

BOOK REVIEWS

OCEAN TO OCEAN.*

"TRAVEL a thousand miles up a great river ; more than another thousand along great lakes and a succession of smaller lakes ; a thousand miles across rolling prairies ; and another thousand through woods and over three great ranges of mountains, and you have travelled from Ocean to Ocean through Canada." Such is the journey described in "Ocean to Ocean." The author in a modest preface apologizes for literary mistakes, which he begs us to ascribe to the circumstances under which the Diary was written, and to the fact that, living a thousand miles away from the printer, he had no sufficient opportunities of correcting the proofs. We cannot say that this apology is needless. But the general freshness and vividness of the Diary, its unflagging interest, and the genuine aroma of wild and picturesque travel by which it is pervaded, more than make up for any literary defects.

Prince Arthur's Landing is the point from which the Expedition begins. The first stretch is to Fort Garry. One of the incidents of this part of the journey is shooting the rapids in the Maligne River :

"To shoot rapids in a canoe is a pleasure that comparatively few Englishmen have ever enjoyed, and no picture can give an idea of what it is. There is a fascination in the motion, as of poetry or music, which must be experienced to be understood ; the excitement is greater than when on board a steamer, because you are so much nearer the seething water, and the canoe seems such a fragile thing to contend with the mad forces, into the very thick of which it has to be steered. Where the stream begins to descend, the water is an inclined plane, smooth as a billiard table ; beyond, it breaks into curling, gleaming rolls, which end off in white, boiling caldrons, where the water has broken on the rocks beneath. On the brink of the inclined plane the canoe seems to pause for an instant. The captain is at the bow, — a broader, stronger paddle than usual in his hand—his eye kindling with enthusiasm, and every nerve and fibre in his body at its utmost tension. The steersman is at his post, and every man is ready. They know that a false stroke, or too weak a turn of the captain's wrist at the critical moment,

means death. A push with the paddles, and, straight and swift as an arrow, the canoe shoots right down into the mad vortex ; now into a cross current that would twist her broadside round but that every man fights against it ; then she steers right for a rock, to which she is being resistlessly sucked, and on which it seems as if she would be dashed to pieces ; but a rapid turn of the captain's paddle at the right moment, and she rushes past the black mass, riding gallantly as a racehorse. The waves boil up at the side, threatening to engulf her, but except a dash of spray or the cap of a wave, nothing gets in ; and, as she speeds into the calm reach beyond, all draw long breaths and hope that another rapid is near."

For the most part the journey was real poetry, but the poetry was varied by rougher experiences such as the following, which marked the entrance of the party into Manitoba :

"The next stage was to Oak Point, thirty-three miles distant. The first half was over an abominable road, and, as we had to take on the same horses, they lagged sadly. The sun had set before we arrived at Broken Head Creek, only half-way to Oak Point. Somewhere hereabouts is the eastern boundary of Manitoba, and we are not likely to forget soon the rough greeting the new Province gave us. Clouds gathered, and, as the jaded horses toiled heavily on, the rain poured down furiously and made the roads worse. It was so dark that the teamsters could not see the horses ; and, as it unfortunately happened that neither of them had been over this part of the road before, they had to give the horses free rein to go where they pleased, and—as they were dead beat—at the rate they pleased. The black flies worried us to madness, and we were all heavy with sleep. The hours dragged miserably on, and the night seemed endless ; but, at length emerging from the wooded country into the prairie, we saw the light of the station two miles ahead. Arriving there wearied and soaked through, we came to what appeared to be the only building—a half-finished store of the Hudson Bay Company ;—entering the open door, barricaded with paint pots, blocks of wood, tools, etc., we climbed up a shaky ladder to the second story, threw ourselves down on the floor, and slept heavily beside a crowd of teamsters whom no amount of kicking could awake. That night-drive to Oak Point we 'made a note of.'"

The next morning, however, finds the sufferers eating a good breakfast of mutton-chops and tea, and then starting in their waggons to Fort Garry across a prairie which was a perfect garden of nature. "Tall, bright yellow French marigolds, scattered in clumps over the vast expanse, gave a golden hue to the scene ; and red, pink and white roses, tansy, asters, bluebells, golden rods, and an immense variety

* OCEAN TO OCEAN ; Sandford Fleming's Expedition through Canada in 1872. Being a Diary kept during a Journey from the Atlantic to the Pacific, with the Expedition of the Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific and Intercolonial Railways. By the Rev. George M. Grant, of Halifax, N. S., Secretary to the Expedition. Toronto : James Campbell & Son.