

NOR'-WEST REMINISCENCES.

THE paper given below was read by Rev. F. C. Harrington, before the Athenæum Society on the evening of January 21st. The students enjoyed the paper and tendered the gentleman a vote of thanks. We have much pleasure in placing it before our readers.

One of the great ambitions of my boyhood days was to follow the sage advice of Horace Greely, and point for the setting sun. The imaginations of myself and one of my brothers, the immortal Hanc, had been inflamed by some of those dime novels, got up in the shape of Government Pamphlets, full of Fourth of July panegyrics on the great and glorious Nor'-West, with its boundless flower-spangled prairies, its astounding fertility, its precocious cities, its majestic rivers, its park-like poplar groves gemming the long-rolling undulations of the prairie, its countless lakes, swarming with fish of all kinds waiting impatiently to be caught, its herds of buffalo shaking the solid earth with their wild gallop, its elk and antelope, its jack-rabbits, warranted to distance a cyclone or wind a blizzard, and multitudes of other strange and beautiful phenomena too numerous to mention. And many a plan did we concoct by which we might reach that Land of Beulah, that new Arcadia, that modern Utopia, that happy hunting ground of the gaudily bedizened red man, and having gathered up the gold that lay in the furrows of the prairie, and slaughtered countless bison and "grizzlies" while so engaged, might then return covered with glory, if not with gore, to our native land. But the fates were against us and we did not go. However, the idea of going lingered and was strengthened by new revelations, given in new pamphlets, more exceeding wondrous in their ingenious one-sidedness. In ways that are vain and tricks that are strange these pamphleteers are peculiar. And at last the long-looked-for time came, when myself and another brother (the immortal Hanc who had gained wisdom in the classic halls of Acadia and lost his old-time enthusiasm,) started for this enchanting El Dorado, this Paradise of Squatters, armed with guns, revolvers and bowie-knives, scissors, needles and Perry Davis' Pain Killer and all the other paraphernalia necessary to a fierce frontier life. Boarding a train we were soon rattling on in a gay and festive manner mid the Arctic May scenery of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

If the old French pirate who discovered Bay Chaleur, had found it on that 3rd of May when we gazed upon the loads of hay crossing its broad surface on the ice and had waded thro' three feet of snow on that bitter cold May day, he would have hesitated before giving the Bay such a name. On we thundered thro' the cedar swamps and rocky hills of New

Brunswick, past the long narrow fenced farms of Quebec, the landscape fairly alive with multitudinous writhing, cavorting, snake-like fences; on thro' the darkness, leaping and thundering the train rushes, an iron cyclops, its one eye gleaming balefully, its iron frame trembling with latent energy.

On to Ottawa our civic capital, where for several months in the year, from all parts of our glorious Dominion, gather our Canadian magi to air their wisdom and elocution. Here we remained a few days waiting for the flood then blocking all travel to the N. W. to subside. As the House was in session we gained entrance thereto, and gazed with awe and veneration on the dome-like foreheads, pensive features and nodding heads of the drowsy mob below, soothed by the somniferous monotone, the words of which we could not catch of one or more of our country's fiery orators. Then sadder and wiser we went away. After leaving Ottawa we are delayed a night in Chicago, a day in beautiful St. Paul, and remain over a day in Fargo to see a friend, and then on to Winnipeg. After leaving Fargo we pass thro' a prairie country, level and treeless and monotonous. At last we cross the line between St. Vincent and Emerson and are in the Land of Prairie. Rapturously we gaze out of the car windows at this magnificent country. As far as the eye could see nothing but a huge swamp, out of which rose stunted underbrush and small poplar clumps, while flocks of wild ducks, geese and swans swam placidly over the prairie. It was an affecting sight! Bye and bye we reach Winnipeg the fair prairie city whose praise was in everybody's mouth and whose potatoes were two dollars a bushel. The flood had subsided but the mud still held on. And there is no discount on Winnipeg mud. It is the dirtiest, greasiest, slipperiest, stickiest, most atrocious mud on the face of the globe. Now Main street in Winnipeg is well paved, then it was a quag-mire. And such a scene as there was about Winnipeg station is not often seen. *Baggage!* literally heaps upon heaps, heaps upon heaps, inside and outside, piled up in the most inextricable masses conceivable. *People!* why it seemed as if all men had made up their minds at the same time that they would get to Winnipeg or die. Main street crowds rivalled those of Clark street or Madison street in Chicago. And mostly all were men, young men, coming to make a fortune in this veritable Land of Promise. After remaining in Winnipeg a few days to get our luggage disinterred, we go on further west to Brandon, 145 miles. Here we spend the 24th of May and we do not hanker after such another Queen's birth-day as that was. Brandon is now a city of wood, stone and brick, with good roads and sidewalks. *then* it was a scattered collection of tents, and had enough mud to suit a Winnipegger. Snowstorm on the Queen's Birth-day made things miserable enough. Living in a breezy, fireless tent,