

describe the Canadian Rockies as I sat in the observation car and looked at the tall, snow capped peaks gleaming in the sunshine; it filled my very soul with a peace and understanding that Nature had so generously bestowed so much on us to enjoy. Lake Louise, where my room overlooked the lake and snow capped mountains, where when I got out the next morning and took a tramp through my first snow, how thrilled I was to make snowballs and hurl them through the air. The large dining-room, where soft-footed waiters took our orders, the food so well prepared and served under soft lights—what more could anyone ask? Everything I had dreamed about was all coming true, and so I lived the next few days in this world until realisation of dwindling funds brought me suddenly to earth and the future.

Chicago loomed into vision. First I felt I had been transplanted with a sickening thud into an inferno, the huge city with its elevated trains screaming by every minute; the masses of people hurrying to goodness knows where frightened me; the city and all the people; one had to wash one's face many times, and even in the security of my hotel room the noise would penetrate. The hospitals were all situated on the worst side of the city, which did not help at all. Even the patients looked tired and grey as they would try to procure some rest. And so I fled to New York with \$10 in my pocket, and here is where "Alice in Wonderland" faded out and grim reality stared me in the face! Jobs were rare, and as I searched each day the \$10 soon dwindled to \$5 and then \$2. I bought 10 cents worth of bones and vegetables, concocting a pot full of soup, and by a slight tightening of the belt it lasted a week. Of course when things look darkest always a light appears in the sky, and so deliverance came, just when I could see the bottom of the soup pot, in the shape of a call to take care of a sick man. Gladly I put on my uniform and gaily stepped out to the home of the aforesaid patient, to be greeted at the door by the wife who said: "My Husband refuses to have a Nurse." Inwardly I quailed and thought rapidly. Said I, "Won't you let me go in and talk to him?" Consent was given, and I entered and soon was installed to give care to a very sick man, and here comes a confession that I am sure enters the heart of every nurse at some time in her profession. I prayed a silent prayer that my patient would live until after 12 midnight, so that I might earn another day's fees, sufficient to cover the rent. Need I add, my wish was granted and I ate again!

New York and its vastness was so different from San Francisco, and yet on the face of it the people were the same, full of warmth deep down; the theatres, so many of them spilling out the hundreds of laughing gay faces, remembering some part of the play, going on to supper clubs; the eastside of the city—Greenwich Village where the artists' colony was located; Battery Place, where one would not dare walk around at night unprotected; Hell's Kitchen, where a nurse in uniform was respected. More and more scenes would flash themselves before my eyes, and I learned the way the American people lived, getting the most out of life.

While in the big city of seven million people, I met the Governor of New York, and he asked me what I would like to see most. I know he expected a far different answer from that I gave—"A trip to the Prison Islands on the East River"—but it was arranged. So a party of us one morning boarded the Ferry and were taken first to where the incorrigible girls and boys were kept. The authorities are doing such splendid work in trying to teach them the basic fundamentals of good living by kindness and understanding, so that they may return to take their place in society. I think the tiers upon tiers of cells, where the so-called tough male prisoners were billeted alarmed me, but the kitchens and laundries were so spotlessly clean, and outside the gardens were a riot of colour as those men worked silently.



Mrs. George Hickerson, M.B.C.N.

Perhaps it gave them time for thought that crime does not pay. The island where the drug addicts were was the saddest of them all. 87 per cent. of them, the Warden told us, were hopeless; they lay around on cots quietly with such apathetic expressions on their faces; and then, finally, came the last island where the less dangerous convicts live. Here a hubbub of activity was going on, the buzz of the saws turning out chairs and tables and making all kinds of usable articles. I came away at the end of the day thinking of how much there is to do in the education of the young children, so that they may develop a healthy outlook on life in general and become good citizens.

Washington, D.C., was next on the agenda, and there I had a taste of the way the country was governed. I had the good fortune to meet the President of the United States, many of the Senators, and the well-known novelist, Mary Roberts Rhinehart, who was so delightful and gracious.

Washington in the Spring, when the cherry trees are in bloom, is one of the loveliest pictures I have ever seen. It is a truly beautiful city ruined by one thing—its climate. It has been said that in the summer one can fry an egg on the Lincoln Memorial steps, and I can readily believe it; however, in the Fall it is really lovely.

And so time went on, three months spent here, and three months there; Virginia, Pennsylvania, Long Island and Connecticut were visited. I worked my way back to the West Coast, being grateful that my training as a nurse had given me such an opportunity to travel around and learn from people who knew so much more than I did.

Thank you for asking me to write a little about what I have done in this country. I think perhaps I have wandered rather from the main objective, but perhaps the readers might enjoy a taste of this.

Sincerely yours,

MURIEL HICKERSON.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)