

Our English Page

WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SWEDEN?

The other day I met a couple of young boys. They were born here in Canada, but their parents came from "the Land of Saga", Old Sweden. The old folks arrived here some twenty years ago and settled down in Saskatchewan, where they got a homestead not far from a middle-sized city in the central part of the province.

Well, of course I started to speak to the young boys and naturally I used the Swedish language. They looked at each other and one could see they did not feel at ease. Finally one of them said: "I am sorry, but I don't know that language". He looked a little ashamed at first and then he started to explain why he never learned to speak Swedish. He told me he could understand a few words but that was about all.

We talked the matter over for a while and so I asked them a question: "What do you know about Sweden?" — "Not much", they answered me almost right away. But we would like to. Daddy and Ma never tell us anything. I know the name of the capital. It is Copenhagen, you know. And then I know that the country is mostly populated by lapps, those small fellows with a yellow face."

I could not help laughing when I heard what they have learned about Sweden. This little chat with the two boys gave me the idea of establishing a "Young peoples department" in our paper, giving the young folks a page of their own and in a language they would be able to read. In this department I want to have a number of questions about Sweden and also articles regarding intellectual and industrial developments in the old country during the last 10-15 years.

I think you ought to know a little more about the country where father and mother

came from, or at least a little more than you can learn by studying your own school books. The informations there are rather meager, you have to admit that. I could not really blame you for not having learned more about Sweden, and I dare say the old folks in many cases are neglecting to tell you anything. If they have been here for a number of years they are bound to forget quite a lot about their old country or at least they are not able to tell you anything regarding the last developments. And there has been a great deal of wonderful developments since the old folks left the country. Maybe the old folks also might find a few things worth while in these columns. At least I hope so.

From now on you have your own page! You can edit it yourself! Ask me any question about the old country and I shall be glad to answer it as good as possible. Some times later on we'll arrange a little contest to see what you have learned. There is a good prize to win so you have better follow the articles! Hoping that you will take great interest in this page I am sending you my best wishes.

Your Editor.

SWEDEN.

SITUATED between the northern part of the Atlantic Ocean, the North Sea, Skagerrack and Cattegat in the west, and the Baltic and the Gulf of Bothnia in the east, the great Scandinavian peninsula stands out prominently in the northern part of the map of Europe. The western part of the peninsula is occupied by Norway, the eastern part by Sweden. Along the entire frontier the two kingdoms are separated by a broad range of mountains rising with snow-clad peaks and glaciers in the north, but gradually sinking towards the south.

Sweden is divided into 25 counties, roughly corresponding to the ancient and more or less independent provinces out of which the Swedish realm was created more than 1,200 years ago. The most important of these provinces, however, retained their own laws up to the middle of the 14th century, and many traces of this original division can still be found.

In a wider sense the country has from ancient times been divided into three sections. Götaland comprises the districts of southern Sweden, the most ancient of which are Västergötland and Östergötland, Scania (Skåne) and some others of the southernmost provinces formerly belonged to Denmark, but have formed part of Sweden since 1658. In Götaland there are vast fertile plains, here and

there broken by forest-clad ridges and hills. The rich soil has been intensively cultivated and some parts are very thickly populated. There are several large cities with flourishing industries.

Svealand, the middle section, has for its centre the old historical provinces round Lake Mälaren: Uppland, Södermanland and Västmanland. Here the flat open country alternates more frequently with woods and hills. Innumerable lakes now reflect the bright green fields now the sombre forests; and some of the lakes are among the largest in Europe. In Svealand are situated the capital and several of the most important cities of the country. Here are to be found most of the relics of ancient Swedish history, and the more famous industries have here taken root.

The third section, Norrland, the true region of the bright summer nights, comprises the vast expanse of country in the north of Sweden, but the population is very sparse. Most of the cities are situated along the Bothnian coast, along which there are also a number of extensive industrial works.

Between the coast and the mountains on the Norwegian frontier lie immense tracts of dark pineforests, where the spirit of primeval days seems still to linger, source of many a fairy tale and legend. Great foaming rivers teeming with fish make their way from the large mountain lakes through forests to the sea; and many a mighty cataract intensifies the beauty of the scenery. In the extreme north a brooding silence hangs over the deserted plateaux and the snowy mountains of Lappland, but even here human enterprise has made the desert habitable. The mountains of Lappland contain excellent iron-ore, and within a few years thriving communities have grown up round the mines, where formerly only the nomadic Lapps used to wander with their herds of reindeer.

An outstanding feature of the geography of Sweden is its long seaboard. The length of the coastline from the northern point of the Gulf of Bothnia along the Baltic and the Sound to the Norwegian frontier on the North Sea is about 3,000 nautical miles. Most of this coastline is indented with fiords and encircled by a network of archipelagoes. Only in the south, in Scania and Halland, is the coast open to the sea. Of the many archipelagoes, those of Stockholm and Bohuslän (the latter stretching from Gothenburg to the Norwegian frontier) are the largest and most interesting, and they offer delightful scenery and excellent opportunities for bathing, yachting and fishing.

The physical aspect of Sweden is varied. Whether covered with deep snow glistening beneath the wintry starlight in midwinter, or luminous beneath the spell of the light summer nights, its charm remains ever the same. The lyrical and poetical elements in all Swedish scenery make a strange and unforgettable impression on the mind of the traveller.

HISTORICAL SURVEY.

At the dawn of Sweden's history, about 600-800 A.D., only negligible portions of the country were cultivated. Between these lay vast stretches of practically impenetrable forest. The soil yielded but poor harvests, and starvation was frequent amongst the ever-increasing population. Beyond the seas lay wealthier lands which lured the people with their promise of rich booty and the glamour of conquest. When therefore the snow melted and the bays became free of ice, ships were launched and Vikings from the North assembled with mighty fleets to make war upon West, South and East. Numbers of Anglo-Saxon coins from this period have been found on Swedish soil, while the runic monuments on the Isle of Man are also evidence of Swedish raids in the West.

Mostly, however, the Swedish Vikings journeyed eastwards and, with Novgorod as their capital, founded what was to become the Russian Empire. Their voyages took them further, along the rivers of Russia, to Kieff, Constantinople, and down to the Caspian Sea.

Swedish Vikings served in the bodyguard of the Eastern Roman Emperor, and the runic writing on the famous Lion of St. Mark in Venice is believed to have been carved by one of them. In the wake of those warlike expeditions sprang up a flourishing trade, which brought a breath of eastern culture to the north; and even to-day one can discern traces of oriental influence in the ornamentation and colour-schemes in Swedish peasant woven fabrics. With the pressure of the Mongol westwards, however, the connections between Sweden and the Near East were gradually severed.

After the introduction of Christianity into Sweden, about 1000 A.D., these Viking expeditions ceased, but they were now succeeded by the Crusades, to Finland in particular, which latter country was moved to adopt Christianity and became incorporated in the Swedish Empire. There followed periods of domestic strife, during which, however, knowledge and culture made great progress. Particularly under the able Kings of the Folkunga a series of wise laws was passed, which have since served as a basis for the promulgation of justice and security.

From the close of the 14th century, Sweden, Norway and Denmark were on several occasions united under one king, but when foreigners endeavoured to undermine the ancient liberty of the people the peasants rose under the leadership of the "bergsmän" (a privileged class in Sweden to whom was granted the right of working the mines) Engelbrekt Engelbrektsson of Dalecarlia, and drove out the invaders. In 1435 Engelbrekt summoned together representatives from all classes of the community to the first Swedish Parliament, and the institution has survived down to the present day. The struggles for union, however, went on for another hundred years, until a young noble-

man, Gustavus Vasa, with the aid of the Dalecarlian peasants, succeeded in destroying the Danish influence once and for all. Gustavus Vasa's election as King in 1523 marked the foundation of the modern Swedish state.

His grandson, Gustavus Adolphus the Great, fought brilliantly in the Thirty Years War in defence of the religious liberty and political independence of his country. The king himself fell at the Battle of Lützen in 1632, but the great statesman Axel Oxenstierna brought the war to a successful issue. Sweden was now the most important power in Northern Europe. The Baltic became practically a Swedish inland sea, and after 1658 the country's own frontiers followed the natural geographical lines.

The hegemony of Sweden lasted for about a century. In the course of uninterrupted struggles against the superior combined forces of Russians, Poles, Germans and Danes, however, the Swedish possessions in the East and South of the Baltic were again lost, and at the time of the death of Charles XII in 1718 there remained of these only Finland. During the Napoleonic Wars even this province was wrested from Sweden.

Sweden's relations with England during these stormy centuries were as a rule very good. It often happened that the two countries fought in the same campaigns and at several critical periods in Swedish history the British Fleet has by its presence in Swedish waters afforded invaluable support.

It is of special interest to note the exploits of the Scots during the Thirty Years War. In one year some twenty thousand were levied for service under the Swedish sovereign. In 1630 the Scots united to form the famous Green Brigade, commanded by Sir John Hepburn, whom Louis XIV called the best soldier in Christendom. Many prominent Englishmen and Scotsmen were serving Sweden at this time. We recall with pride names such as Alexander Leslie, Sir Patrick Ruthven, Sir James Turner, General James King, Sir James Hamilton, and later on, Field Marshal Robert Douglas, General Robert Light, William Bennet, Hugo Hamilton who all saw service in the army, and Stewart, Klerck, Forth, Spalding in the navy, while among men of learning may be remembered, Murray, Guthrie, Strang, Eyre, Leyer and many others.

With America, too, Sweden's connection has been intimate, from the founding of the Swedish settlement of Delaware in 1627 down to more recent times when millions of Swedes have emigrated to the States. Delaware soon fell to the Dutch in 1656, but many sons of the settlers have played a prominent part in American history, and places like Tinnicum, Elsingborough, New Jersey and others along the river may be traced back to the original Swedish settlement. The tomb of Johan Prinz, governor of New Sweden (1643-53), is to be found in Sweden at Bottnaryds church, from the town of Jönköping.

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SEALED TENDERS addressed to the undersigned and endorsed "Tender for electric clock system, Public Building, Winnipeg, Man." will be received until 12 o'clock noon, Thursday, January 29, 1931, for the supply and installation of an electric clock system in the Post Office Building, Winnipeg, Man.

Plans and specification can be seen and forms of tender obtained at the offices of the Chief Architect, Department of Public Works, Ottawa, and the Resident Architect, Customs Building, Winnipeg, Man.

Tenders will not be considered unless made on the forms supplied by the Department and in accordance with the conditions set forth therein. Each tender must be accompanied by an accepted cheque on a chartered bank payable to the order of the Minister of Public Works, equal to 10 per cent of the amount of the tender. Bonds of the Dominion of Canada or bonds of the Canadian National Railway Company will also be accepted, a security or bonds and a cheque if required to make up an old amount.

By order,
N. DESJARDINS,
Secretary.

Department of Public Works,
Ottawa, January 7, 1931.