

A Co-operative Boat Trip

John A. MacDonald, '38.

It was mild gray weather. Inland the day seemed calm but along the south coast of P. E. I. a wind was blowing that whipped the sea into a mass of frothy waves which leaped and tossed restlessly. About eight o'clock in the morning as some of the residents of Keppoch, a summer resort at the mouth of the beautiful Charlottetown harbour, were appearing out of doors a motor vessel was seen passing. Around the bow of the vessel was written "Bessie M. Dougan." The name had little significance for some, but the suspicions of others were aroused by the number and the actions of the crew. Some of the early risers bringing out their binoculars observed that there was a crew of about twenty-five on the small boat, and further, that nearly half of them were garbed in dark clothing. They probably noted that these strange mariners were not swabbing the decks or scrambling up and down the rope ladders, but that some were sitting around in groups, apparently having an informal chat, while others were reading the morning papers. In general, they seemed to be enjoying the ideal life of a sailor.

Why any captain should ever have signed on and embarked with a crew which acted in such an independent and carefree way puzzled the onlookers, nevertheless, that is what had actually happened. Shortly before the ship had passed beyond the range where the movement of those on board could be easily discerned from the shore, and was coming into rough water, the sails were raised. They noted this incident did not arouse any latent seafaring enthusiasm among the crew, with the result that all the work had to be done by two members while the remaining ones merely moved their chairs out of the way in a rather nonchalant manner. As a matter of fact, half of the crew consisted of clergy and the other half of professors, school teachers, farmers, and two house-wives, all bound for the Rural and Industrial Conference at St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish. Although every one on board had in reality been required to sign on as a member of the crew in order to comply with customs requirements, the real personnel of the crew consisted of only four seafaring men while the others should be classed as students—students of the co-operative movement,

which was discussed in its many different phases during the trip.

As we proceeded along the coast the boat began to roll but by this time most of the crew had gotten their "sea legs" so that only two were noticeably distressed by the motion of the ship. When we had passed the Wood Islands Light and were farther out in the Strait the water was perfectly calm. About eleven o'clock in the morning it was unanimously agreed that the lunch boxes be opened and some hot tea was soon prepared. After all had been satisfied several packs of cards were brought out and bridge and forty-fives provided amusement for many. Following this, every one joined in singing some of the old favorites and it is really a pity there was no audience other than the crying gulls to enjoy the harmony. Before we realized it the afternoon had nearly slipped away and we were roused from our pleasant pastimes by the sight of Cape George several miles in front of us and of the peculiar Sugar Loaf back of Antigonish, only a few miles overland. Once around the Cape it was a short run to Ballantyne's Cove where we were to land. Just before docking the only mishap of the voyage occurred when a gust of wind left one of our party suddenly hatless. A fisherman set out immediately from the dock in a gallant attempt to recover it but Davy Jones snatched it just before it could be reached. As we stepped onto the dock, in fine spirits and nicely tanned from our day's trip, our popular purser (Dr. Croteau) having obtained a particularly fine coat of it, we were greeted by several Island people attending the Conference who drove us the remaining twenty miles to Antigonish.

After registering at the University and being assigned to our rooms we went at once to the dining-room where appetites sharpened by the sea trip were at last satisfied. Some time was spent after supper exploring the buildings of this famous seat of learning before we followed the crowd to the Gymnasium where the sessions were being held. On our arrival there the audience was so large that we were obliged to be satisfied with standing room in the gallery. From our place we looked down on a group of people comprised of clergymen of all denominations, nuns of different orders, professors, farmers, students, fishermen, men in public life, tradesmen, professional men, and many others from all walks of life who were interested

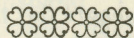
in adult education. This movement as spread by the Extension Department was aptly described by Charles A. Beard, President of the American Association for Adult Education, as being motivated by people "with their heads in the clouds but their feet on the ground."

Space and the subject do not permit the writer to discuss at length that memorable conference. It was remarked, however, by some of the Island party after the session which we attended on the evening of our arrival, that that programme alone was well worth the trip. Stated briefly, it consisted of speeches from ordinary men active in the co-operative movement who, by their earnest and natural expression instilled in their hearers a feeling of intense respect and admiration for the work being done by Drs. Tompkins and Coady, Prof. A. B. MacDonald, and the other members of their staff. Among those taking part in the discussion that evening were several farmers, a fisherman, the manager of a co-operative store, and a woman prominent in spreading knowledge on "Arts and Crafts for Women." Following this an inspiring address was given by the well-known Dr. Coady, Director of the Extension Department. Elmer Scott of Dallas, Texas, concluded the session with a talk on the problems of adult education in his state, and expressed his admiration for the way in which these men were helping people and directing them towards the solution of their own difficulties. Statements of practical achievements and inspirational addresses of the kind heard on this evening featured the whole six sessions. Some highlights of the Conference were the speeches of: Bishop Morrison, Antigonish; Charles A. Beard, New York; Rev. J. D. Nelson MacDonald, Baddeck Forks, C. B.; Michael Williams, Editor of The Commonweal, New York; Rev. Malcolm MacLellan, Prof. of Education, St. F. X.; and Miss Ida Gallant, field secretary of the Extension Department. Dr. Croteau when called on during one of the sessions, related to his audience the encouraging progress of Adult Education on Prince Edward Island and told them of the success of the novel co-operative venture about which your author is writing—needless to say, he was very well received. All who attended the Conference, whether from as far west as Edmonton or as far south as Texas, left at the end of the third day with a profound respect for the co-operative movement and with the feeling that they had enjoyed a

real taste of "Highland hospitality" during their brief stay among the people of Antigonish.

On our return to the boat we motored by a longer route, travelling over well-gravelled roads through the peaceful countryside on the north-eastern coast of Nova Scotia. The ship cast off shortly before mid-afternoon and at the beginning of our homeward trip, we again encountered rough weather. This did not mar the enjoyment of the trip, however, as singing was again popular and the discussions on co-operation were, needless to say, more numerous and enthusiastic. The trip itself was an excellent example of the versatility of the co-operative movement, which serves to show that it can be extended into many different fields and would be a more economical way of carrying out many community enterprises. For those who had the privilege of making the trip it was not merely an example of the merits of co-operation (the round trip cost only \$4.), but was such an enjoyable event that most of those who made the trip are looking forward eagerly to making another this year.

Instead of following the course along the coast of Nova Scotia to Pictou Island, the captain set out directly for P. E. I. and after several hours of driving into the wind we were in the shadow of the red banks where the water was calm. By that time every one was beginning to feel a gnawing inside and the hearty lunch served just before sun down was received with great relish. Coasting along the Island shore in the evening and at night, guided by the lights, was a very pleasant experience, especially for those of us who had not been to sea before. One member of the nominal crew surprised us, however, and showed himself to be an old hand at the wheel by guiding the ship most of the way up the coast in a very capable manner. At last, we saw the range lights of Charlottetown and slipped in quietly through the darkness—except for the singing of a few last songs, notably "Should Auld Acquaintance" and "For They Are Jolly Good Fellows."



So much one man can do
That does both act and know.

—Marvell.