

Among Teachers in the West.

By G. U. HAY.

It will be of interest to the readers of the REVIEW to give some account of educational people and conditions in British Columbia, as they were observed at Revelstoke during the Easter vacation teachers' institute, and in a somewhat hurried visit to the principal towns and cities of the province at a later period. Revelstoke is a prettily situated town of nearly 3,000 inhabitants on the Columbia river, which expands just below the town into the Arrow Lakes leading to the beautiful Kootenay country farther south. It is on a plateau shut in by snow-capped mountains, which, like nearly all the Selkirk range, are wooded well up to the summit.

I had travelled from the Atlantic seaboard nearly 3,000 miles with few signs of the awakening of spring, but in and around Revelstoke (April 25th) the birds were in full song, with the foliage and grass of a many tinted green, so grateful to the eye after a long winter, and the early flowers—violets, blue and yellow—spring-beauty and others known in our eastern flora, with some peculiar to the west—bursting into bloom. I had heard that the forests of British Columbia were silent, that the song of birds was scarcely ever heard, but I did not find it so. Along the bare defiles of the Rockies it was perhaps true, but everywhere else many songsters enlivened the woods, including the meadow lark, whose clear, joyous notes were heard on prairie and mountain.

The provincial institute is held alternately on the coast, or in the interior. This year there were very few from the coast, except the inspectors and the normal school faculty, and one had a good opportunity of seeing the teachers of the country and of the cities and towns in the interior. They were a bright and capable looking lot of men and women, having a keen interest in everything pertaining to their work, enthusiastic, and apparently eager to advance themselves and their schools. The papers and addresses were scholarly and marked by a practical view of all questions discussed. The debates were conducted in a courteous and moderate tone, some of the speakers showing considerable fluency and readiness.

A large number of the teachers of British Columbia, especially those occupying leading positions, are from Eastern Canada. One meets frequently the graduates of McGill, Toronto, Dalhousie, Acadia, University of New Brunswick and Mount Allison.

The farther west one goes, the more does he meet Maritime Province men and women, not only as teachers, but in every profession and occupation, as if the overmastering desire was to reach the sea and hear again the roar of breakers. Few who have gone to the middle west or far west have the desire to return to the east for a permanent abode. When they reach the limit of the West, where the East begins, they are content to settle down in those fair cities of Vancouver, Victoria, New Westminster, amid the Kootenay lakes, in the Okanagan Valley, or to choose a home in one of the thousand picturesque valleys of British Columbia, where almost perpetual summer reigns, and where no extremes of heat and cold are felt. The temperature very seldom rises above 80° on the sea coast of British Columbia, nor falls much below the freezing point in winter—if such a season can be said to exist there.

Mr. David Wilson, the president of the provincial institute this year, is senior inspector of schools for the province. He is a native of Richibucto, N. B., and a graduate of the University of New Brunswick. He has been in British Columbia for twenty years, and is regarded as a very successful administrator. He is familiar with every portion of the province, and has accumulated a fund of information and anecdote.

In his annual address to the institute, President Wilson, in answering some statements made by a clergyman who had denounced the schools as "pagan," made an able defence of the excellent moral influence of the schools of British Columbia, and paid a warm tribute to the high character of the teachers, and their efforts to train their pupils to become honest and truthful men and women.

The other inspectors of schools in British Columbia are Mr. C. A. Stewart, of Vancouver, and Mr. J. S. Gordon, of Vernon. Both are natives of Prince Edward Island, and both have grateful recollections of the "Gem of the Gulf," of the veteran and honored teacher, Dr. Anderson, and the old Prince of Wales College, whose well-equipped scholars are found occupying honorable positions in every part of the continent, especially the Far West of Canada. Mr. Stewart and Mr. Gordon have won their way steadily to the front, and have been prominent in the educational development of British Columbia.

Among those who took a leading part in the discussions at the institute was Principal William Burns, of the provincial normal school. He is