

Manitoba Teachers in Britain

A Story of the trip taken last summer by a number of Pedagogues from the Prairie Province through the old lands, and the impressions gained by so doing

By THOMAS LAIDLAW

IT IS with mixed feelings that a man contemplates a return to his native land, after an absence of 25 years. Through the "dim divine" of time and distance memory calls up old faces and old scenes while reason tells him that the faces at least must have changed. The older people whom he knew, and looked up to with respect, have gone, most of them to that bourne whence no traveller returns. The boys with whom he played, and fought, have grown up and like himself perhaps have wandered far.

"The wee bit laughing lassie's
Noo a guid wife growing auld,
Wi Jennie at her apron and Jamie on her
knee."

Only the scenes remain the same; they do not change. The burn where he waded and fished and fell in, still "rattles through the clashan," the hills are blue or grey or gold, as the mists fall or the sun shines on them. If the returned wanderer be Dumfriesshire bred, he will find that Queensbury still stands guard at the head of the glen, that the mists hang heavy on the top of Burnswark, and that Criffel and Skiddaw still rear their heads on the English side of the border. Ah, The Border! What glamor and romance hang about its history. The grey "peel" or ruined tower still to be met with here and there, bear eloquent if silent tribute to the grim life of the old days, when a man rode out armed with Jeddart axe or border spear to drive a foray from his neighbor or the English, it mattered little to him for "they stole the beeves that made their broth from England and from Scotland both." These stark moor-trooping Elliots or Armstrongs or Rutherfords, or by whatever name they were called. But it is not only the ruined peel, and Border memories that haunt him. Here and there on the hill-sides are the cairns or heaps of stones that mark the graves of the martyrs. The witnesses for Messiah's crown, who braved the wrath of kings and priests, and who left home and wife and children and all that a man holds dear, to hide in the moss hags and among the mires; yea who gave up life itself for the sake of Christ's crown and The Covenant. But surely in death theirs was the victory, and their country owes them much. Their names will live, renowned in Scotland's history, while the names of their persecutors will be forgotten or be remembered only with shame. But these days have gone. The sword and spear are left to rust. Persecution's fires are out, upon old shelves her relics lie, mute memorials of the cruelties of an iron. And here am I in Scotland already, while our party has not yet left Winnipeg.

How the Trip was Arranged

It was my good fortune a year ago last July to meet a young Englishman named Ney, who was associated with me in reading the papers of candidates for teachers' certificates. In the course of our work, Mr. Ney asked me, how many teachers I thought would undertake a trip to the old land if such a trip were organized. With Scotch caution I replied it would depend entirely on the cost. "Oh," he said, say \$200. "They will all go at that price," I returned, "but it can't be done." Nothing more was said and I had forgotten the conversation, until last February when I received a letter from Mr. Ney, saying that he had almost completed arrangements and that the visit to the Motherland was assured. He went over to England in March to make final arrangements there, returned in June, and on the 5th of July the party of Manitoba teachers, a hundred and sixty-five in number left Winnipeg with him on the long journey.

The reception given them on their departure by the Winnipeg city council was only a foretaste of the joys to come. A special train had been provided for the party, and the long run to Montreal was made in excellent time. At Toronto, a short halt was made, and the teachers were welcomed by the mayor and council, entertained to luncheon and then taken for a drive through the most interesting parts of the Queen City of the East. Rested and refreshed, the journey was resumed and Montreal reached about eleven o'clock in the evening. From the station, the party was conveyed in brakes to the dock where they embarked on the Allan Line steamer *Virginian*.

Here let me say that the attention shown to the party by the officials of the C.P.R. and Allan Line could not have been excelled in courtesy and consideration.

Early on Friday morning we were all on deck to gaze at the shores of the mighty St. Lawrence. The greatest water-highway in the world. Not half a dozen of our number had ever visited the

and the barren shores of Labrador, round which Norman Duncan has flung such a pathos and halo of romance. Some of his descriptions rose to mind as we gazed at the fishing fleets lying in the harbor or putting out to sea, and many a silent prayer went up that the Great Father would keep safe and give bountiful harvest to these hardy toilers of the great deep.

"Buy my caller herring, ye wha ca'
them vulgar faring,
Wives and mithers 'maist despairing
Ca them lives o' men."

Among the Icebergs

Soon we are wondering whether we will get through the Straits of Belle Isle without a fog or if we shall see an iceberg. Both of these things happened. We got through without a fog, and we saw not one but many icebergs. Eight of these monsters from the frozen North were lying in the Straits when we passed through, while the towering peaks of many more glittered on the far horizon. Contented were we to give them a wide

Arrangements for their accommodation in the city had been made beforehand and every one was comfortably not to say luxuriously housed in one of the best parts of London that night. But that ride from Liverpool to the city will not soon be forgotten. The smooth, gliding speed of the train, the green fields, the trim hedgerows, the trees, the scent of the clover and flowers, floating in through the open window, the riot of color everywhere, were all new to the Canadian visitors, and many were the exclamations of delight as they sped on.

On Saturday they were taken for a three hours drive through the heart of London, accompanied by guides, from the London and National Teachers' associations, who provided the buses. The Strand, Oxford Street, Piccadilly, so long merely names were now a reality, to the visitors from the Western Plains; the roar and rush of London's traffic was in their ears, as enchanted and partly bewildered they drove through the streets. In the evening at seven o'clock there was a special reception to the visitors by the London teachers, and the Manitobians were officially welcomed to England. At ten o'clock another reception was accorded them by the proprietors of *Lloyd's News* and the party was shown the printing and publication of one of the most widely circulated English journals.

Entertained Royally

On Sunday the Zoological gardens are closed to the public, but were open to the visitors from the Prairies, who had a splendid opportunity to enjoy the sights undisturbed by the crowd. The two following days or the mornings at least, were spent in visiting the London schools which were still in session. While on the afternoon of Monday they were received by the Rt. Hon. Walter Ransiman, president of the board of education, and afterwards were entertained at Stationer's Hall by Sir Isaac Pitman and Messrs. Longman Green and Co. On Tuesday afternoon Mrs. Alfred Emmett, wife of the deputy speaker of the house of commons was at home to the teachers from Manitoba, and in the evening a reception was given them by Messrs. Novello & Co., the great musical publishers.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent in visiting Kew and Richmond, Windsor Castle, Eton and Stoke Pogis. At Kew and Richmond the Party was met by the mayor and council, and a visit was paid to the beautiful gardens. How beautiful they are is beyond my power of description, so—

"Here my muse her wing maun cower,
Sic sights are clean beyond her power."

The green lawns, the stately trees, the harmony of color everywhere, the quiet and peace that lies over it all must be seen and felt to be appreciated. It is also useless for me to attempt to convey any idea of the extreme kindness of the people who received us everywhere. Sir James Snylumper, Lady Yoxall, the mayor and mayoress could not do too much to make our visit a pleasant one, while the teachers of the two places exerted themselves to the utmost to entertain their fellow-workers from over the seas.

At Windsor Castle

At Windsor Castle we were delighted with all we saw. The relics of the past and the splendor of the present were there side by side, and when we came out it was rather a dazed and breathless party, that turned their steps to St. George's Chapel. With hushed feet, they trod the ancient cloisters, and gazed reverently if curiously at the historic altar. Luncheon was provided in the hall of Sir Christopher Wren, and we sat down to the meal surrounded by life size paintings of the kings and queens of England that adorned the walls.

Perhaps the visit to Eton will linger as long in the memory, as the memory of



King Motor on the Noble Farm, Glenora, Man.

old land before, and few of them had been outside of Manitoba. So it was all new and strange and wonderful.

Viewing Old Quebec

The great river, the quaint old-fashioned houses of the French settlers, the shagging villages, the inevitable convent-roof and church-spire were all matters for wonder and comment. As the day wore on interest never waned, and speculation was rife as to what we would see round the next bend of the river. Soon the famous old city of Quebec rose to view. The frowning ramparts, the steep cliffs, the Citadel, Wolfe's Cove, the Plains of Abraham, and history crowded thick and fast on the memory. For we were looking on the spot where over three hundred years ago, was decided forever the great question as to whether the Saxon or the Gaul should rule on the Western continent. Here is where the fleet was stationed under Admiral Saunders, there the Beauport shore; here the path up which Wolfe's men clambered on the eventful night of the 13th. In fancy we can see again the red masses drawn up on the plain above the heights, see the astonished but undaunted Montreal, when day broke leading his white-coated battalions and voyageurs against the foe. Side by side they sleep peacefully enough now, the two great generals and their men, and we hope that never more will the roar of an enemies' guns be heard by Quebec or Canada.

At Father Point we dropped the pilot, took on the last mail and considered that we were fairly afloat. As we steamed on, the towering headland of Gaspé gave way to the rocky coasts of Newfoundland,

berth. Just at sunset on Sunday night we were clear of the land. For long we watched the lights twinkle on the rocks as they sent their warming rays, far out to sea; faint and more faint they grew; distant and more distant came the sound of the fog-horn, until it died away, as lonely, rugged Belle Isle, sank from sight, and Canada was left behind. But it gave some of us pause when we remembered that we had left Winnipeg on Tuesday afternoon, that we had been travelling steadily ever since and were only losing sight of our own shores on this Sunday night.

The voyage on the whole was uneventful. Deck quilts, shuffleboard, books, letter-writing, served to pass the time, until the Irish coast rose to view on Friday morning. We were fortunate to sight in the Irish Sea a portion of the British fleet, about which we had heard so much but which none of us had ever seen. As they came stealing silently out of the mist, those grim, grey-sided guardians of the silver coasts, a thrill of pride shot through every heart. Giant line-of-battle ship, swift cruiser, wicked torpedo craft were all there.

At Liverpool the party was met by representatives from the National Teacher's Union, and the London Teacher's Association. A special train was waiting to convey them to London, and they were whirled off to the great Metropolis at sixty miles an hour. At first the engines and carriages were fair mark, for amused and sarcastic Canadian criticism, but they had not been long in England when they arrived at the conclusion, that the people of the old land have little to learn about railroading.