

The Presidential Year from the Driving Wheel.

WHEN it dawned on my family and friends that I really was expected to write this article, they inundated me with suggestions for the title, such as: "The Presidential Year from a Not Usual Angle," "My Censored Diary," "My Wanderings with the President." But I think that the one I have chosen is as good as any! The only suggestion I received for the opening paragraph was: "Writing of the President's journeyings is very much like a hen trying to lay an egg on a moving staircase!" I very much sympathise with the hen, for it is difficult to know where to begin, or what, out of 25,000 miles' wanderings, you would find most interesting.

As you read this masterpiece, please realise that at school nothing terrified me more than having to write an essay.

We started off in the West Country—much to Father's joy, as you will appreciate if you have ploughed through his address. (You would understand my attitude, had you waded through all the drafts; typed, censored, and re-typed them all; and, finally, listened for over fifty minutes to the completed oration!) For part of that tour we had to use our small Sports car. Those who have seen how the President had to be carefully wrapped up after meetings before travelling in a closed car can imagine what precautions had to be taken in an open car. It really was a funny sight! People often turned to look and laugh as we went by, for all that suggested that the huge bundle of rugs, capes and scarves next to me contained anything human was a trilby hat (no, not the "topper"!) perched above it all!

Many all over the country know, to their cost, the amount of luggage entailed in the President's entourage—first and foremost, the hat box containing the famous Top Hat; enough clothing for the climate to be met on a tour of ten days, a fortnight, or three weeks; two big attaché cases containing correspondence and stationery; my portable typewriter; Father's small case containing his notes. (I have often wondered why no one had the presence of mind to cause this case mysteriously to disappear!) All this paraphernalia had to be carefully packed into the back each morning, and unpacked each night. I am afraid that this mode of travel rather took from the dignity of

the High Office, as we must have resembled a moving sky-scraper or a pantechnicon! This amusing, but uncomfortable, procedure mercifully only lasted for ten days, after which we returned with alacrity to the comfort of our Ford V8. (BNO 1, the number of this car, has more than once been translated by humourists as "Baptist Number One" !)

That was a most happy month. Few would object to touring Devon in May, even at the price of attending meetings *ad lib.*

During that tour we came to London to attend a Reception at which the King and Queen and members of the Royal Family were to be present. Later, I drove Mother and Father to St. Paul's Cathedral to the Jubilee Service. I was thrilled with both, and could have stood for hours watching all the notable people in their brightly coloured uniforms, many adorned with the Ribands of different Orders, and an amazing assortment of medals.

Going to the Cathedral was a unique experience. An hour before the Royal party was due to pass, we bowled along in state through gaily decorated streets packed on either side with colossal crowds. Every available window and roof was occupied. One car preceded us—otherwise the roads themselves were deserted, save for cordons of mounted and other police. As we sailed along through the excited and expectant crowds, it gave me a most regal sensation, and I felt that I ought to be bowing to the left and right! Mother and Father said that it was a most impressive service, and were most interested in meeting many famous characters gathered there.

The other excitement of this type was when we three went to the Royal Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Again I was intrigued with the brightly coloured and gay throng, and sat on as many chairs as I could in the Palace! The grounds were most unpalatial, but very restful. I can imagine how the King loved to stroll over the lawns, with his pet dog, through the trees down to the lake. It was charming to see the way in which Princess Elizabeth ran up to him under the canopy, and, having curtsied, jumped up on his knee and kissed him. There they sat for quite a time, chatting and laughing most happily. I shall always be thankful to the Presidency for giving me an opportunity to see King George.

It has been great fun visiting the villages, many of which I had never even heard of before (Geography having been my weakest subject!). I feel now that I know more than many about our country, and the more I see of it the more I love it. We have also spent about a fortnight touring Scotland. It was in Aberdeen that Father patronised one of the local cinemas on a

Sunday evening, thus shocking his puritanical daughter, who thought it her duty to take a firm stand by absenting herself! But his diversion was quite harmless, as he was taking part in a united evangelical service.

Father often talks about the conservatism of Baptists. He certainly is right there. I do not know much about other denominations, but I am sure they could not beat Baptists for refusing to budge. It does make the Scots blood in me boil to hear of a huge sum, offered for a church building in an important position in a town or city, being turned down because of sentiment. Father always tells me that I entirely lack that quality. Well, if it has that effect, I am glad I do. What is there in the building, anyhow—especially if the church could be moved out from where the population has already departed to new housing areas, where thousands are living with no church of any kind near them? The Roman Catholics will go there instead. They seem to be progressing famously—building compact, attractive little churches all over the country in newly populated areas. If people like us are so short-sighted, can it be wondered at that the Roman Catholics make such headway by keeping up with the times?

Then, there are a ridiculous number of churches which have "split." This means that many small towns have two Baptist churches, with congregations which, if united, would not even fill one of them. I can't help thinking of spoilt, pampered children who, having quarrelled, instead of making up their differences just sulk in a corner, glowering at one another.

(This tirade is the outcome of encouragement to write quite frankly of how things strike an onlooker.)

I could write an article on vestries alone. When you spend nearly every evening of every week (and often the afternoons, too) typing in one, you get to know quite a bit about their eccentricities—to say nothing of atmospheres! When there was not a vestry, I had to type as best I could in the car—and sometimes that was the more desirable course. The trouble then was, especially in a distressed area or a slummy part of a town, that an open-mouthed audience invariably collected! If, however, that was the total extent of their activities, I considered myself let off lightly! Once, when I was seated in the back trying to concentrate on my typing, the front off-side door opened, the horn sounded loud and long, and the culprit disappeared before I could do anything about it! I hope it did not disturb the meeting unduly. (Perhaps they would have been glad of a little diversion—you never know!)

Our hosts and hostesses have always been kindness itself. The "roof over our head" has varied from a young mansion, with four maids and a butler, to a miner's cottage. With my

miner host, I had a most interesting talk concerning his job underground. He told me of the wages some of the men under him received, and I really do not blame them for sometimes going on strike. He was a lay preacher, and, in spite of working underground all day at his precarious occupation, he was full of fun, and, far from being overawed by the President, enjoyed pulling his leg. I was much amused at being consulted as an authority on the question of open-membership.

We were much struck by the cleanliness of many of these homes in these dirty, smutty, industrial areas. It would do a lot of good if more people were to travel through the distressed areas. They would then realise how terrible it is to see works after works closed down and falling into ruin; and to see the crowds of men, young and old, standing about on the street corners with no hope of work. We just hated going past them in our powerful car, and slunk through the streets with our tails between our legs.

I am quite popular at home now, as every time I came back from a tour I brought a new recipe—always most acceptable in a large family. One was of delicious sponge cakes made by a dear old lady in Lancashire. In true northern lavish style, she used a dozen or more eggs for each batch of cakes she made, and then distributed them to the poor of her church. She was considered a fairy godmother in the district. One of her kindly deeds was to make a beautiful cake for an old woman about to celebrate her eightieth birthday. This octogenarian would otherwise have gone without a cake, as she had neither money to buy one nor relatives to make one.

At the Yorkshire Association meetings at Hebden Bridge, I was bullied into the barbaric custom of eating cheese with apple tart! Evidently aware that I was still unconverted, a plot was hatched to make yet another attempt to poison me by sending still more cheese with Christmas cake. That's the way you are treated at Association meetings! (By the way, do not go to Hebden Bridge in a car in wet weather—the streets are cobbled and narrow, steep as the roofs of houses, and full of Devil's Elbows! Otherwise it is a charming spot! !)

On the subject of roads, our worst experience was when we spent three hours in the dark trying to extricate the car from a Gloucestershire lane. Shortly after midnight we succeeded, but, not content with that delay, proceeded to lose our way (going round in small circles), eventually arriving at our hostess's at one o'clock in the morning.

I shall never forget the Association meetings at Ross-on-Wye, where during the luncheon we noticed a dear old man running about making himself most useful. He was almost completely enveloped in a white apron, but above it was a bright,

cheery face, crowned by a shining bald "pate." He was foremost in clearing the tables and was chief washer-up. Later, we learned that he was employed on the railway, and had a week's holiday every year. Of this, he was giving three days to this work.

Many friends most rudely say that it is a miracle to have got through the year without loss of life or endorsement of licence! Once I certainly had an exciting race with four police "cops"! (Father was not with me, although I must say he always was a sport when there was a chance of a race). But when we came to a thirty-mile limit, thinking prudence was the better part of valour, I very obviously slowed down, ostentatiously lowered the window, and still more deliberately waved them on. This greatly delighted them, and they sailed by at about fifty miles per hour, all holding up three fingers in a superior manner. That, however much it may be doubted, was the only *contretemps* we had with the police.

One of the most important duties throughout this year has been to cultivate the art of deflation. It has been a strenuous and whole-time job, but with all this experience behind me I now feel qualified for the position of official deflator to the future Presidents of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland—and they will need it!

CONNIE D. WOOD.

First The Kingdom, The Story of Robert Fletcher Moorshead,
by H. V. Lacombe, B.A., B.D. (Carey Press, 3s. 6d. net.)

Fletcher Moorshead was a lovable man whose memory is fragrant to-day wherever he went. Medical Missions were his passion: he never tired of their advocacy. Baptist Medical Missions are his story and his monument; but Mr. Lacombe has done more than write their history. He has revealed the personality of this God-possessed man and shewn how gracious and beautiful a Christian home can be.

The Lamp of Truth, by H. J. Dale (T. and T. Clark, 1s. 6d. net.)

The author, who is minister of the Lymington Baptist Church, is an earnest Bible student. He has acquaintance with modern Biblical scholarship, and in five brief chapters writes illuminatingly of the history and nature of the Book and its abiding worth. This is just the introductory study which thoughtful young people will welcome.