

Our Foreign Letter.

OUR CANADIAN COUSINS.



It was the good fortune of those members of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, who

recently crossed the Atlantic in the Allan liner, "The Parisian," to approach Canada on a perfect day. Few among us will forget entering the straits of Belle Isle. The distant wild Labrador coast, purple, under a brilliant sky, made an impressive background for some stranded icebergs gleaming white and glittering in the sunshine, an unprecedented number of whales, spouting freely, adding a striking feature to the picture. More than all, the spirit of hope was with us, and something one realized of the feeling that must have come upon those early explorers who looked at this fair new land for the first time. Then up the grand St. Lawrence to Québec, where our ship stayed a few hours, and many of our party went in the moonlight up to Dufferin Terrace to see one of the most picturesque cities in the world, at its most picturesque hour. Surely we in England do not understand how beautiful is her dear daughter, Canada, how blue the sky, how bright the sunshine, and then, more than all, the exquisite air!

Well, I must not linger over the beauty of Québec, Montreal, or even the queen city of Canada, Toronto, where the meeting of the British Association was held, a meeting which was as successful as—what has been called—"a most representative team" of British scientific men could make it, in such an ideal place as Toronto University, and with the help of all the kindness, care, and hospitality which our Canadian hosts lavished upon us.

I have, however, been asked to convey to you my impressions of Canadian women. It is difficult in a hurried visit to focus one's mind on an entirely new set of conditions, incidental to life in a large country, instead of a small one; a continent far away from foreign lands, instead of an island in the midst of them.

The Canadian population is small, not, as in England, so large, that the principal thoughts of most people are how they are to live at all, and place their children in professions, or trades, in which it is possible to earn a livelihood, hence the first big thing that strikes one is, that it is easier to live in Canada than in Europe—men and women alike have a chance, if they will take it, and work.

Although women, unfortunately, have not yet the parliamentary franchise, or, even, in all cases, the municipal franchise, still, the life of men and women is less separated than in England, education is often mixed, and there appears to be (with the exception of the suffrage) more justice for women, and better paid work.

This is probably accounted for by the wide distribution of the population of which I have just spoken. We must remember, however, as a set off against the advantages, that the difficulty of living in Europe also necessitates a fuller use of whatever brain power the individual may possess. It is to be feared, that simple conditions of life do not tend to the full development of mental resources.

The second impression that occurs to me, is, how young the people seem, not quite awake yet.

Among the well-to-do, too much thought seems to be concentrated upon "having a good time." When out of doors life is so pleasant, it is not to be wondered at if all kind of sports are engrossing. I, at least, found it difficult to get the average young, or youngish, person to speak on serious subjects at all, and even the working classes, to judge only by the people in the streets, have a sort of "take it as it comes," "go as you please," air, that is very different from the careworn aspect of, say, the East London poor.

It is not fair to criticise the women of Canada upon so slight an acquaintance with them, although sometimes a fresh eye can see better than an accustomed one, but, it seems to me, that in spite of a high standard of education, they are, as yet, hardly conscious of their duty to the nation, as half the nation, they have to see that women in professions, shops, home life, and all kinds of work are fairly treated, that the laws affecting men and women are equal, all the real interests of children have to be considered, and unless the educated women of Canada take their proper place in school boards, as factory inspectors, and so on, how can they watch over the interests of their less fortunate sisters, and the children? Stronger laws concerning the care of illegitimate children seem to be needed in Canada, to judge from advertisements in the public press. Women should see to these things. The most important work for women in Canada to do is, as elsewhere, to get the franchise, for without good laws, all is nothing. They have still to learn that indirect influence has again and again been proved to be useless; they should remember what Cecil Rhodes said not long since: "The vote covers everything."

F. M. ROBERTS AUSTEN.

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[previous page](#)

[next page](#)