

The Baby College of Canadian Methodism

ALBERTA COLLEGE, the youngest of the educational institutions of the Methodist church is situated in Edmonton, on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan. Just across the beautiful valley of the rushing river is the thriving town of Strathcona. The population of these two places is at least 8,000 people. Edmonton with its vigorous sister to the south has one of the most beautiful locations in all the west, and is the centre of an extremely fertile district of farming country. In the near future three great railroad systems will touch the town, and from it there will radiate lines in all directions to meet the increasing demands of the trade of that extensive country. In addition to being the centre of a splendid agricultural country, Edmonton has all around it an almost inexhaustible supply of coal. Great seams of coal crop out of the high banks of the river for many miles of its course. The Saskatchewan which is navigable for 800 miles, has cut its way right through these vast coal deposits. Not only has the great Creator placed with generous hands a fuel supply necessary for many generations, but He has opened up through the supply a noble waterway, along which the coal with other products can be transported to the very door of the consumer in Assinibois, Saskatchewan and Eastern Alberta. In view of these important facts, Edmonton must in the very nature of things be a large manufacturing and distributing centre. Even at present with its limited railroad facilities she is one of the largest trade centres of the West.

At such a strategic point the Methodists of Edmonton and the surrounding country with many sympathetic helpers from other denominations, determined to establish an educational institution. Their purpose in doing so was to place in that new country an agency which would represent the finest culture, and aim to produce the noblest type of manhood and womanhood. There in July, 1903, a provisional Board was organized on the very spot where the Rev. Geo. McDougall, of immortal memory, had seen while the land was yet a wilderness, a stately group of buildings rising to educate the youth of that far West. Rev. J. H. Riddell, for many years professor in Wesley College, Winnipeg, was invited to become the principal. The Board must be congratulated on securing the services of Prof. Riddell, for there is, probably, not in all the West a more inspiring, efficient, and enthusiastic teacher and educator than the new principal.

In rooms rented for the purpose Mr. Riddell opened Alberta College on the 5th of October, 1903. In describing that opening afterwards the principal said, "As announced I opened Alberta College on the 5th of October, at 10 o'clock. All day I waited in that large lonely hall for students, and not one appeared. Somewhat discouraged I went home. The next day I returned to wait for students. About the middle of the forenoon one long, lank, mud-bespattered young fellow from 20 miles in the country entered. With all the dignity possible and with no small sense of relief I rose to receive him, and with due formality registered this the first student of Alberta College. I am pleased to say that God has so wonderfully blessed that humble beginning that the registration for the year in all departments is 73."

This is truly a remarkable showing for an institution which was organized as late as last July and had to contend with such peculiar difficulties during the past two months that it could not get its work before the people.

The need for just such a college will be evident to any one who for a moment considers this situation. At that time Edmonton was at least 1000 miles from the nearest similar institution. The travelling expenses, not to say anything of the long distance from home, for one wishing to go to such a college were \$80.00. In all that western country there were only three high schools. These could meet the needs of only a few of the young people of this country. They made no effort to supply residential facilities. There was consequently little in the Territories to awaken a desire for the culture which comes from Higher Education. Practically nothing which would inspire a longing for the power and visions springing from education ever touched the lives of the young people growing up in the scattered homes of the prairie. In meeting this deeply felt need, Alberta College is filling a well-defined niche in the intellectual life of the people.

The college was not long in operation before it became apparent that a residence was a necessity. Through the generosity of the Missionary Society a site right in the heart of the town was secured. On this a building costing \$16,000 for is in the course of erection. This will furnish class-rooms and residential work of this college, a boarding department and residential accommodation for 20 girls and 20 boys. The building is to be heated with steam, lighted throughout with electricity and fitted up with all conveniences. Each bedroom is 10 x 17 by 10 feet high and comfortable. The Board of the College is attempting to make these advantages possible to the students at such low rates that we are surprised how they can make it the pay. But their ambition and honest effort to place "all the blessings of an education combined with the security and helpfulness of a residence as near like a home as possible within the reach of all the young people" are most commendable.

During the first year of its history the College was supported entirely by fees from the students and subscriptions from Edmonton, Strathcona, Leduc, Lacombe and Red Deer. Such men as P. Secord, M.L.A., John A. McDougall, P. E. Butchart, W. T. Henry, Mayor Short, A. G. Harrison, C. W. Cross, Cushing Bros., T. M. Turnbull, H. C. Taylor, W. H. Parsons, R. L. Gaetz, Wm. Brumpton, G. A. Lovell, E. E. Michener, C. T. Daykin, C. W. Mathers, A. C. Rutherford, M.L.A., Drs. Wilson, Nicholls, Smith and Jameson, with many others, deserve the greatest credit for the energy they displayed in this new enterprise and for the generosity they have shown in supporting the institution. This is an indication of the value these men place on higher education. While they stand at the fountain head of the springs of activity the streams must surely be strong and noble. In financing the new building they are providing for all the money except \$5,000, which they are hoping to secure from the outside.

The outlook for the ensuing year is most encouraging. The prospectus of the courses of study is just such as will meet the needs of that new country. The work of the college is divided up into four departments. First, the academic, which offers a course specially designed for young people whose early education has been neglected owing to the distance of their homes from the centres. It includes such subjects as reading, writing, arithmetic, grammar, composition, history, spelling, and elements of book-keeping. Second, the arts department covers the work of Manitoba University up to and including the second year. The examination of the University in these years will be held in Edmonton in April and May of each year. The business department includes all the ordinary subjects of a commercial course, such as book-keeping, stenography, typewriting, and kindred subjects. Diplomas are awarded in this department. Fourth, music and elocution, which gives instruction under the best teachers in vocal and instrumental music. The college is to be congratulated on having secured as teachers in this department such persons as Mr. Percy Hook, late of the Toronto College of Music, and Miss Crawford, a name well-known in Woodstock, Ontario. These names are synonyms for energy, efficiency and enthusiasm. Miss Edith Bellamy, who holds a diploma from Moulton College, Toronto, is the teacher in elocution and physical culture. All these courses are open to young men and women irrespective of creed or nationality.

The young institution should be proud of the fact that one of its students has been selected as eligible for the Rhodes Scholarship, and will, in all probability, go to Oxford, England. In speaking of the college afterwards, this young man said, "If I succeed, I owe my success to Alberta College, and whether I win out or not, I shall always feel grateful for the splendid help received there."

Mr. C. E. Roca, B.A., Port Hope, Mrs. Roca, B.A., and Miss Bessie Nicholls, three excellent and experienced teachers from Ontario, were on the staff the first year. We learn that some additions are to be made to the staff for next year.

The new Alberta conference is assuming large responsibility for the financial support of this college during the next year. No small amount of this heartiness manifested is due to the earnest advocacy of Rev. G. W. Kerby, B.A., whose ministry