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**CHATTING.**  
 by M.H.B.



Thought I'd take advantage of a couple of those leisure hours on the train back from Jasper, to tell you a little about the CWNA Convention and the trip . . . in strictly informal style, and simply as the thoughts occur, without any necessary rhyme or reason.

Being our first trip west of Ontario, the vastness of this Dominion of ours, impressed us most deeply. The miles—seemed like a hundred at a time—impressed interminably, often with no signs of human habitation. There was the rugged beauty of northern Ontario and Manitoba—nowhere, except of course in the Rockies—did we see this scenery excelled. It closely resembles Muskoka, but with no summer resorts or cottages. Only very occasionally would we pass a poor-looking little house, and see an Indian family standing on the front stoop to wave as the train sped by. They were so very isolated. Couldn't help wondering what they'd do in case of sickness, or even how the children were educated. Someone on the train told us they had lessons and examinations sent in by mail to the nearest outpost. Doesn't sound like a very satisfactory system, does it?

Even as the train passed through this section of the country, we began to notice the absence of hard maple trees. Nearing Winnipeg, the character of the landscape suddenly changed from the picturesque lake studded wilderness of evergreens and rock, to lush farming land, with acres of freshly ploughed black loam. Still no hard maples, however; but Manitoba, or soft maples in abundance. And as we write this, looking from the train window, over the prairies, we have yet to see one. After this column goes to press, we'll probably have plenty of people point out that the maples were there, but we just didn't see them. It will be interesting to find out, anyway.

One thing that struck us about western fields, was the contour plowing. This was particularly evident on the shallow hillsides, where the odd clump of trees lent a touch of green to the brown and yellow of the autumn farmlands.

On the second morning of our trip, we awoke to find we had arrived at Edmonton, Alta. Naturally, we had been hoping the weatherman would be on his best behaviour for the trip. So it was an unpleasant shock to see a slight skitter of snow, and people bundled up in overcoats, shivering on the station platform. If it's like that here, we worried, what on earth will it be like in the mountains. Someone said the temperature was 18 degrees at Edmonton, and we imagine they weren't far wrong. It didn't help any to hear they had had anything from 4" to a couple of feet of snow in Banff the previous day there. However, it turned out that we needn't have worried. The weather was beautiful—clear and sunny—for the four days we spent at Jasper Lodge.

The real scenic thrill of the trip was, for us at any rate, the first glimpse of the Rockies—way off in the distance, framed white and majestic by the darkly rolling foothills. Not that the mountains became any the less beautiful as we drew closer—quite the contrary—but that first "vision from afar" so to speak, was the big thrill. We aren't going to attempt to describe the mountains. If you've seen them yourself, you'll know it would be practically impossible. Each one is so entirely different, and they surround you, envelope you, and stretch on for miles and miles, as far as the eye can reach, on every side.

Jasper proper is a small town of about 2000 "permanent" inhabitants, while Jasper Park Lodge, where the Newspaper Convention was held, is some three miles from the town, built around the crescent of one of the bays of lovely Lac Beauvert. And it is a beautiful spot. You sleep in individual log cabins, and have your meals in the main Lodge, which consists of a dining room, ballroom and lounge. It's spacious and beautiful, built of peeled logs, in rambling log-cabin style, with the rustic note carefully preserved. Two huge stone fireplaces were kept going constantly, with plenty of comfortable easy-chairs about, from which to enjoy the blaze.

One thing we had always been a little skeptical about, was the colour of mountain lakes—that bright greeny-blue. But we found it was really a fact. As we walked to the Lodge at mealtime—especially at breakfast, the lake was like a shimmering turquoise mirror, reflecting the surrounding trees and mountains in perfect detail.

Telling you about Jasper wouldn't be complete without mentioning the bears, and the deer. The bears are quite tame, and we rather liked them. They were so furry and fat. Would like to have

ted one, but an authority higher than we (friend husband, that is), asserted himself, and made us keep at a respectable distance. A couple of the ladies at the convention received nasty claw-marks. So perhaps it was just as well. The place to see them (the bears of course), is at the dump, that is if you want to see a large number all at once. We saw about a dozen or more. It was quite a sight to see them lumbering around, in and out of the woods, and coming right up close to the people or their cars. The bears often wander about the grounds of the Lodge, and it isn't unusual to find one, esconced on your front verandah.

One morning as we stepped out of the cabin to go to breakfast, a beautiful little fawn was having its breakfast from the shrubs surrounding the cabin.

While at Jasper, we went on a sight-seeing tour, and among the many beautiful places we stopped was the Maligne Canyon—a frighteningly deep fissure hewn from the rocks by a swirling mountain river. From where we stood at the guard-rail, the water below was crystal clear and green. Up at Pyramid Lake, we saw where the beavers had been at work felling hundreds of trees. Would like to have seen them in action, but the sound of the sight-seeing bus must have frightened them off.

One thing, tho, that we did miss at Jasper, was Bing Crosby. "Der Bingle" and his party of thirty had been there for "Golf Week," and left Jasper just half an hour before the convention train pulled in. From all reports, Bing made a very good impression—acts just as casually and naturally off-screen as on.

Just though of something amusing. There is an elaborate sprinkler system for the golf course, and for some time there was a mystery as to who was turning it on at night. They finally caught the culprits in the act, and fixed the system so that bears couldn't turn it on anymore.

A vicarious thrill was provided one day, when a touring car full of guests from the Lodge clipped a curve a little too fast, and overturned on the mountainside. Had it not been for a big stump that was in the way, there might have been tragic consequences. Luckily, no one was hurt.

One of the highlights of the convention was a real western-style barbecue, arranged by the Alberta Division of the CWNA, and held at Lake Annette about two miles from the Lodge. A four hundred and fifty-pound beef carcass (provided by Burns & Co., Ltd.) was cooked in a pit beside the lake for twelve hours, and the night before the barbecue, we went over to Lake Annette to see how the meat was prepared. . . . all three hundred of us.

This was a really unique process. First of all they dug a long deep trench, lined it with flat stones, and in it built a huge fire, extending the full length of the trench. After several hours elapsed, and a deep bed of coals was formed, it was time to put in the meat. We arrived in time to see them do this. (The actual work of preparing the barbecue was done by cowboys from adjacent ranches). The beef carcass was cut into chunks of approximately forty pounds each. These were wrapped in several layers of cloth and burlap, wired up and placed in the pit.

A large metal sheet was placed over the meat, and over this, the sandy earth—was shovelled, until it formed a mound.

By this time, two enormous campfires were blazing, and the cowboys and girls, who had ridden their horses from the district ranches, really out some western vim and vigor into the campfire songs. The night couldn't have been more perfect—sky full of stars, and as we stood waiting at the chuckwagon for our coffee and flapjacks, the moon rose over the snow capped peak of Mount Edith Cavell, and illumined the mountains ringing us about.

Then at noon the next day, we had the actual barbecue. We all wondered what the meat would be like. The idea of leaving so much meat so many hours had us erstwhile housewives worried. But it turned out fine—juicy and tender. They told us the meat could have been left in the pit for another twenty-four hours, and still be at the same stage of "doneness" as when we ate it.

The food was served from a real western "chuck-wagon", that had been brought several hundred miles for the occasion by Guy Weddick, a big Alberta rancher, and originator of the Calgary Stampede. He spoke to the crowd for a few minutes—a very entertaining man, and he seemed to enjoy every minute of showing us a bit of real western ranch-style living.

Well, a story about our trip wouldn't be complete without saying something about trains, because we spent well over half our time on them. Quite frankly, we still have not fathomed out which direction is the "club car" and which direction is the "diner." If someone hadn't been guiding us, we'd have spent most of our time wandering up and down that half-mile-long train trying to find one place or the other.

Then there were those super-de-

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lux women's dressing rooms, where everything was built-in, and operated by push-buttons. Sinks and everything else fall out of the wall like magic. Took us a while to learn about all the gadgets, and in the process, pushed the wrong button a time or two. Think the journey was as amusing as we were. . . . A bit of excitement was provided while travelling at a fast clip through northern Ontario, when the train ran into a 1000-lb. moose. There was a terrific bump, and we thought for sure we had been derailed. Took the train a good mile to come to a stop. Only damage was to the air brakes of the baggage car, where one of the moose's antlers had ripped a hole.