

## OTTAWA — THE MECCA OF THE CIVIL SERVICE.

From an article by AUGUSTUS BRINDLE in  
*The Canadian Courier.*

A young man now in Canadian public life was one day paddling down the Ottawa River towards the Houses of Parliament. Miles up the river he and his companions had been getting glimpses of that noble pile of buildings which dominates the Ottawa quite as the British Parliament does the Thames — with infinitely greater beauty of landscape. By nature something of a prose poet with the instincts of a statesman, the young man suddenly stopped paddling as round a bend he caught sight of the towers and domes of Parliament Hill. Being impulsive and patriotic he said to his companions:

"Boys, it's beautiful! Those buildings were the expression of a creative epoch and a poetic impulse in the people of Canada."

So far as the scene is concerned he spoke with authority. No scene in Canada better challenges admiration than the part of the great pine-land valley marked by the Ottawa in the foreground and backgrounded by the dim Laurentian hills.

It was winter when I first saw the Capital, and there is no winter landscape with a greater charm, whether on the Saskatchewan, the Bow or the St. Lawrence. The light is that of diamonds. The air has a nip that stirs the blood. At its best it is the climate of northern Alberta—minus the chinooks. At its worst it seldom becomes slushy like normal Toronto. It is the north; and you know it. You would not be surprised to see a team of dogs go racing down the street with a toboggan and a red-sashed "musher" behind. You may observe characters almost as unusual and quite as borean; for it is the city of the coonskin coat and the lumberjack. Here come river-drivers for a touch of metropolitan life, even as their ancestors used to in the days when Bytown was a village in the woods. Pack-trailers and prospectors and outlanders many; fur-coated women and red sleighs robed with musk-ox; jumpers loaded with cordwood and sleighloads of hay that come blundering down the main street and down Wellington street in front of the Parliament Buildings; it is all snap and go. Ottawa is no place for a loafer. It is one of the smartest cities in America; also one of the crudest. Once it was a huge lumberyard and a rendezvous of river-men. Most of the lumberyard has been relegated to Hull, across the river, leaving only the remnants in the Capital, which yearns now to have done with the wooden age and to substitute the age of electricity.

But that is a mere incident. Nature may have intended Ottawa for a borean Pittsburg, as some hope it will become, because they think that at present Parliament overtops the city. Nature primarily intended

Ottawa to be a place of beauty, and in spite of man she has succeeded very well in doing it. Those pioneers who took a hand in the design did a good deal, however, to spoil the picture. The most obvious feature is that the main street is either too close to the Parliament or else that the Parliament grounds should have been extended clear down to Sparks street, leaving one side of the street open of walls for half a mile; so that the visitor might walk up street among the people and at the same time see what gives the real scenic and architectural character to the place.

Otherwise the parliamentary environs are perfect. Seen from the city street the towers are imposing without being possessed of absolute grandeur. By night they are much more admirable; thanks to the long sweeping arcs of mellow lights that curve in tiers from the hill down to the street and give a mellow aspect to the buildings which is lacking in the hard light of day.

But the river, not the town, is the real dooryard of Parliament. The building seen from the river or the river scanned from the hill is equally fascinating. Here is the valley at your feet; sheer down a cope-wood bank spangled with birches and hardwoods and little pines to the frozen river. Here the dome of the library bulks up crisp and jangling with keen light seen for many a mile up and down the Ottawa; behind that again the centre tower rising higher with its flap of flag when the House sits and its coronal of electric lights that go out when the House adjourns and are visible over the entire city.

Listen to the Chaudiere; a mile or so below the hill; the music of the water that made the Indians think poetry. It's all there as it was centuries ago; the same Chaudiere that now has been computed into horsepower and will some day be harnessed and hitched to drive the wheels of what some call the coming Pittsburg of the north. Perhaps so. But the croon of the Chaudiere is at present the finest music in Ottawa. It is the tunless melody of a beautiful land. Never mind the steam-clouds and the saw-screeches of Hull. They are but an episode. Chaudiere is the voice — of the real splendid Ottawa which to the unbiased mind is the meeting-place of the tribes, of the chiefs of the white men, as once it was the gathering place of the tribes that pitched wigwams. And you reflect that the Queen of England was well advised when she placed her finger on the map and said, "Let this be the Capital of Canada." No painter could have chosen it better.

Ottawa as Parliament Hill is frozen music, and poetry, and painting, and whatsoever else in art you have a mind to call it; and when Sir Wilfrid Laurier called it the future "Washington du Nord" he was not merely sentimentalising as was the young man in the canoe, for he has been in the real