

# PEOPLE AND PLACES

**P**EACE RIVER occupies the imaginations of westerners these days. The double lure of the Peace is gold—the gold of grain and the gold of the mint. Almost every second man anywhere in Canada nowadays knows that the Peace River Valley—so-called—is able to grow grain hundreds of miles north of Edmonton. A priest now on his way to Rome tells of an abundant harvest in that country this year. Flour is being ground at Vermilion. This of course is old information. But it is the basis of much else; the dribbling in last year of hundreds of prospectors eager to stake claims ahead of the railway; those who in Pouce Coupe and the Grande Prairie are shacking and cropping and waiting for the road and the market and the settlement. The last west they call it; and thrifty United States land-buyers already write to know where in that valley land may be bought. To quote Prof. Macoun, who went up there thirty years ago, speaking of the country between Dunvegan and Fort St. John, a distance of 120 miles: "It would be folly to attempt to depict the appearance of the country, as it was so utterly beyond what I ever saw before that I dare hardly make use of truthful words to describe it. Mr. Selwyn, who made an excursion ten miles to the northwest, reports a very luxuriant vegetation where he was—much greater than he ever saw at Edmonton or anywhere in the Saskatchewan country." Four causes for the exceptional productivity of the region are: Natural fertility of the soil; decreased elevation of the country, for the whole surface of the continent east of the Rockies has a slope to the north from the plateaus of Dakota and Montana; long hours of sunshine; ample rainfall.

But the pure gold is the newest sensation and the most powerful lodestone to the romantic. Those there are who say that the Peace River gold is as famous as that of the Klondike. Both east and west of the Rockies prospectors are outfitting. Last year a well-known Edmontonian went in and located mines. He is confirmed on the gold find; enthusiastic; already has a mining and milling plant in view—and will soon be a miner in the Peace. Yes, the lure of the Peace is big and it is old; a generation now since that marvellously beautiful valley began to attract the gold-seeker. It was Hon. Edward Dewdney, late Lieutenant-Governor of the Territories, who first revealed Peace River placer gold to the West. Years and years Edmonton has been telling of flour gold in the Smoky and other rivers tributary to the Peace; and somewhere at the headwaters is the quartz. And from Cariboo a thousand men trekked to the Peace years ago when Dewdney, then a miner, blazed the trail. Was excitement then—steamers, portages and packs; even a steamer was portaged to St. Stewart's Lake. Perhaps the furore of those years will not be repeated. But there is a Peace River movement of a double character that promises to reanimate a lot of people who had begun to think that the big rushes for new things were all over in that part of the world. Already a legal party under direction from the Attorney-General's department at Edmonton has gone north to open new courts in the land where up to the present all the justice has been dispensed by the Northwest Mounted Police.

Already the settler has a grievance. Mr. Alexander Mackenzie—whose name is nothing if not Canadian—who has been forty years in that north-land, gives his views to a prospector who has just returned from the Peace. He alludes to the railway activity regarding the Peace; to the settlers already there in advance of the railway, but unable to market their produce. What they need, he says, is water communication with points north. He recommends a ferry across the Peace at Dunvegan to give the settlement of the Grand Prairie an outlet. He complains that prices charged for goods by fur-trading corporations are away out of proportion to prices paid settlers by said corporations for such products as they have for sale. Monopoly is already established—no new thing in that country so long used to the Hudson's Bay Company; but white settlers are more ambitious than Indians and have better economic ideas. Mr. Mackenzie eloquently advises the government: "Don't give away the people's heritage to corporations, syndicates, or individuals. Keep it for the crown and all the people. Don't grant any more fishing franchises or special privileges to individuals or corporate bodies. If necessary to preserve the fish and game, enact close seasons and when open give all the same equal privileges. Cancel whenever you can legally do so all special franchises and privileges and issue no more."

Which is very good advice that will probably not be taken.

**S**T. BONIFACE—still unearthing historical curiosities; this time a find of mediaeval medals under the site of a demolished bridge in that suburb of Winnipeg. The medals were old enough to have been placed there hundreds of years before even the Hudson's Bay Company saw Fort Garry; as for instance these: A bronze medal with an excellently cast image of Philip III, king of France from 1270 to 1285, bearing the inscription "Philip III, dit le dari roi de France." Another with the inscription "Charlemagne roi de France." A couple of large zinc plaques considerably worn by age, one bearing a profile with the words "Siege of the Bastille," the other entitled "Arrival of the King in Paris, 1789." Another bronze medal in an excellent state of preservation bore the words: "L. I. Bourbon, Prince de Conde ancien maitre de l'armes Francaise, 1817." Other medals had been struck in commemoration of British events. One bore profiles of the present King and Queen, giving the dates of their births and marriage. Another was inscribed: "D. I. Eaton, three times acquitted of sedition, 1795."

Old-timer who is able to ravel the mystery is Police Chief Ligori Gagne, who asserts that the medals all belonged to a former member of the Manitoba Legislature, E. P. Leacock by name, who lived ten years in St. Boniface, and according to rumour was robbed by a half-breed named Joe Sioux away back in 1893, of silverware including the medals, which he seems to have hidden under the bridge when he discovered to his sorrow and contempt that they were not coins of the realm.

**E**MBALMERS in session at Toronto recently were assured by Mayor Oliver that the population of that city would soon be half a million. Whether he meant that the population would largely consist of dead men does not appear; but the optimism of the chief magistrate appealed very strongly to the people who look after dead men. Furthermore, the mayor gave the embalmers the freedom of the city.

**D**EGREES in music may now be granted at McGill University. One of the greatest universities in America, McGill has been a long while discovering that music is one of the democratic arts. Toronto University has granted degrees in music these many years. The McGill Conservatorium of Music already contains a large staff, to which have been added two new members this year, including Prof. Davies, in charge of singing, and Signor Darbieri, who takes charge of the violin department.

**R**ESUMPTION of activity in steel plants gives excuse to a writer in the Sydney *Record* thus to introduce an economic article on the working of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company's works in Sydney, Nova Scotia:

"Strings of cars, piles of red, white and black stones, avenues of long, low buildings, a multitude of smoke-begrimed chimneys, all sorts and conditions of wheels, some aloft, some below, an inordinate number of flaming pots, kettles, cauldrons, stoves, ovens, and furnaces, filled with boiling fluid of some sort, poked, stoked or stirred by gangs of commonplace-looking wizards and devils in grimy overalls. Rows of big, tall, square blocks, or pillars of glowing metal that are gradually tortured or squeezed in monster moulds, to be turned into rails or wires. Tremendously fascinating, yet so dangerous. Such is the impression left with possibly ninety-eight per cent. of the visitors to the plant of the Dominion Iron & Steel Company in Sydney."

**A**LL people interested in the economic welfare of the Maritime Provinces—and that should mean all Canadians—will be able to learn much from the thoughtful letters of Mr. Walter H. Trueman, written from Winnipeg to the St. John *Globe*. Mr. Trueman is a native of St. John. He speaks with the candour and earnestness of a patriotic citizen who sees that something must be energetically done to keep the Maritimes in the race with the westward provinces. He says:

"Unless St. John and New Brunswick develop more opportunities for their young men in the industrial and commercial classes than at present exist, Montreal, Toronto and this western country are going to attract them more powerfully than did the

New England States appeal to our young people of a generation ago. It will be some sentimental satisfaction that they remain in Canada. That is but a small satisfaction to those who remain at home, who feel themselves to be the poorer because of the drain, and who want to be living in a community progressive enough to retain its population."

In a practical way Mr. Trueman goes on to give an example of what St. John is able to do by way of building up industries liable to languish unless something be done quickly. He makes an example of furniture manufacturing—but neglects to point out that in the making of furniture Ontario has many more factories than are to be found in London, which he mentions. He does not mention that Toronto, Berlin, Stratford, Preston, Waterloo, and a dozen smaller places have large furniture factories which at present do a large business outside of Ontario. However, his arguments are economically just. He says:

"I suppose before Grand Rapids, Michigan, became the great furniture making centre of the United States, it had rivals without number, and that before it commenced to be the seat for that great industry there were powerful concerns in other localities which had possession of the trade. I am not familiar with the conditions of this business in Canada, beyond knowing that there is a large furniture factory at London, Ontario. I have no doubt that there are other factories elsewhere. I do not know that there is one in the Maritime Provinces. These provinces in themselves are considerable of a market. Their combined population is well up to one-half of that of Ontario. If supported by the local market of Ontario so many industries in that province can thrive it ought to be possible for the lower provinces to sustain industries that seem to be particularly native to our conditions. In the west they would have a field in which the manufacturer of Ontario has no favours, except a small advantage in freight rates. Impressed by the example of Grand Rapids, I would seek to make St. John the furniture emporium of the Dominion. I am not aware that the furniture factories of Ontario have a nearness not possessed by us to special kinds or grades of lumber. In fancy woods they cannot be any better off than we are, while in ordinary classes of hard woods the conditions ought to favour St. John."

**H**ENRY HANS RASMUSSEN is perhaps the most famous Norwegian in Canada. He lives in Winnipeg and has been in the Canadian West for nearly fifty years. Mr. Rasmussen came out in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1852, one of a party of sixty Norwegians who were recruited that year into the service of the great company, who were unable to keep up their supply of Orkney-men. Years before he became a voyageur and general knock-abouter in the fur trade, Rasmussen was a sailor on the high seas; an adventurous mariner, first a cabin boy, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean; during which time he saw Russia and China and showed such hardihood and love of the sea and such agility aloft on the yard-arms that the Hudson's Bay Company sought to secure him for the marine end of their service. However, young Rasmussen elected to remain in York Factory; there he changed his allegiance from salt water to the great inland rivers and the sailing vessel for the York boat. After serving his five years contract at York Factory Rasmussen went to Fort Garry; afterwards serving under Factor Pruden, from whom he got into the freight boat business. In his various trips up the Albany and Winnipeg rivers he became familiar with the great trade route that is now being revived on both land and water in the proposed railway to Hudson's Bay. He was one of the expedition sent to meet General Wolseley in 1870, and help him down the dangerous rapids of the Winnipeg River. He says: "We arrived at Rat Portage before the expedition, and our boats were all lying crowded together at the post, while Mr. Sinclair and the Rev. Mr. Gardiner, who accompanied us, were visiting the master; when suddenly our men—mostly Swampies—began to whoop and fire off their guns in joy at seeing the boats of the 60th Rifles close at hand. The soldiers, mistaking the joyful whoops and friendly salute for a hostile demonstration, levelled their guns and were about to fire when I called to our steersmen to hoist the Union Jack. The moment the soldiers saw that they lowered their rifles and gave us a hearty British cheer. From Rat Portage Mr. Sinclair, with four boats, lightened those of the 60th and went on with them down the Winnipeg River, while the other four boats went on to Fort Frances to meet the Canadian volunteers."