doubloons, and of horrendous monsters of the deep. Finally he told of what had befallen him in a recent hurricane.

When the storm first struck the captain's house the building slid off its foundation posts and wandered down to the bay, demolishing a smokehouse and a twelve-foot skiff in its path. The captain and his two cats were in the house at the time. When the gust subsided, after about forty minutes, the captain picked himself up from the floor, where he had been knocked by a flying shutter, and went outside to investigate. A flat calm had ensued and his house was thirty yards out in the mud, lodged

against an old fender piling, where three feet of water had been only a few minutes before.

The captain paused for a meditative sip of rum. "I knew it was the center of the storm passing over," he continued, "and I says to myself that if the house could navigate herself out there, I reckoned I could navigate her back when the wind changed."

With the remnants of an awning for sail, a sixteen-foot poling oar for a tiller, and two kedge anchors to brake her, the captain was ready when the wind returned from the opposite direction. The return voyage was a complete success, except that a slight error in the calculation for the length of one of the anchor ropes caused the house to rotate. It came to rest squarely on its foundation posts, but was completely turned around.

"And I want to tell you," said the captain, with a hunted look in his eye, "the thing is running me plumb crazy!"

Refreshing himself from his goblet, the old mariner went on. "Yes, sir, it's running me crazy. A man as old as I am don't belong to have the points of the compass switched on him that way. The front door is in back and the back door is in front. When I go out to get me a gourd of water from the sink, I fetch up at the old lard can with a dipper full of grit. When I step outside to see how the skiff is riding, I like to fracture my skull against a sea-grape tree, and when I go to get

me an armload of stove wood, like as not I'm knee deep in the bay before I can get my bearings.

“Even the cats don't like it. They sleep all night and prowl in the daytime. And how can you blame them when the sun sets in the east about 6 A.M., and rises in the west along about bedtime? If another blow don't come pretty soon so I can bring her about and anchor proper, I reckon I'll be fitten to be tied.”



There is nothing, I suppose, that can be done about hurricanes. Like earthquakes and floods and volcanoes and avalanches, they remain largely beyond human control. But insects are another matter.

Life near the equator has hitherto been uncomfortable, if not impossible, for the white members

of the human race. They have been obliged to seek homes in the obviously less desirable regions of the north. Now, however, science is making possible a return to sunshine and warmth and the most fecund soil. The mosquito has been conquered. In Cuba, for example, people live largely without screens at their windows. The time may not be far distant when man will forsake the wintry north, with its short seasons of grudging fertility and the endless labors of keeping warm, and will return to the easy comfort of the equatorial belt from which he probably started.

With insects controlled, if not eliminated, and with buildings air-conditioned, existence in the tropics would be far more agreeable than it is in what are facetiously called the temperate zones. The time may come when the abandoned subdivisions of Florida will bloom again, while cities of the north will be abandoned to the coyote and the prairie dog.

Though all this, as the Ancient Mariner points out, is dependent on the assumption that man is a reasoning being.



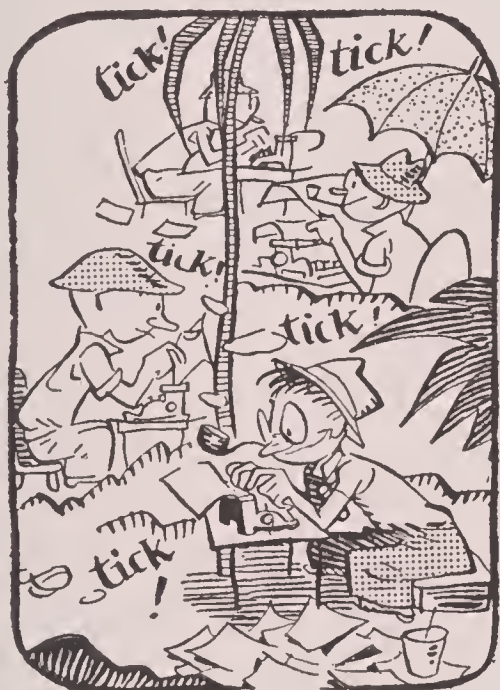
“TWEEN WHEELS”

One who spends most of his time in cities forgets how densely populated the world is with creatures other than of the human species. It is not until man takes up residence in the tropics that he realizes how numerous and how proficient in attack and defense are the forms of life competing with him for existence.

Many of these creatures, such as the alligator and the wildcat, are hidden away in the swampy jungles. Others, like the barracuda and the sting ray, spend most of their time in the cold, still depths of the sea. A vast assortment of life, half plant, half animal, is buried in the wet ooze of the shore. Still another is not even visible to the naked eye. But in relatively plain sight are the snakes, the spiders, the scorpions, the centipedes, the rats, the roaches and the mosquitoes. With the exception of the last named — that saber-toothed tiger of the air — the enemies and competitors of mankind are seen only often enough to provide a reminder of their busy existence. They fear man no less than he fears them, and are quick to hide at his approach. Only by accident do the contenders

meet, and only the mosquito makes unprovoked attack.

The life of this island runs a strange gamut, from the single-celled protoplasm of the beach to the last sophistication of the human intellect. A few yards from where we ride at anchor under the palmettos, an internationally famed critic sits behind screens, toiling at his monumental history



of American art. Next door lives a well-known author of books for boys. He lives in solitary state, as good a cook and housekeeper as he is a writer, keeping his larder largely filled with the fish he catches from his own sloop, and occasionally going off on long cruises in the open sea. A traveler, as well acquainted with Tahiti and the antipodes as he is with the Parisian haunts of the gourmet, he

prefers this spot to any he has visited. Here, he says, nature smiles, living is cheap, the companionship is lively and puttering has been raised to the plane of a fine art.

The click of the typewriter is heard hereabouts almost as much as the creak of tackle against a cleat, the hum of a reel or the hunting song of the mosquito.

The contrast between the primitive and the sophisticated extends to the little establishment, half hotel, half guest-house, where we take refuge occasionally from camp life and luxuriate in a feast of oysters and red snapper. It is a small place, accommodating only thirty patrons, but apparently is always full.

The name of this tranquil retreat from the gaudy life of mainland resorts is "Tween Waters" — so called from its situation only a pebble's throw from the gulf on one side and the bay on the other. Inspired by this nomenclature, the friend whose front yard we have desecrated with our traveling incubus calls his cottage "Tween Drinks." We have followed suit by naming our ambulant abode "Tween Wheels."

This afternoon we are celebrating our discovery of Captiva by serving tea and whatever other beverages can be found, aboard our terrestrial yacht. This party should establish a new record for congestion, but it should be a huge success. People are tremendously interested in trailers. We have

already received a handsome cash offer for ours. We declined it with scorn. Maybe, if it is repeated a couple of weeks hence, we shall not decline it so scornfully. Perhaps, at that time, life in a fixed abode will be more appealing.



ON THE ROAD AGAIN

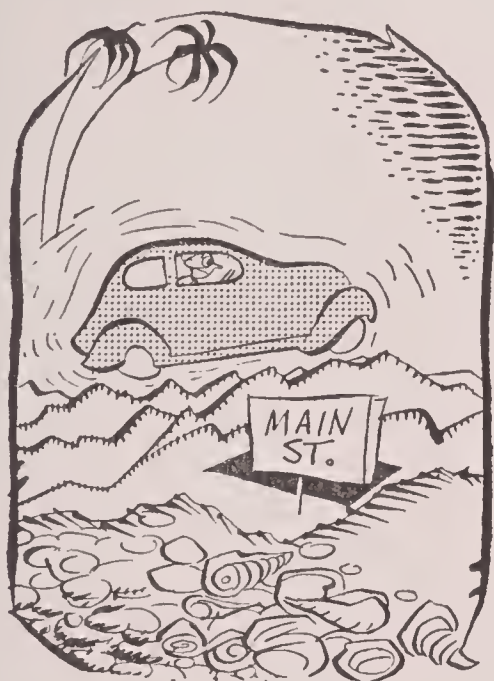
Among the guests at our party aboard the lugger last night was an old sea captain — in his eighties now and taking his ease in his house on Captiva, but as spry and hearty a sea dog as when he skippered the *Ventura* and made the Union Jack dip in the humiliation of defeat.

It was a commentary on the march of time that this grizzled old deep-sea sailor should find himself sitting in the cabin of an automobile trailer, anchored on his own front lawn. I asked him for comments on the situation, but all he would say was that he found it “very interesting.” I suspect that, out of earshot of the ladies, he said other things. But the captain is a gentleman of the old school. He does not use fo’c’sle language on the quarter-deck.

As an incidental bit of information about this farewell party of ours, there were no fewer than seventeen persons aboard the trailer at one time. Our covered wagon is a sturdy craft.

There are moments when I feel that instead of idling among the shells I should be studying economic conditions. But it seems to me that economic “conditions” don’t alter much. A large

part of the human race is occupied normally at hard and more or less painful labor, under a variety of unpleasant conditions, and satisfied to get out of it just a bare living.



Most of the permanent residents of these islands gain their bread by fishing. They are remote from the ordinary concerns of the world. Politics does not interest them; and, because they have only a handful of votes, politics is not interested in them. They have neither time, facilities nor inclination to "keep up" with the news. They see no papers, have no radios. Yet they are content. They seem to enjoy their long solitary vigils with line and net. It is doubtful if they would care much for a factory job, even with movies every night.

This morning we stowed away the pots and pans,

took a few hasty, last-minute snapshots, said farewell to our Captiva friends and took to the road again. There was some question as to whether the tide would permit embarkation on the ferry, and there were signs in the sky of a coming squall, but all went merry as a marriage bell, and we reached the mainland with no displeasing incident save the extraction of the \$3.70 which the skipper of the ferry charged for taking us across the bay.

In Fort Myers, however, trouble assailed us. After a serene drive past odoriferous orange groves and the estate where Thomas Edison tried vainly to grow rubber, we found no landing field available. We drove three miles out to a camp which had been recommended, but found it an establishment of tourist cabins, with neither room nor welcome for trailers. So round and round we rolled, looking for a place to light and feeling that nobody loves fat men or house cars.

At last, when we were just beginning to feel really discouraged and to regret that we had ever been tempted into travel by trailer, we found a small tourist camp with a field in which we could cast anchor and a proprietor who had been a Y. M. C. A. secretary. There were no toilet facilities, however, except those in the cabins. So, as the weaker members of the party yearned for hot running water, we weakened in our resolution, and, in a burst of extravagance, planked down two dollars for a cabin. In it is a neatly furnished bedroom

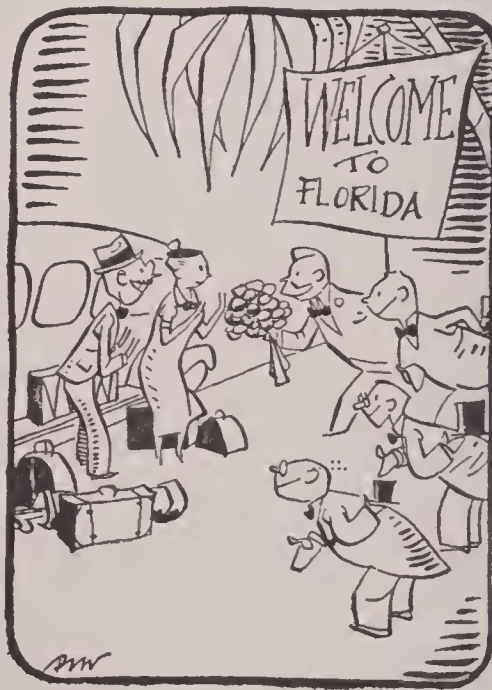
with a kitchen attached. The latter does not interest us very much, for, after all, we *have* a kitchen. But there is also a shower, which interests all of us enormously. It is, in fact, the most interesting thing we have found on our travels.

We shall probably stay on here for several days, occupied with nothing but the study of economic conditions — and the taking of baths. Don't misunderstand me. One can take baths in the trailer. But a cold shower in a two-foot compartment, the space being shared with other "facilities," is amusing only the first time. After that one yearns for more heat and more commodiousness.



POOR MAN'S PARADISE

The principal industry of Florida is what the French call *tourisme*. To be sure, the land grows citrus fruits and celery, and the breeding of cattle is an industry which increases in importance. But the chief article of export is climate, and hospitality is the box in which it is packed. The visitor



can do no wrong in Florida. On the streets of this drowsy town, for example, the parking signs read: "Local cars one hour." Cars with foreign license plates may stay as long as they like.

Despite weather unprecedentedly cold and disagreeable, Florida has been jammed this winter. Even now, with spring in the air and northward-bound cars predominating on the highways, the sidewalks are thronged and the cash registers jingle merrily in the open-front stores. The astonishing thing about the popularity of Florida is that it has been achieved in spite of nature no less than because of it. Florida is long on balmy air and sunshine, but it is singularly short on natural beauty. Of what may be called scenery there is woefully little. The spots with pictorial charm are largely artificial. The untouched landscape is a flat and tiresome waste of sand, weeds, scrub pine and that most uninteresting of trees, the palmetto.

In winter, at least, the Florida landscape is without color. The green of the foliage is mixed with a dusty gray. Even the water of the sea has a leaden cast, and the skies, at their brightest, fall far short of the turquoise magnificence that one finds in Arizona. It is not surprising that few painters have found anything in the Florida landscape to intrigue them.

With much of its population transient, and another large part essentially parasitic, the political life of Florida is on a low plane. I am told that the corruption of Florida municipalities outdoes anything discoverable in the rest of the land. In certain spots, at least, gambling is recognized as a proper diversion of the gentry, and those insects

of the underworld who are to be found buzzing wherever money abounds are allowed a relatively free hand in their operations. Here is the happy hunting ground of every variety of leech, from the primitive con-man to the adventurer with a title.

The whole state is a glorified playground, and whether one comes in a second-hand trailer or in a Long Island houseboat, laden with champagne, he finds himself royally welcome. Your taste may be for shuffleboard or for roulette, but in either case you will find it gratified. There is, literally, something for everybody. If your purse and your inclination limit you to sitting on a park bench, listening to a free band concert or a lecture on the Townsend plan, you can be just as happy in St. Petersburg as can the millionaire, shooting the works at the races in Miami or pursuing sailfish off Palm Beach.

There is no provision for paupers, and I have yet to see beggary on Florida streets. I suspect that Florida has effective means of discouraging those with no money at all. However, for those with some ready cash, no matter how little, there is a place with a welcome. Those not too well heeled can live very cheaply, wear their old clothes and do as they please, with plenty of their own kind for company. And when they return to the harder north they will be the better for the sunshine they have soaked up.

Probably, when human society gets around to

being realistic about things, it will discover that all work and no play makes Jack not only a dull boy but a social liability. The cost of taking care of people who get no vacations is undoubtedly great. The nation would save money by requiring every citizen to take several weeks off each year, living largely on fruit and lying in shorts on the Florida sands. What such free vacations would cost the community would be much less than what the community now spends to take care of the tired, the ailing and the bored. Pending the arrival of that day of sweet reasonableness, the state of Florida is already doing a good job of making the poor man's vacation dollar roll a long way. Food and lodging are cheap, and most of his entertainment is free.



LETTERS FROM HOME

So far, this has been what even a purist would be justified in calling a lousy day. It began early — just when dawn was breaking in the eastern sky. At that moment, an important element in my bed gave way. Then, as I was pumping up the gasoline stove, a seam started in the tank, thus ending all prospects of morning coffee. To complete the dismal picture, the famous Florida sunshine gave place to a chilly rain. And now, adding a frame to my distaste for the things of this world, letters from home have caught up with me.

They bring assorted discomfitures. There is a curt note from my bank, regarding an error in my arithmetic. The county treasurer threatens dire consequences if I don't pay my taxes. There are bills, more or less unexpected. Worst of all, there are letters from readers. They engulf me in dark brown billows of biliousness!

I am, at this moment, fed up on the human race — or that part of it which takes pen in hand to tell me what I should and should not do.

At General Delivery, this morning, I was handed a pile of assorted vituperation. There was a neatly typed letter on a piece of engraved stationery, demanding my transfer to a concentration camp for

having blasphemed the gods of capitalism. Next to it was a missive, scribbled in pencil, retching at my supine adherence to privilege. There was a blast from a prohibitionist, reviling me because I have a taste for beer. There were protests from various special interests, complaining at inaccurate and superficial treatment of their specialties. Typical of these was a letter from a manufacturer of trailers, who was hurt by my inadequate furtherance of his interests.

I started to answer this fellow, but gave it up. How could I make such a person understand that I am not engaged in writing propaganda — for or against; that in this log I have recorded both the bitter and the sweet; and that whether it persuades others to go and do likewise, or to stick cozily by their firesides, is no concern of mine?

There were a number of letters from experts in trial by trailer — some helpful and some caustic at what they considered my Milquetoast attitude toward “roughing it.”

I felt like answering them, too; but again, *cui bono?* I have “roughed it.” I have sailed before the mast — though the ship was driven by steam and there were no masts to speak of. I have had a taste of soldiering. I have slept on the ground when no bed was available, and I have been rained on when I could find no shelter. I am still of the opinion that discomfort is something to be endured, if necessary, but avoided if possible. There

are those who seem to like discomfort for its own sake: I am not one of them. I guess I am aging.

Oh well, the sun is coming out now; and just to maintain a proper sense of proportion, I'm pasting one of these letters over the mirror in the bathroom. I shall read it every time I shave — and perhaps it will keep me from saying what I think about shaving in cold water.

“ We're all fed up with O'Brien's bellyaching about discomfort! Hasn't he ever gone duck-hunting? And, as for lack of parking space, doesn't he know that real trailer-folk never wheel up to the center of town looking for a night camp? With beds and a stove, what more does the guy want? (Oh, well — tell him there's one in every service station and the attendants will button up his pantywaist.)

“ He's the sort of fellow who would take an umbrella on a sailing cruise, or pack a bundle of kindling on a camping trip, or worry about the crease of his Levi's on a ranch, or wear his rubbers trout fishing.

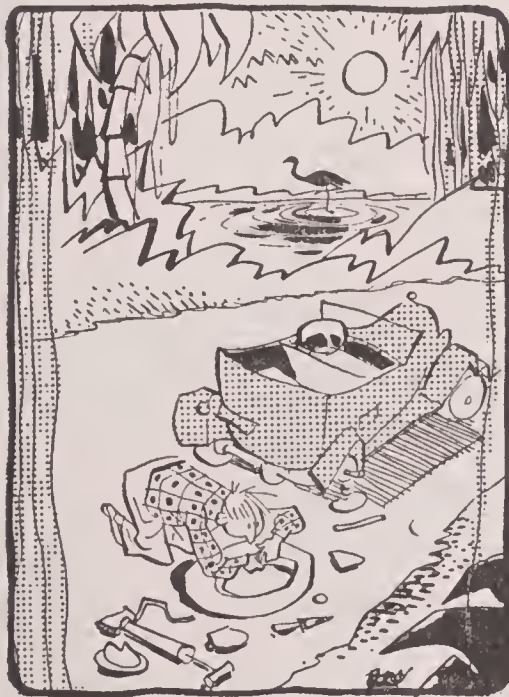
“ Next time you're looking for an adaptable correspondent for an outing expedition, get someone who can take it. Leave the whimsical, philosophical, artistic Mr. O'Brien at home, handy to his scented bath, slippers and easy chair.”

Yes, I shall keep this letter for reference. It will be helpful when I feel myself going Persian. And I can quote it when my women folk complain.



YES – NO ORANGE JUICE

These lines are being written somewhere in the Everglades, while we pause for the midday halt by the side of the Tamiami trail. It is at such a time that I rejoice in my profession. I can, with honor and legitimate excuse, take to my typewriter while the women folk busy themselves in the covered wagon with the pots and pans.



A flamingo stands motionless in a near-by pool, gazing hungrily at the black water. A couple of herons hide in the top of a palmetto, their long

bills poised for gastronomic action. Vultures flap their way lazily over the cypress trees, and a little way down the road a Seminole Indian, in gorgeously colored shirt, is fixing a flat tire on his rusty old flivver. We are on the road again, and, for my part, with no little regret. Fort Myers endeared itself to me because of an eating place called the B. & K. Garden Spot, where, for sixty-five cents, one could have the most succulent lobster, the flakiest pastry and real French-fried potatoes.

Our most vivid remembrance of Fort Myers will remain our encounter on its main street, Sunday afternoon, with friends who were waiting for the evening train. They invited us to join them in a farewell libation. Accepting the invitation, we started in search of a suitable emporium. We discovered, however, that Florida — or this part of it, at any rate — does not permit the dispensing of potable spirits over a bar, or even at a table. You can buy bottled goods, but you cannot drink the contents on the premises. So we decided to have tea instead of potable spirits, and for that purpose we repaired to the Royal Palm.

A uniformed flunky met us at the curb, two others opened the front door, and a fourth asked us our pleasure. When we said tea he answered sadly that the kitchen was closed — no tea. His words made us clap hands at our own folly. The idea of ordering tea or potable spirits in the land of citrus fruits! It was monstrous. With one voice we called for orange juice. But the flunky

shook his head again. Yes, he had no oranges. He thought, however, that he could supply some ginger ale.

So we thanked him for his thought and said we would go to a drug store for our orange juice. At that he smiled wistfully through his tears. The drug stores of Fort Myers, he said, were closed on Sundays. In general he was right. But, after some search, we found one place that had wickedly stayed open. There we had chocolate ice cream sodas!

Many things made us sorry to leave Fort Myers. There was, for example, the police. Imagine a place where the motorcycle cops tip their caps and



say: "Pardon me, sir, but your taillight is out. Will you be good enough to have it attended to as soon as you can?" And where the crossing traffic

officers say: "Really, madam, won't you please stop at the stop signals? It would be a great help if you would."

A genial, slow-moving place is Fort Myers, where the tempo of existence is *andante sostenuto*, and where practically everybody you meet is a Lord Chesterfield, where a chair in the sun offers a large measure of earthly contentment, where shuffleboard is considered violent exercise, and where one of the most pretentious establishments in town belongs to the funeral director.

It was hard to leave this paradise of the idle poor — and in more ways than one. When we rose this morning it appeared that we should be in Fort Myers more or less permanently. It had rained busily during the night and our trailer was down to its hubs in the mire. The moist sea air had also done its work with the threads of the lifting jack. They were well rusted. Our prospects were no brighter than was the sky. A small tourist camp is not the gayest place in the world under the best of circumstances. When a tropic rain is in progress the gaiety is even less pronounced.

However, our lucky star was still in the ascendant and we were able to make the hitch with no discomfort beyond a thorough soaking. The wheels of the car took hold at once and before the morning was well advanced we were on our way across the state to another and more debatable kind of paradise — Miami.



NO REST CURE

At peep of day, or thereabouts, we left Fort Myers and headed the caravan for Miami, only one hundred and twenty-five miles across the Everglades and the cypress swamps. We arrived in this glittering playground shortly after noon. It is now dark and we have only just come to rest.

Entering from the west, we first reached the subdivision of Coral Gables, now getting its second wind, real-estatically speaking. There we tarried, receiving black looks from white-coated butlers, and so pushed on to a haven more hospitable to trailer folk.

I might mention that our party has been increased by the young man who is shortly to wed our daughter, and he is being trained in a number of qualities, such as patience and fortitude, by being assigned to the task of driving. This is technically not difficult, but on the emotional side it is a strain, for the directions are given by a committee of three. One result of this divided authority was that by midafternoon we found ourselves well on the way to Key West.

Turning around, we made for Miami Beach. It was pouring rain, but we had ideas about lolling

on the sands in the sunshine. However, a gas-station attendant advised against this. He said that trailers were not welcome on the beach and suggested a tourist camp only ten miles farther north. We proceeded to that place only to find that there were no cooking facilities. This was serious, since our stove was on the blink. So, it being difficult to turn around, we continued in a northerly direction.

A few miles farther on we found an excellent trailer camp. However, we had to have a cabin for our young man, and there were no cabins. We could, of course, defy the conventions, and put him in the fourth bed of our trailer. But, not being familiar with trailer life, he had arrived with a considerable amount of baggage. This, if it could not be stowed in a cabin, had to be stowed in the car. If it were stowed in the car we could not go anywhere for dinner. And our stove being on the blink we had to go somewhere for dinner. It was all very complicated and I did not blame the manager of the camp for looking perplexed.

So we turned westward, arriving presently at a very duck of a camp, with trailer space and a cabin right beside it — just what we wanted. Unhappily, it had just been taken — and it was the last space available.

We were advised to try a town called Little River, where there was said to be a camp. On we

went, twenty miles or so, and sure enough, there was a camp with a big sign on it: "Cabin Vacant." We cheered at this, but prematurely, for it soon transpired that the occupant of this cabin had changed his or her mind and there was now no vacancy.

So, into the setting sun, we wandered on. Halted at a crossing, we were approached by a man with a kind face, who gave us a circular about a camp called Belle Haven — a beautiful spot, apparently, with a dance hall and a swimming pool — only ten miles farther on. This was a happy omen and we spurred on — only to find that the place had no cabins. Extra men, the manager said, slept in tents. He advised Hialeah, only five miles away.

Hialeah had a handsome racetrack, but no tourist camps that we could find. So we went on, bearing eastward and stopping here and there for advice, until through the rainy twilight we saw signs advertising the Spanish stucco cabins of a Mr. Winslow. We tacked for these, and, beating up through half a dozen miles of winding streets, finally reached them.

It was pitch dark and we were more than a little fatigued with gypsy life. The rain had increased to something like a cloudburst and the palms bowed before a rising wind. We craved repose, with or without honor. Mr. Winslow was pre-

pared to provide it, in the shape of a little cottage, equipped with kitchen and other facilities, for \$1.25 a head.

It seemed a little silly to be renting beds when we had a trailer full of them, but it appeared that Mr. Winslow was not licensed to let people sleep in trailers. We could park, but we could not sleep. There was nothing to do but capitulate.

So the trailer stands outside, empty, dark and rather ridiculous. And as I sit here at my typewriter, listening to the howl of a wind which seems to have become a hurricane, and recording the events of the day, I am struck by the fact that it took less time, by a couple of hours, to cross the state of Florida than it did to find lodging in Miami. The rest of the party lie stretched on their several beds, asleep. Travel by trailer is full of surprise, adventure and amusement, but as heaven is my judge, it is no rest cure!



LIKE CINDERELLA

It turns out that last night's wind really was a small hurricane, tearing up palms and unroofing houses. We could see its marks as we went this morning to visit Ollie Trout's Trailer Camp — the Taj Mahal of such establishments, with space for some three hundred rolling villas.

We quickly discovered what pikers we were at this game. We had believed our outfit to be the last word in trailers, but near the entrance stood one of incredible size and grandeur, one which had cost its owner more than eight thousand dollars. A huge tent protected it from the sun, a neat parapet of coral rock had been built around it, and a gentleman of color was busily polishing its brasswork. It seemed obvious that this equipage was on exhibition, and I was just about to step in for a look when the irate owner appeared to set me right. It was not on exhibition and it was not for sale. It was, he said tartly, a private residence.

So we went away from this crusty fellow and picked up a more friendly wayfarer, a gentleman in a sombrero, with a trailer full of Navaho blankets and pottery which he had brought from

Gallup, New Mexico, and was (or had been) hopeful of selling in Florida. Incidentally, he expressed himself as willing to swap the entire state of Florida for one square yard of the southwest.



We were joined by a trailer salesman, and there was much talk about this mode of transport. We agreed upon several things. One was that the arrangements for taking care of trailers lagged far behind the trailers themselves. As I have said before, the great oil companies are missing an opportunity if they do not enter the trailer-camp business, with stations located, say, two hundred miles apart, on the main highways. My guess is that such a development will be a fact within a couple of years. It will be a logical extension of activity for those paragons of efficient courtesy, the

filling station men. They have the experience and the temperament to make them the ideal caretakers of trailer-travelers.

The second fact brought out in this debate between experts was the astonishing change which has taken place in the market for trailers. It used to be, said the salesman, that the only people who bought trailers were those for whom economy was the prime consideration. Buyers are now coming from the higher income brackets, taking to trailer travel not because it is cheaper, but because they like it better. He pointed to an example near at hand, a luxurious "job" costing several thousand dollars. It was owned by an elderly couple of considerable wealth. Their chauffeur did the cooking and dishwashing. He lived in a tent, pitched near by.

And so, my head buzzing with plans for a trailer equipped with valet and butler, a bowling alley, swimming pool and movie theater, we drove off to Miami Beach — which, dear reader, is not to be confused with Miami. In the opinion of beach folk, it is to the city what Sheffield plate is to the paper dishware of the five and ten. Here are the homes of those who pay in income taxes far more than most people earn.

On a series of synthetic islands, separated from the mainland by lagoons and reached by causeways, one finds varying degrees of exclusiveness. The home of Al Capone is not far, in distance,

from that of a man who was once a candidate for president of the United States. There are bath-houses where anybody can rent a bathing suit, and there is the Bath Club, which no one may enter



save in the custody of a member. In this sanctuary, while the orchestra played "Boots and Saddles," we dug our toes in the aristocratic sand, and lunched on a variety of delectables that would make Lucullus spin in his grave. To look at us, no one would ever have guessed that we were trailer folk. The dresses of the ladies came unwrinkled from their hangers in the rolling cabin. Indeed, the women of the party, in whom this Persian atmosphere has engendered a certain distaste for the housekeeping phase of trailer life, go so far as to suggest that the ideal way to travel is to

have a trailer used only as a baggage car or a portable wardrobe.

From caviare and cognac with the opulent gentry of the Bath Club we proceeded down the island for a round of golf at a course whose membership roll reads like that of the Liberty League, and whose locker room is something between Westminster Abbey and the Grand Central Station. After that we dropped in at the "cottage" of a friend — an establishment suggestive of the abode which the genii tossed up for Sindbad the Sailor — for cocktails served by a Filipino in a white jacket.

Then, suddenly, the clock struck the witching hour. Titania, the queen of the fairies, waved her wand and blew her whistle. Like Cinderella, we shed our fine raiment, and in the gathering dusk crept back to our covered wagon.



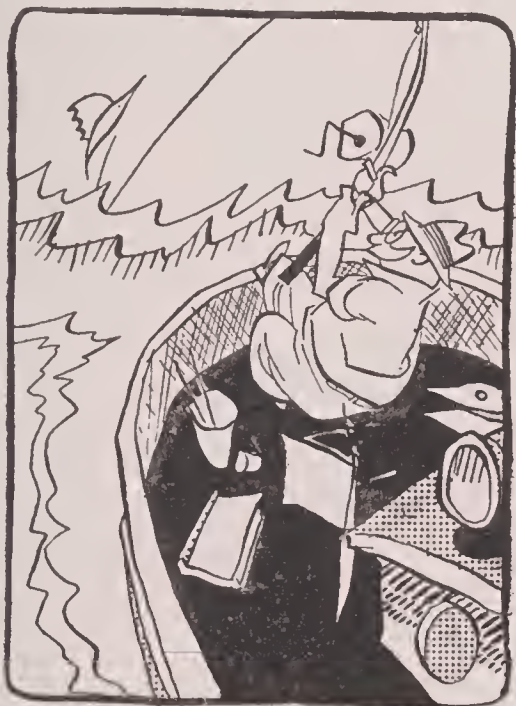
WASTED COMPLIMENTS

Miami Beach is an ideal laboratory for the study of economic conditions. They are all here, from the frail who doesn't know where her next meal is coming from, but who, from experience, believes that heaven or a lonesome bookmaker will provide; up (or down) to the tired chairmen of boards of directors, who get blisters on their fingers from cutting coupons and cankers on their tongues from cursing Roosevelt.

These islands, manufactured by pumping sand into the original tangle of mangrove roots, form a show window of social contrast. At one end are honkytonks, the barbecues with curb service which are the southern version of the hot-dog stand, the cheap boarding houses and the municipal beaches, alive with the sort of N'Yawker that Milt Gross immortalized in *Nize Baby*. Cigar-smoking gents with conspicuous paunches, obese crones in flowered pajamas, semi-nude young females with painted smiles, snappy young chaps in Broadway's latest variant on the dark-blue shirt and yellow tie, crowd the landscape.

As one proceeds northward the picture changes, getting more expensive and more exclusive. Grass

appears. The hotels and casinos grow more pretentious. The beach is no longer free. There are no more itinerant photographers, no vendors of popcorn or ice cream. The people dress more decorously. Then, like a slap in the face, a fence appears. This is the end of free access to the sands.



From now on the shore is lined with private homes, apartment houses and hotels where rooms run into important money. Those who live along here have their own beaches, though they aren't using them much this year because of that tiger of the sea, that disrespecter of persons, the barracuda shark.

Casting about for a place to lunch, we chose Louis' Grill, largely because it had tables on the sidewalk in the Parisian manner. This proved a

lucky choice, and we had Spanish mackerel about which one could rightly rhapsodize. Calling the head waiter, I exclaimed with enthusiasm: "Surely Louis is a Frenchman! His last name must be something like Vattel or Foyot or Prunier?" The head waiter did not beam at this as I expected he would. On the contrary, the look he gave me was definitely sour. "Louis is not a Frenchman," he said. "And his last name ain't any of them you mentioned. It's Fishbein."

And so, making no further efforts to dispense compliments that weren't appreciated, we moved on to the north, through more and more exclusiveness, until we came to those temples of privacy, the Bath and Surf Clubs. Turning off from the latter, we went on to that final triumph of isolation, the Indian Creek Golf Club. At a bridge, reminiscent of A Century of Progress Exposition, we were challenged by a guard in a gray uniform, and our credentials were examined. It was like getting into Buckingham Palace. The only difference was that the sentry wasn't in busby and scarlet tunic. He did, however, say "right-o" when he let us pass.

Indian Creek is probably the hardest place in the world for an uninvited guest to penetrate. It stands on an island of its own, with a well-guarded bridge as the only means of access. Here the millionaire can really be alone. If there are three foursomes on the fairway at one time it is consid-

ered a frightful state of congestion, and a meeting of the greens committee is called at once to take action.

The clubhouse is a cozy little place, about the size and somewhat in the manner of the state theater in the City of Mexico. The men's locker room alone is enough to abash a visitor. Its vaulted ceiling suggests one of the college halls at Oxford, and this ecclesiastical atmosphere is borne out by the lockers themselves. No crude contraptions of olive-painted steel are they. They are of carved wood, like the choir stalls of an ancient church. And the members do not lace their shoes on benches. There are no benches — only upholstered chairs and soft divans, covered with delicate chintz. Even the most hobnailed personality is subdued by this atmosphere of elegance, and the crudest parvenu comes quickly to the manners of a Groton graduate.

Leaving the painful diversion of golf to my companions, I repaired to silent communion with my thoughts in the chaste solitude of the men's locker room. At any moment I expected the singing of Gregorian chants, but no sound marred the magnificent stillness. There were no raucous voices complaining of missed putts. Not even a servitor appeared. Here, at last, was the perfect peace I had traveled so far to find. Silently, reverently, I removed my smallclothes, and gave myself over to the sensuous luxury of a bath. I reflected, as I

stood there in ecstatic enjoyment of unlimited hot water, that the onyx stall of the shower was about the same size as our entire trailer.

Happy moments, those, in the caress of Indian Creek's hottest water and softest towels. I shall always look back on them with the tenderest gratitude. The roughest tourist camp can never obliterate their memory.





GOURMET'S DREAM

We spent an hour this afternoon in a home which is one of the few Florida establishments that have the patina of age and repose. Its owner is one of the real old-timers — been here, man and boy, nigh on to twenty years!

As we sat on an enclosed balcony, whence we could see the sun reddening behind the minarets of Miami, across the lagoon, we talked of politics. But something set us off on the Civil War. From there, by stages not altogether clear to me now, we came to the subject of Florida. And as the word “ham” inevitably suggests the word “eggs,” the subject of Florida brought the name of Henry L. Doherty into the talk.

He, as you may know, is the rich oil man who appeared on the scene, with ready cash in his pockets, when the local boom burst. He bought up properties from which the bottom had fallen out. Today, among other things, he owns a number of hotels. But where do you suppose he spends most of his time? Yes, children, in a *trailer* — a magnificent affair, as big as a Pullman, with a sort of conning tower in front from which he can see

the road ahead, and a pair of uniformed chauffeurs to drive.

It was now time for dinner, so, leaving the hospitality of our friends, we proceeded — on their advice — to an establishment located down near the dog-racing track and the shooting galleries, a place called Joe's. There we made the acquaintance of a gourmet's dream, the stone crab — a crustacean to be had only here and in Cuba. Rich in iodine, it cannot be kept for much over twenty-four hours, and it cannot be transported alive. That is why stone crabs, though plentiful, are expensive. More succulent than the finest lobster, they fetch two dollars a portion — and are worth it.

Judging from our behavior that we were novices in crab-eating, Joe Jr. (whose last name is Weiss) volunteered instructions. He showed us how to salvage portions we had found inaccessible, how to remove the shell, how to mix lemon juice with the drawn butter, and how to dunk the rich white meat in the sauce. And finally he introduced us to his mother, wife of the original Joe, who presided over the cash register. She had come from Hungary, she said. And, when I asked her if she didn't want to go back to the land of paprika, she said no; she preferred Florida.

Well, there may be souls so dead as not to soar on a gorge of stone crabs, but if such there be I trust that I may meet them infrequently.

Our faces still moist with crab meat and lemon butter, we left Joe's in search of our last evening's entertainment in Miami Beach. After some debate it was decided that we should top off our visit by attending a performance of Minsky's burlesque show. This is the dominant feature of the county fair which the south end of exclusive Miami Beach



has become. It is a branch — and a profitable one, I suspect — of the Minsky's for which New York is famous. It is housed in a makeshift shelter on a pier, but the price of admission is fairly high.

The burlesque shows of the big cities are patronized almost exclusively by men. But considerably more than half the customers in this one were women — most of them beyond the first bloom of youth. And the smuttier the jokes the more the

feminine part of the audience laughed. We have certainly proceeded far from the quaint Victorian notion that the so-called gentler sex lives in a more rarefied moral atmosphere than does the male.

I confess that I was puzzled by Mr. Minsky's entertainment. It was a graceless hash of clumsy dancing, nasal singing and jokes that ranged from the merely stale to the actively decomposing. In the long wait between acts hawkers marched up and down the aisles peddling what they assured us was the sort of pictorial depravity that delights the natives of Paris, France, and which is, in fact, the sort of depravity that infuriates the real natives of Paris, France, and makes those selling it subject to the attentions of the police.

What baffled me most about Mr. Minsky's efforts was how successful they were. The customers were not out slumming. They had come to be amused, and they *were* amused. Their laughter was spontaneous and from the midriff. They were delighted by endless repetitions of the strip act, that standby of burlesque in which a well-contoured female removes her attire, bit by bit, and slips behind a curtain just before the job is complete.

It was a pleasure to retreat to our trailer, wash ourselves well and try to forget Minsky's while we remembered the fresh, clean whiteness of the stone crabs.



NEW WORLDS CONQUERED

Our retreat from Miami, this morning, took longer than it should. The torrential rains of the last few days had buried the wheels of our covered wagon in the sand, and the salt wind had coated the threads of the lifting jack with rust. Our landlord's wife was helpful, but not experienced. For lubricant she proffered a can of shellac. However, she found some oil also, and we should soon have been well on our way northward except for the not unexpected discovery that one of the party had left belongings behind. The frequency with which this discovery is made, I find, increases geometrically with the number of persons in the party, and it is made usually when we have gone about eight miles from the starting point.

By noon, however, we were out of the Miami suburbs and in the midst of that characteristic feature of the Florida landscape — the subdivision that never grew up. The coast, from Miami northward, alternates flamboyant castles of more-or-less Spanish architecture with wind-swept acres of marsh grass — the cemeteries of some realtor's dream.

As we bowled along I fell to speculating on that

symbol of Florida, the palm tree. Of no use that I can discover, save for the coconuts which grow on some of them, it is a singularly inconsequential growth. Its huge trunk rises high above the ground, only to culminate in a tassel of unlovely foliage that creaks in the wind like saddle leather. Its roots are negligible, the seemingly solid tree being held to earth by nodules as trivial as the growth at the other end. No great force is required to push it over. Yet it can easily be righted again, and, when it is, quickly returns to life.

Florida, I gather, is like that. Panics may flatten it financially. Hurricanes may blow down its buildings. Frost may ruin its fruits. But it promptly recovers from any and all of these troubles, to bloom with renewed opulence.

In a trifle over two hours we reached Palm Beach, a place which is geographically like Miami, but which in spirit is quieter and in fact is smaller, richer, more exclusive and more sophisticated. Palm Beach is a spit of sand which flowered to its present beauty under the hand of that imaginative oil magnate and railroad builder, Henry Flagler. It is separated by a narrow strip of water, called Lake Worth, from the mainland town of West Palm Beach, where abide the purveyors, caretakers and camp followers of the winter residents. This is really not a lake at all, but an arm of the sea, with an inlet at either end. Access to Palm Beach is by bridge.

It was early afternoon when we crossed to Palm Beach, and we expected to be halted at the bridge. Palm Beach is legally part of the United States, but in fact it is a separate nation, if not, indeed, a separate planet. It was not likely that so exclusive a community would welcome a trailer. Ours, however, was not noticed, and we were able to drive serenely among the bicycle chairs and the custom-bodied Rolls-Royces until we found the place we sought.

This was the home of a friend, a retired financier. It was our plan to drive up to his door and surprise him with the impish suggestion that we park on his lawn. The surprise, however, was on us; for no sooner did he see our caravan than he proposed that we anchor in his front yard and sleep in his house. We compromised by parking in the street while we changed clothes for a swim in the near-by ocean.

When we had finished our dip, with steamers coming down the gulf stream so close in shore that we could almost read their names, we returned to our friend's house, and in his patio tried to catch up, for a few leisured minutes, with the news of the world. But the sun was setting and we had to be about the serious business of locating ourselves for the night.

And so, through streets that had never seen a trailer, but which gave not the slightest evidence of the fact, we went back across the bridge. Our

goal was the Lakeside Camp, which was said to be just north of West Palm Beach. It proved to be just north of the city limits — which meant that it was almost as far out in the underbrush as it would be in Los Angeles.

The designer of this camp had not foreseen trailers. I gave one look at the place and said despairingly: "Drive on." But the head of our clan is both optimistic and resourceful. Disregarding my fretful pessimism, she had us drive into the place and unhitch. Then she took a hand at pushing the trailer into a stall that was wider by not more than the breadth of a hair than the trailer itself. Strangely enough, the thing was done quite easily. Everyone was astonished except the little Napoleon who had conceived the idea. While the rest stood and marveled, she went briskly about the preparations for dinner. It is lucky for all of us that she is in command of this expedition. Without her we should still be mired in a Georgia cornfield. If she wanted to, I believe she could park that trailer in the top of a palmetto!



THROUGH THE NEEDLE'S EYE

My pencil crumbles and my fingers grow floppy as I try to set down the events of yesterday. Words fail me. Even with a map, it would be difficult to make things clear.

To begin with, we received a telegraphic invitation from a friend who owns one of the grander establishments in Palm Beach, to move from our camp to his palatial estate. He was not to arrive for a day or two, but we were to make ourselves comfortable at once. So we hitched up the trailer and started happily for our new anchorage. When we arrived we found that the servants had not been apprised of our coming; that is, they had not been apprised of the *manner* of our coming. Even if they had been, there was nothing in their training or experience to qualify them for so strange a situation.

I explained to the butler that we had come to camp, and he said, "Very good, sir." It was plain, however, that he did not feel very good about it.

Our first step was to find a suitable location for the trailer. Our friend's estate, though considerable, was designed in the days before trailers, and a high stone wall presented difficulties. There was,

to be sure, a gate; but it was a narrow, not to say a merely decorative, gate, and at such a peculiar angle that — well, lacking a map, you will just have to take my word for it that getting a trailer through this particular gate was much harder than the scriptural problem of getting a camel through a needle's eye.

We had, however, got the trailer into and out of strange places and we were not daunted. Furthermore, the Little Corporal had gone off to get groceries, and it seemed a good opportunity for us men folk to show what we could do.

After first mapping our course of action and measuring everything carefully, we tackled the iron gates. One of these we pried open and the other conveniently fell apart. Fortunately they were old gates and practically rusted away. We next found that the aperture was, as we had calculated, wider than the trailer. It was not much wider — only a millimeter or so, but for fellows like us that was enough.

This preliminary work done, we drove the caravan over the lawn to a position previously charted, and there, with the almost comatose butler helping, we unhitched and prepared to push. When I invited the butler to help push he looked at his white jacket, then at the sky, and said piteously, "Very good, sir." It was even clearer than before, however, that he did not find things good.

By this time we had been joined by a French

maid, slightly hysterical; several scullery wenches; and a dark fellow in a blue smock, who said things in Spanish which I did not understand, but which I guessed were protests, if not prayers. There were also numerous representatives of the native population and several small boys. So, with all hands heaving and everything working out according to



our calculations (except that the butler fell under the wheels, considerably sullyng his white jacket), we pushed the trailer through the needle's eye — or at least as far as it would go, a palm tree having sprung up to impede further progress.

We now paused to admire our handiwork. As we stood there, mopping our brows, we found two things to mar the perfection of our achievement. One was the fact that we had cut off half the ap-

proach to our host's garage. This, of course, was trifling, since the weather is mild down here and it wouldn't matter if a car or two had to stand outdoors overnight. But the other defect was more serious. The door to the trailer was in such a position that it could not be opened. And all our baggage was inside the trailer.

We thought this over for awhile, accompanied by the thinking (more audible) of the French maid, the Spanish valet, the scullery wenches and what remained of the butler. Then we decided that the best thing would be to hitch up again and go somewhere else. To this decision the butler uttered what I thought was his first really heartfelt "Very good, sir."

It was even harder getting the trailer out than getting it in had been. It managed to get stuck in the most unexpected places, and in general behaved like an arrow, or a thorn, or, to use a Florida simile, a woodtick. But we were getting a little anxious for fear that the Little Corporal might return and not be tolerant about the slight error we had made in our calculations. So, using perhaps more speed than finesse, thereby removing part of the wall, a wreath or two of bougainvillaea, several bits of assorted shrubbery and part of what had once been the butler's white jacket, we pried the trailer out again.

Being fatigued by that time, we just hauled it to the nearest vacant lot. There it reposes. And

if anybody wants it moved he can jolly well move it himself. We are through for the day. Our thought is to sit quietly while the butler puts himself together again and is able to move something liquid and refreshing in our direction.

I gather, however, from what the French maid said, that the butler is through for good.



REGRETTABLE COINCIDENCE

Our host arrived by plane early this morning — probably in response to an S O S from his butler. I found him looking gloomily at the effects of our efforts to get our trailer into his garden. He seemed to feel that a trailer was only slightly less devastating than a hurricane. I pacified him as best I could, and was just about to crack a breakfast egg, when the doorbell rang. In a moment the butler appeared and there was a vengeful gleam in his eye as he fixed it on me. “It’s a policeman, sir,” he said ominously. “He’s looking for you, sir.”

This proved to be true. There was a policeman and he was looking for me. It was about the trailer. It appears that what we had thought a vacant lot was really somebody’s kitchen garden. And, even if it had been a vacant lot, the owner thereof considered that mooring a trailer thereon constituted trespass. If we didn’t move the thing immediately, the policeman said, we would have trouble.

I laughed heartily at the policeman’s warning. It seemed to me quaint that he should suggest the

possibility of future trouble. I should have thought it clear that we were having trouble already.

“ Well, what am I to do? ” I demanded of my host.

“ Do? ” he echoed mournfully. “ Haven’t you done enough? Isn’t it sufficient to have wrecked the most beautiful antique gate this side of Seville; to have put wagon tracks on the finest lawn in Dade County; to have uprooted several rare examples of flowering plants, and to have unhinged the reason of an even more valuable butler? Or don’t you consider that *doing* anything? ”

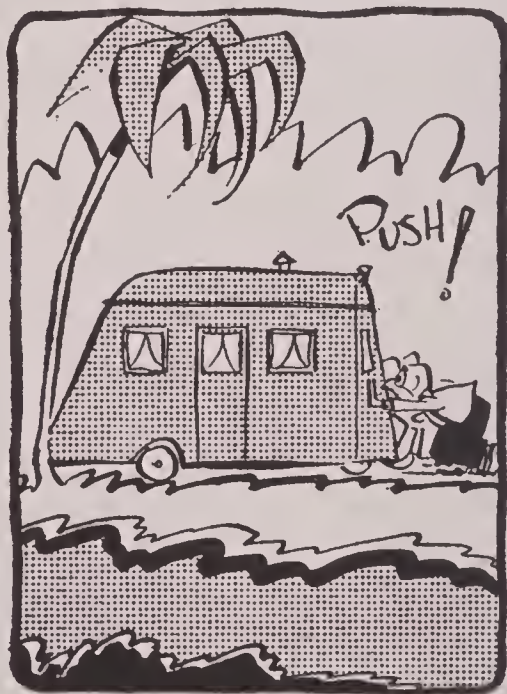
“ Your position is illogical, and, if you will pardon my saying so, ill-mannered,” I protested. “ You invite me and my family to be your guests in this monument of unearned increment, and now you behave as if you regretted it.”

“ I am childlike and candid,” said my friend. “ I do regret it. I regret it terribly. I invited you, it is true. I didn’t invite a plague of locusts. You are deadlier than the boll weevil or the Japanese beetle. Oh, my lovely hibiscus, my pure, smooth lawn, my antique gate, my historic wall, my precious butler! ”

“ Stop sniveling, you wretched materialist,” I ordered sharply. “ It is only the things of the spirit that matter. You can plant everything again, including your butler, and everything will grow. It’s a wonderful climate for growing things.

But meanwhile, I ask you again, what am I to do about my trailer? ”

This book might fall into the hands of the young, and I cannot, therefore, give a verbatim transcript of just what he said about my trailer. Suffice it that he spoke eloquently and in such tones that the butler, coughing discreetly, withdrew to the pantry.



I had to interrupt the flow of invective. “ The hour advances,” I said firmly. “ Presently there will be more constables coming to tell me that I must move. There is no question about the law’s being on their side. The one question is — where shall I move *to?* ”

My friend grew sarcastic. “ I suppose you will suggest that I remove enough of my wall to permit

your monstrous vehicle to get through. That would be a logical suggestion, too. You have already made a good start at it.”

“No,” I said firmly. “I am a sensitive person and I can tell when I or my trailer is unwelcome. I am not one to force myself where I’m not wanted. Wild horses could not drag my trailer through your gates. As a matter of fact, after our experiments of yesterday, I doubt if even a brace of caterpillar tractors could do it. No, I shall not let a mere trailer mar our hitherto beautiful friendship. I shall take the thing elsewhere. But I appeal to you, as one who knows the real estate of this region, to tell me where.”

“There are several places you could take it,” said my friend thoughtfully. “One is the place that is paved with good intentions. Another is Lake Worth — assuming, of course, that the darned thing wouldn’t float and become a menace to navigation. And a third is to make it keep company with another of my afflictions — the vacant lot across the street, which I bought during the boom and have not yet been able to get rid of.

“The more I think of it,” he went on, “the more I believe that this third solution would be the most appropriate. I have pains in my solar plexus every time I look at that vacant lot, and it will pain me only a little bit more to see your mechanical termite upon it.”

And so it has come to pass that our trailer is

now moored next to a " For Sale " sign. This is a regrettable coincidence and it gives a false impression, but there seems to be no other anchorage available. Incidentally, it is worthy of mention that more people have asked the price of the trailer than have asked the price of the lot!



PLACE OF CONTRADICTIONS

The essence of all philosophy is embodied in the phrase, "Know Thyself." So few really do that the exception is worth noting. He is the proprietor of the tourist camp in West Palm Beach, where we tarried the other night.



Exuberant over my experience as a nomad on wheels, I suggested to him that he should at once set about acquiring more land, and so be in position to accommodate the trailers which would soon be coming over the highways in ever-increasing

numbers. To this counsel of wisdom he shook his head. "I don't want no trailers," he said glumly. "Matter of fact, I don't even want no tourists. I don't like this here tourist-camp business. It's a helluva business. I'm goin' to get out of it soon as I can. Seems like I ain't fitted for it. I lose my temper too danged easy. Them tourists just get my goat, that's all." He went off muttering about folks that ran away with his soap and left their cabins like pigpens; and we slunk guiltily out of sight.

Many observers have written about Palm Beach and reached a variety of conflicting conclusions. That is not surprising, for it is a contradictory land. One is likely to be confused by a place where the richest and most influential go devoutly every Sunday to listen in rapt approval to sermons on the vanity of riches.

Palm Beach is supposed to be the special playground of the very affluent and certainly its great estates are the most luxurious in the world. But high walls and watchful servitors keep them remote from the vulgar eye, if they are not, indeed, actually remote in miles. They have their own swimming pools, their own polo fields, their own jazz orchestras, their own movie theaters, their own tennis courts and their own scandals. Their wealthy owners — or, of recent years, their wealthy tenants, for wealth has to some degree changed hands — hardly ever appear in public, except to fish in the ocean or play golf at the Seminole or the

Gulf Stream — superb courses which by no license of words could be called public.

On the other hand, there are many quite modest houses in Palm Beach and quite modest people living in them. These, while not of the gilded variety that supply copy for the Sunday supplements, are not, to be sure, of the common herd. It takes quite a bit of change to rent even the most modest of the Palm Beach cottages.



Once established, however, the visitor can have a good deal of fun for nothing. There are no shuffleboard tournaments as there are at Fort Myers and St. Petersburg, but there is a great stretch of beach open to anyone who wants to use it. People go there on bicycles, afoot or in busses from the small hotels, tourist camps and trailers of West Palm, and step directly into the surf. These

are quiet people. If they aren't quiet by nature, uniformed guards will take courteous steps to see that they learn quietness — or move on, say, to Miami.

There are inexpensive restaurants along the shore, but no shooting galleries or burlesque houses, and women were required to include stockings as part of their bathing costumes long after the rest of the world had gone nudist. Today, of course, the accepted attire is as scanty as it is anywhere. Not even Palm Beach could stand indefinitely in the path of progress.

There are dancing and drinking establishments for the dark hours, but they are neither numerous nor blatant. Palm Beach is decorous even in its vice. No church could have a more subdued atmosphere than the famous old building of white clapboards which houses Mr. Bradley's roulette wheels. This is known officially as the "Beach Club," and it is far more exclusive than most real clubs.

There may be things of import going on in this world — wars, strikes, revolutions, hunger, and the collision of planets — but Palm Beach knows not of them. Drowsing tranquilly on its spit of sand, fishing, playing at games, shopping in its shadowed arcades, downing vast quantities of potable spirit, it heeds not the rumble of distant drums.

I shall be sorry to leave it, but the day of de-

parture draws near. Life is real, life is earnest, and across the street, already overgrown with tropic shrubbery, our trailer stands leaning on its jack, in mute appeal to be up and doing.



NOT FOR THE EFFETE

Now and then a letter survives my various forwarding addresses and catches up with me. One came this morning with the following comment from a friend and reader:

“ I have followed your wanderings by trailer with a good deal of interest; for I have long cherished the notion of trying this mode of transport. However, after reading your reports, I think I shall give up the idea. It isn't so much what you say as what I can read between the lines.”

This communication demands an immediate answer! So, instead of discussing the habits of the sailfish, as I had intended, I shall answer it.

My dear sir, I beg of you not to read between my lines. The whole story is in the lines themselves — nothing added, nothing left out. I have tried to be scrupulously truthful in these articles, because I realize that there are people who may be moved by them either to try trailer travel or to forego it.

The best advice I can give the doubtful is to borrow an outfit or rent one before buying. Trailers, like caviar, modern music, beach picnics and fishing, are not for everyone. People so effete that

they abhor any form of "roughing it" would certainly find life in a trailer more work than play. Likewise, people so crystallized in habit that the taste for adventure has left them, and for whom there is no salt in encounters with the unexpected, are advised to stick to trains or conventional motor-ing.

The trailer has been developed to a high point of ingenuity, but the fact remains that for several people to cook, eat, sleep and argue in a space measuring less than one hundred square feet means a certain amount of congestion. It calls for good dispositions and mutual forbearance, even in fine weather. When it rains the psychological difficulties are multiplied.

The hardest thing about trailer travel is disposing of the trailer when you want to make camp. It is true that it can be unhitched anywhere. But "anywhere" does not often provide electricity. This, to be sure, is unimportant, for one can do very well with oil lamps, or even candles. But still more rarely does "anywhere" provide toilet facilities. One can, of course, arrange things like soldiers on a march, but after the novelty of anchoring for the night wherever you happen to be has worn off the wayfarer tends to seek a camp where he can plug into the lighting circuit, get hot running water, and find civilized plumbing. This may be deplorable — an evidence that one has been ruined by mechanized life — but it is so.

Well-equipped camps are available, but they are not numerous. They are, in fact, comparatively rare. And candor compels me to say that the best that I have seen are not very good. In most cases they are makeshifts, hastily improvised to meet a new demand, badly drained, awkwardly arranged and with sanitary equipment which at best may be called questionable.

These are the hard facts of life in a trailer, as I have found it. In California and the southwest the tourist camp has reached a development it has not attained elsewhere. In another year or two the rest of the country will catch up — of that I am sure.

Meanwhile, the trailer has a long list of advantages to offset its disadvantages. First and foremost is its economy. It makes possible wintering in the south for less than the cost of staying at home in the north. Furthermore, it permits the carrying of far more baggage than would be possible — or, at least, endurable — by any other method.

As I look about me in our traveling home I observe the most appalling amount of impedimenta — several sets of golf clubs, tennis racquets, bathing suits, a typewriter, a drawing board, a painter's easel and materials, cameras, a radio and a whole library of books. Nor are these things stuffed away in trunks. Everything is readily accessible. And clothing, instead of being rumpled in bags and suitcases, is arranged neatly on hangers.

The trailer is here to stay and it will make many changes in our way of life. Though it is an infant industry now, I believe it will be a giant before long, with great numbers of people employed in servicing it. In the long run I suspect that it will prove another nail in the coffin of urban congestion. No longer will the city dweller be content with short week-end trips in a crowded countryside. People of small means will find it possible to take inexpensive vacations far from home.

My whole experience with the trailer has been in and between cities, where the difficulties are greatest and the contrasts with normal living most acute. But I think that the trailer will find its best service in making possible inexpensive trips to the wilds. For city folk, going to other cities is not the best of vacations. A city man will have more fun getting as far away from cities as possible. Hitherto, a hunting or fishing trip was, in cost, beyond the poor man. Now, with a trailer, and perhaps a collapsible boat stowed in it, the forest primeval is his to command.



FUTILE FUN

The rich, contrary to general belief, do not lead a jolly life, free from every care and strife. Far from it. They work like — well, they work hard.

Consider the chatelaine of the establishment in which these lines are written. There are some twenty guests, and at least half as many servants to wait upon them. To take the guests about there is a flotilla of motor cars, and down at a dock on Lake Worth is moored a yacht. True, the mistress of the place has a housekeeper to take off her shoulders most of the details of management. But I observe that many details remain. Providing breakfast is a problem in itself. The young folk, after dancing all night, do not rise until eleven, but the fishing fans are up at dawn. In between those hours there is a steady stream of guests drifting in for grapefruit and coffee. And after they are fed, cars have to be provided to take them to their various amusements.

I have spent a whole day in deliberate waste of my opportunities. I resisted my host's entreaties to join him in fishing for pompano. Without regrets, I let a party go off for golf at Boca Raton. I

was not interested in lying on the beach at the Bath and Tennis Club. I refused to make one of mixed doubles at the Everglades. And when the gilded youth had rubbed enough sleep out of their eyes to be ready for cocktails at the pool, and invited me to join them, I declined without hesitation.

The reason for all this nonconformity was that I had important business to attend to. I wanted to paint a picture of the patio, showing the Spanish stairs, with their wrought-iron rail, and the sunlight filtering through the archways.

It is dark now, and all day I have toiled at this problem, struggling to make plaster look like plaster, and not like bakelite or weathered oak or whitewashed cork or Ivory soap. And I have failed gorgeously. The other guests paid little attention to what was obviously a harmless mania — one, indeed, which was to be expected in a person who traveled in a trailer. But the servants behaved like canaries who have found a sparrow in their nest. They had become accustomed to such forms of time-wasting as golf and backgammon and sun baths, but the painting of pictures was a vice new to them.

The butler, who from long experience could instantly determine such things as the quality and extent of a guest's thirst — and knew how to provide the proper cure — was baffled by my behavior. He hovered about, respectful but wor-

ried. Was there anything he could get me? A Tom Collins was refreshing on such a hot morning. Or would I like a chair? When I assured him that all I craved was solitude, he said, "Very good, sir," and stole silently away, a slightly broken man. It was evident that people who craved solitude were something he had not recently encountered.

The saturnine youth who spoke Italian and wore a green apron continued in my vicinity, plainly more sympathetic, but also more critical. He had apparently seen painters at work before, perhaps in his native Naples. But presently he made a clucking noise in his throat and went off about his business. From the expression on his face, I gathered that he did not consider me a painter.

His dismissal did not bother me. I am not a painter, and never shall be. But I get the same fun out of trying to make paint behave that other people seem to get out of crossword puzzles, or even out of trying to make a little white ball roll into a hole in the center of a smooth plot of grass. I am sure that I had just as much fun today as any member of the household — and this, despite the fact that I did not succeed in making plaster look like plaster.

I was unmoved even by the acid comments of the French maid, whom I overheard discussing

me. "What a droll one," she exclaimed, "standing up all day long, trying to make a picture. An' ze picture zat he makes — pouf! *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose!*"

Too true. But the same remark might be made of life itself. The more it changes the more it is the same thing.





TIME FOR CANDOR

This morning my host came to me in some embarrassment. "Just had a wire from my wife's mother," he said, flicking at his highly polished riding boots in the manner he has when pained. "She is coming sooner than we expected. She is coming, in fact, this afternoon. What is more, she is bringing with her one of my wife's more dismal cousins and a whole covey of children."

"How delightful!" I exclaimed. "You needed company around the old place. I have been thinking how lonesome it was with only twenty guests."

"This is not a jesting matter," he said bitterly. "My wife's mother is a serious woman, with strong feelings about the idle rich. She visits here as a sort of slumming expedition, and she spends her time making unpleasant cracks about the coming revolution. On the other hand, she is a woman with a taste for comfort. And that brings me to the point."

"Your tone implies something unpleasant," I said.

He nodded somberly. "The point is that we have run out of beds. It may seem strange to you that in all the caverns of this vast Spanish palace

there is not a spare bed lurking about, but it is so. There is not even a hammock.”

I understood what he was driving at, and I hastened to reassure him. “Don’t give the matter another thought,” I cried. “Only just across the street are spare beds — four of them. Your wife’s mother and your wife’s ill-favored cousin can sleep in our trailer, with nothing but the rustle of the palms to break their slumbers. They will be far from the carousing of the bloated bondholders that makes night hideous in your home.”

My host did not seem altogether pleased with this generous offer. “For nearly a week,” he said, “I have had to look at that bizarre equipage of yours, forming practically the entire view from my window. For nearly a week I have heard you babbling about its comfort, its convenience, the beauty of its Honduras mahogany interior and the taste of its leaded glass windows. Almost you have convinced me; but I do not think you could convince my wife’s mother, or even my wife’s cousin. I do not even think you could convince my wife’s cousin’s children.”

I turned for a brief glance at the bed in which, for nearly a week, I had slept so peacefully. “I am a man of the people,” I said firmly. “A child of the rough, open spaces. Too long have I lingered in this suburb of Sybaris, being awakened by an English accent with the news that my bath was quite ready, sir. I have softened under this sort of

thing. I have forgotten the hard realities of life. Sipping orange juice off a tray, fetched by a former Russian admiral, has made me lose interest in the



burning issues of politics. It has dulled the edge of my zeal for a redistribution of wealth. I have almost become reconciled to having it distributed among such persons as yourself — lush growths of pelf to which I might cling in parasitic ease.

“ I have fought against telling you this, fearful that I might hurt your feelings. But the time has come to be candid. I am homesick. My whole family is homesick — though not, I regret to say, quite as homesick as they should be. We all yearn for the cozy quiet of our trailer. We want to be alone with our books, and our pots and pans — just us four.”

Without another word I reached for the pants which the valet in the green apron had pressed. "This night shall we sleep like the gypsies we really are, and your wife's mother can toss through the long watches of the dark, listening to the clink of glasses from your plutocratic patio. We shall be at rest on the bosom of nature, hearing naught but the sweet, fierce cries of the wild life in your jungle across the street."

"Will you be staying there long?" asked my friend with an accent which, I regret to say, sounded hopeful.

I shook my head. "The call of the open trail sings in our blood. It has been pleasant and instructive, having this glimpse of economic security, but we yearn for the taste of our own coffee, the primitive intimacy of our own little bathroom. We are nomads, you know — Romany rye, and all that sort of thing — and even stucco walls and wooden ironwork imprison our souls. Tomorrow, shortly after the sun rises, and before the bar at the Bath and Tennis has served its first daiquiri, your vacant lot will be vacant indeed; for the wheels of our covered wagon will be rolling northward."

"Oh," said my friend, with a new gleam in his eye, "I shall miss it."

He spoke as a man who had been cured of a broken leg would speak of missing his crutches.



WHAT A WHIRLIGIG!

Last night, in jubilation at his deliverance from our trailer, our host threw a party for us at one of the swankiest of the night spots.

After we had dined, danced and drunk our fill, he proposed that we all move on to Bradley's and have a go at the gaming tables. This, I may say,



was not my idea. In fact, I objected to it. I had no funds for such diversion, and, to me, gambling isn't a diversion, anyway. However, being nothing if not docile, I pretended to be the sort of fellow

who can't sleep till he has dropped at least fifty bucks guessing wrong on the bouncing ball; and followed the mob to Bradley's. The rest of the party sailed right on into the green and white hush of the gaming rooms. I was halted at the outer gate by an official with a blue jowl and eyes like shrimps, who informed me, with notable lack of cordiality, that only gents in evening clothes were admitted to the real part of the entertainment.

This was really not news to me, and I countered by citing the special rule that gents who were leaving in the morning might appear in street or civilian attire. The fellow at the desk, who looked as if he had just sucked a lemon, replied that this rule applied only to members.

Until that time I really had had no great desire to enter the sacred precincts. I had entered them many times before, and had never been greatly amused. But human nature being what it is, I warmed to the argument and said acidly that I *was* a member, and had been for some twenty years. The fellow was not as impressed as he should have been. He said — quite accurately — that I had not joined the club *this* year. Stung by this, I played a trump. Was Colonel Bradley present? The fellow's lips twisted in a supercilious smile at this question. He had seen this card played before. Yes, he said, Colonel Bradley was on the premises, but he saw no one after 5 o'clock.

Until this point I had not given much thought

to interviewing Colonel Bradley. I knew he was a busy man, what with his racing stables and the management of his gambling establishment. For that matter, I was a busy man myself, what with managing my trailer and things like that. But I was stung by the challenge of inaccessibility. So, as unpleasant as the chap behind the desk, I demanded pen and paper and dashed off a note.

“Take this in and let us see what we shall see,” I ordered grandly.

A moment or two later, to the great astonishment of the guardian and all his assistants (and not a little to my own), Colonel Bradley appeared. He was not, I must admit, effusive in his greeting. He was, in fact, slightly on the chill side. “What did you wish to see me about?” he inquired.

“I did not wish to see you about anything,” I replied truthfully. “I merely wished to see you. You are the world’s greatest redistributor of wealth, and I could not bear to leave these parts without presenting my respects.”

He was warmed slightly by this, and I asked him how business was. He said it was punk. With one great hotel closed, and a still greater one torn down — the Poinciana — there were left in Palm Beach only about five thousand potential customers. Many of these had lost either their interest in gambling or the cash with which to gratify their interest.

Presently, after some mutual reminiscences —

both of us having first visited the place about the turn of the century; he to open the Beach Club, and I to follow my nurse to the alligator farm — he shook hands and asked if there was anything else he could do for me. Yes, I said, there was. He could get a greeter for his front office who would not act like the desk sergeant of a police station. “How’s that?” he asked, cupping his ear. “Speak a little louder, please, I’m a trifle deaf.”



I took extreme pleasure in repeating my words in the loudest possible tone. I hope they resulted in a certain party's having a lesson in deportment before dawn broke over Lake Worth. When I am ejected from any sort of establishment, I like to have it done suavely.

After that, conversation rather languished. The

colonel excused himself and went away. I remained standing in outer darkness, being glowered at by gents who obviously didn't like me, but who also didn't know just what to do about it. Probably there were machine guns trained on me from behind grilled loopholes.

When my friends had lost all their money, and came out to sympathize with me for not having been able to lose any, one of them said that he had overheard one of the minions whispering to Colonel Bradley about a newspaper reporter, a mysterious and probably dangerous fellow, who had come in a trailer.

Make what you can of this. It baffles me. Either Colonel Bradley has a marvelous spy service, or I have come actually to *look* my occupation and my means of transport.

And so, with this last memory of Palm Beach to carry with me — off to the highway again. And from a Spanish palace, with a butler and a French maid to see that my bath was hot, to Ye Olde Touriste Campe, with cold water in a dirty tin dish. Ah, my masters, what a whirligig is life!



THE WRONG ROAD

After a long argument this morning, as to whether or not we should go several hundred miles out of our way to visit Charleston, it was decided that we should not — that the narrow, ruin-lined streets of St. Augustine, where carriages are still drawn by horses, would provide enough in the way of quaintness and antiquity.

So, off we went. Heaven, however, has a way of juggling the purposes of men. Months ago I clipped an item from a country newspaper. It seemed so symbolic of man's futile efforts to circumvent his fate:

“ Dr. and Mrs. F. A. Graham returned Friday from a trip abroad. They booked passage for England, but part way over the boat ran into a storm and a rudder was broken, making it necessary for the boat to return to St. John's, N. F., to be put in dry dock. The Grahams then booked passage on a boat going back to Boston. They stopped at Halifax, N. S., en route. Dr. and Mrs. Graham visited Dr. Leroy Hartman in New York, friends in North Carolina, and from there went to New Orleans, where Dr. Graham took a course in plate work.”

A dentist starts for England and winds up doing plate work in New Orleans. We start for Atlanta and at sundown find ourselves — in Charleston. Everybody blames everybody else for it, but it was just fate, that's all. That, and a wrong road, too narrow to permit turning the trailer around. Fate is especially inexorable when you get a trailer on a wrong road.

We were a little troubled because our *Golden Guide* — that compendium of undependability — mentioned only one tourist camp in Charleston; and that one wasn't in Charleston, but nine miles north of it. However, said I — always cheery — Charleston was a great tourist center, a place of notable beauty and historic interest; and there were bound to be many camps there. Well, there weren't many camps; there was only one and that one was nine miles out, along a road running between a railroad and the quarter of the more impoverished Negroes. Furthermore, it was a camp without provision for trailers.

It was dark by the time we had effected a tolerable mooring. Thus far, the beautiful gardens and the charming old houses of historic Charleston had rather eluded us. But we were not to be conquered. We had heard of a quaint old inn, a place of suave elegance, where Ravenels and Beauregards vied with Cabots and Lodges in looking down their noses at one another; and we resolved to dine there.

The proprietor of our camp looked rather bewildered when we inquired the location of this inn. He looked much as the manager of a flop for the unemployed would look at one who asked how to reach the Waldorf-Astoria. However, he told us, and we drove nine dark miles to the water front and the white columned portico of the inn. A lady in white satin and a gentleman in dinner jacket were just entering. We followed and a courteous young man at the desk, after some questioning, gave us a card authorizing us to dine in the establishment.

In the center of what was once a private house, where dashing gallants twirled their rapiers, quaffed goblets of Madeira and danced the turbulent rigadon, was a pool of water around which, at small tables, sat beautifully attired people, mostly of advanced age.

We presented our ticket to the grand vizier, or head waiter, who coldly directed us to await further instructions in the drawing room. There we found several others, like ourselves, in limbo. After about an hour the summons came and we were permitted to enter the sacred precincts of the dining room. There, in an atmosphere of decorum as thick as custard, we had a Sunday evening snack of some half-dozen courses. There was no laughter in the room. Nobody spoke above a whisper. It was like a classroom in etiquette, or the wait before the minister arrives. The only

sound came from a Negro quartet, singing spirituals in the gallery above.

When thoroughly stuffed we repaired to the drawing rooms with their white marble fireplaces and high walls covered with pale-blue tapestry, and colonial sofas, equipped with antimacassars. The air reeked with gentility, like the odor of tuberose in a mortuary chapel. We swooned under it and went quickly to the desk to see how much it had all come to. It came to three dollars a head, not counting what the grand vizier seemed to expect and didn't get. I now understood why the keeper of the tourist camp had looked so peculiar when we asked our way to the inn.

Alas for my dreams of gallants in ruffles and periwigs, treading the stately measures of the minuet in the storied chambers of this ancient mansion. It was not an antique mansion. It was built in the gay but garish nineties.

And so, having rubbed shoulders with the quality, we drove back to our trailer. Ours is a life of contrast. Tonight we dined with opulent elegance and in the morning we shall breakfast with truck drivers. On the whole, we prefer the truck drivers. Their laugh is heartier.



WATERSPOUTS IN THE SEA

Rapidly, we move northward. As the landscape changes, with the palmettos disappearing and cold patches of snow taking their place, I find my emotions changing, too.

Those sunlit days in Florida were a pleasant interlude from reality, but already they seem remote. No longer is the eye warmed by great white houses set in shrubbery and flowers and singing green lawns. No longer do we dispute for right of way with custom-built cars driven by smartly uniformed chauffeurs. The roads are empty, save for an occasional shabby truck. Scattered houses straggle, unpainted and decaying, on bleak hill-sides. Lean men in overalls stare coldly as we pass. Gaunt, pallid women in shawls and ancient bonnets look out from the shadow of their rickety porches. Children in thin, patched jackets cluster in the red mud, waiting for the school bus. We have left the latitude of luxury.

Factories appear, the sooty smoke from their stacks climbing slowly to the pewter sky. At twilight grimy men, lights still burning in their caps, come drifting out of the coal mines.

I feel like an explorer, working up to the head-

waters of a great river. In Florida the stream of wealth rolls broad and tranquil. It is the culmination of the web of little creeks which rise in the hills and dales of the north. Each sooty mine, each cluster of hovels and factories, each patch of tilled land, contributes its bit to the flood which finds its destiny in Miami and Palm Beach.

Under the sun of those places the torrent of wealth created in the bleak farms and dingy factories rises in iridescent mist. In the forests thousands tend the little cups on the pitch pine, toiling arduously among the gnats to accumulate enough turpentine for the purchase of a single bottle of champagne at the Bath and Tennis Club. In the hills men labor from dawn to dusk, picking out enough lumps of carbon to provide the wherewithal for a single toss of the dice at Bradley's.

Well, and what of it? asks the realist. The answer, of course, is that if the possessors of great wealth were stripped of everything the lot of those who produced the wealth would not be perceptibly changed. Great wealth is like a waterspout in the sea — it attracts attention out of all proportion to its significance. If all the waterspouts were suddenly cut down the rise in the level of the sea would not be enough to be measured.

I cannot get very excited over any of the plans now current for artificially and violently limiting the possession of wealth. I can't see that any more laws are necessary. If I were a dictator the only

law I should enforce would be one making it obligatory for rich people to do a certain amount of travel. And it wouldn't be travel by limited train



or by limousine, with stops only at white-and-gold hotels. It would be travel by trailer. It would be an excellent thing if those whose lives are packed in velvet could get around and see what life on the bare boards is like.

These thoughts occur to me as I repose where we have camped for the night. It is a morass of mud to start with and the rain falls unceasingly. Clustered miserably in the valley below us is a hamlet of decrepit shanties. Darkness has fallen, but there are few lights showing. The folk hereabouts go to bed early. There is nothing else to do. Besides, light costs money.

The region is just recovering from an unprecedented fall of snow. Roofs caved in under it and roads were impassable for days. It is melting now and the hillside above us is a reticule of rivulets. The nearest hotel is miles away, over doubtful roads. It is at such a time that the advantages of dragging your home with you are most apparent. A fire crackles briskly in our stove, a savory pot *au feu* simmers in the kettle. We are dry, warm and comfortable. Outside the wind may howl and the tempest rage, but we are snug indeed. There are moments, such as those in which you want to halt where only diagonal parking is permitted, when you use bad words about trailers. But in moments like the present there is only rejoicing in the possession of one.



TOUGH GOING

It has been a tough day and I am now prepared to testify that a trailer can go anywhere a car can go.

Dawn was just breaking over the Blue Ridge this morning when we pried ourselves loose from the mud of the mountain side and took to what poets call the open road. It quickly transpired that the road could no more be called "open" than the hills could properly be called "blue." What on the map is the broad red line of Route 25 proved to be a narrow, undulant, twisting anguish of chuckholes, washouts and detour signs.

The rain came down in sheets, blotting out even the skyline of the mountains. The swollen streams were like brown calcimine. The fields were great lakes of ochre water. On the hillsides lay whole patches of pines, prostrate under the buffeting of snow and dislodged shale. The signs, "Look Out for Falling Rock," were sharply emphasized as we heard the roar of landslides above the crash of thunder.

There were times when eternity seemed close — once when a boulder the size of a watermelon

landed in the road just ahead of us and bounced off into the canyon of the French Broad . . . what a quaint name for a river!

There were detours in plenty — tortuous affections, knee-deep in greasy mud and not always well marked.

Through it all, careening and bouncing, the covered wagon followed faithfully along. There



were moments when I felt sure that all was over — an especially memorable one when a wheel took the air where a part of the road had disappeared. But everything held. And when at last, long after dark, we came safely to port there was no evidence of damage — not even so much as a broken dish.

I am able to state that trailers can “take it.” I can also state with equal emphasis that our small

car can take it, too. The modern motorcar has gone far in dependability over the machines of even five years ago.

The automobile headlight, however, remains at the horse-and-buggy level. Not a particle of progress seems to have been made in the effort to provide a light which will not blind the other fellow. There are various devices on the market which are supposed to eliminate glare. I have seen no evidence that they do.

On this trip I have seen a half-dozen large trucks lying overturned in ditches — gruesome spectacles. I cannot say what caused these mishaps but I would guess (1) headlight glare, (2) sleepy drivers. Truck drivers are sometimes required to work longer hours than the human frame can endure. And a sleepy driver is more dangerous than a drunken one.

While on this theme I might mention that good driving seems to be on the increase. There is unquestionably less speed, and infrequent enough to be notable are instances of such follies as passing on hills and curves. Still at large, however, are numerous examples of the sort of imbecile who goes past parked cars at forty miles an hour and who sticks too close to the car in front of him.

Tonight it was our fortune to gladden the heart of a lonely old man. We had halted at a roadside hashery, where an oafish youth admitted reluctantly that we might dine. Under pressure and

after mysterious calls within, he confessed to the possession of some steaks. We had taken our places at a bare table close to the bar and slot machines. But the young man conducted us outside. A door was unlocked and we climbed a flight of stairs to make the acquaintance of an artist named Jim. In white jacket and chef's cap, his black face wreathed in smiles, he assured us that we should fare of the best.

He took an incredible time about it, but when it came it was not to be bettered by the best of Park Avenue. "Yes," said Jim, "I've worked in some right smart places. But here — nobody never comes."

When I asked him, as he brought in a fresh tray of "hot bread," if he could make beaten biscuit, his face clouded. "In the old days, when I worked in big houses, I made 'em. But now. . . ." He shrugged his shoulders in a gesture oddly wistful.

It was easy to picture him at the stove of a manor house in the blue grass country serving out fried chicken to guests coming in from the hunt. But time had marched on. It had left him stranded — an artist without tools and without audience; perhaps the saddest thing in this world.



QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Now, home at last, we sing with Longfellow:

Stay, stay at home, my heart, and rest;
Homekeeping hearts are happiest,
For those that wander they know not where
Are full of trouble and full of care:
To stay at home is best.

Last night, idle and empty, our mud-covered wagon stood at the curb, its work done. When I came out this morning I found two men eying it with what seemed to me a hostile gaze. "Are you the proprietor of this conveyance?" they inquired. And when I admitted the impeachment they displayed stars!

What a dismal climax! Four thousand miles without so much as a scowl from the police, only to be pinched for parking without lights at my own front door. It was too much!

But I had guessed wrong. The hawkshaws merely wished to look inside. They were of a mind to try trailering themselves. What did I think of it, really?

Here goes for an answer to the questions most commonly asked:

Q. — Is it difficult to drive a trailer?

A. — No. The women folk did most of our driving, even in the heart of city traffic.

Q. — How fast can you go?

A. — Faster than you ought to. We reached sixty-five miles an hour and could have gone faster. Our last day's run was four hundred and fifty miles.

Q. — How about turning and backing?

A. — Turns can be made in wide streets. Backing requires practice, but can be done surprisingly well.

Q. — How does it behave at high speed?

A. — It takes curves well, travels on any sort of road, does not sway appreciably, and, except on ice, can be braked easily. Owing to its balance on one pair of wheels, the weight on the rear of the power car does not seem great — I should guess three hundred pounds at rest; less when under way.

Q. — How about gas consumption?

A. — Something like eleven per cent more than for the car alone.

Q. — Limbering and unlimbering?

A. — On a hard surface a child can do it in a minute or two. In sand, or with rust on the jack, it takes longer. The coupling on ours was ingenious, and, I should guess, foolproof.

Q. — What about parking?

A. — Vacant lots, farmyards, gas stations and tourist camps of varying degrees of cleanliness and comfort. Most of them are primitive. We saw none that could be called luxurious.

Q. — Roads, bridges and ferries?

A. — Trailers weigh less than cars. Tolls seem to run about a third higher than for cars alone. We encountered no roads that were closed to trailers, though one cop tried to argue us into considering ourselves a truck.

Q. — Can passengers ride in the trailer?

A. — We did, even preparing meals and writing articles. We did not, however, do it often.

Q. — What about beds?

A. — Ours were fairly comfortable — something between a cot and a beautyrest. With two persons in them, mutual forbearance is obligatory. Tossing is penalized; snores echo.

Q. — Cooking and heating?

A. — A two-burner gasoline stove does one; a stove using chestnut coal does the other. By plugging into regular lighting circuits, electric gadgets of all kinds are available.

Q. — Plumbing?

A. — This is the Achilles heel of trailer-tripping. We had "facilities" aboard, but for the most part we used what we could find along the road. They left much to be desired in the way of elegance and sanitation.

Q. — *Water, ice, provisions, and so forth?*

A. — We carried thirty gallons of water, tapped by two pump-operated faucets. The refrigerator took fifty pounds of ice, a charge lasting two or three days.

Q. — *What about the young man who joined your party, but was not mentioned afterward?*

A. — He stuck it out manfully. I may add that no young man ever had a sharper closeup of his bride-to-be and the nature of her parents — and vice versa. True love may not run smoothly in a trailer, but whatever befalls this romance, it will certainly not be because it was built on illusion. Crockery may survive a month in a trailer, but no illusion can.

Q. — *What do the women of the party think about trailer-life?*

A. — They have read the proofs of this book, and corroborate all statements.

Q. — *Would you advise me to try tripping in a trailer?*

A. — Friends and fellow countrymen, I wouldn't advise anybody to do anything. *De gustibus non est disputandum*: and some people don't like oysters. The only way to find out is to try it.

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