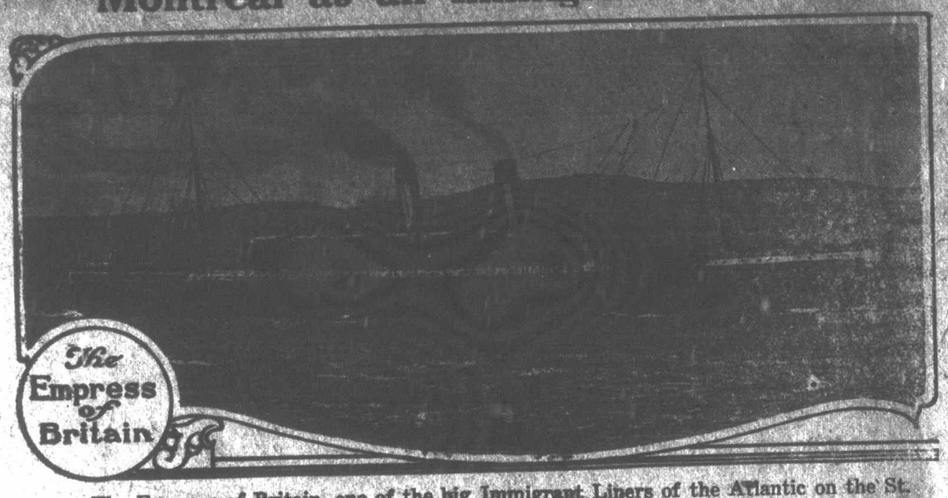
Montreal as an Immigration Centre



The Empress of Britain, one of the big Immigrant Liners of the Atlantic on the St. Lawrence Route. On her last voyage she brought 800 settlers to Canada, most of them bound for the West.

Montreal is one of Canada's chief immigration centres.

While the chief ports of disembarkation are Halifax and St. John in winter and Quebec in summer, a large proportion of the total arrivals reaches Montreal on their way west or for redistribution, while many stay off at that city in order to settle in Quebec province.

Evidences of its being a busy immigration centre are seen at the wharves as well as the railway stations. Come with me to the Canadian Pacific Ocean Service dock. The Melita has just come in at an hour when the city has hardly awakened. Soon after the big leviathan ties up at the wharf—and remember that she sailed up a river for eight hundred miles from the open sea—all is bustle and excitement, for the docking of a transatlantic vessel is always an imposing sight. Gang planks are lowered, donkey engines sing their noisy song as they hoist the endless number of trunks from the deep holds, and the passengers land once again on solid mother earth.

Among the hundreds of passengers are scores who may be regarded as newcomers and as prospective settlers in a new land, the third-class passengers having left the ship at Quebec. And among the Montreal arrivals are many who belong to the class of household workers, for whom Canadian homes are waiting. As they have been helped while on board by a C. P. R. matron, so on land there are immigration officials, of both sexes; and port chaplains of the churches, priests and sisters from the Roman Catholic Church, Y. W. C. A. secretaries, Jewish missioners and many another ready to render help. The service these voluntary workers gives is of the highest value and is greatly appreciated.

With baggage and luggage arranged alphabetically in the long freight shed, it is an easy matter to identify and check the mountains of trunks and bags as they are piled high in the transport wagons for the railway station.

Next let us go to the Windsor Street Station of the Canadian Pacific Railway. It is always a busy centre, but after the arrival of several ocean boats it is doubly thronged, and yet such is the excellent system in vogue that there is no confusion. No one can go astray in finding the right train. The workers one finds at the docks are here also, for they know no union hours. Twenty at a stretch is not unusual under pressure for there is a myriad service to be given, and given quickly.

Before we see off the trainload of immigrants it will be worth while visiting the wonderful facilities offered these newcomers in this one station and by a railway company. Under the Concourse, there are large rooms, well equipped for the use of the immigrant who may need to remain in the city for a few days. The foreigners are in one room, and the English-speaking ones in another; those who are passing through Canada on their way to the United States have special provision made for them, while yet another huge apartment is devoted to the Chinese in bond.

Montreal does a great deal for the new arrivals. A sample is Dorchester House, a fine home for immigrant girls where they are guided in every way and assisted in finding suitable employment. Hundreds take advantage of this excellent institution, which is maintained co-operatively by several Protestant denominations, also working in harmony with the nearby Y. W. C. A.

There is also the Dominion Immigration Hall, adjoining the Windsor Street Station, a four-story building where immigrant arrivals can be kept for a short time free of charge, where delinquents are treated as in a court, where hospital service of a first aid nature is given, and where a goodly number can be accommodated in dormitories and cots.

This is something of what Montreal is doing for the new Canadian in which the Government, the Railways, the Churches and other organizations are sharing, and it is to the credit of Canada's commercial metropolis that, amid the life and commerce of a great centre, it has time and thought for the immigrant.
—F. Y.

The East in the West

If we were only visiting the East—my wife and I—we would probably say nothing. First, because there are certain conventions which even we Westerners recall, but more likely because the East would still be showing us that mask of smiling indulgence which it wears for the benefit of the plainsman — and we should never have guessed its real forbearance underneath.

But having been brought here, so to speak, by royal command of an Eastern head office, and having been given the inestimable boon of enduring the most interfering traffic police and the most acquiescent criminal police in the world, we are accepted as Easterners! There is no longer any mask. This enables us to speak, as it were, within the family circle, with the mask hanging on a peg behind the door. Eastern universities feel just a little dismayed at the irreverence with which the Western student addresses himself to some of the age-old problems of metaphysics or natural science, and the breeziness with which he takes off his coat, makes his rough preliminary measurements, and proceeds to deal with that problem as cheerfully as though nobody had ever tried it before and failed! Undoubtedly this is a little crude, and the boy will probably fail and never have so much courage again. But this way, this Western way, will ultimately solve more problems than the way of the head shaker and the doubt-doubter who cherish as holy relics the traditions of other men's failures.

Among b..k people here in the East there is an attitude of restrained wonder. Well, well; What will the West do next? Three-quarters admiring—and a little bit afraid!

And in railway circles I know high officers with whom, after a conversation at Saturday lunch, I have been invited back to empty offices to be shown colossal sacred books that showed—there was no doubting it—how poor Billy Langley's head for figures had gone wrong again! How Bill, in public addresses, before the Railway Commission, solemnly swore that he had shipped—let me see—1,800 bushels of oats and only made $250 because, forsooth, the railway rates had gobbled up the rest! Well, the railway rates hadn't done this gobbling it seemed. There were the books, and there were the pages, and there were the columns—and there the figures! If Bill's oats had been of the lowest grade, and if they had been shipped on the longest haul at the highest rate and sold for the lowest price in the year he was talking about—why Bill must have got at least $522 for his 1,800 bushels instead of the $250 which he told the world about. And if his oats had been high-priced oats, he would have had nearer $700. But he said, said the railwaymen, that he got only $250 and that the railways had taken the rest.

I could have told these Eastern railway officials even worse examples of election-time arithmetic than this one. There is far more careless addition and subtraction right here in the East. But if they wanted Western cases—there was that farmer mentioned by Bill Langley, who claimed that 6,000 bushels of oats on which he paid 12c a bushel freight rate, would not net him more than 11c after paying for threshing. Well, if his oats had been of the lowest grade, and sold at the lowest price that is 42½c, he must still have had 18c a bushel with which to pay the thresher. Of course every farmer knows that no thresherman ever got 18c a bushel. The inference in this case was that once more the railways were getting it.

There was also the case of a Mr. Brown, of the United Farmers of Manitoba who says that the cost of a binder laid down at Pilot Mound, Manitoba, is now $48 higher than it was last year, and that the railway rates are to blame for $22 out of the $48. I happen to know from an implement manufacturer that the entire freight costs of a five-feet binder if shipped in carloads from Hamilton, or Toronto to Pilot Mound in the spring of 1920 was $12.16; in April, 1921, $16.40; an actual difference of $4.24. If carried in carloads to Winnipeg and re-shipped as an individual binder from that point to Pilot Mound the total freight cost in 1920 was $19.25, and in 1921, $25.25, a difference of $6. Mr. Brown's estimate of the increase alone was greater than the entire cost.

But could you explain to Eastern railway officials that poor Bill Langley's figures, and poor Mr. Brown's figures must not be mistaken for Western arithmetic! That because Langley was a cabinet minister the Western farmer was not fooled into thinking that two and two make five, simple because Bill sometimes thinks so. Surely the East has seen just such foolish examples of arithmetic in the strain of fighting elections. There is no higher level of native intelligence anywhere in this world than among the people I come from, the kind that had the courage to march up to a new country and say: "Here! I am going to tame you!" and stick to it, although that country might still send all its forces of snow and wind and old-time loneliness to try to drive them back. As proof of the fact Langley was defeated in the Saskatchewan elections—rejected along with his arithmetic.

But leave the railways out of it. Among the small Eastern investors—the kind with whom my business—brings me in frequent contact—I find what I might almost call sublime conceit in supposing that they can see through the charlatan and discover the fraud out West twice as quickly as the West itself. "No," quavers one of these very nice people with perhaps $1,000 to invest, "I don't think I care to hold any more western school debentures—or city bonds, or whatever it is"—until I see. There is a bit too much demagogery out there! Too many young lawyers strutting around and flirting with parlor Bolshevism. Not just the O. B. U. strike in Winnipeg though that was bad enough—but I read of a case, etc., etc., etc." I wonder how many of the well-informed easterners know the amount of buncombe of that kind is talked among the little investors in the East and in England, timid people to whom the loss of the interest on even one debenture would mean some bill unpaid, some comfort done without?

The West is just as sane as the East. It sees through its own demagogues just as quickly and perhaps a little more quickly than the easterner. The western farmer is the last man in the world to tolerate Bolshevism. If, as I suppose, the basis of this eastern distrust is due to sometimes extravagant attacks on the railways by western orators, the East should remember that one of the surest ways a young lawyer can take for getting into the public eye out West, and winning a good constituency is to quote Scripture and rag the railways. It is always better for a family doctor to tell a lady patient she has XYX-ism of the ABC than to tell her the truth that she is really suffering from run-down nerves, unwise eating, late hours, too much coffee, worry over her children, and acidosis of the temper. She would never recover. So these popular and wise young doctors of state flourish the sword of scriptural quotation and shout "have you troubles good people? Stop worrying. Your public ailments are really very simple. You think you have many, but you really have only one railway mess! "If he explained the whole combination of economic conditions that cause this or that unpleasant symptom he would put the wise men in his audience to sleep, and the rest would be frightened to death. But the West, which is mostly wise, is not fooled even by his promise to bring low the great. It winks and enjoys the fireworks. It knows very well when he quotes Scripture to liken the Winnipeg Board of Trade to Judas Iscariot, that he had to ask a Methodist preacher to look up the quotation, because the leaves of the office Bible, used for swearing affidavits, are pasted together to keep it from falling open and embarrassing some client in the middle of a perfectly good deal. These youngsters get up and talk about the psychology of the farmer—as though any self-respecting farmer would admit having such a thing, and as though these young orators had ever heard the matutinal rooster or sweated behind a binder. The West knows that when this lad gets to Parliament and his party is in power, responsibilities will sober him up. It knows that he knows that nobody understands better than the West the importance of having railways prosperous enough and ambitious enough to carry on as leaders in the development of the whole country.

Of course it is foolish to pretend that demagogery is not dangerous. It is. Fragments of rash speeches, traversing wires and cables, have often frightened shut the pocket-books of people who have never seen a prairie sunrise over the harvest-fields. But Westerners are no more given to this vice than anyone else. Free speech is a British heritage and it is up to the intelligent Easterner or old countryman to make enquiries or to suspend judgment before deciding that the West intends to wreck the C. P. R. in order to get calls to build fences.

(Signed), A. WESTERNER.
(From the Montreal Gazette.)

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