

## It is Common:

So ARE the stars and the arching skies,  
So are the smiles in the children's eyes;  
Common the life-giving breath of spring;  
So are the songs which the wild birds sing—  
Blessed be God, they are common.

Common the grass in its glowing green;  
So is the water's glistening sheen.  
Common the springs of love and mirth;  
So are the holiest gifts of earth.

Common the fragrance of rosy June;  
So is the generous harvest moon,  
So are the towering, mighty hills,  
So are the twittering, trickling rills.

Common the beautiful tints of the fall;  
So is the sun which is over all.  
Common the rain with its pattering feet;  
So is the bread which we daily eat—  
Blessed be God, it is common.

So is the sea in its wild unrest,  
Kissing forever the earth's brown breast;  
So is the voice of undying prayer,  
Evermore piercing the ambient air.

So unto all are the "promises" given,  
So unto all is the hope of heaven;  
Common the rest from the weary strife;  
So the life which is after life—  
Blessed be God, it is common.

## A WESTERN EXPERIENCE.

BY W. J. WITHROW.

ONE bright morning toward the end of April, 1886, the writer of this sketch left Toronto for the far West.

The scenery throughout northern Ontario is of a picturesque character, lit up here and there by a romantic lake or rapid stream. Once a glimpse was caught of the Ottawa, and later on Lake Nipissing was in view. A short glimpse of Lake Superior, as the train, on the down grade, shot across the head of a narrow inlet, was soon followed by a full view of the great inland sea from the overhanging precipice along its rocky shore. Leaving the enterprising town of Port Arthur, and its neighbouring rival, Fort William, with its solitary table mountain, one passes through a long stretch of scrubby low land to Winnipeg. The size and wealth of the Prairie City are a complete surprise to one from the East visiting Manitoba for the first time. Little is left of Fort Garry; but on the site of that old Hudson Bay trading post now stands the enterprising Company's store, the superior of which even Toronto cannot boast.

But we must hurry away from these haunts of the pale-face intruders to those of the dusky aborigines. As the train glided out from Winnipeg we had the first good view of the prairies, not boundless, but beautiful, for long belts of timber skirted the horizon.

At length the signs of wild western life began to appear. Highly painted Indians, wrapped in their gaudy blankets, and a few red-coated mounted police mingled with the crowd at every station. Occasionally the picturesque scout, in his buckskin shirt and leather trousers, was seen astride a bucking bronco, or leaning lazily against the station with his broad sombrero thrown back on his head, revealing generally a handsome sun-browned face.

Here is the prairie and these are its denizens.

"These are the gardens of the desert, these The unshorn fields, boundless and beautiful, For which the speech of England has no name,

The Prairies.

And well may one feel with Bryant when he says,

"I behold them for the first,  
And my heart swells, while the dilated sight

Takes in the encircling vastness. Lo! they lie

In airy undulations far away,  
As if the ocean, in his gentlest swell,  
Stood still, with all his billows fixed  
And motionless forever. Motionless!  
No! They are all unchained again. The clouds

Sweep over with their shadows, and beneath  
The surface rolls, and fluctuates to the eye;  
Dark hollows seem to glide along and chase  
the sunny ridges."

At Calgary the writer met the Rev. Leo. Gaetz, as had been appointed, and started on a journey about 90 miles north to the Red Deer Crossing. The clouds on the far horizon took strange fantastic forms, soon developing sharp and clear into the mighty mountain range, seeming scarcely eighteen miles away instead of eighty.

The Red Deer was reached on the fifth day. There ran the beautiful river over its gravel bed, 200 yards wide, its cool and crystal waters fresh from the melting snows on the mountain slopes. A few days of hard work on the part of the new settler, restored to its original usefulness the deserted "shack" or cabin of an old trapper who had hunted deer, lynx and beaver here four years before. A new sod roof and a cellar dug in the frozen ground, converted the ruin into a palace. A roaring fire in the small box stove sheds its warmth through the whole building—the one-roomed Bachelor's Hall, while the lord of the manor swings in his hammock. Here almost in solitude he lives for over six weeks. And who would not envy him, who is brought into such close intercourse with nature in all her primitive wildness. Can he not truly say that

"This is freedom! These pure skies  
Were never stained with village smoke.

And here the fair savannas know  
No barrier in the bloomy grass,  
Wherever breeze of heaven may blow,  
Or beam of heaven may glance, I pass."

When everything was made comfortable in the "shack," the young frontiersman started out to explore the country, and try his skill among the game. Two beautiful lakes, nestled in the bend of a wooded hill, were the haunts of innumerable wild-fowl, many of which soon fell victims to Nimrod's shafts. During the long summer evenings which were light up till ten o'clock, the young hermit would stroll half a mile up the river to the mouth of a little creek to fish,

generally returning laden with fish enough to feast himself and dog like kings. All night long his dreams were disturbed by the serenades of deep-mouthed coyotes, who made the place uncanny with their dismal howling. At first, I must confess, it was rather startling to hear these large but cowardly wolves prowling around the "shack," particularly as the door, unhung, merely rested against the frame, and there was no glass in the windows.

Early in June a companion arrived from Toronto, and another and more roomy cabin was selected nearer civilization. For miles before the door stretched a beautiful park-like country. There were flowers underfoot, and life and beauty everywhere. Every evening could be heard the bugle-call from the Fort, where a detachment of mounted police were stationed, and which was seen half a mile away, surrounded by an encampment of Indian tepees; while, on a clear day, the snow-capped peaks of the great mountain range, 150 miles away, appeared above the horizon.

At last the time arrived for the two Toronto boys to pull up stakes and strike for the mountains. Taking the railway train at Calgary, they hardly had time to exchange their frontier manners for civilized etiquette, before they found themselves at Banff, the Canadian National Park, landing at 3 a.m. The snow-capped peaks, piercing the clear sky on all sides, were flooded with soft moonlight. As the rising sun cast a rosy tinge upon the highest peaks, they climbed to the mountain's top. The summit was reached as the sun appeared.

What a scene of awful grandeur was presented to their view. It beggars all description. The contemplation of those mighty masses of up-heaved rock gives an idea of might and majesty which cannot otherwise be obtained. Cascade Mountain to the north, and Castle Mountain to the west, were the most perfect specimens of rock stratification they had ever seen. Below them lay the Yosemite of the north, with its hot sulphur springs, and wonderful caves on the slope of Sulphur Mountain, opposite. In the centre a little lake mirrored the sky, the mountains, and the dense foliage along its shores, in which were partly hidden snowy tents and picturesque cottages.

The day was spent in visiting the scenes of wonder and beauty in this rugged paradise, including a trip to the falls on the Bow River, a bath in the sulphur hot springs, and another in the cave, where, descending a rocky shaft by a long, slender ladder, they found themselves in a grotto, forty feet high and fifty feet across. A little lake lay at the bottom, leaving only a narrow landing on one side.

The warm water bubbling up through the rock from the heart of the earth, rendered bathing here delightful, winter or summer.

Taking the train again that night, they found themselves next morning at Hector, a few miles this side of the summit of the range. Here they set out to cross the Rockies on foot. After passing Lugen, they struck the down grade toward the Pacific, and were in British Columbia. All morning Mt. Stephen loomed up 6,480 feet above them on the left. Down the steep grade of 4½ in the 100 they coasted on a hand-car, rattling down the incline at a break-neck speed. A few miles further on the glacier on Mt. Ottertail came in view. After crossing the bridge over the stream, from which the mountain derives its name, they visited a galena crushing mill, and soon reached Ottertail station. Sunrise next morning found the writer labouring up the mountain side. All morning he struggled up the steep incline, over huge logs and through thick underbrush, which, covered with melting snow, quickly soaked him to the skin. By 10 o'clock he had passed the timber line, and found himself above a thick stratum of clouds, which filled the Kickinghorse Pass. In another hour the almost precipitous face of the solid rock itself was reached. Taking advantage of crevices and ledges, he scrambled up to the line of perpetual snow, and entered the clouds again. By making his way along the ridge, which sometimes narrowed almost to a wedge, at last he found himself at the very summit, over 6,000 feet above the track, and nearly 10,000 feet above the sea. But no sooner did his excessive exertions cease, than he began to feel the chilling effects of great elevation. The Chinook wind, so friendly on the plain, was not so on the mountain; but it was to do him one more good turn before he left. The clouds that encircled the mountain top suddenly passed, and could be seen hurrying to leeward, spreading away on all sides until they lost themselves. In the distance rose the snowy peaks of the mighty range, like hoary headed Titans in council assembled.

But nature could not endure the intense cold long, so our amateur mountaineer was obliged to clamber down again on the opposite side to that by which he had ascended. Dropping from a ledge upon a loose rock, he dislodged a huge boulder, weighing tons, which went crashing down the mountain side for a mile and a half, crushing everything before it. Again entering the clouds, he lost the bearing of the glacier, of which he was in search. A six mile tramp, or rather, climb, brought him to the railway, barely in time to catch the train for Calgary.

A few days later he left Winnipeg for Minneapolis and St. Paul. After spending two days among the flour mills, the fine buildings, and the exhibitions of those cities and Chicago, he re-entered Canada, and landed in Toronto five months after he had left it for his summer's adventures.