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Leaves from my Note Book

In Walking through the Canongate, Edinburgh, I noticed a quaint-looking old bookstore and entered. After examining the books for a time I asked the proprietor if he could direct me to John Knox's house. "You are in it now," was the reply. Sure enough, this was the very place occupied as a dwelling by Scotland's great preacher. The two upper stories have been filled with interesting Knox relics, which are carefully preserved. Here may be seen his private study, the chair in which he sat, the window from which he preached to the people on the streets, and a number of pictures of historic value. What a magnificent old hero John Knox was! Possibly he was a little rough with Queen Mary, but he was thoroughly sincere, and much can be forgiven a man when he is conscientious and dead in earnest. When some one suggested that he might be afraid to meet Queen Mary personally, he said: "Why should the pleasing face of a gentle woman affray me? I have looked on the faces of many angry men and have not been afraid above measure." He was certainly a courageous man with strong convictions, and Scotland does well to keep green his memory.

ALMOST everywhere one goes in England and Scotland he will find good temperance hotels, with rates rather less than the licensed hostleries. They are not elegant, but usually very comfortable, with a "homely" (in the English sense) atmosphere. The beds are good, and the meals, while not elaborate, are well cooked, and nicely served. Why can we not have such hotels in Canada? If Englishmen can make them pay, we ought to be able to do it just as successfully. The right sort of temperance hotel would be undoubtedly well patronized.

The saddest thing one sees in walking through the streets of the big cities of Great Britain, particularly London, Liverpool, Glasgow and Edinburgh, is the great number of squalid, discouraged-looking, wretched women. On their faces we can see the effect of poverty, bad surroundings, dirt and hereditary influence, but on many of these countenances the words that are read most emphatically are, "whiskey," "gin," "beer." The besotted condition is transmitted from mother to child, and the miserable, wizened appearance of these rum-cursed children is most pitiable. What can be worse than a wretched-looking woman coming out of a public-house hugging a bottle of gin under a faded, thread-bare shawl with one hand, and dragging a thin-faced, starved child with the other? There is an agitation at present to prevent children from being served with liquor or from entering the bar-room. This is a step in the right direction, but the prohibition might well be enlarged to include women.

It is somewhat amusing to hear people in England talk of having taken a very long and tiresome journey, when they have travelled a couple of hundred miles. As a matter of fact this is somewhat of a jaunt, when it is remembered that it would be possible to go from one end of England to the other between daylight and dark of one day. The country is comparatively small, but it is great in historic interest. And it is beautiful, too; for though it has no river like the St. Lawrence, no mountains like our Rockies, no waterfall like Niagara, no gorge like the Grand Canyon; still for quiet picturesque beauty of hill and dale and charming landscape there is probably nothing like old England in all the world. Its climate is perhaps a little damp, but this gives it the green fields and hedges which are so much admired. By all means visit England if at all possible.

To stand for two hours on the street waiting for a procession to pass is not a very pleasant experience, but when that procession happens to include the King and Queen of England, the Prince and Princess of Wales, the King and Queen of Denmark, besides other notables, one is fairly well repaid for the fatigue. The occasion was the arrival of the Danish sovereign on a visit to London. His Majesty Edward VII. plays the part of king very well indeed, and is extremely popular with the people generally. He is both dignified and genial, which is a rare combination. As for the Queen, it is simply wonderful how young and pretty she looks in spite of her years. If a stranger desired to identify the Queen in a company of middle-aged ladies, he would be quite safe in picking out the youngest-looking and the handsomest of the lot. She is, like the King, esteemed for her good qualities of mind and heart.

In travelling one sees some strange signs. In Liverpool there is a saloon called "The legs of a man." This struck me as very appropriate, as there is nothing that tangles a man's legs so effectually as the stuff that is sold in such places. On the Strand, in London, I noticed a street pedlar with the sign "Liar's License," exposed in front of his cart. This was the climax of appropriateness, for these fellows are adepts at lying. If all the liars in Europe who are engaged in selling goods of various kinds should be required to take out a license it would keep an army of clerks busy to write out the documents.

While in England I had the opportunity of addressing a rally of the Wesley Guild, the Young People's Society of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, in the old city of Plymouth. The meeting was remarkable for the fine attendance of young men, who were probably in the majority. Great interest was manifested in our Epworth League in Canada and the United States, and I was asked to tell them about our work. The Guild is prospering, and making very good progress.