

# The Ontario Stretcher

No. 6.

NOVEMBER, 1916.

Price 3d.

## SOME IMPRESSIONS OF IRELAND.

It must be remembered we were not touring Ireland or making special visits to any of the beauty spots for which the Emerald Isle is famous. We were merely visiting friends, and our survey of the country was necessarily very incomplete.

The trip was delightful, from the first mad rush to Euston Station to catch the Holyhead express until our last good-byes on Kingston Quay, where the land of the shamrock gave us a most tearful farewell by sending us off in the heartiest rainstorm of the season.

The passage over was quite uneventful, and, for a wonder, the sea was calm. Arriving in Kingstown early in the morning, we did not leave the boat much before nine o'clock, and in a very short time were with our friends, where a warm welcome and a good breakfast awaited us.

After a rest we sallied out to see "dear, dirty Dublin." Dear we certainly found it, but not at all dirty. Lord Iveagh (head of the Guinness family) has converted some of the worst slums in Dublin into model tenement houses for his workpeople, and one could not fail to be struck with the large number of rosy-cheeked, tidily-dressed children.

It being Sunday, we went first to the Cathedrals, attending short services at St. Patrick's and Christ Church. The former has been restored and the interior decorated at a tremendous cost by the benefactor before mentioned, and takes its place among the beautiful churches of the United Kingdom.

Sackville-street (at one time considered the finest in Europe) has suffered greatly during the recent rebellion, the General Post Office and many other buildings being destroyed. Even the Nelson monument proved a target for the rifles of some of the maddened men, but in spite of the havoc wrought Dublin is still a very interesting and pretty city. The Vice-Regal Lodge (the home of the Lord-Lieutenant) is situated in the upper part of Phoenix Park, and is a very unpretentious but solid-looking building. The park itself contains fifteen hundred acres of land, in which are zoological and botanical gardens, and much space is devoted to out-door games. The polo games on Saturday afternoons are particularly exciting. We must not forget the very fine monument erected there to the Duke of Wellington.

The next day was spent in visiting Trinity College, Dublin Castle Hospital, and Guinness' Brewery (all visitors to Dublin are taken to the last-mentioned place).

Trinity College has long been famed as one of the greatest seats of learning in the world. The building itself—hoary and grey—is of the simplest possible style of architecture, and on either side of the portals are statues of Goldsmith and Moore. There is a wonderful library which contains many famous volumes. Scholars come from all over the world to browse over its ancient tomes. Here is the famous "Book of Kells," dating from the sixth century, and is a marvellously illuminated copy of the Gospels with colours and delicate tracery as true and distinct as on the day when monks of old finished their labour of love on the vellum pages. One realized that only love and devotion combined with exquisite skill could produce such a work of art. In the museum, among many other curious and interesting things, may be seen the ancient harp which had been used at the crowning of the Irish kings, and was the subject of Moore's beautiful poem, "The Harp that once through Tara's halls." No one in whose veins flowed the blood of Irish ancestors could look on it unmoved.

The Castle Military Hospital proved most

interesting, this being the place where before the war all the State functions were held. Many of the rooms were gorgeously decorated. We found several of our wounded Canadians occupying the Throne-room, and very comfortable they looked amid its grandeur. The nursing seemed to be of the best, and judging by the skilful arrangement of dressings and splints the Irish surgeons are not a whit behind their French and English confreres.

The city has fine residential districts. Merrion-square is the "Harley-street" of Dublin, and if attainments may be judged by titles, the Irish doctors and surgeons must be very eminent men indeed. In spite of the cost of material, many buildings are seen in course of erection.

A journey by rail brought us to Trim, at one time the capital of Ireland, but now a quiet, unprogressive little town of perhaps fifteen hundred people. The remains of several interesting castles are here (some of them so old that their origin is wrapped in obscurity). One called King John's Castle is still in a fair state of preservation. Our host very quaintly remarked "He's not there now; hasn't been for some time." There is enough of the old Cathedral of Meath left to show that it must have been a very beautiful structure, combining in its walls many of the different styles of architecture with which we are familiar in the cathedrals of England, but time and vandalism (particularly the latter) have done their sorry work. There is an ancient tomb in the graveyard adjoining, along the top of which runs a groove, and it is asserted that whosoever places a pin therein may have his or her wish gratified. It is needless to say we added our contribution to the already countless numbers.

About eighteen miles from Trim and three from Drogheda the Battle of the Boyne was fought. The spot is suitably marked. On the way there Slain Castle, the seat of the Marquis of Conyngham, was passed. It is situated on the River Boyne, and has particularly fine casellated gateways on which are the carved armorial bearings of the family. It was in Trim we had our first experience in an Irish jaunting car. Arriving on a pitch-dark night with heavy rain we were escorted to the "car" and seated thereon. "How do you keep from falling out?" we asked fearfully. "Och, Miss, hold on with your feet, to be shure. 'Tis the safest vehicle you ever rode in, because if the horse goes to run away there is no box to get your feet trapped up in, and shure you're so near the ground you can jump off aisy." Small comfort this to us who felt that we were swaying in space at least ten feet from terra firma. Before the journey was over, however, we had learned how to hold on and laugh into the bargain.

Wicklow—the Garden of Ireland—had yet to be visited, so early one morning we started from Harcourt-street Station. The trip was interesting, and would have been charming along the sea coast had the sun been shining. One wondered how the old heather-covered Bray Head would look with the sunlight on it. Though the trip has been made several times, yet it has always on those occasions been wrapped in the most sombre of rain clouds. It must be fine sometimes, for the Marchioness of Aberdeen calls Bray the Torquay of Ireland. The scenery all the way is delightful—wooded hills through which flow swift-running rivers with here and there a waterfall, green hedges from whose leafy depths peep a few belated Foxgloves, and Woodbine blooms all make a picture not easily forgotten. Coming to Avoca, that spot was passed where Moore had the inspiration for his poem, "The Meeting of the Waters."

Being on the sea coast, the climate of Wicklow is mild; Fuchsias attain an enormous size, and the Yucca palm grows luxuriantly in the open air. Nowhere had we seen such tuberos-rooted Begonias.

To the casual eye, at least, Ireland is prosperous. Tenant farmers may now buy their lands at, to them, most advantageous

terms. The labourers' cottages are well-built and pretty with their flower plots and good vegetable gardens attached. Throughout the grass counties great herds of cattle, which look as if they could do their share in keeping up the meat supply both as to quality and quantity, were feeding.

Of the Irish people and their racial characteristics, it may be said in the words of their own poet, "and e'en their failings lean to virtue's side."

It is to be hoped that when the present vexed questions are settled, Ireland will have a long era of peace and prosperity, forgetting the troublous times that have passed.

PATTSEY.

## RETURNED PRISONER FROM GERMANY.

Among the patients who have come to the Hospital recently are several returned wounded prisoners from Germany, and the tales of their experiences are very interesting.

Reminiscences of severe trials or ludicrous incidents form the subject of stories which relieve the monotony of convalescence and help to pass the time in the wards or the recreation room. Nearly all these tales show that the best traditions of the medical fraternity are generally maintained, and the spirit which inspires the physician to combat the physical ills of man transcends the bitterness of war. Medical attendance in most cases is given ungrudgingly to friend and foe alike. But apart from this, many of the wounded have had bitter experiences indeed.

One of those who have recently returned is Private G. W. Green. He enlisted in the 90th Winnipeg Rifles in August, 1914, was trained at Valcartier and Salisbury Plain, and went to France in February, 1915. He was wounded at St. Julien on April 27th, 1915. His story is best told in his own words:

"I was crossing some open ground to get some water when a sniper got me. I lay in the open for two nights and a day, when the Germans picked me up. The German soldiers were rough, and even refused me water, but the Red Cross men gave me water and a little rum. I was carried back to a dressing station and was given good medical attendance.

"In company with others I was sent to a place about twenty miles back of the line where we were kept about three days. Here we met with considerable abuse. Threats to shoot us, taunts, and rough handling were common. When one asked for a drink, water was often thrown over him. We were then transferred to a hospital at an internment camp at Ohedruft, south of Gotha, in the Thuringen Forest. At points of transshipment on our way we were pulled about by curious people eager to see where we were wounded.

"At the hospital we again received good medical attendance, but our food was poor and scanty and meat was very scarce. The news of a British or French victory seemed to have a bad effect on those in charge, and many of the wounded were sent from the hospital to the internment camp while still in a very poor condition.

"In October, 1915, we heard that we were to be exchanged, and our spirits rose at once, but in a day or two we were grievously disappointed by the announcement that the exchange was cancelled. However, early in February the exchange was arranged, and we arrived in England on February 7th, 1916, and I was transferred to the Ontario Military Hospital in the middle of September."

Pte. G. W. Green reached the climax of the happy outcome of his adventures shortly after coming back, and married a winsome English lassie, Miss M. Sewell, who will shortly accompany him back to Canada.