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Northcliffe's Impression of Canada

C.P.R. Just three initials, which most of us have learned during the past twenty years or so to regard with the same indifference as G.W.R., G.E.R. or G.N.R. Just a big railway which we are told runs from the Atlantic to the Pacific, a journey of over 3,500 miles.

We read about Canpac shares in our morning papers, we see beautiful models of great steamers in the Cocks-pur-street offices of the company, and we hear enthusiastic descriptions of the gorgeous scenery through which this three-letter railway runs. To most of us who have not crossed from sea to sea by the marvel of marvels, there is perhaps not a very great difference between C.P.R., P.L.M., and the other big railways of the world—an appeal to the romantic which lies buried somewhere in the staidest Britisher, not very much more powerful.

The fact remains that there are few journeys more full of romance, of beauty, of adventure than the run we are making this morning between Toronto and Vancouver. It is land-yachting, it is doubling Cape Horn in an old wind-jammer, it is pioneering—above all it is pioneering.

These tremendous trains run daily from coast to coast with the same regularity, almost with the same punctuality as do the express trains from London to Edinburgh, yet every one of them is, in a sense, a pioneer. Since we left Toronto we have passed through country which is exactly the same wild, savage tract of stone pines and gaunt rocks as it was when the first blow of a pickaxe announced the birth of the C.P.R.

None but the wild animals live there, bear, black fox, elk, moose, and deer. The lakes and streams are full of bass and trout and pickerel—a sort of big perch—and to you looking out of the window of a C.P.R. train the whole land is a sportsman's paradise. It is a fair-sized piece of the world which has not changed since the Creation.

Between Toronto and Calgary you pass every sort of scenery the world can show you. You find Norway, Scotland, the Roman Campagna (the capital of which is that little city with the great name, Medicine Hat), and, along the shore of Lake Superior, the Mediterranean by the French Riviera, and bits of the Adria by Corfu. For miles and miles on each side of Winnipeg you run through limitless wheat-fields stretching out on either side to the horizon, North Norfolk magnified a thousand times, a Sahara of grain.

Last night I awoke in the small hours. It was not because the train had stopped, but because a silence, an utter absence of any sort of sound enveloped us. It is a commonplace to say "a silence which can be felt," but it was, in truth, exactly that. The wide world—the little station of Moose Jaw, I think it was—lay buried beyond rescue under a crushing silence. The vast size of the land around us, the sense of absolute loneliness bore down on us tiny atoms like the Atlantic on the pebbles of its seafloor.

Life on board the Montmorency is extremely pleasant. This is what she is like. Outside she is painted a rich crimson and her lines give her just that distinction between a smart 300-ton yacht and a White Sea



trawler. Both are delightful to look at, but the yacht holds your eye the longer.

At the stern is something rather like the captain's stern-walk in an old three-decker, with a green and white striped awning. Here is the gangway, the way in, and here you sit in fair weather. Leading out to the stern-walk is the drawing-room or observation compartment, where half a dozen full-sized people can sit in comfort, and where two of the same kind can sleep at night in beds which are no sort of relation to the coffin-bunks on trans-European expresses.

Here, too, is the speed indicator, a most fascinating toy, which is hourly watched by us all as it climbs and falls between zero and 56 miles an hour. Forward of this come three bedrooms, simply and restfully decorated, each with its tables and chairs, its cupboards, dressing-tables, and wash-stands. Follows a bathroom with a shower.

Beyond these comes the dining-room, where eight people can sit down to dinner in all comfort and ten can be arranged for with a little good-will. This room, with its four great windows, is also the writing-room. A well-fitted desk of proper size lets down out of a recess containing everything the busiest man can need. In two of the corners are a couple of spare beds, which disappear into the paneling, in case you feel hospitable and invite people to spend a night or two on board this delightful car.

That is one of the charms of this tremendous run from sea to sea. It is one journey for you, who begin it at Montreal or Toronto and finish within sound of the Pacific breakers, but it is perhaps twenty or thirty to people along the line. During your cruise, therefore, you can send telegrams through the agency of the C.P.R. and invite a friend to join you at, say, Winnipeg. You do not say "Do stay with me on Tuesday or Wednesday," but "Keep us company between Winnipeg and Calgary, or between Woman River and Indian Head." And, if the friend is wise, he hastens to accept and come aboard with a suit-case.

Beyond the dining-room come the pantry and the kitchen, whence issue delicious meals, which are never

the same, served in a quite perfect manner. Nearly every day, at sunrise, one of those kindly, hospitable Canadian wayside station masters or an agent of the C.P.R. boards the car with a present of freshly caught speckled trout or bass, or, if you happen to be out of the river-lands, with the next best and most valued thing, an armful of flowers with the morning dew still on them.

At every hour you are given fresh proof of the kind-heartedness of Canadians, who go to any trouble and travel any distance to do you a simple kindness and wish you luck on your way.

The courtesy of the C.P.R. officials, which I have known and enjoyed for nearly 30 years, is the proud and justifiable boast of the company, but it is the sort of courtesy which begins with kindness. All along the line we have had a special telegraph news-bulletin sent in twice a day, and the various divisional superintendents have left nothing undone to make our journey as pleasant as possible. For example, at Kenora I was taken for a short motor drive, abandoning the train, which stopped to pick us up a few miles further on.

Again, every official on the train is eager to give you interesting information about the country, the cities and the peoples, red and white. One thing which has particularly struck me on this journey is the deep affection in which the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Connaught are everywhere held. From all sorts of people I have heard just those little familiar sentences about them which mean so much and which among English-bred folk are used only about people they really like.

Years ago when Canada was simply a huge, vague territory sprawling between the oceans and giving nothing to bind it together or give this mighty Dominion real cohesion, people who were regarded as ripe for the asylum used to say that one day a great steel road would run across it from end to end and give it what it needed most, an artery. One of these dreamers was Bulwer Lytton, who made the prophecy more than sixty years ago. He and the rest were laughed at.

Then the C.P.R. came along and, disregarding mountains and rivers and hundred-mile long chains of lakes, every conceivable engineering obstacle, gave Canada and British Columbia the mightiest steel road, over three thousand miles long, on which the whole economic life of the Dominion depends. And the whole of the extraordinary efficiency which permeates this colossal organization has been due, each in their turn, to Van Horne, Shaughnessy, and now E. W. Beatty, presidents of the C. P. R.

The C.P.R. is one of the greatest feats of engineering in the world, a thing before which a man should stand bare-headed. And the Montmorency and her sisters flit over it, back and forth, with the unconcern of a tramway-car.

I shall see many wonderful things on my long voyage round the world, but I do not think anything is likely to impress me more than this five-day run across a continent in the Montmorency. (Copyright in United States and Canada by United Press).

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