

A Book for the Holidays: A Scamper 'Cross Canada

One need not be a motorist, a literary critic, or in any sense a book-worm, in order to read with an amused interest and an enjoyable relief Mr. Percy Gomery's "Human Interest Narrative of a Pathfinding Journey from Montreal to Vancouver."

That sub-title of the book which, (as noted in a brief review appearing here following publication, is entitled "A Motor Scamper 'Cross Canada"), fairly indicates its nature, but does not do justice to its writer's record of his, and "the Skipper's," varied experiences.

With such experiences indeed, any man or woman could hardly avoid writing a record of the trip. And while there are many evidences in the volume of hasty writing and unrevised expressions in grammar and otherwise, the narrative as a whole runs so racily, and Mr. Gomery reveals such a recurring and effervescent humor, and that even (whatever he felt or said at the time) in dealing with conditions certainly mettle-testing, that one is constrained to ejaculate again and again "Good for you!", "Well done!" etc.

As one reads the book (as this note-maker did only recently) with genuine pleasure, numerous passages and paragraphs stand out as well worthy of reproduction. Not because Mr. Gomery is, as we infer, a Western Canadian—in one chapter he mentions "the great range country, romantic atmosphere of my school days"—but because of the historic journey recorded, its end at the Pacific Coast, and the fact that we think it is a book that should be in the home of every Canadian citizen with a bookshelf to put it on, or friend to pass it to, we shall without further comment, give space to a selection from the many portions that merit quotation.

The Philosopher Speaks

"When you take your little compass in hand, by the shore of Sister Atlantic, and undertake to grub a path for yourself to Father Pacific by the agency of your own feelers, dodging en route the world's greatest chain of inland seas, you are likely to find yourself "passing on" from discomforts and disappointments, from cold, wet and thirst, from bumps and bites and exasperations plus. You will also, however, be "passing on" from joy unto joy of independence, from the luxury of choosing your own playgrounds, from the discovery that noble men and women dwell in low as well as high places, from the realization that life is not "society", from a living, actual knowledge of your own country, from the inspiration of adventure and from the thrill of achievement.

"We are told that "the Play's the thing," but I am sorry for the man who thinks it is. Life's the thing, and to buy life by the yard is no more satisfactory than buying travel by the mile. Let him who will travel "de luxe"; I will continue to travel "de bumps"!"

Courtesy in United States Commended

"One of the most interesting studies of our tour was the study of public spirit, personal, municipal and national. Scores of advance letters were written by the Vancouver Automobile Club and public officials, so that every town of importance had the chance to show its interest in the inauguration of "The King's International Highway." I am sorry to have to say that, as I found it, public spirit to the north of the international boundary was no match for the systematized courtesy in the United States. There was, however, a notable exception. Laying myself open to the charge of barefaced advertising, which, nevertheless, is entirely unsolicited, I found a dependable and marked public spirit everywhere that there was an agent of the Imperial Oil Company. I hasten to add that this Company flatly refused my request for a reduction in the price of gasoline! Although I do not intend again to write the name in so many letters, it will

be impossible to avoid referring to the innumerable courtesies of its representatives who study our comforts and furthered our object at every turn.

Plain Speaking

Sudbury is a city fairly radiating prosperity. Its pavements, street cars and commercial fame bespeak wealth, present, past and to come. The name of its chief hotel, "The Nickel Range" suggests it. We found there very high rates and service almost unbelievably poor. Perhaps that is why it suggests wealth—and independence.

Quite early I was awakened by the telephone bell. An officer of the Board of Trade and the president of the automobile club were waiting to see me. This early bird solicitation smacked of a disposition to swallow the worm and have done with it. The courteous gentlemen, with almost oriental politeness, assured us that they, their possessions and the city, were at our command if we would remain a day or two. They deplored North Bay's laxity in robbing them of the honor of going out to meet us last night. The "meet" suggestion sounded as though it might be genuine, but as for the rest, "I am not so sure; he bowed too low," as the Cardinal says in "Richelieu."

Just then the Skipper asided to me, "This is Dominion Day. These men are sure to have made arrangements for it."—(See the book for the ending).

Like an Oasis in the Desert

Any reader who has travelled over new "trails" anywhere in Canada, or who, in other days and ways, say with bicycle or pony, has ventured on a journey for business or pleasure in an unfrequented country region, and known what it is to be wearied and tired in such circumstances, while uncertain where one may find a resting-place for the night, will specially appreciate the experience thus recorded by Mr. Gomery:—

"About four o'clock, at the end of seventy agonizing miles, we reached a wretched-looking village called Rexton. There was no hotel other than an impossible lumberman's boarding house, but, at the end of the line, in an orchard, and half hidden by cool, shimmering vines, there was a home so artistically built, so spacious and alluring that it did not seem to belong at all.

"That's where you are going to stay and rest until tomorrow," I whispered to the Skipper. She scarcely had the energy to open her eyes, but she said, "Oh, if I only could, I am so tired."

"My 'story' went down with Mr. and Mrs. Miller at once, and in ten minutes the invalid was in bed surrounded by affectionate friends and luxuries so unexpected that it all seemed like Aladdin's palace in the desert. The whole round world seemed to change hue, and the man in the moon turned his mouth up instead of down. Alternately I wrote letters and chatted with the Millers, helped get the supper and wash the dishes. What is it that makes the newcomer feel so much more at home and less of a bother in a huge house? . . . The Skipper slept for sixteen hours and then was smiling and ready for the road once more. . . .

Many Others of the Same

"The happiest habit we formed was that of forcing our presence for the night on unsuspecting peaceful families. At first the private home was a matter of necessity, but quickly it became purely a contrived accident, while the hotel was a sheer obligation and last resort. A solution for it all is camping, but, although the necessity for such an equipment was not overlooked by the Skipper and me, we rarely used it. The truth is that, on a strenuous trip, one does not do anything himself that he can pay anybody else to do.