

Random Thoughts.

Beyond the East the sunrise, beyond the West the sea,
And East and West the wander-thirst that will not let
me be;

It works in me like madness, dear, to bid me say good-
bye;

For the seas call and the stars call, and oh! the call of
the sky!

I know not where the white road runs, nor what the
blue hills are,

But a man can have the Sun for friend, and for his
guide a star,

And there's no end of voyaging when once the voice is
heard,

For the river calls and the road calls, and oh! the call
of a bird.

Yonder the long horizon lies, and there by night and
day

The old ships draw to home again, the young ships sail
away;

And come I may, but go I must, and if men ask you
why,

You may put the blame on the stars and the Sun and
the white road and the sky!

GERALD GOULD.

At heart we are all tramps. Bound by conven-
tion to our little or large brick houses, moored by a
hundred invisible threads to our belongings, hedged
round by circumstance and the stern necessity that
drives us to our daily work, we pant and long for
the freer life that lies always just beyond, "to take
the road" mentally as well as physically. Each has
his or her own call; for some it is the white road
and the blue hills, for others the broad-stretching
veldt or prairie, for others the racing screw and the
wake of foam or the singing cordage; but it comes
alike to all, the longing to be free of our chains,
even if they are of silk, and to be off and away, to
be for a short time not ourselves, but the other self we
would like to be. It breaks out worst at holiday time,
when the world can hardly contain us, and we hark
back to our ancestral predilections and make our bid
for happiness once again according to our primitive
instincts. What ancestor was it that gave us our
longing for the mountains, who planted in us a
desire so keen to scale them that we risk life and
limb, to say nothing of our complexions, in the
effort to crawl up them?

What old Viking, who was restless and unbappy
on land, has bequeathed us that thirst for the sea,
that drives us to the shores if we can get no further
and sends us out happy and beaming in wet, slimy,
little fishing boats to trawl for mackerel, or racing in
tiny yachts smothered in foam and wash, or, further
still, pleasuring in the great steamers "on the long
trail, the out trail, the trail that is always
new"—?

And who gave us that oldest, most primeval, and
most general longing for the white road, the green
turf, and blue sky? To wander from day to day
along the road, or through the fields and forests, over

downs and by river banks, sleeping in a fresh spot
each night, happy, careless, and irresponsible, facing
the rain and sun with indifference, one's belongings
reduced to a minimum, finding out each day how
little one really wants, freed for a short time from
the terrible tyranny of "things."

Much has civilisation given us, but much it has
taken from us. Think of the days when our
ancestors lived, not in smoky towns, but always
face to face with Nature and the unexpected. I
have been staying lately on the Wiltshire downs,
and on one height lay a British encampment with
a fine view of miles of surrounding country, and
in full sight of another camp on another down some
six miles off. Think of the glorious uncertainty
of their life. Fancy camp No. 1 signalling to camp
No. 2, "Enemy in sight, make ready," and we all
crushed and crowded behind our earthworks
whilst the men folk polished up their flint weapons
and thoughtfully placed a few rocks handy for us
to roll on the foemens' heads. And then some
people say civilisation has given us more interests
in life! Could any interest equal that we should
take in the question as to whether our houses would
be still standing in the morning, and we with or
without our heads? Even a charging motor is flat
and tame compared to a charging Roman phalynx.

But we are their descendents, even if degenerate
ones, and, therefore, when holiday times comes
round, we shoulder our knapsacks, clasp our
alpenstocks, or mount our bicycle, and become for
the time being tramps and dwellers in the open.
When I look back across a long nursing career,
interspersed with the usual annual holidays, those
holidays stand out most clearly and as having been
most delightful which have satisfied in some form
or another the go fever, to which I am periodically
a prey.

One of the most delightful holidays I ever spent
was on a walking tour over Dartmoor many years
ago, before the advent of bicycles, with a knapsack
and a friend; I mention the knapsack first because
I had to carry that knapsack, whilst my friend
walked on her own two legs. The very first
day we lost ourselves trying to take a short
cut somewhere to the south of the road leading
from Holnes to Two Bridges, and floundered about
in a dense mist on boggy moorland, and only found
our way by luckily remembering that the watershed
must be to the north. After that we lost ourselves
frequently, never, I am happy to say, with disastrous
results; but my note-book is full of scraps like the
following:—"Started in morning to walk across
moor to Okehampton. Passed successfully through
Bractor and Armtor, then of course the mist arose;
hid the path, and all else. Floundered along vague
cart track until we reached deserted peat works, and
entered little hut. Soon after in came two peat
workmen, who entertained us with strong, sweet,
milkless tea and courtly and interesting conversa-

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