

The President's Corner

Mrs. Leonard Trivers,
President F.W.I.O.



THE THIRD NATIONAL CONVENTION is now history and for those of us who were privileged to attend it was a memorable experience. For those who were not present, this issue will bring you some of the highlights and we hope you will read them carefully. There are so many things to be appreciated — the detailed planning for our comfort and enjoyment, the tour arrangements to allow us to visit the lovely and historic countryside, the splendid response of members across the land for the handicrafts sale, and the spirit of friendliness which prevailed among the delegates from the various provinces. These are the things which do not appear in the reports but which make the convention one to remember.

I would like to share with you a little experience which to me proved to be the "crowning touch" to the convention. As you may know, I was overseas the previous week to attend the A.C.W.W. Council meetings and came by air to Halifax with Mrs. Spry, Canada's representative on the A.C.W.W. Council, who was my gracious hostess while in London. Our first glimpse of Canada after hours over the ocean was of the rocky barrens of northern Quebec, yet we began to feel we were at home. The feeling grew as we winged our way up over the narrow strip farms along the St. Lawrence, and became complete when we saw our first scarlet-clad Mountie at Dorval Airport.

After a week in beautiful Nova Scotia our train homeward-bound brought us up through New Brunswick along Chaleur Bay and the Restigouche, where our eager eyes scanned the scenery as long as a bit of daylight remained, then on through the night to Quebec City where the citadel stood out in shining splendor in the clear, early morning light. There was no train to our part of Ontario until night, so while the rest of the group went on, three remained in Montreal, coming at last on a summer Sunday evening to the nation's capital, still less than halfway across our huge country.

Four hours remained before time for the train which would take me on the final lap of my journey. Alone and weary, I dined, then walked through the Mall to listen to sacred music by the same band whose stirring strains we had heard two weeks earlier leading the opening devotions of the Governor - General's Conference. When the band had gone I went on up to Parliament Hill where the chimes from the Peace Tower had just begun. For an hour I was part of an anonymous group who walked among the flowers and the statues in that lovely garden, or sat in attentive silence on the benches while the familiar notes of sacred and classical music filled the air and the flush of sunset gradually died above the hills beyond the mighty river. The noise of the city came faintly to our ears here; people spoke very little and in hushed voices. Finally, as the soft summer darkness fell and the first stars appeared, we heard the bells begin "O Canada." As one person the crowd of listeners came to their feet and stood in silence until the last notes had died away. I wish I were able to capture for you the magic quality of that moment, standing shoulder to shoulder with complete strangers, all silently joining in the refrain "O Canada, we stand on guard for thee." Many of you will have had the same experience when in Ottawa, I am sure, but to me it was a fitting climax to a National Convention.

Since that night I have often relived the scene and reflected upon the words "We stand on guard for thee." Do we actually mean the words we sing so glibly? To a man, guard duty means something quite positive. Has it any meaning for women? I think we might find two points of similarity between our lives and that of a guard on duty: A guard is not expected to plan the tactics used in defense or attack, nor to direct the carrying out of the plans. His concern is to see that his immediate section of the line is kept as strong as it lies within his power to keep it. Secondly, a guard may find his work to be far from the centre of activity, yet it is none the less important. How many battles in history were lost because the guard at some distant post was lax in his duty?

What is expected of Women's Institute members as mothers, as educators and as community leaders in standing on guard? How well are we doing our duty? I think this is something we might well consider in our branch meetings so that we may be sure we tell the truth when next we sing "We stand on guard for thee."

Mary Trivers.