

BAEDEKER VISITS CANADA

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TO most of us here, the name "Baedeker" tells of earnest pilgrimages to European art centres and beauty spots. The remote and the exotic are brought down to earth through detailed descriptions of hotel accommodation, railroad fares and continental cuisine. Somehow, the idea of anyone bothering to write a guidebook to Canada seems to most of us a little ridiculous. But, from his offices in Leipzig, old Karl had his eye on the growing tourist business, and towards the close of last century his agents were busy throughout the Dominion, gathering material for a 420-page guidebook, which appeared in 1894. In the preface, Baedeker declares that his book is intended to "enhance (the traveller's) enjoyment and appreciation of the Dominion's manifold attractions". The book ran through four editions, but so far as can be ascertained, has not been reprinted since 1922. The fact that this fourth edition was prepared during and immediately after the World War speaks volumes for both Baedeker's singleness of purpose and his encyclopaedic knowledge of the Dominion. And if we wish to see ourselves as others see us, we can do no better than spend a couple of hours with old Karl.

The Dominion of Canada, with Newfoundland and an Excursion to Alaska, is divided into eight sections, on geographical lines, and is supplied with twenty-six beautifully engraved maps and plans, and a bibliography covering five closely printed pages. In the main body of the text, Baedeker's observations on Canadian life and customs are often buried among such information as: "Oshawa (331 ft; Queen, Commercial, from \$3; golf course) on C.P.R. (p 201) and C.N.R. (p 207), industrial town (automobiles etc) with 11,552 inhab." and "On top of the MOUNTAIN (comp Pl B 4; 650 ft; inclined rly 5c.), part of the 'Niagara Escarpment' (comp. p 261), which affords a fine View, stands the large *Government Lunatic Asylum* (beyond Pl A 4)." But in the introduction he really lets himself go.

He begins with a discussion of Canadian money, and at once grips the nostalgic reader with the statement that "of gold coins there are \$5 and \$10 pieces". This leads on to the matter of expenses for a Canadian trip. While a voyage to Canada will cost, aside from the greater distances, about as

much as a trip to Europe, "persons of moderate requirements, by frequenting boarding houses instead of hotels, and avoiding carriage hire as much as possible, may travel comfortably for 5-7 (at the most 9) dollars a day". Then, too, as he sagely observes, "the expense of locomotion can sometimes be materially diminished by travelling by water instead of by land".

The officials at Quebec seem to have dealt sharply with old Karl, for his remarks on the Canadian Customs are tinged with obvious rancor. "The custom house examination of the luggage of travellers entering Canada", he complains, "is generally conducted courteously, but often with considerable minuteness; . . . unusually liberal supplies of unworn clothing are apt to be regarded with considerable suspicion".

But he reserves his loftier scorn for the Canadian railroads. Reading between the lines, you note the European's longing for the privacy and regimentation of his own systems. "The seats in the Canadian cars offer very limited room for two persons. A single crying infant or spoiled child annoys 60-70 persons, instead of the few in one compartment. The passenger has little control over his window, as someone is sure to object if he opens it. The continual opening and shutting of doors, with the consequent draughts, are very annoying. The incessant visitation of the train boy, with his books, candy and other articles for sale, renders a quiet nap almost impossible." It is as well that Herr Baedeker never had occasion to travel on a ski-train.

"On the other hand," he generously admits, "the liberty of moving about the car, the toilette accommodation, and the amusement of watching one's fellow travellers greatly mitigate the tedium of a long journey; while the publicity prevents any risk of the railway crimes sometimes perpetrated in the separate compartments of the European system". This is something to remember the next time a crying baby keeps you awake on an overnight special.

Baedeker likes pullmans, but his frugal nature is offended by their expense; and on top of that, "by what seems a somewhat illiberal regulation, the upper berth is always let down, whether occupied or not, unless the whole section is paid for". He also feels that the introduction of a certain amount of good old Central European regimentation would do the system some good: "The names of places are not shown distinctly (sometimes not at all) at the stations, and the brakeman, whose duty it is to announce each station as the train approaches it, is apt to be entirely unintelligible".

This travel advice is followed by a series of detailed plans for vacations long and short. Travel by boat, train or carriage is described in almost lyric prose, but on coming to the pedestrian, old Karl sheds a quiet tear. "The pedestrian is unquestionably the most independent of travellers, but there are few districts in Canada where walking tours can be recommended". This is due to lack of "comfortable inns", absence of footpaths, and the severe climate, or the "gnats and other insects which in summer render the Canadian forests very unpleasant". Out West, it is even worse, for "a stranger on foot might be regarded with suspicion, or even exposed to danger from herds of semi-wild cattle".

The section on hotels and restaurants produces the guide-book's masterpiece of understatement: "The hotels in smaller towns and country districts can seldom be classed as good". But to our food he is unexpectedly generous. Fish, game, fowl, desserts are all good; only beef and mutton are "inferior to those of England". Travellers are also sternly warned that "restaurants which solicit the patronage of 'gents' should be avoided."

The rest of the introduction is taken up with a list of dates in Canadian history, a long article on the Canadian Constitution by Sir John Bourinot, an even longer article on Canadian geology by George M. Dawson, and a special section on sports and pastimes. Before enumerating and describing twenty-one trans-Atlantic routes to Canada, old Karl makes a modest disclaimer: "The Editor hopes that this volume will continue to share the advantages that accrue to the whole series of his Handbooks from the valuable and highly appreciated CORRECTIONS and SUGGESTIONS of the travelling public". And now, the reader is ready to explore the Dominion.

Sections II, III and IV deal with the Maritimes and Newfoundland. What impresses you most is Baedeker's extraordinarily detailed, not to say out-of-the-way, information. We learn, for instance, that in Saint John a good view is obtained from the grounds of the New Brunswick School for the Deaf; that in Halifax the Provincial Museum ("open free week-days 10-4") contains, among other things, "a gilt pyramid representing the amount of gold produced by the province in 1862-93 (value \$10,869,900)"; that in Charlottetown, "the large *Lunatic Asylum* occupies a point projecting into the East River, and near it is the *Trotting Park*." Even the most curious traveller could scarcely wish for more specific information.

Montreal, described in Section V (Quebec), is dealt with in an, at times, almost sombre manner. "In the lower part

of the town, the streets are irregular, narrow and dingy", and "The huge and amorphous structure behind the Windsor Hotel is the *Victoria Skating Rink* (p 133) used in summer as a garage," while the Art Gallery is described, with a well bred twinge, as "in the pseudo-Greek-Ionic style". But a visit to the tower of Notre Dame inspires a quotation that is frankly rhapsodic: "So far as the eye can see, it dwells only upon what is magnificent. Below you spreads the city, which has less that is merely mean in it than any other city of our continent. . . Two mighty streams commingled flow past the city, lighting up the vast champaign country to the South, while upon the utmost southern verge, as upon the northern, rise the cloudy summits of far-off mountains."

In Quebec City, Baedeker warns those who wish to take a *calèche* that "though there is a fixed tariff, it is well to come to a clear understanding beforehand." On a tour of the Parliament Buildings he pauses for a moment to observe of the coats of arms on the wooden panelling of the stairway, that they are "not always quite accurate". He missed extremely little. The street cars in Ottawa are "propelled by electricity generated by the Chaudière Falls"; "nervous visitors" to the Houses of Parliament "should note that a time-gun is fired at noon (at 10 a.m. on Sun.) near the Macdonald statue"; the Interprovincial Bridge "is composed of one cantilever span (556 ft long), two anchor arm spans (each 247 ft long), and two truss spans (247 ft and 140 ft)." He also appends a note for those wishing to test the forensic ability of Canada's legislators:

Few of the speeches delivered in the House can be called inspiring. In fact, when not personal, they are prosaic. This can hardly be helped, for a Canadian Parliament . . . deals, as a rule, with matters from which only a genius could draw inspiration. The French-Canadian members . . . are far superior to their English speaking *confreres* in accuracy of expression and grace of style.

Baedeker's advice to those visiting Toronto is to "ask for rooms away from the street-car lines", but otherwise he seems to find the city much to his liking: "the buildings are substantial and often handsome"; "the city has substantial grounds for the claim it sometimes makes of being the 'Boston of Canada'. Toronto contains about 300 churches, and Sunday is very strictly observed". Old Karl admires the University of Toronto very much, and remarks that its buildings form "perhaps the finest ensemble of college architecture in the W. Hemi-

sphere." He has goodnatured fun, however, at the expense of the Island: "Like Coney Island, it is nothing but a large sandbank, fringed with flimsy summer cottages and studded with merry-go-rounds, band-stands, dancing-pavilions and the other paraphernalia of a Cockney Paradise." In his description of a drive through Riverdale Park, his passion for all-inclusive accuracy reaches a high point: "The *Zoological Collection* is large and varied. A lacrosse match is generally going on... on Saturday in summer. In the vicinity are several picturesque cemeteries."

At Niagara Falls, Baedeker is shocked at the ravages of industrial development, and at the frank exploitation of the tourist, against which he warns repeatedly: "The former extortionate charges have somewhat abated, but the cab-touts on the trains and at the station are scarcely to be trusted." "It is always advisable to make a distinct bargain with the driver... It should be expressly stipulated who is to pay the tolls in crossing the bridges etc; and the driver should be strictly enjoined not to stop at any of the bazaars or other pay-places, unless ordered to do so". "No time need be wasted on the so-called *Burning Spring* (adm 50c.)."

Finally, we leave for Western Canada—"The line runs (from Toronto) towards the W. (view of the old *Lunatic Asylum* to the right and the *Home for Incurables* to the left), then turns to the N. and quits the city precincts." This final section, VII, deals with the Western and North Western Provinces, and is followed by a supplement on Alaska. Our first stop of any length is at Winnipeg, "the 'Chicago of Canada'... the most cosmopolitan city in the W... and claiming to enjoy 330 sunny days out of the 365 days of the year". "The environs of Winnipeg offer little to detain the lover of the picturesque", but the city itself "contains many substantial and even handsome buildings... is dotted freely with churches and public schools, and has large areas of public parks". But an aside on the "inevitable mansard roofs" of the public buildings leaves us in some doubt as to old Karl's real opinion of the city's architecture.

Proceeding further west, he finds Calgary containing "a large proportion of a good class of English settlers." "The city offers a more refined life than most western cities of so recent origin (1884)". Vancouver, despite its substantial buildings and excellent streets—"Vancouver compares very favorably with most towns of its age"—is, you feel, something of a let

down after Calgary. But in Victoria Baedeker finds himself completely at home: "a quiet and attractive little city... forming a pleasant contrast to some of its rather raw-looking neighbours on Puget Sound, and containing a larger proportion of a cultivated 'leisured class' than is usual in the Far West... it has quite an old world air, while the climate...rivals that of the most delightful health-resorts in the South of England."

You will have guessed, of course, long before this, that Karl Baedeker's guidebook to Canada was written by an Englishman. It was actually prepared by Dr. J. F. Muirhead, editor of the famous *Blue Guides*; and knowing this, you understand and sympathise with his almost audible sigh of relief as he arrives at Victoria, after having charted, for other Englishmen, the trackless wilderness of wildest Canada. Dr. Muirhead was assisted in his task by Professor David R. Keys and Professor J. F. McCurdy, while statistical information was furnished by Canadian officials in London. But, insofar as a personality emerges from the factual impersonality of the book, it is Dr. Muirhead's. One pictures him as of the Gordon stamp—the "literary gent" who nevertheless has a resilient core of tungsten which enables him to withstand any amount of discomfort—indeed, to welcome it—in the cause of accuracy and polish. But from this bundle of facts, information and statistics, there is visible only the dry bones of Canada, not its flesh and blood. Perhaps it is too much to expect any guidebook to give us that.