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A 27th Regt. Man Visits Old London

The following extract from a letter written by Sinclair Battley, a Sarnia member of the 27th Regt. with the overseas contingent, to the Canadian, will be found of interest.

Salisbury Military Camp, Nov. 1st, 1914.

I am sending you an account of a brief trip to London, which three of us were fortunate enough to have.

On our arrival at Paddington station, we had to cross the city to Battersea, which was our objective point. We thought that the best way to go was by subway. The tube system in London is very efficient, and quickly carries one from point to point. We afterward found that we had gone about three times as far as was necessary, but the ride in the tube was worth the extra time. That evening we took a bus down into the city, passing on the way the Houses of Parliament, Westminster Abbey and Trafalgar Square, and then passed by the Strand. London at night presents a far different appearance than in times of peace. Ordinarily the streets are a blaze of light, but now only the absolutely necessary lights are left lighted. The tops of street lamps are covered to prevent the rays from passing upward. All window shades are drawn, and unnecessary lights are extinguished.

Search lights mounted at prominent positions sweep the sky, searching for hostile air craft.

Next morning we again took a bus and started out to see as much of the sights of the great metropolis as possible. The methods of conveyance in London are considerably different from what we see in our Canadian cities. In the city itself there are no street cars or "tram cars" as they call them over here, but motor busses are used. There are two decks, a lower closed one and an upper open one, which is reached by a narrow curved stairway. They are fine for sight seeing, and have the advantage over street cars of being able to come up to the curb and of passing one another when one is obliged to stop for some time. In the more outlying sections tram cars are in use, but the third rail system has been adopted, which renders unnecessary the use of overhead wires and poles, and gives the streets a fine open appearance.

After passing up the Albert Embankment, we crossed the Thames near the Houses of Parliament, passing the Hotel Cecil, Metropole Hotel, and Cleopatra's Needle to London Bridge from which Tower Bridge can be seen. Near by is the Billingsgate fish market, one of the largest in London. Here we saw many varieties of fish which we had never seen before, eels, oysters in the shell, shrimps and winkles.

We now paid a visit to the Tower of London. The great age of this famous structure was impressed upon us by noticing initials carved in the stones of the gateway bearing the date 1099. Within we saw the famous Traitors Gate, Bloody Tower, Beauchamp Tower, and Norman Tower, built by William the Conqueror in 1066. Nearby is the spot where Anne Boleyn was executed in 1539, the spot being marked by a brass plate. The regalia afforded us much interest. In glass cases surrounded by iron bars we saw the emblems of England's sovereignty, the various crowns, mace, orb, christening font, and so on, the value of the whole being about \$25,000,000.

Passing down Cheapside we came to St. Paul's Cathedral. It is hard to realize the immense height of this building, over 400 feet to the top of the dome. It is a wonderful structure when viewed from the outside, and is even more so from the inside, where a better impression of its height may be obtained by gazing up into the dome. The sculpture and carving are beautiful—tablets and statues in memory of many of England's honored dead being arranged about the walls. The crypt beneath the cathedral contains the remains of Wellington and Nelson and many others prominent in English history. Finally we paid a hurried visit to Smithfield, where the martyrs were burned at the stake, and saw the very window from which Queen Mary viewed the burnings.

St. Bartholomew's church in this district is one of the oldest edifices in London, and amply bears evidence of its age by its worn and crumbled appearance of the stone pillars within. One seems to be passing back to a past age when visiting these places. It is indeed hard to realize that they have stood for so many centuries, silent witnesses of England's history.

I had during the morning the opportunity of talking with an army service corps man who had been wounded in the arm and had recently returned from the front. He said that the stories of German atrocities to the allied soldiers were largely overdone, that although wanton destruction of property had doubtless occurred, the cruelty, attributed to the Germans to their prisoners was largely exaggerated.

As we only had half a day remaining to spend in the city, we hastened out early in the morning to see the chief points of interest. First we walked through Battersea Park, the only one of London's Parks which we visited. It comprises about 300 acres and is laid out

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in a most artistic manner. The walks curve in and out among beautiful shade trees, and are bordered by neatly trimmed hedges and beds of flowers. Geraniums and chrysanthemums are still in bloom here, as well as many other flowers, and the foliage is still on the trees, although turning the hues of autumn. We found several trees unknown to us in Canada—the plane, a tree very similar to our maple, the laurel, boxwood and holly. An artificial lake has been constructed in the park and ducks and black and white swans swim about in it.

Passing by Buckingham Palace and the Victoria Memorial, we walked up to St. James' Palace where we had the good fortune of seeing the Prince of Wales. We saw the Duke of Connaught's residence, and passed up Pall Mall to Westminster Abbey, and the Parliament Buildings. As service was at that time going on in the Abbey, we looked through St. Margaret's church, the chapel of the house of commons, where many notables are buried. Opposite stands the House of Lords and the House of Commons with the famous clock, Big Ben, in its tower. The light which illuminates its dials are extinguished at night, a thing which has not occurred in London for many years. Near to the House of Lords is the building in which Charles I. was beheaded.

To adequately describe England's famous abbey, Westminster, would be indeed a futile task. The sculpture and carving are magnificent, especially the roof in certain places. Throughout the abbey lie buried England's famous men, sovereigns, statesmen, warriors and authors, of all ages. The massive pillars are in places worn away by time and blackened by the flight of years, but the old abbey still stands a silent witness of England's greatness.

While in the abbey I met a Belgian lady, a refugee from Belgium. She was dressed in deep mourning and had probably, although I did not ask, passed through many trials. She anxiously inquired of me when the Canadians would be moving into the war area, seeming very anxious to know when we would be able to lend assistance to the troops now fighting there.

Although London does not present the lively appearance which it does in times of peace, especially at night, the feeling here is very optimistic. New songs of a martial type are for sale in the shops; stationery, post cards, handkerchiefs and candy boxes have appropriate military designs on them; posters are everywhere in the streets urging men to join the colours. It is indeed wonderful how calm and united the British nation is in this great crisis in its history.

In the afternoon we took a train back to camp after spending one of the most delightful as well as profitable holidays possible, our only regret being that we did not have more time to spend in historic old London.

A TALK TO MOTHERS

Mothers, do you know that every time a member of your family sustains a cut, scratch, burn, or bruise, no matter how slight, you take a grave risk in neglecting the injury? The wound may start to fester, and develop into a running sore, or blood poison may set in, resulting in the loss of a limb, or even of life.

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