

Gentlemen, Be Seated

WILLIAM MILLER

I'm a little devil. Every morning I walk a block to the bus stop preceding the one in front of my house so that I can get a seat. I feel sure my neighbors give me icy stares as I sit comfortably with my nose in a book. I never see them. Yesterday morning I was too late to walk to the other stop, so I stood while the lady next door sat in my seat and smiled at me with sarcastic little daggers throughout the fifteen-minute ride. She probably thinks I have no conscience, but I do and I keep telling my conscience that this walk early in the morning is good exercise. The North Meridian bus which I ride from town is never crowded at nine o'clock so those who ride it probably give me credit for being very chivalrous.

Perhaps chivalry in the older sense, however, went out as woman suffrage came in. I think it makes everyday life nicer and more beautiful when gentlemen allow ladies to enter doors first and other little courtesies, but does chivalry require a man to give up two hours of valuable studying time each day so that a woman can get a load off her aching feet. If she would come down off those three-inch heels she could stand as well as anyone else. Science has revealed that we men are not nearly as durable as the women. Although there is a decidedly greater number of males in embryonic development and also at birth, there are far more females among adults. I wonder why the women of the white race have forced their men to wait upon them while in other races the opposite is true.

Many times, however, I do not have to fight so ridiculously hard to clear my conscience because the buses are not crowded. Then I choose my seat very carefully to

find the best conditions for study. I never sit in the seats which face sideways because it is almost impossible to study while rocking back and forth. The same is true about the back seats except that they bounce one up and down just like my father flips flap-jacks. Of course, in cold weather I sit near a heater and as far away from the doors as I can get.

When I first began using the bus as a study room distractions were everywhere. I would no sooner open my book than someone would distract my attention. Ordinarily grown people sit perfectly quiet and useless so that they do not hinder my work, and quite often children are too timid in the strange surroundings to make much fuss. The real bothers, however, are giddy bobby-soxers who delight in telling the whole bus about a new shade of lipstick they are wearing and how funny it looked on Jimmy Saturday night.

I have learned to concentrate even under the worst conditions a bus can offer, because I consider two hours a day very valuable. In that time I could play six games of ping-pong, listen or dance to five records, write to one girl, call another, and spend the remaining half hour reading or just loafing.

I try to make the most of these two hours a day by concentrating every minute upon one of my subjects. I often wonder how I manage to transfer from one bus to the other, because I do it as if in a daze. Just before time to transfer I get something in mind to recite to myself while waiting for the next bus—usually a declension or conjugation in Greek.

A great help to me in this experiment of studying on the bus has been this pas-

sage from Arnold Bennett's *How to Live on Twenty-four Hours a Day*:

"When you leave your house, concentrate your mind on a subject (no matter what, to begin with). You will not have gone ten yards before your mind has skipped away under your very eyes and is larking round the corner with another subject.

"Bring it back by the scruff of the neck. Ere you have reached the station you will have brought it back about forty times. Do not despair. Continue. Keep it up. You will succeed. You cannot by any chance fail if you persevere. It is idle to pretend that your mind is incapable of concentration. Do you not remember that morning when you received a disquieting letter which demanded a very carefully-worded answer? How you kept your mind steadily on the subject of the answer, without a second's intermission, until you reached your office; whereupon you instantly sat down and wrote the answer? That was a case in which *you* were roused by circumstances to such a degree of vitality that you were able to dominate your mind like a tyrant. You would have no

trifling. You insisted that its work should be done, and its work was done." Yes, everyone can recall times when he has really concentrated, but it is difficult to follow the same procedure when the subject is not of particular interest. Bennett solves this problem when he suggests that the secret lies in the mental attitude. If I get on the bus and say to myself, "Well, now how can I make myself study?", then I am likely to spend a greater part of my time on that baffling question. However, if I simply say to myself, "What type of drama is this *Antony and Cleopatra*?" and seek to prove my answer, the time goes quickly and I really accomplish something.

I would not think of spending two hours everyday in the library merely looking around. I like to live, and so I conquer half of my drudgery on the bus when I can do nothing else.

My Father

KATHRYN ALFS

My father is five feet eleven inches tall. He has large grey-green eyes, a somewhat too-large nose, a medium sized mouth, and a very square jaw. His physique is typically middle-aged. After being teased to distraction about being built like a butter-churn, he now wears a corset with the fond delusion that it pushes his stomach into his chest and looks youthful. Aloud he swears it is for his posture. He now resembles a top-heavy butter-churn.

My father has never exacted much discipline or insisted that we profit by his mistakes. He has instilled an independence of thought and action.

My father is somewhat of an extremist. For instance, he will go along in good

humor letting us leave our house in perfect chaos over every week-end and then suddenly come home some night late, find a coat someone has neglected to hang up, and fly into a rage comparable to a five-year-old's tantrum. He will drag my sister and me out of our warm beds and insist we clean the house from cellar to attic as penance for breaking the house-keeping rules. The first few times this happened the inconsistency of his behavior made us feel very much abused. We now follow his bellowed directions with a stoic calm. He is incapable of sustained wrath.

My father's reaction to religion is passively active. I mean by that he believes in God, in heaven, and in the Bible.