

# The Western Scot

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## TWO DAYS IN LONDON.

Can you imagine anyone being "fed-up" after only two days in London, especially a blooming Canadian who had never seen it before? Yet such a one exists, right in our midst, too, in a manner of writing. Now, it would be quite comprehensible if a visitor to London returned before his leave had expired with the excuse that he had spent so much weight—say ten or fifteen pounds—as to be unable to carry on further in a manner befitting an officer and a Canadian; or did he proffer the excuse that he had been four times to the Empire and twice to the Alhambra without having seen either show, one might understand that his discouragement had moved him to rush back to camp. But that anyone could actually, without other reason than that of complete ennui, exchange the life of dear, dark old Lunnon for a spot so totally devoid of excitement, so utterly lacking in snap and ginger, as Bordon Camp, passes understanding, and leaves us gasping like a too-athletic sockeye that has flipped itself clear up on the bank. There are other good and valid reasons for returning—or being returned—from London—such, for instance, as that of a Tommy from one of our sister batts. (if it is permissible to refer to a sister as a "batt."). His pass had been altered at his own orderly-room, but as the alteration was not initialled he failed to satisfy the curiosity of a London Red-cap, and thereupon was landed fuming home in charge of an escort. It quite spoiled the evening he had arranged with an awfully nice girl he had met along the Strand; but, of course, this is war, and war is—(no you don't, Padre; I haven't a penny left!).

One of the main features one notices during a brief stay in London is the darkness. Up to the present no one has been clever or enterprising enough to capitalize the darkness and charge extra for it, although it offers an excellent opportunity—there is so much of it. Take, for instance, a foggy day—and they are not infrequent—followed by a regular London Zep-proof night, and you have a quantity of darkness (if darkness is quantitative) that should appeal to the London capitalist. And when practically everything else comes extra, why not the darkness? It is one of life's little perplexities!

Of course one *does* pay extra for the darkness indirectly, in many ways. But comment in this respect would be worse than useless as advice. One *must* learn by sad experience!

Another noteworthy feature of London streets is the system of taxi-cabs. Eightpence the mile, with a half-crown an hour for waits, is the tariff, and it seems little enough when one considers the nervous energy expended by the chauffeur. Of course the passenger expends more or less nervous energy as well, but then it is merely entertainment with him, while with the driver it is business. No self-respecting chauffeur would think of driving sedately down the Strand following the regular progress of the ruck of traffic. Not he! Being a direct descendant of Jehu, he needs must drive furiously. Now he takes the bow off a Liverpool Street 'bus; again he shaves the shore of an "island" and disconcerts a brother chauffeur by cutting suddenly and unexpectedly in front of him. He is in a playful mood, as witness the joyful prank he introduces to one of the chic new lady 'bus conductors when he whirls full-tilt at her, only to check his flight in the nick of time as his steaming radiator spurts hot water on the "Is It Safe?" sign on the taffrail of

the 'bus. Seldom does an accident occur, a fact which is chargeable in equal parts to the chauffeur's skill and the protection of a benign Providence; but oft-times a "near thing" evokes caustic comment from both worthies engaged, and on such occasions the "langwidge"—oh! Clarice!!

It would be improper to omit, in even a casual review of a trip to London, reference to the charming manner in which the women of London welcome and entertain soldiers. The writer, during two days in the city, saw numbers of our gallant Jocks in the streets and life-saving stations, and always accompanied by charming members of the fair sex (although it is only fair to say they were not all fair, but included a sprinkling of delectable and sprightly brunettes). In fact it was quite amazing that so many of our men found sisters and cousins in the city. When the leave-list was made out prior to the departure from camp of the first fifty per cent. it appeared to me that the majority were bound for outlandish places such as Aberdeen, Glasgow, Killaloo, Pittenweem, Whitehaven, etc., and now to see them all in dear old Lunnon, and all so happy in the bosoms (so to speak) of their relatives was quite affecting, I do assure you. And what was my further and greater consternation when I beheld such anomalies as a Jock with a name like McClintock cherishing a sister from Brussels!

And that reminds me to mention with warm appreciation the special ministrations of our dear delightful refugee visitors. It was indeed pleasurable to meet quite casually a fragile lily from France, or a stormy little petrel from Belgium, and discuss with her the short-comings and long-goings of the humannerly Hun. Such sympathy as she would display, and with what tenderness would she pity one's loneliness. After all, are we not brothers—I mean sisters—or, rather, brothers and sisters, in exile? But, ah me, they are wonderful feminines!

It strikes one as strange that leave to London is referred to in days. Lieutenant So-and-So is granted two or three days' leave to proceed to London for the purpose of taking tea with his grandmother. And, does Lieutenant So-and-So turn those days to advantage hastening about from Gog and Magog to Gin and Beer, disentangling the Abbey from the Tower and rectifying his mistakes, if life-long, belief that there are lions and clowns in Piccadilly Circus? Far be it from such! Recumbent in a deep lounge chair he spends his days in slumbrous rest. But his nights—ma foi!—those nuits! And in that one bright temporal oasis from 12 to 2.30 pip-emma, his sole and only toast is: "Here's happy days; the nights are *always* pleasant!" Yet the orderly-room *will* refer to his visit as so many days' leave for the purpose of—but what's the use?

Behold the worthy Scoutmaster and One Other industriously "seeing the lions." As they descend Tower Hill and enter the Stockade Gate a fearsome individual in khaki, who looks as if he ought to be a field-marshal, but turns out to be only a sentry of the Guard, springs so smartly to "attention!" that our heroes are all but over-awed and consider seriously the advisability of turning back while the turning is good. Curiosity anent the Bloody Tower overwhelms other considerations, however, and they press onward and inward. Seventeen salutes take them safely past Middle Tower, and they seek shelter in the ample arms of a Beef-eater. But,