



—Trio

The Governor-General receiving the salute upon arrival at Victoria, B. C. With him, Lord Hardinge, A.D.C., and General Ross

# NORTHERN LIGHTS

## Comment about Canadians & Events

**M**R. THOMAS AHEARN is the man who will guide Ottawa's first development under the new Federal District scheme dramatically announced by the Prime Minister in the closing days of the last Parliament. He is a man whose name is less well-known throughout Canada than it should be, for the career of Mr. Ahearn has been no less romantic than, and comparably remunerative with, that of the late J. R. Booth. In

short, he is a man who has reached tremendous success on the ladder of life—which perhaps is a great reason, in addition to his Liberalism, why Premier King chose him for the new position. Pioneer of electrical power as he is, Mr. Ahearn did much to make Ottawa what it is to-day, and the beautifying of the Capital has been one of his strong personal interests.

"An exceptionally able business executive," Premier King said in Parliament, but he touched only the fringe of Mr. Ahearn's remarkable life.

His story is one of the best that ever captured the imagination. For Thomas Ahearn, or Tom, as Ottawa affectionately calls him, was born near the Chaudiere "Flats" before there was a water wheel there. He was the son of a blacksmith who bequeathed to his son remarkable qualities of genius, health, a love of work and honesty. Did the tumbling waters of the Chaudiere Falls tell him that electricity was the key to the age? He left school early and started life as a telegraph boy. Then he learned to be a telegrapher and became so proficient that, working in New York, he was entrusted with the important government communications to and from Washington.

But he came back to Ottawa, and became manager of the former Dominion Telegraph Company, as a very young man. His old school friend, the late Warren Y. Soper, was manager of the

Montreal Telegraph Company, and the two decided to stake their all upon electricity. So they became partners. Mr. Ahearn was manager of

the first telephone exchange in Ottawa. The pair constructed long-distance telephone lines connecting Halifax and Vancouver, and developed electricity from Chaudiere Falls. One of their first contracts was the stringing of telegraph wires for the Canadian Pacific Railway along the bleak coast of Nova Scotia. Baron Shaughnessy, then plain Thomas G. Shaughnessy, gave them the contract for telegraph instrument equipment of the C.P.R. from the Atlantic to the Pacific, and the firm was on its feet.

Both were keenly interested in the use of electricity for transportation. Electric cars ran merrily in the warmer cities, but they were thought utterly impossible in Ottawa in view of the heavy snowfall. From 1870 to 1890 the Capital had horse-drawn cars on a few streets. Then the service became inadequate. In 1890 a Toronto firm turned down its option on Ottawa's street railway, and the two young Ottawa men took it up. They were financed by the savings of many Ottawa people who had faith. In June, 1891, practically the whole city turned out for the inauguration of the new service. The electric current was turned on at the Chaudiere by Franklyn Ahearn, five-year-old son of Mr. Thomas Ahearn, the latter drove out the first car from the barns, and Mr. Soper was motorman of the second. What a day it must have been!

There remained the coming winter! The two undaunted men had electric sweepers built to their own specifications, fastened to trucks with specially adapted bodies, and as a special treat and surprise for patrons, Mr. Ahearn designed electric hot water heaters piped beneath the seats so that the cars were cosily warm. In less than two decades the two telegraphers were well on the way to fame and fortune. Later there followed the organization of the Ottawa Car Manufacturing Company which supplied cars to many cities. They built the first large double truck cars in Canada; waggons for the South African War; ambulances of their own design; gun carriages and equipment; and in the Great War howitzer carriages.



—Thomson

Lady Willingdon, with Lord Hardinge, A.D.C., reviewing girl guides at Vancouver, B.C., from which she has just returned to Ottawa



—International

Left: Mr. Thomas Ahearn chosen to guide Ottawa's first development under the newly constituted Federal District Commission

Right: Hon. Ernest Lapointe, Canada's minister of justice, who represents the Dominion at the official opening of Canberra, Australia's new capital.



—Castonquy