Chapter 5

TRAVELING
WITH THE
MILLIONS

Although the expansion of railroads throughout much of northern Europe opened the possibility of leisure travel for people of modest means, significant obstacles continued to stand in their way. Schedules and fares were complex because of the large number of competing railway companies, low-cost accommodations were limited, and guidebooks for the budget traveler nonexistent. Perhaps most significant, middle- and working-class people were unaccustomed to the very idea of travel for pleasure. It took a new kind of entrepreneur to persuade them that travel was both useful and agreeable, as well as within their reach.

The first of this new breed was, on the face of it, a rather unlikely candidate for the task—a young temperance preacher from the Midlands region of England. Thomas Cook, a thirty-two-year-old cabinetmaker by trade, earned a modest living writing and distributing temperance publications from his home in Harborough. While walking the fifteen miles to a temperance meeting in Leicester on a hot summer day in 1841, he hit upon the idea of chartering a train to
carry the faithful to their next regional meeting. Train fares, even for short distances, were still high enough to give pause to the working-class people who dominated the membership of the Harborough Temperance Society and its sister organizations, so Cook persuaded officials of the Midland Counties Railway to offer reduced fares in exchange for his guarantee of a substantial number of passengers.

Although several working-class organizations had sponsored railway excursions for their members in recent years, the idea was still enough of a novelty to encourage a carnival atmosphere. Hundreds of curiosity seekers converged on the Leicester train station to watch as the 570 excursionists boarded third-class, open carriages. A brass band, arranged by Cook as part of the festivities, greeted the group at Loughborough. At one stroke, Cook managed to advance his cause by making it easier for temperance advocates to attend the meeting and turned the meeting itself into an occasion to remember. This excursion proved so popular that Cook kept himself busy over the next three summers organizing trips for Temperance Society members and Sunday school children throughout the region served by the Midland Counties Railway.

His early successes encouraged Cook to move beyond his work with temperance and church groups. In the summer of 1845, he arranged an excursion to the seashore at Liverpool—a trip open to the general public, intended simply for pleasure, and sponsored under his own name rather than on behalf of an organization. It was a far more complicated undertaking than day trips to temperance meetings. The railroad fares alone required negotiations with four different companies; in addition, Cook researched hotel accommodations and restaurants (although participants made their own arrangements), planned side trips into Wales to visit Caernarvon and Mount Snowdon, and produced a guidebook called *A Handbook of the Trip to Liverpool*, detailing sights to be seen along the way. All 350 tickets had sold within a week of departure, and a few scalpers resold their tickets at higher prices. The obvious popularity of the Liverpool excursion induced Cook to run a second one two weeks later, with equal success. Climbing Mount Snowdon with his enthusiastic travelers, he decided an excursion to Scotland would be his next venture.

It was a logical choice, given Scotland’s continued popularity as
TRAVELING WITH THE MILLIONS

a tourist destination, but one that brought a new level of complexity to Cook’s work as a tour organizer. Because there was no through railway service between England and Scotland at the time, and the company that controlled the most direct steamer connections refused to negotiate special group fares, Cook worked out a complicated route involving a train to the west coast of England just north of Liverpool, a long ship passage to the Scottish coast, and then another train to Glasgow and on to Edinburgh. These convoluted arrangements proved no deterrent, however, as more than four hundred people signed up for the first tour in the summer of 1846. The prospect of such a large group of tourists descending upon Glasgow en masse was so novel that a crowd of gawking well-wishers met them at the train station. Later they were entertained with a parade and party at City Hall.³

Cook organized three more tours to Scotland in 1847, the last one made entirely by rail except for the crossings over the Tyne and Tweed rivers. Within another year, his arrangements were well established, drawing more than three thousand tourists annually. Meanwhile, he continued to develop excursions closer to home. Turning his powers of persuasion from railway and steamship officials to members of the nobility, he talked the Dukes of Rutland and Devonshire into opening the grounds surrounding their country homes, Belvoir Castle and Chatsworth, to his groups. But as Cook himself realized, his future as a travel organizer lay in planning longer tours. The continued expansion of railway service soon made short excursions inexpensive and ordinary; as a result they lost much of their appeal as vacation trips. In addition, railroad companies began introducing their own cheap fares, further diminishing the role for an organizer like Cook.⁴

In 1846, Cook’s temperance publishing business failed, apparently the result of competition from other publishers, forcing him to declare bankruptcy and providing whatever further inducement he needed to transform his travel sideline into his primary business.⁵ This shift from temperance to travel was entirely logical, however, if not entirely voluntary. Promoting travel for the working classes was as much a calling as a business for Cook, inspiring the same kind of moral fervor previously devoted to publishing temperance tracts. He
believed that travel—whether linked to a specific purpose or designed simply for pleasure—broadened the mind and encouraged a thirst for knowledge, in the process breaking down barriers of class and nationality and promoting tolerance and Christian benevolence. He also argued for the positive benefits of fresh air and recreation. Such ideas were fairly widely shared in the mid-nineteenth century, but Cook went beyond standard wisdom to argue that everyone, rich and poor alike, had the right to travel, and that railways were the means to make this possible. "Railway travelling is travelling for the Millions," he wrote, adding that trains were a democratizing influence because they carried all kinds of people, "a mourning countess and a marriage party—a weeping widow and a laughing bride—a gray head and an infant of days," in the same conveyances, to the same places. Sights that had once been accessible only to the privileged could now be seen by nearly anyone, and in Cook's opinion, this was not only good for the working-class folk previously denied such pleasures, but also for society at large.6

Cook was unique in arguing for the positive benefits of working-class travel, and in the fact that he spoke from the workers' perspective. Schooled only to the age of ten, as an adolescent he had worked for a gardener and was then apprenticed to his uncle, a cabinetmaker, at about age fourteen. While still in his mid-teens, he joined the local Baptist church; soon after completing his apprenticeship, when he was about nineteen, he became an itinerant preacher. In his second year on the job, he traveled nearly 2,700 miles, most of them on foot. When the church began cutting back its missionary work because of limited funds, Cook set himself up as a cabinetmaker, but he continued to take an interest in church-related work. Perhaps because his early employers had been addicted to drink, he gravitated toward the temperance movement and in 1839 set up a small business in his home distributing tracts, pledge cards, and medals. He soon began writing the tracts as well, and in 1841 established the Midland Temperance Press in Leicester.7

Because of his background and his personal involvement with the people who patronized his excursions in the early years, Cook understood the aspirations of his clients and respected them as individuals. In particular, he recognized that they were just as curious about
other parts of the world as those above them in the social hierarchy, and just as eager to travel, given the opportunity. This empathy with his clients—and the habit of traveling with them and listening to their opinions—would prove critical to his success, even as he expanded his business far beyond the limits of working-class excursions.

When London’s Great Exhibition opened at the Crystal Palace in the spring of 1851, the first of a series of world’s fairs celebrating the achievements of industrial technology, Cook found the perfect opportunity to meld his moral beliefs about working-class travel with his career ambitions. These exhibitions, mounted regularly in cities throughout Europe, the United States, India, and Australia up to the Second World War, proved enormously popular, drawing people of all social ranks from substantial distances. As the first of these spectacles, however, the Crystal Palace Exhibition’s potential attraction was untested. The promoters wanted to encourage attendance among lower-income people and provincial residents, but faced significant obstacles. The cost of admission, although modest, was a deterrent, especially for large families and out-of-towners, who had to pay for train fares and hotel accommodations. More significantly, anyone who lived more than a short distance outside London had to contend with competing railway lines and separate fares for each segment of the trip.

Cook’s reputation for organizing low-cost excursions and his base in the industrial Midlands, an obvious source of visitors to the Exhibition, led Joseph Paxton, the designer of the Crystal Palace, and John Ellis, chairman of the Midland Railway, to approach him about arranging excursions to London. The idea appealed to Cook for practical as well as idealistic reasons. It would be a logical outgrowth of his business, with the potential to draw far more patrons than his day trips or Scottish excursions. He believed that working men and women, the people behind England’s industrialization, had a special interest in seeing the Exhibition and should not be prevented by considerations of cost. “Now is the time for the working classes,” he wrote in the midst of organizing his excursions; “the upper and
GRAND TOURS AND COOK’S TOURS

middle classes have had the benefit of arrangements adapted to their circumstances, and the time for the millions has now arrived." The Exhibition, he thought, could exercise a "Harmonizing & Ennobling Influence."

In organizing the London excursions, his most ambitious undertaking to date, Cook expanded his established methods of operating and tested new ones. As usual, he worked with the Midland Railway, which gave him the exclusive right to organize tours on the southern section of their system. He searched out suitable accommodations in London, looking for boardinghouses that were inexpensive, clean, conveniently located, and whenever possible, "conducted on temperance principles." They ranged from large establishments like the "Mechanics Home" in the Pimlico district, which could accommodate one thousand people dormitory-style for 2 shillings a night, breakfast included, to rooms in private homes. One small boardinghouse near Regent's Park advertised a pew in the parish church and free entry to the botanic garden in Regent's Park, along with bed and breakfast. In addition to maintaining a list of accommodations, Cook set up an office at the Euston train station with an agent assigned to keep track of the availability of rooms each day. He also located omnibus routes that would take people from their boardinghouses to the Exhibition grounds. With these details arranged, Cook turned to promoting his tours, a task he had not bothered with much in the past. He launched a newspaper, The Excursionist and Exhibition Advertiser, devoted to articles about the Exhibition and details of his proposed excursions, including train schedules and advertisements for the various boardinghouses deemed acceptable by Cook. To help drum up business and solve the financial obstacles to a London trip, Cook and his son, John Mason, traveled throughout the Midlands setting up "Exhibition Clubs" among workingmen; members contributed a small sum each week until they had accumulated enough to pay for the trip."

Part of Cook's task in marketing his excursions, besides convincing people that they could afford the trip, was persuading them that they really wanted to go. London was a long way from Leicester or Manchester, culturally as well as geographically. It was one thing to visit the seashore, but quite another to confront the metropolis. In
his first issue of the Excursionist, he published an article titled "Why Should Working Men Visit the Exhibition?" urging workers to visit the Crystal Palace not merely for amusement, but as a means of improving their own skills by viewing the best examples of their trade from other parts of Britain and Europe. The Exhibition, in Cook’s words, was "a great School of Science, of Art, of Industry, of Peace and Universal Brotherhood!" He noted approvingly that there would be no celebration of the anniversary of Waterloo on June 18, a fact he attributed to the "glorious Peace Demonstration at Hyde Park." The prospect of England and France joining forces in the Exhibition suggested that their traditional enmity might finally be ended and, with it, inappropriate "war demonstrations" like those customarily marking the victory at Waterloo. (Later Cook learned to his chagrin that he had been mistaken in believing that the usual celebration had been canceled.) He also pointed out how popular the Exhibition had proved in its first weeks, remarking that other sections of London seemed nearly deserted by comparison with the crowds at the Exhibition grounds. An added draw, for those of temperance leanings, would be the international temperance demonstration scheduled for August, at the height of the Exhibition season. For those who might prefer some other kind of entertainment, Cook ran articles in The Excursionist on the sights of London as well as points of interest along the way.

Cook continued to work on ways to make the fair affordable to the working class. Articles in The Excursionist praised benevolent employers who provided lodging for their workers in company-owned buildings in London or helped finance trips by advancing wages or paying interest on savings deposited with the company. He argued for lower admission fees, suggesting special children’s fees and single tickets good for four days, which would incidentally help keep the crowds to manageable size by giving people the freedom to come and go for a single price, without feeling that they had to see everything in a day or two. He also urged railroad companies to provide low excursion fares—an argument that backfired, since cheap fares would undercut his own business. Early in the season, the Great Northern Line began offering round-trip fares of 5 shillings, compared with the 15 shillings Cook had negotiated with the
GRAND TOURS AND COOK'S TOURS

Midland Railway. Cook had no alternative but to match the fares, covering the difference between what he charged his patrons and what he owed Midland out of his profit margin. (Competition from at least two other excursion agents cut into his business as well.) He attempted to make up the difference by generating even larger numbers, with some degree of success. One of his strategies was sending his seventeen-year-old son on a tour of Midlands towns, leading a band advertising the Exhibition.  

In the end, about 165,000 people visited the Exhibition on Cook's excursions, amounting to about 3 percent of the total number of visitors (and a much higher percentage of out-of-town visitors). Even so, Cook lost money on his London excursions. When the Exhibition had closed, he ceased running trips to London, turning his attention instead to expanding his country tours, adding trips to seaside resorts in Lancashire, Yorkshire, and along the southern coast. Cook didn't give up on industrial exhibitions, however. He organized tours to Ireland in connection with the Dublin Exhibition in 1853, and, in a move that would permanently change the character of his business, launched his first Continental tours to capitalize on the Paris Exhibition of 1855.  

When Cook began organizing his first Paris trips, he ran into resistance from Continental railway companies, which refused to negotiate special fares. The Brighton and Southeastern Railway Companies, which controlled trains to Dover, also proved uncooperative. As a result, he found the most advantageous route to be from Harwich to Hook van Holland, then via rail to Antwerp, Brussels, and Paris with extensions for those who wished to visit the Rhine and parts of Germany. Cook offered assistance in making hotel arrangements—a plus for those who had never traveled abroad and couldn't speak French—and included advertisements for Paris hotels in The Excursionist, much as he had done in organizing his trips to London. Those willing to follow a fixed itinerary could join a tour escorted by Cook himself, thus taking all the uncertainty out of a foreign trip. Fifty people opted to join the "personally-conducted" tour (as Cook called it), which included Antwerp, Brussels, and the battlefield at Waterloo, "that interesting field of a feud now past and buried for ever (it is hoped)." Part of the group returned to England from Brus-
Traveling with the Millions

sels, others went to Paris, while the majority followed Cook to Germany, sailing up the Rhine from Cologne to Mainz, then on to Frankfurt, Heidelberg, and Paris by train. A few continued to Switzerland on their own. A second tour later in the summer offered a wider choice of routes.14

Despite enthusiastic reviews from many participants, Cook lost money on these tours, but cleverly parlayed his problems into an advertisement for his second season, playing up the difficulties he and his groups had encountered with Continental railway companies, grasping hotelkeepers, money changers, and a bewildering array of currencies. "All these monetary perplexities caused continued annoyance to most of the Parties," he wrote. Not only the women, but even "shrewd commercial gentlemen" asked Cook to handle their bills for them. In short, readers of The Excursionist with designs on the Continent ought to seize the opportunity to travel with Cook. His prices would be a little higher this season, he admitted, and he had learned to demand a deposit at least a month in advance to secure places. But he offered a wider array of choices, with travelers free to diverge from the group at will. Evidently Cook didn't get a sufficiently large response to justify continuing the tours, however, because he made no effort to repeat them for the rest of the decade, preferring instead to concentrate on business closer to home, especially the Scottish excursions, now firmly established as the cornerstone of his business.

By the mid-1850s, more than four thousand people traveled to Scotland each summer under his auspices. About a quarter of them joined guided tours led by Cook himself, while the rest struck out on their own using tickets arranged by his company. The system he adopted for these independent excursions, which he labeled the "circular tour," consisted of a set of tickets for trains, steamers, and coaches covering a specified itinerary for a set price. Travelers could choose from several routes—in the mid-1850s Cook offered eight different options leaving from Edinburgh—combining more than one if they chose. Tickets were good for a fixed period of time (typically two weeks), but within that period travelers could decide for themselves when to proceed on each leg of the trip, and they could make changes along the way without forfeiting the cost of tickets already
purchased. The system offered a considerable degree of flexibility without the complications of arranging for passage on each separate leg of the trip—a convenience in the Highlands, especially, where railroad service was still limited. One tour from Edinburgh, for example, included a train to Stirling, a coach to The Trossachs, a steamer on Loch Katrine, another steamer on Loch Lomond, a train from the foot of Loch Lomond to Bowling, and finally another steamer on the Clyde to Glasgow. For those who wanted the security of an accompanied tour, Cook published the complete itinerary that he planned to follow. Typically as many as five hundred tourists chose to travel with him each time."

The spectacle of hordes of English tourists descending on Highland villages and peaceful lochs created a certain amount of skepticism and even ridicule among those accustomed to traveling more conventionally. Cook responded by continuing to argue for the social benefits of group travel as well as its economies. "There are some 'stuck up' people who affect to look down on 'cheap excursionists' as an inferior grade of tourists," he remarked, "... but our belief is that envy is at the bottom of such manifestations wherever they appear. Take a steam boat party of 100 passengers, 75 of them going under our arrangements and the other 25 in their own isolation; every one of the associated party may soon be identified by their courteous and joyous fraternization," in contrast to the "independent" tourists, who paid up to three times the cost "for the privilege of thus sitting solitary in a crowd of free elastic spirits." For Cook, the sociability of travel was part of the point. What he didn't realize was that, for wealthier travelers, privacy and the ability to maintain social boundaries were all-important. These travelers abhorred what they perceived as the noisy, gauche behavior typical of lower-class people moving beyond their station.

Cook's championing of social bonding and mutual assistance was especially important for single women, who under mid-nineteenth-century conventions would have been all but barred from traveling. From the beginning, a majority of Cook's patrons were women, either by themselves or with other female friends. One young woman, making her first trip to Scotland in 1855, remarked about the "pleasant and home-like" atmosphere of the excursion, "especially to la-
dies, of whom there was quite a majority; some in family parties of four, five, and six; others in twos or threes; and a few, having neither sister or friend to join them, had resolved to see Scotland alone rather than not see it at all. 11 Such solo travelers need not be at all concerned, she wrote, because the group was friendly, yet not beyond the bounds of "respectful familiarity" and "anything in the shape of annoyance or ill behaviour was not known. . . . So tell all your anti-excursion folks, that their fears and fancies about this and that difficulty would all subside, if once brought into contact with our Leicester Excursion Manager." 12

Other travelers, equally aware of the criticism leveled at excursionists, stressed the value of Cook's tours. A man making his second Scottish-tour cheered, "Hurrah for the Excursion Trains, say I! They are a fine invention for men like myself, of small means and not much leisure. . . . He who can travel first-class express, with a valet to take his ticket and look after his carpet-bag, can afford to despise the humble mode of locomotion whose praises I sing: but these are the days of the million; and for my part, I am heartily thankful that the wants of the million are cared for, and that Bobson, Dickson, and Tomson (of course with Mistresses Bobson, Dickson, and Tomson), can o'erleap the bounds of their own narrow circle, rub off rust and prejudice by contact with others, and expand their souls and invigorate their bodies by an exploration of some of Nature's finest scenes. 13 Few were aware, he thought, that one could actually travel from Cambridge (his hometown) to Edinburgh and back for a mere £1 14s. 6d. 14

As far as the Scots were concerned, some praised the tourist boom, recognizing that it brought money into their economy. An Edinburgh publisher, writing in 1854, remarked that Cook's excursions "are really very curious . . . for an attempt is made to gather up tourists from a number of tributary streams, then carry them in a body along a trunk-line of railway, and then distribute them over the north, to catch pleasure wherever it is to be found. Then, the pleasure being over, the wanderers are picked up from far and wide, they are brought back along the trunk line of railway, and they are distributed over the whole of the south, almost to their own doors." 15 One could learn much from this system, he asserted, including the value of com-
mon railway gauges and the value of mass travel in reducing both railway fares and hotel charges. Finally, he pointed out, these tours "circulate money where money is not very abundant: when English pleasure-money gets to the heart of the Highlands, surely it will do some little good: surely it must give an impetus, even in a humble degree, to the spirit of commerce and traffic."  

Throughout the 1850s, Cook continued to develop his business in other parts of the British Isles as well. Trips to Liverpool and Wales remained popular, and he added tours to several seaside resorts, the Lake District, the Isle of Man, and Ireland. By the end of the decade, Cook was receiving ever larger numbers of inquiries about tours to the Continent and other destinations farther afield. There were those who "would not be easy without a Trip to the Moon, if there were any possibility of such ascension," he remarked. But the financial losses of the 1855 tours and the threat of war on the Continent deterred him from expanding his business across the Channel until 1861, when a project dear to his heart pushed him to reconsider. The Working Men's Excursion to Paris originated in part to counter a proposal for a visit to Paris by an organization called the Rifle Volunteers. The prospect of a highly publicized visit to France by a military group met with considerable opposition as impolitic; instead, a group calling itself the London Committee of Working Men proposed an excursion of workers, who would tour Paris and "shake hands with the Parisian ouvriers, and assure them that, whatever may have been the case many years ago, this nation has now no other feeling towards France but that of good will, and that the British people have an earnest desire to live on terms of amity with neighbouring states." The committee itself was hardly a working-class group—its president was Joseph Paxton, designer of the Crystal Palace and a member of Parliament—but all the members, Cook noted, had risen from humble backgrounds. The excursion was intended to be a pleasure trip, but one with a moral purpose as well. This combination of travel for workers and promotion of peaceful relations between Britain and France coincided perfectly with Cook's own views, and he wrote to the organizers offering to
TRAVELING WITH THE MILLIONS

help make arrangements for workers outside London to join the excursion.19

Escorting as many as five thousand Englishmen to Paris at a popular holiday period required special attention to lodgings, so Cook went to Paris some weeks ahead of time to inspect hotels and estimate the cost of living expenses for the excursionists. Despite a cool reception from some hotelkeepers, who were not enamored of the idea of a large working-class inundation, he put together a list of reasonably priced accommodations. For those who wanted to make all their arrangements in advance, Cook offered tickets for lodging at “good second class hotels” and meals at 5 to 6 shillings per day. “Our aim being to get practical information,” Cook also decided while in Paris to try one of the city’s well-known restaurants. He found the four courses, though a bit “spicy,” much to his liking and reasonably priced, and noted with approval that those who did not care to drink the wine provided with the meal could have a dish of fruit instead: “More civil this than the tyranny of the English table laws which would compel a guest to pay for wine whether he drank it or not, and thus assist to make others drunk.” Another evening he was just as happy to dine at his hotel, “where a good deal of ‘plain English’ in language and behaviour, as well as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, were blended with French mixtures.”20

The proposed trip generated considerable interest and many questions about who, exactly, was eligible for the “working men’s excursion.” Cook himself wished that the organizers had called it an International Excursion, because the label “working men” was vague and seemed to exclude people. Some criticized the proposed tour as “some great attempt at fraternization of English workmen with French ouvriers.” In response, Cook urged women and men not generally thought of as “working class” to join in. As it turned out, about seventeen hundred people made the journey—many fewer than the three to five thousand Cook had predicted, but impressive nonetheless. Transportation arrangements went smoothly, including the transfer of nine hundred excursionists at a clip from Channel steamers to trains at Boulogne; and the visitors met a warm welcome in Paris, where city officials opened the Hôtel de Ville for a special tour. A French humor magazine poked fun at the English visitors,
but, as Cook noted with some satisfaction, the hoteliers who had snubbed him on his reconnoitering trip later tried hard to gain the patronage of his clients.  

The Working Men's Excursion was a special undertaking for Cook, one he later described as a work "of love, minus profit." A similar expedition the following year was also a financial flop, in part because the London Exhibition of 1862 drew many of the people who might otherwise have visited France. Cook himself was heavily involved in organizing trips to the Exhibition, a business that proved more profitable than his French excursions. After his experience in 1851, he knew enough not to try to organize excursion trains himself, but rather to rely on the railway companies to cut fares as a way of increasing travel. Although he published advertisements from railway companies quoting fares and schedules, he put most of his energy into accommodating visitors once they reached London. Not content merely to scout hotels and assist in making arrangements, he hired a large, newly built tenement in the South Kensington district of London and converted it into a Visitors' Home providing bed, breakfast, and tea for 3 shillings per person. No alcohol was served, and smoking was limited to a single common room. The Visitors' Home proved so popular, with middle-class as well as working-class tourists, that Cook also engaged a group of smaller boardinghouses to provide lodging for those who could afford a somewhat higher standard of living. Trips to the Exhibition became a popular company-sponsored outing, with Cook catering especially to such groups. He was also proud of his international clientele. At one point during the summer he had a group of sixty-five Germans and another of forty Italians, in addition to his British guests. By the end of the season, Cook had accommodated about twenty thousand people.  

The following summer, Scottish railway companies put an abrupt end to Cook's popular tours in their country. For some years, Cook had operated under a system in which he paid the various rail and steamship companies a fixed rate per mile and then issued "circular tickets" allowing tourists to select the segments they wished to cover within a given itinerary. In 1863, however, the companies decided they could do better by issuing tickets directly to customers. Some of the companies apparently thought that Cook was favoring their
Traveling with the Millions

competitors; railway officials also believed that the popularity of the large, escorted party was on the wane, that most travelers would be willing to pay somewhat higher fares in exchange for the privilege of greater choice and independence. Scotland was becoming sufficiently familiar (and, with the continued expansion of railroads, more readily accessible), so that fewer travelers felt the need of an escort. Cook continued to issue tickets as an agent for the railroads, but his days of conducting five hundred people at a clip, four times or more a summer, were over.33

Cook professed to understand the business motives behind the railway companies' decision, yet he was obviously hurt and angry that some sense of loyalty and gratitude for his years of service had not prevailed over purely financial considerations. Indeed, it seemed to him (probably correctly) that he had in effect put himself out of business by introducing English men and women to Scottish travel, enhancing the region's popularity and eventually making it so easy to travel there that his services were no longer needed. "We almost wish we could think with these gentlemen [the railway officials], and on personal as well as pecuniary grounds, resolve to give up all this anxiety, and toil, and risk, and quietly retire into some peaceful, noiseless occupation, away from the entreaties of friends and the cold influences of unappreciative finesse." But the comment was merely rhetorical. Cook was not about to retire early, and so he turned his attention once again to the Continent.34

He began by repeating his short, inexpensive excursions to Paris, arranging special trains and steamers from London to Paris with a stop in Rouen for what he boasted was the best fare ever offered. Moreover, those "delicate folk who do not like Excursion Trains (they are those who know the least about them)" might travel a few days later by regularly scheduled trains at the same price. The return trip could be made anytime over a period of ten days. Those who wished could be accommodated at one of two hotels in Paris, where Cook had reserved a block of rooms, while others were free to make their own arrangements. To assist them, Cook as usual published a list of accommodations he had inspected, with their prices and a brief description, noting those where English was spoken and where "plain English" food was served.

149
Concerned about potential resistance to foreign travel, Cook emphasized, as he had many times before, the importance of increasing knowledge and understanding between the two nations. One could learn much from the French, he argued, especially "in matters of taste and courtesy," and go home strengthened in one's own beliefs, especially those concerned with religion and observation of the Sabbath. Cook's disapproval of Parisian Sundays, celebrated as a day of merriment rather than rest, remained a persistent theme in all his commentary about France. The spectacle of people parading about parks and enjoying themselves in cafés bothered him, but even more disturbing to him was the fact that shops, cafés, and restaurants all remained open, forcing thousands of people to spend their Sundays working.25

The Paris excursions proved more successful this time around, encouraging Cook to try more ambitious itineraries. Searching for a substitute for his lucrative Scottish business, he set his sights on Switzerland, which had scenic similarities and posed challenges much like those he had faced in the early years of his Scottish tours: limited train service, rough terrain, and the need to combine train, coach, and steamer travel if one were to get beyond the major cities. If Cook could work out a system that would simplify the transportation problems and cut costs, he might reasonably expect to equal or even exceed his lost Scottish business.

During his spring trips to Paris, Cook met with railway officials who explained to him the various rail/steamer/coach links that were possible and promised special fares. Encouraged by these talks, he decided to make an exploratory trip through France and on to Switzerland late in June. Announcing his intentions in The Excursionist, he offered to take a small group with him.26 The response far exceeded his expectations. About 140 tourists signed on for the trip to Paris, with about half that number continuing on to Switzerland on what would prove to be a whirlwind tour. Departing London at 6:00 A.M., the group arrived in Paris at 11:30 P.M., allowing an hour's stop for breakfast at Newhaven, five hours to tour Dieppe, and a mere fifteen minutes for refreshments at Rouen. (Serving supper to dozens of tourists in the space of fifteen minutes was no small feat. One member of the group remarked, "'Jambon' sandwiches fol-
TRAVELING WITH THE MILLIONS

allowed each other in about as rapid succession as balls do in firing, leaving one to infer that the commissary department had been subject to English justice."") They remained in Paris only long enough to catch a few hours' sleep, leaving for Geneva at 6:00 the following morning. Fortunately, the next day was Sunday, which Cook always tried to observe as a day of rest, so the group had a brief respite from trains and railway station food. In the evening they had their first opportunity for a leisurely dinner in the Continental style. The ten-course menu, remarked one, "reads like an index to a cookery book." Somewhat to the surprise of the tourists, they were up by 5:30 Monday morning, despite pouring rain, to visit the confluence of the Rhone and Arve rivers.

At Geneva the group split up, some going to Chamonix with Cook and others heading east to the Swiss Alps. Among the Chamonix contingent was a high-spirited group of seven young men and women: Jemima Morrell, her brother William, and five friends. Calling themselves the Junior Alpine Club, they traveled with Cook's group as far as Chamonix, but then struck off on their own, determined to see as much of Switzerland as they could cram into the two weeks allotted to them. Their frenetic itinerary was typical of the new breed of traveler with just two or three weeks' vacation: days that began at 5:00 or 6:00 A.M. and ended late in the evening, hours spent on trains and in carriages, nearly every night in a different hotel. In their two weeks, the Morrell group crossed the Tête Noire Pass between Chamonix and Martigny, went up the Rhone Valley as far as Sion, visited the spa at Leuk, rode mules over the Gemmi Pass to Kandersteg, steamed across Lake Thun and Lake Brienz, toured Interlaken, visited the waterfalls at Lauterbrunnen and Giessbach, and climbed Mount Rigi. On one particularly grueling day near the end of their journey, the Morrells and friends traveled from Giessbach to Mount Rigi via three lake steamers and a diligence, with a four-hour break in Lucerne around midday, where they squeezed in a visit to the cathedral before lunch. ("It must be done," Jemima remarked.) Arriving at the base of Mount Rigi late in the afternoon, they proceeded to climb to the summit—a nine-mile hike that took four and a half hours, the last bit of it after dark. At 3:00 A.M. they were up again to view the sunrise in subfreezing temper-
GRAND TOURS AND COOK’S TOURS

atures with the other two hundred guests at the hotel. By 7:00 they were ready to hike down the mountain and head back to Lucerne; "Time was despotic" was Jemima’s comment.

Despite feeling rushed and often exhausted, the Morrells and their friends had no regrets. They approached the trip in a spirit of high adventure, prepared to be entertained with everything they saw, the people as well as the scenery. "I set off with an impression that we should find the annoyances of travelling considerable and that there would be some dangers," William wrote to his parents, but the opposite had proven true. "All has gone on as pleasantly as could be and as to the dangers they are very much overdone." He and his sister were enchanted by the unfamiliar, from the "minikin coffee pots only copious in supply to Lilliputians" and the "peculiar" tea to the multicourse dinners. They deliberately sought out the "foreign" hotels—that is, the ones that didn't make a practice of catering to British tourists. Not only were they cheaper, but "more novel," unlike those at Chamonix, which seemed altogether too much like being at home. 19

The Morrells’ enthusiasm about their travels was widely shared among those who accompanied Cook on his Continental scouting trip. The response encouraged him to map out a full-scale tour for early August, which he boasted would be "one of the best excursions ever known on the Continent." Nearly eleven hundred people went as far as Paris (including a contingent from the "Glasgow Abstainers Union"), with more than three hundred continuing on to Switzerland. Some joined Cook on a conducted tour from Geneva to Mont Blanc and back via train, coach, mule, and lake steamer, while others took off on their own. Cook escorted another group in mid-September, finishing the season quite well pleased with his efforts. Clearly he had minor problems to work out; at times his groups had reached their day’s destination only to find their hotel full, and the transit connections didn’t all work smoothly, as Cook discovered when his group arrived at Lake Lucerne hours before the next steamer was scheduled to embark. (Rather than wait, he hired boats and had his group rowed across the lake.) Still, Cook finished the season with the basic elements of his French and Swiss tours in place.

152
Traveling with the Millions

The system was similar to the one he had worked out for his Scottish tours: The "Swiss Tourist Ticket," as he called it, provided transportation from Geneva to a variety of destinations of the traveler's choice, all for a fixed price, while the "Mt Blanc Circular Ticket" covered the excursion to Chamonix. Hotels and meals were charged separately, but in the course of the 1863 excursions, Cook had negotiated set fees at a series of hotels in Paris and Switzerland, so he could reassure his patrons in advance about what they would be expected to pay, an important consideration for those traveling on limited incomes. He also advised prospective tourists about passports (no legal requirement for France and Switzerland, but he encouraged those going as far as Switzerland to obtain one anyway), currency exchange, and language difficulties, which he generally minimized. In Paris he steered his patrons to hotels run by English-speaking proprietors who adopted a helpful attitude toward first-time visitors and catered to British tastes, while reminding them, "Our friends must remember that not Monsieur, but John Bull, will be the foreigner when we have landed on French soil." On the matter of food, Cook also adopted a middle ground, noting those hotels where British food was served but reminding tourists to be prepared for differences: "It is especially difficult to adapt a French dinner to a thoroughgoing roast-beef-and-pudding-eating Englishman. A little charity and allowance for taste and custom must be exercised at a French table d'hôte, or the best of French dinners would be by some disesteemed."³⁹⁰

The success of his first season in Switzerland convinced Cook to extend his offerings to include Italy. The following spring, he crossed the Channel to scout possibilities for Italian tours. Cook had in mind a much expanded version of his circular tour: across the Mont Cenis Pass to Turin, through the major cities of northern Italy, and then back to France via the coastal route from Genoa to Nice. The first part of this scheme worked out well. Crossing the Mont Cenis Pass by diligence was still an adventure despite recent improvements in the road, but Cook observed the early work on a tunnel (completed in 1871), which would eventually permit direct train service from Geneva to Turin. In Italy he concluded negotiations with railroad
GRAND TOURS AND COOK'S TOURS

officials and found good hotels with English-speaking staffs. (He also noted with approval the signs of the struggle for Italian unification, evident in several cities along his route.)

The journey from Genoa to Nice was less successful. Two long days spent in a diligence riding over poor roads, with an overnight stop at an inn where the beds "had a very suspicious-looking appearance, suggestive of midnight intruders," were enough to persuade Cook to eliminate this segment of his proposed route until the railroad line, recently completed as far as Nice, was extended to Genoa. Instead, when he launched his Italian tours the following summer, Cook and his clients entered Italy via the St. Gotthard Pass and returned over Mont Cenis after touring the Italian Alps, Milan, Parma, Bologna, Florence, Pisa, Livorno, Genoa, and Turin. Cook also offered optional extensions from Milan to Venice and from Florence to Rome and Naples.  

Judging from an account written by one of the participants in the first season's tours, Cook's Italian groups maintained a pace rivaling that of Jemima Morrell and her friends in Switzerland. The journey over the St. Gotthard Pass, for example, began with a 5:00 A.M. departure from Lucerne in a driving rain. It continued with a brief stop at Flüelen to see Wilhelm Tell's chapel, followed by an all-day ride by diligence over the pass, stopping for dinner at Andermatt. The passengers arrived in Bellinzona, Italy, at 2:00 A.M., caught a few hours' sleep, and were up again at 7:00 to visit the local church before their 10:00 A.M. departure for Lugano. Despite its regimented quality, the tour took on something of a life of its own. In Milan the travelers met to decide whether they would take a side trip to Venice. They voted in favor and, true to form, did Venice in two days packed with sightseeing, arriving at 11:30 P.M. and rising early the next two days to fit in the Doge's Palace, the Rialto Bridge, a moonlight ride in a gondola, a stroll through the market, mass at St. Mark's Cathedral, coffee at the café Florian (very expensive, one traveler noted), and visits to the Armenian monastery (where Byron had studied the Armenian language) and to the Academy of Fine Arts. The next evening they were back in Milan, having left Venice at dawn and devoted three hours to touring Verona en route.

It seems to have been a cardinal principle of Cook's tours never
TRAVELING WITH THE MILLIONS

to start on any journey later than 6:00 A.M. This particular group left Milan at 4:15 the next day, bound for Florence on a journey that rivaled the day spent crossing the St. Gotthard Pass. They "bolted dinner" at Bologna, getting back to the station just in time to catch their train; crossed the Apennines by diligence; waited an hour and a half for a new engine when the one hauling their train broke down; and finally arrived in Florence at 11:00 P.M. Like Venice, Florence rated two days of sightseeing, followed by yet another dawn departure, this time to Pisa and Livorno. Those who wanted to extend their tour to Naples and Rome traveled by sea from Livorno to Civitavecchia (an overnight trip of about twelve hours), where they transferred to a train for a two-hour ride to Rome on what Cook later described as a "roughly worked Railway" with miserable second-class carriages. After two and a half days in Rome, they continued on to Naples by train, spending just a day and a half—one day for an excursion to Pompeii and Mount Vesuvius and half a day for sightseeing in Naples itself. Then it was back to Livorno and Genoa by ship and across Mont Cenis to Geneva. The month-long tour finished up with back-to-back overnight journeys: Geneva to Paris followed by Paris to London.15

One of the keys to Cook's success was his care to build upon proven strategies in expanding his business; the Swiss tours had followed the Scottish model, and the Italian tours were an extension of the Swiss experience. When another international exhibition opened in Paris in 1867, he revived the methods he had used to attract tourists to earlier exhibitions in London and Paris, but on a much larger scale, expanding his Continental business substantially in the process. The 1867 Exhibition generated an enormous amount of advance publicity, which boded well for Cook's ambitions but also made preparations difficult, as the anticipation of huge crowds encouraged everyone in the travel business to hold out for high prices. Following the model he had worked out for the London fair in 1862, Cook intended to rent a large building in Paris and convert it into a boardinghouse for working-class visitors, but found that the only available spaces were run-down buildings in dubious locations, for which the owners nevertheless asked exorbitant rents. Most hotel proprietors, including many he had worked with for years, refused to make any
advance arrangements, expecting that prices would rise as the Exhibition drew closer. Cook himself predicted that charges at the first-class hotels would jump 50 percent over current rates.

Eventually he negotiated terms at several moderately priced hotels and rented one large building, about twenty minutes' walk from the Exhibition grounds on the Champ de Mars, where he proposed to provide bed and breakfast for about half what even the most moderate hotels would charge. To make his clients feel at home, he installed a "thoroughly English" staff and offered afternoon tea in the English style, English newspapers, facilities for currency exchange, and assistance in posting letters. John Ripley, one of Cook's assistants (like his employer, a former temperance preacher), was in charge, available to help patrons organize sightseeing expeditions. Special arrangements could be made for workingmen's clubs. For wealthier visitors, Cook hired another house, newly constructed and beautifully furnished, where he could accommodate groups of ten to twelve in suites complete with "splendid" drawing rooms and individuals in rooms with access to a common drawing room and dining room.

The Paris Exhibition also found Cook reaching farther afield to encourage American tourists for the first time: He had made a trip to the United States in 1865 to explore the possibilities of organizing British-American tours, and his son, John Mason, who had officially joined the family business in 1865, led a small group on an American tour in 1866; but the distances and complications involved did not encourage them to pursue transatlantic excursions. As it turned out, persuading Americans to visit Europe proved much easier than getting the British to visit America. During the prosperous post-Civil War years, an estimated forty thousand Americans crossed the Atlantic annually. The 1867 fair was an especially popular attraction. Cook heard reports that ships of the Cunard Line were fully booked for May despite a substantial increase in fares. He worked hard to gain a share of the American business, even while cautioning his British clients to be wary about patronizing hotels popular with Americans, because the Americans were known for their free-spending habits and would be sure to drive up prices.

In November 1866, John Mason went back to New York in an
attempt to negotiate special steamship fares for American visitors to Europe. The companies initially agreed, but later reneged on their arrangements, seeing no reason to negotiate lower fares at a time of peak demand. Cook had to concentrate instead on encouraging Americans to patronize his hotel arrangements. In recognition of this potential new market, he called his two boardinghouses "Cook’s English and American Exhibition Visitors’ Home" and the "British and American First-Class Exhibition Boarding House." He also changed the name of his newspaper, the principal means of promoting his business, from *Cook’s Excursionist and Tourist Advertiser* to *Cook’s Excursionist—European and American Tourist Advertiser*. In 1873, he began publishing a separate American edition.44

As Cook’s business grew and focused increasingly on Continental travel, the nature of his clientele also expanded far beyond the working-class men and women who had patronized his early excursions. The Paris arrangements provided clear evidence of this shift. Those attending the Exhibition under Cook’s auspices could choose from three distinct categories of accommodation: a simple, inexpensive boardinghouse with heavy emphasis on "Englishness," where no liquor was served; rooms in moderately priced hotels at fixed rates, for those who could pay more for a greater degree of privacy and the privilege of taking wine with dinner, if they liked; and a luxurious boardinghouse run "in accordance with Parisian taste and custom." Cook continued to advertise his interest in cooperating with workingmen's excursion clubs and maintained an active business issuing tickets for short-distance excursions to seaside resorts and other popular destinations within Britain; he also continued to emphasize the modest cost of his tours in his efforts to attract new patrons. (A three-week tour to Paris and Switzerland should cost no more than £15 or £16, he observed, "a sum often spent at home, in fashion or folly, in a single night, leaving little for the disbursement but aching heads, wearied limbs, and restless ennui." But by the mid-1860s Cook’s focus had clearly shifted from making travel possible for the working class toward simplifying and packaging travel for a broad range of income groups.44

Tours within England and Scotland were patronized largely by tradesmen, clerks, and "mechanics" (i.e., artisans and other skilled
workers); Continental excursions catered mostly to teachers and businessmen, although the Whitsuntide trips traditionally included "a good deal of the Cockney element." The early Italian trips, more expensive than most tours and therefore likely to attract an upper-middle-class clientele, included "clergymen, physicians, bankers, civil engineers, and merchants"—in short, the kind of people who could afford to take three or four weeks for a vacation (and had the kinds of jobs that permitted it), but did not have unlimited time and money. Cook catered especially to teachers and ministers, timing tours for periods in the summer when they were free to travel and directing notices in The Excursionist specifically to them.35

Single women, whether daughters of middle-class families or widows with a bit of money and the time to travel, continued to be prominent among Cook's tourists, partly because they were more likely than men to have time to travel. A newspaper writer observed of Cook, "'Unprotected females confide in him; hypochondriacs tell him of their complaints; foolish travellers look to him to redeem their errors;... but the great conductor never flinches, and his eye is as bright and his smile as ready at the close of the most fatiguing trip as if he had never left home.' From the outset, Cook's tours had attracted large numbers of women; by the mid-1860s, women were in the majority in most groups.36

Over the years, repeat business was common. An 1865 tour to Italy included five or six people who had been on one of Cook's previous trips to Switzerland or Italy; a Yorkshire man who had been part of his first tour to the Scottish Highlands, now accompanied by his wife; an elderly man from Cornwall, who had been the first to buy tickets for Switzerland last year; 'one brave woman from Herts, who has been with us almost 'everywhere' for several years past'; and several men who had been on previous tours, in addition to a family of five from New Zealand and two sisters and a brother from Australia, all visiting Britain and bent on seeing some of the Continent before they returned home.37

With Continental tours supplanting local excursions as the mainstay of his business, Cook found himself spending more time
in London. In 1865 he moved his headquarters there, to a building he purchased on Fleet Street, while maintaining the Leicester office primarily for printing *The Excursionist* and his various other bro-}
chures and guides. The entire family was involved: John Mason managed the London office, while Cook’s wife operated a temperance hotel on the upper floors (as she had in Leicester). John Mason had at first been reluctant to leave his job as a printer to join his father in the travel business, claiming that the two of them had not agreed on business matters in the past, but Cook insisted. The business had reached a point where he had to delegate if he was to expand further, and Cook felt he could hand over tasks to his son that he could not trust to anyone else. The partnership between father and son was never a comfortable one, however, as John Mason pushed the family firm toward becoming more businesslike and catering to wealthier clients, while Thomas never quite let go of his idealistic vision of travel as a way of uplifting the working class. By the end of the 1870s, the two men had broken irrevocably, leaving John Mason in charge of running the business, which, by then, had sixty offices throughout the world.38

Cook & Son, as the company continued to be known, added to its network of routes until it covered most of Holland, Belgium, France, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Italy. In 1869, the firm launched its first tours to the Middle East; in 1875 it introduced Scandinavian tours, including a “Midnight Sun Voyage” to the North Cape, noting that those people who had already covered all of France and Italy and found the popular destinations hopelessly overcrowded might do well to look farther north. Over the next decade, it added Spain, India, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States. Still, the great majority of Cooks’ clients, like most British tourists of the nineteenth century, continued to choose Paris, Italy, Switzerland, and the Rhine as favorite destinations.39

Although the company continued to offer escorted tours, by the 1870s the great bulk of its clients traveled on circular tickets, mapping out their own routes within certain limitations. Even so, the specter of Cook’s huge early tour groups dogged the firm for years, leading John Mason Cook to run articles in *The Excursionist* from time to time reminding potential customers of the distinction between
escorted tours and circular tickets, and emphasizing that most Cooks’ tourists traveled quite independently. Whatever the choice of route, tickets for each leg of the traveler’s journey were bound in little booklets and enclosed in a leather or cloth case stamped with the label COOK’S TOURIST TICKETS. These ticket cases became so ubiquitous across the Continent that conductors often simply looked at the case itself without bothering to claim the ticket.

In 1868, Cooks introduced a similar arrangement for hotels. From the beginning, Thomas Cook had made hotel arrangements for those of his clients who requested assistance; beginning with the Italian tours, he had arranged to pay all hotel charges for a fixed sum for those individuals who didn’t want to worry about their day-to-day charges. Hotel coupons, modeled on the circular tickets for transit, were the next logical step. Cook negotiated fixed fees with hotels in all the areas he served and then issued booklets of coupons, each one good for breakfast, dinner, or room. He printed the terms of the arrangement on the coupon booklet—breakfast, for example, was Continental style, with eggs or meat to be charged extra—and provided clients with a list of hotels participating in the system. By 1872, the list included 130 hotels; that number jumped to nearly 400 by 1876 and 500 in 1880.44 In Thomas Cook’s experience, dealing with hotel charges had always been one of the inexperienced traveler’s greatest difficulties. Currency exchange was even worse, and by 1873 his son was well on the way to solving that problem too, by issuing what he called “circular notes”—the forerunner of the modern traveler’s checks. Patrons paid Cook a given sum of money in exchange for notes issued in denominations of £5 and £10, which could then be cashed at hotels participating in the hotel coupon system.

Although it had required some effort to persuade hotel proprietors to accept the coupon arrangements, within a few months, much to Cook’s annoyance, he discovered others imitating his system. At least one imitator, working through an agent in Paris, used Cook’s name in soliciting cooperation from hotels and printed coupons that resembled Cook’s very closely. Worse still was an article claiming that someone else had invented the coupon system in 1858. This kind of deliberate copying outraged him, but even legitimate competition

160
was anathema to Cook, who threatened to stop patronizing hotels that allowed their names to appear on any other agent's list.44

It was a problem he could hardly expect to avoid, however, because the firm's success inevitably inspired imitators. An agency called Stangen was established in Breslau in 1863, the first of several German travel agencies. They were not a serious concern, since Cooks could not very easily tap the German market. American Express, although established in 1848, did not get into the travel business until early in the twentieth century, and thus posed no threat to Cooks' transatlantic business. (In 1902, the president of the company declared that there was no profit in the travel business and, even if there were, he would have no part of it. "I will not have gangs of trippers starting off in charabancs from in front of our offices the way they do from Cooks," he wrote.) But British agents were another matter. Cooks' first serious competitor, Henry Gaze, organized his first tour to Paris in 1844, long before Thomas Cook crossed the Channel. In the late 1850s, he launched excursions to Switzerland, accompanied by a guidebook titled Switzerland and How to See It for Ten Guineas. Thomas Cook denigrated Gaze's tours for using third-class hotels and "hard walking" at a cost little less than his own tours, although he did recommend Gaze's book to his own clients. (Punch, on the other hand, satirized the book in an article called "A Week in the Moon for a Pound.") The rivalry between Cook and Gaze became more serious when Gaze again got the jump on Cook in organizing tours to the Middle East and didn't hesitate to advertise the fact that he had been there first. The two firms also competed on tours to the Continental exhibitions. Several other travel agents established themselves in the 1870s and 1880s, among them Dean & Dawson (1871), John Frame (1881), Quentin Hogg (1886), and Sir Henry Lunn (1893).45

The Cooks reacted to competition as a kind of betrayal, much as Thomas had responded to the Scottish railroads' putting an end to his northern excursions. This was especially true when the issue involved someone trying to cash in on the family name or challenge the firm's originality. Despite the Cooks' overwhelming commercial success and the size and scope of their firm, in some ways they dis-
played a preindustrial attitude about business, one that emphasized loyalty and fair dealing over profit. Although his son built the company into the largest travel agency in the world, Thomas Cook never completely abandoned his origins as an artisan organizing excursions for the edification of the workingman and the promotion of peace and friendship among nations.

Just as the Cooks' success generated competition, so it also brought criticism and even ridicule of their methods and clients. British travelers in general (especially those of less than upper-class status) were already targets of satire by the mid-nineteenth century, and Cooks' tourists were easy marks for those who regretted the demise of the good old days, when travel was the prerogative of the rich. In the early years of his business, Thomas Cook had often felt compelled to justify travel for the working class against the arguments of employers and others who considered travel for workers a waste of time and money. By the 1860s, one could no longer argue that working-class and middle-class people shouldn't travel. Clearly they did, and it would have been folly to suppose that they would cease doing so. Instead critics turned to ridicule, depicting group tourists as so many sheep racing mindlessly from one sight to another with little appreciation of what they saw. Cooks' tourists, the critics charged, were superficial, ignorant, and vulgar, failed to appreciate what they saw, wanted everything readily packaged so they wouldn't have to think about anything, and were suspicious of foreign food and foreign ways. Perhaps worst of all, they traveled in groups and therefore called attention to themselves. Upper-class men and women accustomed to visiting the Continent in the pre-Cook era resented the growing crowds and feared that they would be tarred by association with lower-class travelers.

One particularly vicious article appeared in Blackwood's Magazine, written under the pen name Cornelius O'Dowd, by Charles Lever, an Irish novelist and vice-consul at La Spezia. As a vice-consul Lever saw many tourists and obviously hated the new breed descending upon him (and perhaps also the increase in his workload). Lever's satire turned mostly on the need he felt to reassure Euro-
peans around him that not all British people were like the tourist
hordes; when "some platitude about English eccentricity" failed to
convince his hearers, he claimed to have invented a story that the
British government had devised a new system of dumping convicts.
Lever's article was picked up by The Pall Mall Gazette with a fa-
orable comment, while similar kinds of pieces appeared in Punch
and other magazines. One article, commenting on Cook's proposal
to organize school holiday tours for boys, remarked, "If they would
only undertake to personally conduct a bridal party, their series of
benefactions to the human race would be complete."

Cook saw such criticism as a kind of social snobbery and re-
spended by asserting the right of all to travel, decrying "Purse-proud
youthlings who affect to treat with disdain those who occupy a lower
sphere than themselves, and then . . . think that places of rare interest
should be excluded from the gaze of the common people, and be kept
only for the interest of the 'select' of society. But it is too late in this
day of progress to talk such exclusive nonsense; God's earth, with
all its fulness and beauty, is for the people; and railroads and steam-
boats are the results of the common light of science, and are for the
people also." When another critic, writing in the Athenaeum, made
fun of Cook for organizing a tour to Rome that emphasized archae-
ology—implying that Cook's tourists couldn't possibly understand
archaeology, certainly not in the space of a few days—Cook replied,
"The Athenaeum may sneer at Cook's Excursions and those who
patronise them, yet these excursions have done more than all the
articles in the Athenaeum . . . to familiarise the English people with
continental life and manners as they really are, and thus assist in
dispelling the international ignorance and prejudices to which we
owe so many misunderstandings and disastrous wars."

Other writers defended Cook and the concept of inexpensive
travel, using similar arguments. A profile in All the Year Round, a
magazine edited by Charles Dickens, took the position that organ-
izing travel for the working class "is a good thing, and ought to be
encouraged. It is right that a hard-working man, labouring in one
spot for fifty weeks in a year, should, in his fortnight's holiday, be-
take himself to some place as far away from and as different to his
ordinary abode as lies within the reach of his purse, and this he is
only able to do by the aid of such providers as my excursion agent. Another supporter, reminding his readers that it had once been the fashion to make fun of upper-class travelers—"Lord Foppington on his travels; coarse Sir Stentor Stubble doing the grand tour... and such like specimens of the stupidity and vulgarity of the British aristocracy let loose upon the continent"—criticized the hypocrisy of attacking the new breed of traveler for his lack of sophistication, when most wealthy travelers were no better. Most critics of Cook's tourists were not such masters of French and German, nor did he believe that "the veneration of some of them for either high art or high nature is one whit more profound than that of an average Cook's excursionist. It really is quite time to say a word in defence of the Englishman of moderate means who likes to see a foreign city or a foreign river, and yet cannot afford to travel express in a carriage reserved, and with the courier to show all the sights. It does not follow that every such being must necessarily be very vulgar or stupid." The Cooks themselves argued that it was better to encourage people to travel and learn about other nations under the guidance of a "Conductor" than restrict all contact with other nations to those with the means to travel independently. The Cooks also felt compelled to defend themselves in more practical terms, by reminding the public that most of their clients traveled independently and asserting that they were much the same as other travelers. Cooks' tourists were accused of rushing from place to place without enough time to see the places they visited. "If this principle were to be generally acted on," Thomas claimed, "nine-tenths of the visitors to the National Gallery and British Museum ought to stay away." Moreover, he observed, in a dig at the mania for writing travel books, Cooks' clients did not rush about a country and then publish error-ridden books about them. "They do not pretend to master the topography, history, mode of government, social statistics, and all the rest of it, of a large country in a single week, but they do profess to have learnt a little from what they have seen, and to utilise that knowledge, without sinking into pedantic men of learning, or narrow-minded and superficial writers for literary journals." Although Thomas Cook defended the right of all classes of people to
TRAVELING WITH THE MILLIONS

travel, at the same time he asserted that his firm’s clients were drawn from a better class of people than the critics implied.49

In some ways, however, the charges leveled at Cook’s tourists were justified. The few surviving travel diaries written by men and women who participated in the early tours, as well as articles written by Thomas Cook himself, make it clear that they did indeed rush from place to place, preoccupied with seeing as much as possible in a short time. Their travel accounts are superficial, mainly catalogues of places visited, which they tended to describe in comparison with familiar places closer to home. They talked mostly about what they could readily see—buildings, scenic vistas, faces of people—and the conditions of travel itself, especially the food and the endless train rides. Traveling rapidly and in groups, they seldom had contact with the people of the countries they visited, and seem to have formed little impression of life there.

Those who defended Cook argued that it was better to see Italy in three weeks than not at all. The more thoughtful critics of changes in the style of travel argued quite the opposite: that one needed time, knowledge, and mental preparation to be able to appreciate travel fully, especially travel to places of great scenic beauty. Wordsworth had opposed the construction of a railroad line to the Lake District because it would bring in people who could not fully appreciate the region’s beauties in his terms. By implication, his argument was that no travel was preferable to imperfect travel, because the influx of ill-prepared visitors would spoil things for those who were capable of appreciating them. In the 1870s, John Ruskin made a similar argument about Switzerland, claiming, “All my dear mountain grounds and treasure-cities ... are long ago destroyed by the European populace.” The literary critic Leslie Stephen charged that tourists had no independent judgment, but went where they were told to go and admired what their guidebooks told them to admire. They could hardly do otherwise, he claimed, because an appreciation of art or natural beauty required lengthy study and a cast of mind foreign to the average Briton, who concerned himself with little other than work.46

Such critics were not out-and-out snobs, but their views could be
sustained only in a society in which access to the monuments they held dear was limited to an educated elite—a society that was rapidly disappearing in the nineteenth century. "Steam is a great leveller, not only of roads, but of social rank," wrote Arthur Sketchley, the author of a series of humorous books about Cook's tours. He recalled the experience of a friend who had spent three months traveling from London to Naples in 1815; in the 1860s, Sketchley made the journey in four days. A trip to the Continent, he remarked, had become "a mere everyday affair."\(^4\)

Railroads and entrepreneurs like Cook, who packaged travel for people of moderate means, permanently changed the nature of travel. While many regretted the demise of an older, slower, more exclusive style of travel, others valued the opportunity to see places that had once seemed as inaccessible as the moon. In the words of Mrs. Brown, the Cockney globetrotter who was the principal character in Sketchley's stories, "I'm sure as Mr. Cook did ought to 'ave 'is statues by law stuck about all over the world, as 'is a wonderful man."\(^4\)

Writing in 1865, Thomas Cook described the time in which he lived as "the Age of Locomotion." Railroads, he wrote, "have unlocked the doors of districts hitherto barred against the masses of the people." British men and women who didn't travel seemed "as antiquated as dinosaurs." Inspired by idealistic motives, Cook and his family made a fortune by making it possible for the "masses" to travel. By the time the company celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1891, the Cook agency offered more than 30,000 series of tickets covering 1.8 million miles of railroads, rivers, and oceans. During the previous year, the company had sold nearly 3.3 million tickets, a figure that would rise to about 6 million by 1900.\(^6\)