you have left no "back in half an hour" notice in any town; there should be no "got to be" anywhere at any time, no hotel that you are making for twenty miles the other side of the range; no rendezvou with a young cousin or an old man at the crossroads at sundown, but a blessed insouciance regarding men and things.

The grand desideratum is to have found an agreeable spot. "We can put in forty minutes here!" - "My friend, hours!"

The ants shall carry away the sausage rind and the beetles devour the cucumber peeling; bees shall sip where sweet coffee has fallen, shy rodents shall clear earth's table of crumbs — while the heart wells up with joyful conversation, or the eyes drowsily settle on their lower lids. There is a joyous, light-green glittering sleep between the hours of two and four, hours not lost nor to be missed in the temporal economy of the tramp.

There arrive light and happy dreams, the soft-stepping airs of the tramping life. The whole soul has relaxed, the main spring of citizenship has run down, and will
The door opens. That does not look like a stream, the great door, wet-legged by a mountain
or lie prone under the trees,
As you sit on the hillside,
not raise his eyes to scan Big Ben through the gloom—for his life is not parcelled out in Parliamentary quantities. He has no dashed repeater in his pocket, no alarm clock at his ear. The deathwatch does sound in the wall of his forest house; he does not live and sleep beside that coffin on end called a grandfather, "his life-seconds numbering tick-tack-tick." He listens for no morning hooter; he boils his eggs without a measure of sliding sand; he punches no time clock when he begins his day's tramp, and at the end the last trump shall catch him unawares—an irrelevancy.

The most profound philosophers have been engaged for any number of years trying to explain time, and they are all agreed that it is an illusion. The universe would go on existing if all human beings were destroyed, but what we call "time" would not. Time, they are assured, must be relative. The little beetle which we tread upon feels a pang as great as when a giant dies. His normal life may be five months only—but he has as extensive a notion of his life as we have of what we call the normal span—our fourscore years. The insect which lives only an hour fits the fourscore years of impressions into it somehow. "If you can fill the unforgiving minute with sixty seconds worth of distance run"—the insect does it, better than you can.

The fact is, the minutes are not unforgiving. We have to reverse many of the Grub Street maxims: "Take care of the minutes, Freddy, and the hours will take care of themselves." No, take care of the hours and the minutes can go hang. Take care of your life and your days will be all right.

Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son and Arnold Bennett's How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day are of little value to us. We will not read in our baths, nor memorize French verbs while we fry. Or we will, if we like, but not upon the compulsion of filling time.

You will discern that going tramping is at first an act of rebellion; only afterwards do you get free from rebelliousness as Nature sweetens your mind. Town makes men contentious; the country smooths out their souls. The worship of time as a reality is such a powerful superstition that the mind returns to it often after it has got free. It returns again and again, reciting its outworn creed: Thou shalt have one birthday a year and one only; six days shalt thou labor, but only the seventh is the Lord thy God's.

The tramp repeats it, and then unpacks his heart with stinging words. The mood passes. We, too, can be sweet and indulgent about time and time-tables, bivouacking in eternity.

We may even carry a compass clock and, lying in the grass, holding it in our hands, exclaim facetiously with Touchstone: "It is ten o'clock, in another hour it will be eleven"—and morale equally facetiously, for, "so from year to year we rise and ripe and then from year to year we rot and rot—and thereby hangs a tale."

I'm nothing.
I'll always be nothing.
I can't want to be something.
But I have in me
all the dreams of the world.
Let nature pour over
my seething head.
Its sun, its rain,
and the wind that finds my hair.
And let the rest come
if it will or must,
or let it not come.

excerpts from THE TOBACCO SHOP
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