

# HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

alter  
tevens  
BY  
W. S. HERRINGTON

"But there are deeds which should not pass away,  
And names that must not wither."

Byron's *Childe Harold*.



TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS  
1910

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## PREFACE

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THE following sketches were originally prepared, without any idea of publication, in the form of an address to the Lennox and Addington Historical Society, and it is at the request of that Society that I now consent that they appear in their present form. I regret that time and opportunity have not placed within my reach other records which must be in existence in different parts of our country. I feel confident that a careful search of all available documents bearing upon the early history of Canada would reveal many other striking illustrations of the heroic spirit of the early settlers.

For the information upon which these narratives are based, I desire to acknowledge my indebtedness to Parkman's *Pioneers of France in the New World*, Canniff's *Settlement of Upper Canada*, Miss Machar's *Stories of New France*, Mrs. Currie's *Story of Laura Secord*, Miss FitzGibbon's *A Veteran of 1812*, *Picturesque Canada*, Dr. Ryerson's *Loyalists of America and Their Times*, Withrow's *History of Canada*, Lady Edgar's *Ten Years of Upper*

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## PREFACE

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*Canada*, Mrs. Wheeler's *Story of Abigail Becker*, and to Mr. J. C. Walsh, Managing Editor of the *Montreal Herald*, and Mr. C. M. Warner, President of the Lennox and Addington Historical Society.

W. S. HERRINGTON.

Napanee, Ontario, March 1st, 1909.

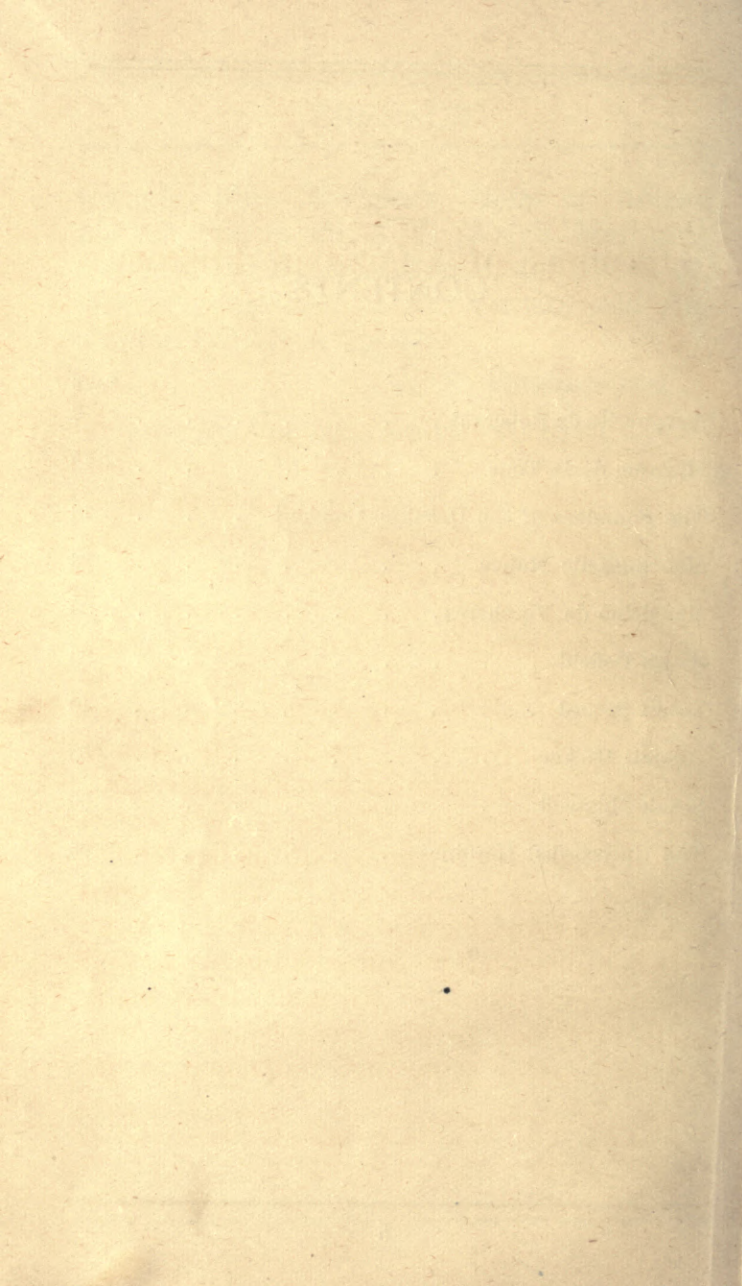
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# Heroines of Canadian History

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## I.

### MARGUERITE DE ROBERVAL.\*

THE story I am about to relate may be of no historical significance, but it furnishes an illustration of the courage and endurance of the women who first visited these shores.

It will be remembered that the third voyage of Cartier, in 1541, was made under Sieur de Roberval, whom Francis the First appointed the first Viceroy of Canada. He was a wealthy French noble of a most determined and cruel disposition. His niece, Marguerite de Roberval, was a member of his household. She was a bright young girl, full of the spirit of adventure of the age, and such a favorite with her uncle that he consented to her accompanying him upon the voyage. Like many another maiden in like circumstances, Marguerite had for some time, unknown to her

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\* Some historians regard this narrative of Marguerite de Roberval as pure fiction, but as careful an investigator as Parkman does not hesitate to accept the story as one of the actual events of our early history.

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uncle, been receiving the attention of a poor young cavalier whose love was not unrequited. He could not bear the thought of being separated from his sweetheart, so he managed to enlist as a volunteer with Roberval, and sailed in the same ship with him and his niece. In the course of the voyage the lovers' secret was discovered, and Roberval's affection for his niece gave way to a vengeance cruel and inhuman. Off the coast of Newfoundland was an island called the Isle of Demons, supposed to be the abode of evil spirits. Turning a deaf ear to the supplications of the frightened girl, the cruel monster deposited her upon this lonely shore with no other companion to share her solitude than an old nurse. With scant provisions, four guns, and a limited supply of ammunition, he left her to her fate. Her lover was powerless to stay the hand of Roberval, and as the ship was getting under way again, strapping his gun and a quantity of ammunition to his back, he leaped into the sea and with sturdy strokes soon rejoined the heart-broken Marguerite.

In vain they hoped and prayed that their pitiable plight might move the stony heart of the Governor. He never returned. Marguerite and her lover went through the form of marriage as best they could without the aid of

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## MARGUERITE DE ROBERVAL

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a priest. Did ever a couple begin housekeeping under such trying circumstances? They built themselves a rude hut. The wild fowl and fish furnished their table, and from the skins of wild animals they provided themselves with clothing to resist the cold of the approaching winter.

In the following summer Marguerite became a mother and devoted most of her time to caring for her baby. Her husband had hoped that the cruel uncle would return to relieve their suffering, and the bitter disappointment he experienced crushed his spirit. Grieving over the suffering of his loving wife, he sickened and died. The baby did not long survive him, and the faithful old nurse also succumbed. In the lonely forest this brave young woman knelt beside the graves she had made with her own hands and prayed for strength and courage to bear up under her heavy burden. Only a few months before, she was the moving spirit in the castle of the "little King of Vimeu," as her uncle was called, and no luxury was denied her. She was his favorite and had often accompanied him upon his hunting expeditions, where fortunately she had become an expert with the arquebuse. His love had changed to hatred. The gayety of the Court was now replaced by



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the dreadful solitude of this lonely isle. Want and privation, discomfort and fear now confronted her, and the three fresh mounds, bathed with her scalding tears, warned her that she, too, was likely very soon to join the only human beings who had shared her misery. Then there would be no tender hands to caress her in her last hours. She did not yield to these despairing thoughts, but determined to meet her fate with a bold front. For eighteen long and dreary months she wandered about the shores straining her eyes for a glimpse of a sail. Three or four times relief seemed at hand as a white speck appearing upon the horizon soon disclosed the dimensions of a ship, only to melt away again, leaving her more lonely than before. The third winter was almost upon her when she again espied a welcome sail. How was she to lure the ship to this dreaded shore—the supposed home of mischief-making demons? Mustered all her strength for one final effort, she sacrificed her little store of fuel that she had painfully gathered from the forest and built a huge fire, in the hope that the smoke would attract the attention of the strangers. Nearer and nearer came the boat, a fisherman's barque. With frantic gestures she signalled for help. The fishermen drew near enough to

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## MARGUERITE DE ROBERVAL

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descry a lonely figure, clad in skins of wild animals, wildly gesticulating as she ran along the shore. In doubt as to whether this was a human being or a dreaded spirit, they concluded to solve the mystery and land upon the island, and thus was Marguerite rescued from her perilous situation and shortly afterwards was returned to France after an absence of nearly three years.

Do the annals of any history furnish a more pathetic or a more impressive tale than this? The courage that will lead battalions to the cannon's mouth might well waver when confronted with the terrors of the awful exile of this brave young girl. The strength that will carry hardened soldiers through a protracted battle would in most instances succumb to the long months of solitary suffering such as was endured by Marguerite de Roberval.

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## II.

### MADAME DE LA TOUR.

No province of our Dominion has been buffeted about more in the storms of political changes than Nova Scotia. It had been the scene of many a bloody conflict before it received its present name. In 1621, Sir William Alexander, a favorite at the Court of King James the First, prevailed upon that monarch to grant to him the whole of the present province and a goodly portion of the mainland, and to gratify his sovereign's fondness for Latin, he called his newly-acquired possession Nova Scotia. Upon the death of King James, his successor confirmed Alexander's charter, and further permitted him to establish an order of Knights-Baronets of Nova Scotia. This title and eighteen square miles of land he could grant to anyone he desired upon payment of a substantial fee.

Claude de la Tour and his son Charles were already firmly established in Nova Scotia, having acquired their title through the French. While Champlain was besieged in Quebec, the elder de la Tour was captured and taken

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## MADAME DE LA TOUR

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prisoner to England. He conceived the novel expedient of changing his allegiance to the English sovereign, and for a time was the lion of English society, married an English wife, and induced Sir William Alexander to create both himself and his son Charles Knights-Baronets of Nova Scotia. He returned to Nova Scotia with the glad tidings to his son, but Charles would have none of his English frills and the protection they guaranteed him. He stood upon his rights and defied his father, Sir William Alexander, and the whole English nation.

We can readily understand that from that day Charles de la Tour had no easy task in maintaining his possessions. But maintain them he did. By the treaty of St. Germain-en-Laye, Nova Scotia was ceded to the French, and, quite naturally, Charles de la Tour thought his claims to the governorship should be recognized by the French King. Great was his disappointment when Captain de Razilly was sent out as Governor. Razilly died the following year, having ceded all his rights to one Charnisay. A bitter enmity sprang up between Charnisay and de la Tour, and in vain the King endeavored to patch up their differences by limiting the territorial jurisdiction of each. Charnisay had the ear of the King, and

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obtained an order for the arrest of de la Tour, and in the spring of 1643 he proceeded to put it into execution. But this was not such an easy task. De la Tour had built a strong fort at the mouth of the St. John's River, which he named Fort de la Tour. Here he and his wife with a handful of followers defied Charnisay and a force of five hundred men, and successfully resisted their attack by land and sea. Charnisay then determined to starve them out, and accordingly besieged them by land and established a blockade at sea. The keen eye of de la Tour discovered an English ship through the blockade, and he and his wife, in a small boat with muffled oars, at dead of night ran the blockade and reached the ship. Now he made good use of his English baronetcy, which he had previously spurned, and prevailed upon the captain to place the ship at his disposal. Sailing to New England, he secured the assistance of four more ships and seventy men, returned to Fort de la Tour, scattered the ships and forces of Charnisay, and followed him to his own stronghold at Port Royal, where he captured a shipload of rich furs.

Hostilities were brought to an end for a time through the intervention of de la Tour's New England allies; but he knew that peace

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## MADAME DE LA TOUR

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could not last long. He at once set about strengthening his fortification, and despatched his brave wife to France for assistance. Charnisay had gone home with the same object in view, and, learning that Madame de la Tour was in France, he endeavored to effect her arrest; but she managed to baffle him, and in so doing had many thrilling adventures. She finally returned in safety to her anxious husband. He again went to New England to obtain assistance. No sooner had he departed than Charnisay attacked the fort, thinking it would be an easy matter to capture it in the absence of the commander. Little he knew of the brave heart of Madame de la Tour, who had already shared the perils of her husband and was prepared to take his place in his absence.

The brave woman immediately took charge and directed the movements of the little garrison. She gave the attacking party such a warm reception that they retired with chagrin, having lost thirty-three men. De la Tour's mission had been fruitless, and Charnisay awaited his return. His loyal wife was left alone to repel the attacks of the overwhelming foe, and he was powerless to assist her. Many weary, anxious days passed, and she longed in vain for the return of her husband with the

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needed reinforcements. She did not despair, for when Charnisay made a second attack upon the fort he found the brave little woman ready to receive him, and he was about to abandon the attempt to dislodge her. Then happened one of those incidents which may be in accord with the ethics of war, but to the ordinary mind smack of cowardice. A miserable creature, an inmate of the fort, sold his wretched soul to the besiegers, and for a paltry bribe admitted the enemy through the outer gates. Driven to close quarters, our heroine yet held her own for three days. At last, seeing that further resistance meant more bloodshed, she surrendered the fort.

If ever a commander should have shown some sense of chivalry that man was Charnisay, but gallantry and he were strangers. When he discovered that the fort contained so few soldiers, he was enraged to think that he had been kept at bay so long, and he ordered the entire garrison to be murdered before the eyes of their late commander, about whose neck he placed a halter.

It is difficult to conceive by what process of reasoning he would attempt to justify this cowardly slaughter of prisoners of war, and no language can express the contempt every fair-minded reader must feel towards the man

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## MADAME DE LA TOUR

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who heaped such an indignity upon a brave woman when she was defenceless and in his power. If he had any sense of shame, surely it must have been awakened when the woman's tender heart asserted itself and she fell fainting to the ground as she saw her faithful comrades butchered by their inhuman captor. He does not appear to have been moved by any such feeling, but carried her away a prisoner to Port Royal. Then the reaction set in. The terrible ordeal she had undergone had taxed her strength beyond its limit of endurance. She fell ill, and in three weeks' time passed beyond the reach of her tormentor.



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### III.

#### THE FOUNDERS OF THE URSULINE CONVENT.

IT is not alone on the bloody field of battle or in the besieged fortress that we are to look for the heroines of our country. Many a hero's fame has been won in a day or an hour when, inspired by his surroundings and enthused by the acclamations of his friends and companions, he took advantage of the supreme opportunity and performed some feat that won for him a place among our nation's heroes. Deeds of valor performed under such circumstances are not to be belittled, even though it may be said the opportunity suggested the deed and the favorable surroundings prompted its execution. All honor to him who seized the opportunity! How many battles have been lost and kingdoms overthrown through the neglect to grasp the situation and act at the proper time!

But what shall we say of the originality, bravery, self-sacrifice and devotion of those who, as it were, create the opportunity and spend years, yes, a lifetime, in carrying out the design? Such is the history of the

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## FOUNDERS OF URSULINE CONVENT

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founders of the great Ursuline Convent at Quebec. That historic pile stands to-day a fitting and everlasting monument to the heroism and Christian devotion of Madame de la Peltrie, its founder, and Marie de l'Incarnation, the first Mother Superior. The former was a wealthy widow much sought after in the social world. In her home at Paris she was surrounded with all the comforts and luxuries the age could produce. She had learned of the settlements of her fellow-countrymen in the New World and of the numerous tribes of Indians to whom the faithful priests were carrying for the first time the glad tidings of the Prince of Peace. The thought occurred to her, what could she do to alleviate their condition? The more she considered the problem the stronger became her conviction that it was her duty to sacrifice her fortune and her life in an effort to give a Christian education to the young women of the New World. She did not act upon the impulse of the moment, but after prayerful consideration she formed her plan. Her old associates endeavored to dissuade her from such a mad act, for the mere thought of a voyage across the ocean in those days suggested weeks, and sometimes months, of sore discomfort. The ships were slow, of small tonnage, and had none of the luxurious

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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appointments of the sea-going palaces of the twentieth century.

To Madame de la Peltrie's friends there appeared every reason for her abandoning the idea she had conceived. Wealth, beauty, youth and popularity seemed to them all that was necessary to secure a happy and contented life. But deep down in her heart there was a voice summoning her to action, the voice of duty, which her more worldly-minded friends could not hear. She bravely, yes, gladly, responded to that call; she sacrificed her rich estates and worldly possessions and devoted them all to her pious undertaking. She secured Marie de l'Incarnation to take charge of the institution she was about to establish. The rest of their staff consisted of three hospital nuns, three Ursulines, and Pere Vimond. They sailed on the 4th of May, 1639, and in eight weeks from that day landed at Quebec, where they were received with great rejoicing. We are told that "the Governor received the heroines on the river's bank at the head of his troops with a discharge of cannon, and after the first compliments he led them, amid the acclamations of the people, to church, where *te deums* were chanted as a thanksgiving."

The devoted women immediately entered upon their duties. Within two years from

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## FOUNDERS OF URSULINE CONVENT

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their arrival the convent was completed. It was a rather pretentious building, being 92 feet in length by 28 broad. The chapel, occupying one end of the structure, was 17 x 28 ft. The building had four huge chimneys, and the historians inform us that they consumed 175 cords of fuel a year. For thirty-two years Madame de la Peltrie devoted her life, fortune and talents to the spiritual welfare of the maidens of New France, and her work was established on so firm a basis that it has continued for nearly three hundred years, and no institution of its kind on the continent to-day has a record to compare with the Ursuline Convent at Quebec. The Mother Superior, lovingly remembered to this day as the St. Theresa of New France, worked hand in hand with Madame de la Peltrie, and survived her by one year. These two pious women, who voluntarily renounced the comforts of home and civilization and devoted their entire lives to the good of others, who had no other claim upon them than the silent appeal of the heathen of to-day has upon each of us, certainly deserve a place among the heroines of our country.

Frederick George Scott must have had in his mind Marie de l'Incarnation when he penned the following lines:

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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### A SISTER OF CHARITY.

She made a nunnery of her life,  
Plain duties hedged it round,  
No echoes of the outer strife  
Could reach its hallowed ground.

Her rule was simple as her creed,  
She tried to do each day  
Some act of kindness that might speed  
A sad soul on its way.

. . . . .  
That cheery smile, that gentle touch,  
That heart so free from stain,  
Could have no other source but such  
As lies in conquered pain.

All living creatures loved her well,  
And blessed the ground she trod ;  
The pencillings in her Bible tell  
Her communing with God.

And when the call came suddenly  
And sleep preceded death,  
There was no struggle we could see,  
No hard and labored breath.

Gently as dawn the end drew nigh ;  
Her life had been so sweet,  
I think she did not need to die  
To reach the Master's feet.

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## IV.

### MADemoisELLE MANCE.

THE tide of religious enthusiasm ran high in the seventeenth century. The primary object of most of those interested in the New World was to convert the pagan Indians. It is true that many embarked in the fur trade, but the vast majority were religious enthusiasts. Champlain had written sketches of his travels, and he lost no opportunity to emphasize the great necessity of carrying the cross to the heathen tribes.

The enterprise of the rich young widow, Madame de la Peltrie, was a common theme of conversation among the ladies of France, and especially among those engaged in religious work. It is not surprising, therefore, to find many young women fired with the same desire to sacrifice themselves upon the missionary altar of New France.

The religious zeal was not confined to the gentler sex. It was no unusual thing for men to give themselves up wholly to religious exercises, and to mortify the flesh by flagellations and other cruel devices. Such a man was

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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Danversiere, who had a call from heaven to found a hospital upon the Island of Montreal in Canada. By a strange coincidence, a young Parisian priest, named Olier, equally zealous in his religious observances, had a similar call from heaven to organize a society of priests and establish them on this same Island of Montreal. At that time this island was a wilderness exposed to the ravages of the dreaded Iroquois.

These two good men were full of their respective projects. Neither had ever heard of the plans of the other until they accidentally met, when, impelled by some unknown force, there was mutual recognition like the meeting of old friends. They discussed their plans and finally settled upon three distinct undertakings: The founding of a hospital, the organization of an order of priests to do missionary work among the Indians, and another order of nuns to teach the children.

For my present purpose I shall confine myself to the first of these pious enterprises. What need, we may ask, was there for an hospital at a point where there were no settlers? The plan seemed to resemble the outcome of a disordered brain. The fact that there was no population upon this island did not quench their enthusiasm. They must establish a

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## MADemoisELLE MANCE

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colony and get the population, and they set about this gigantic task. They organized the Society of Notre Dame de Montreal. Funds were raised and the title to the island secured. It was decided to send out a number of colonists (forty) in the first place, and to at once commence the erection of the hospital. Their next object was to secure a suitable woman to place in charge. Here again supernatural influence was at work. Mademoiselle Jeanne Mance was a delicate and devout maiden of thirty-four years. She had never taken the veil, but had lived a very exemplary and religious life. She had heard of Madame de la Peltrie and her work in the New World, and she longed for an opportunity to go to Canada and do what she could towards Christianizing the many tribes who had never heard of the Saviour, to whose service she was prepared to surrender everything. Her spiritual adviser assured her that the call was from heaven, and that it was her duty to respond to it, which she accordingly did. She raised a considerable sum of money, and, though with no clearly defined plans in mind, proceeded to Rochelle, where Danversiere was preparing to despatch his first instalment of colonists. He had never met Mademoiselle Mance, and had no knowledge of her plans, and she also was in ignor-



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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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ance of his undertaking. Here again the same unseen Power seems to have introduced them to each other. They met in a church, and as the result of the conference, he secured a woman to take charge of the hospital that was to be, and Mademoiselle Mance realized her heart's desire—an appointment to a position of trust and responsibility in the New World. Maisonneuve was in charge of the party, which consisted of forty men with Mademoiselle Mance, a young woman, and the wives of two of the men, who joined them at the last moment.

It was late in October, 1641, when the little colony arrived at Quebec, and their project did not meet with the approval of the Governor, who endeavored to dissuade them from it. Some historians attribute his attitude to jealousy, but it is probable that he had good reason to doubt the success of the venture. The entire French population did not exceed three hundred souls. The Iroquois were swarming about the settlements, and the danger of a general massacre was continually haunting the French. The Indians were particularly bitter at this period, and seemed determined to exterminate the white intruders. It was for the mutual benefit of all that they should not be scattered about in separate set-

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## MADemoiselle MANCE

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lements. The idea of establishing a hospital one hundred and eighty miles from Quebec did not commend itself to the Governor, and he freely expressed his views.

The party wintered near Quebec, and on the 18th of the following May proceeded to their destination. Madame de la Peltrie accompanied them and for the time abandoned her own work to lend assistance to the more romantic one of Mademoiselle Mance. Upon landing at Montreal, their first act was to erect a rude altar, where they offered up thanks to the Almighty for bringing them safe to the scene of their future operations. As they sat about their camp-fires on that quiet spring evening recounting the experiences of the past few months and laying their plans for the future, little did they dream that they were laying the foundation of the commercial metropolis of a great country. Did Mademoiselle Mance see in the flickering flames pictures of that great hospital, the Hotel Dieu, that for nearly three hundred years has ministered to the sick and suffering of her race?

In three months' time another ship brought more colonists and further aid for the erection of the hospital, which was accordingly built, and Mademoiselle Mance placed in charge. She did not have to wait long for patients.

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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The Iroquois soon discovered the new post and made it an especial object of attention. They would lurk in a hollow or in the woods for a week at a time in the hope of surprising a colonist. It was no unusual thing for the inhabitants to be aroused from their slumbers by the war-whoop of the savages. This little settlement was particularly exposed, and the Indians lost no opportunity to harass them, and many a wound from the tomahawk or battle-axe was dressed by the tender hands of Mademoiselle Mance. She did not limit herself to the nursing of the sick, but taught the young Indians and assisted in the religious exercises and instruction of the community. She had to contend against many obstacles, but she stood bravely at her post and surmounted them all. She endured the trials common to all the early settlers, and shared with them the dangers of the furious Indian raids. She had also the responsibility of managing and financing the institution of which she was the real head. She was not lacking in either resource or energy. She gave her life to the noble work, and the success of her labors shows that it was not given in vain.

Her history is so closely interwoven with tradition that it is difficult to sift out all the actual occurrences, but the important facts re-

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## MADemoiselle MANCE

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main unchallenged, that this brave woman left home and friends and came voluntarily to the dangerous wilds of America to sacrifice her life to suffering humanity, with no other hope of earthly reward than the consciousness of having done what she conceived to be her duty.

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## V.

### MADELEINE DE VERCHERES.

THAT a child of fourteen years should of her own accord assume control of a fortification and keep at bay a horde of bloodthirsty Indians for a full week seems incredible, yet such is the well-authenticated record of the little heroine of Castle Dangerous. It was in the month of October, 1692. Seigneur de Vercheres was the owner of a large tract of land on the south bank of the St. Lawrence, about twenty miles from Montreal. He and his tenants, to secure themselves against the attacks of the Iroquois, lived in a fort with four bastions connected with a blockhouse.

Owing to the fact that this seigniory was in the path of the Indians when making their raids upon the French settlements, the Vercheres' fortification was aptly styled "Castle Dangerous."

De Vercheres and his wife were away from home, and the tenants were engaged in their work upon their respective lands. The only occupants of the fort were Madeleine and her

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## MADELEINE DE VERCHERES

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brothers, aged ten and twelve respectively, two soldiers, a serving-man, a few women, and a decrepit old man of eighty years. She was expecting a visit from a young friend recently arrived from Paris, and, eager to greet her, she went to the river's bank to watch for the canoe that would bring her over to the fort. While thus engaged the alarm was given by the serving-man that the dreaded Iroquois were approaching, and a few rods distant she saw a band of fifty braves stealthily creeping upon her with a view to intercepting her retreat to the fort. With the bullets flying about her, she rushed to the gateway and gave the order "To arms!" The inmates were panic-stricken, and she discovered one of the soldiers in the act of preparing to blow up the magazine and thus destroy them all, rather than submit to the torture that he felt certain the Indians would inflict upon them if captured alive. And they saw no other fate awaiting them if they presumed to oppose their slender garrison against such overpowering numbers.

Madeleine severely rebuked the soldier for his cowardice, and immediately assumed command of the place. She at once set about to repair the breaches in the fort. Tossing aside the child's bonnet she was wearing at the time,

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she put on a hat and shouldered her musket. With the coolness of a veteran she stationed her garrison at the points of vantage, not omitting her two young brothers, each of whom was provided with a gun. She appears to have overlooked nothing. She fired the only cannon in the fort to alarm the settlers and thus warn them against being surprised by the Indians. The fort had every appearance of being completely manned and prepared to resist any attack that might be made upon it, as indeed it was if courage and determination would make up for the want of numbers. When her preparations were thus completed, she discovered the friend whom she had been expecting approaching the fort in a canoe in company with her parents. A certain death, perhaps a fiendish torture, awaited them unless by some device she could rescue them. With remarkable presence of mind, she boldly marched alone to the river's edge and escorted her visitors back to the fort. She had rightly conjectured that the Indians would think this a ruse to draw them from their shelter and subject them to the fire from the fort. It was a terrible risk, one that her soldier companions, fearful of the tomahawks and scalping-knives of the watchful foe, had refused to undertake.

The danger increased with the nightfall, for

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## MADELEINE DE VERCHERES

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the Indian mode of warfare favored a night attack. Her garrison had been strengthened by Monsieur Fontaine, who had accompanied his daughter in the canoe. Madeleine stationed him and the two soldiers in the blockhouse to allay the fears of the frightened women, while she and the old man and her young brothers assumed the more perilous positions and manned the four bastions. All night long at regular intervals the cry of "All's well" was heard, while the Indians were planning their attack. Dismayed at the watchfulness of the supposed strong garrison, the savages shrank from the task.

For seven long days and nights Madeleine kept up this appearance of strength and readiness to repel the attack. For seven long days and nights the red warriors watched for an opportunity to surprise the inmates of the fort, but the brave little commander was ever on the alert. Occasionally an impatient brave would venture near the fort, and invariably he was greeted with a shot from the garrison. This was sometimes followed by a wild shriek and a plunge in the grass or bushes which told the story that the bullet had found its billet. Madeleine took no rest but such short naps as she could snatch by resting her head upon a table. The long vigil would have sorely tried



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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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a stronger frame than hers, but she bore up bravely under the strain and so encouraged the others by her example and cheering words that they all determined to sell their lives as dearly as possible before they would yield an inch to their persistent enemy.

In the meantime many of the tenants had been either massacred or taken prisoners, but one of the number had made good his escape to Montreal and reported the brave resistance the besieged fort was making although surrounded by the infuriated savages. A lieutenant was immediately despatched with forty men to relieve the inmates of the fort, if any of them still survived, which seemed impossible. They landed in the dead of night, and no sooner had they hauled their canoes upon the bank than they heard the challenge, "Who are you?" in the childish tones of the watchful little Madeleine, whose heart leaped with joy as she heard the welcome response, "We are Frenchmen." She immediately posted her sentry and went to meet the lieutenant, and in true soldier-like style she greeted him with, "Monsieur, I surrender to you my arms." They escorted her back to the fort, and upon examination everything was found in perfect order.

When recounting the war-like deeds of our

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## MADELEINE DE VERCHERES

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country, the historian cannot afford to omit from the roll of honor the name of Madeleine de Vercheres; for no general's tunic ever shielded a braver heart than that which beat within the breast of the little heroine of Castle Dangerous.

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## VI.

### SARAH DEFIELD.

IN the spring of 1813 the British forces on the Niagara peninsula met with repeated reverses. Fort George fell into the hands of the Americans. The American fleet patrolled the neighboring waters, and a strong force, numbering 3,500 men, threatened to over-run the entire peninsula. Little York, too, had been evacuated, and the British were beginning to lose heart, when fortune seemed to take a turn with Colonel Harvey's daring night attack on the American camp at Stony Creek. One of the most energetic officers in planning and carrying this attack to a successful issue was Lieutenant James FitzGibbon. He was a gallant young soldier, who had distinguished himself on former occasions, both upon the Continent of Europe and in Canada, and had been looked upon with great favor by General Brock.

After this famous engagement he was, upon his own suggestion, entrusted with the command of fifty picked men of the invincible "Green Tigers," an honorary title conferred by the enemy upon the 49th Regiment.

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## SARAH DEFIELD

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The duty assigned to this small band was to precede the regular force, harass the enemy, and cause them all the annoyance they could. For this task FitzGibbon and his followers were well qualified. They interrupted the communications of the invading forces, ambushed wandering bands, and caused such mischief in general that the head of FitzGibbon would have been considered a most valuable prize.

A Dr. Chapin, of Buffalo, had in a measure imitated the example of FitzGibbon by crossing with about fifty volunteer cavalry in frequent raids upon the inhabitants of Fort Erie and Chippewa and the vicinity. On the 21st of June, FitzGibbon, learning that these troublesome fellows were in the neighborhood of the Falls, set out in pursuit and came upon them at Lundy's Lane. At the door of a tavern he saw the horse of an American, and although warned by a Mrs. Kirby to make his escape before he was discovered, he dismounted and advanced towards the door with the intention of capturing the dragoon, never doubting his own ability to cope with him. When within a few yards of the door, to his surprise an infantry soldier confronted him and presented his musket at his breast.

FitzGibbon seized the muzzle of the threat-

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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ening weapon and was in the act of wresting it from his opponent, when the dragoon whose saddled horse he had seen at the door put in an appearance and pointed his loaded rifle at the startled lieutenant. Still clinging to the musket of the infantryman and dragging its owner with him, he sprang toward the dragoon, grasped the rifle, and engaged in a deadly struggle with the two men.

FitzGibbon fought with a valor born of desperation, knowing full well that his life was at stake. He called upon two onlookers for assistance, but they were not disposed to interfere. Seeing by their combined efforts they could not wrench their guns from his iron grasp, the riflemen seized FitzGibbon's sword, which hung at his side, and would have dealt a deadly blow to the plucky lieutenant but for timely interference from an unexpected source.

Mrs. Sarah Defield, the subject of our sketch, who happened on the scene at the moment, realizing the danger of the Canadian officer, seized the wrist of the rifleman and wrested the sword from his grasp. Some bystanders, evidently put to shame by the bravery of Mrs. Defield, now sprang to FitzGibbon's assistance, and in a few minutes the lieutenant was returning proudly to his own

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## SARAH DEFIELD

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camp, taking with him the horse as a trophy and his two assailants as prisoners of war.

We will appreciate the daring and bravery of this young officer when we bear in mind that he was alone in a section of the country overrun by the enemy, and that a considerable number of them were not more than two hundred yards distant at the time, engaged in searching a house around a bend in the road. FitzGibbon was the one man above all others whose capture would have delighted them.

This little incident no doubt saved the life of one of Canada's bravest soldiers and inspired his followers with courage to emulate his worthy example. The Government recognized the importance of the service rendered by Mrs. Defield by granting to her husband at the close of the war a tract of four hundred acres of land.

In a manner she little dreamed of at the time was this good service returned by FitzGibbon in after years. In 1837 her son, who does not appear to have inherited the loyalty of his mother, was taken prisoner as a rebel and would have suffered the death of a traitor had not FitzGibbon, remembering with gratitude the former service of the heart-broken mother, interceded on his behalf and obtained for him a full pardon.

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## VII.

### LAURA SECORD.

FOREMOST in the roll of heroines of Canadian history stands the name of Laura Secord. Her husband was a merchant at Queenston and took a prominent part in the stirring events of 1812. He was engaged at the battle of Queenston Heights, and had the honor of being one of the number who bore the lifeless body of Sir Isaac Brock from the battlefield. Later in the day he himself received a serious wound and was left lying helpless on the hillside. His wife, upon hearing that her husband had been wounded, lost no time in going to his assistance, and arrived just in time to thrust herself between her prostrate husband and two brutal soldiers who with uplifted muskets were about to despatch the defenceless man. She managed to hold the cowardly assassins in check until the timely arrival of an American officer, Captain Wool, who, reprimanding his followers, sent them under guard to the American headquarters, where they were subsequently tried by court-martial

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## LAURA SECORD

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and sentenced to several months' imprisonment for their brutal and unsoldierly conduct. The chivalrous officer left poor Secord in the hands of his anxious and grateful wife, and did not even place him upon parole. This humane act of Captain Wool was long remembered by the wounded soldier, and the natural result was a warm and lasting friendship, which endured as long as he lived.

We next hear of Laura in the following summer, two days after the narrow escape of Lieutenant FitzGibbon, in which Mrs. Defield played so important a part. His little band of busy scouts, reinforced by about one hundred and sixty Caughnawaga Indians, had so menaced and annoyed the lines of the enemy that they concluded some decisive step must be taken to rid themselves of this constant source of trouble.

To Colonel Boerstler, of Maryland, was assigned the task. He had displayed considerable ability as a commander, and with a strong force, consisting of six hundred and thirty men, a company of artillery, two field-pieces, mounted infantry and a troop of dragoons, he was expected to make short shrift of the offensive FitzGibbon and his two score and ten followers. He had other ambitious plans mapped out for himself by which he hoped to



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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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subjugate the entire peninsula, but the first and most important step was the capture of FitzGibbon. He felt confident that once he had this wily strategist in his power and commanded the position of Beaver Dam, held by him, the rest would follow as a matter of course.

On the evening of June 23rd all was in readiness. Detachments had already advanced as far as Queenston, and some of the officers were billeted at the home of Mrs. Secord. From their unguarded conversation the wife of the wounded soldier learned their plans. They were to march on the following morning against FitzGibbon, overcome him, capture Beaver Dam, and use that point as the base of their future operations.

Poor Secord bemoaned his helpless condition, for he knew that unless word of the impending attack could be carried to FitzGibbon, his old comrades would be surprised and fall into the hands of the invading force. His wife, perceiving his agonized condition, immediately determined upon a course of action. FitzGibbon must be warned, and she would warn him. Her husband, realizing the danger that threatened her, was loath to consent to her undertaking the perilous journey, for she was weak and worn out with the anxiety and

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## LAURA SECORD

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care of nursing him, and the road lay through dense swamps and was traversed by swollen streams, and she was in danger of being overtaken by the enemy. From Queenston to Beaver Dam was about twelve miles, but as Boerstler had in her presence disclosed his intention of dividing his forces, and marching by different routes, in order to prevent Major De Haren rendering assistance to FitzGibbon, it became necessary for her, in order to avoid their proposed lines of march, to travel nearly twenty miles by unfrequented roads and paths. Unknown to our heroine, this plan of Boerstler was subsequently abandoned.

Laura Secord appreciated the danger that confronted her, but although frail in body she had a stout and loyal heart, and nothing could shake her from her purpose. She did not wait for daylight. In the early morn, before any in the village were stirring, she set out on her perilous mission. At her own gate she was challenged by a sentinel, who allowed her to pass upon being assured that she was going to visit her sick brother. She did halt at his house, where she was again entreated to abandon her purpose. She, however, insisted upon proceeding at once and prevailed upon her niece, Elizabeth Secord, to accompany her. When they reached Shipman's Corners (now

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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the City of St. Catharines) the niece was too footsore to continue the journey and her aunt went on alone. Along the muddy roads, through the flooded swamps and across the swollen streams she plodded, fearing only that the enemy might reach the goal before her.

In her own simple narrative of the event she makes no mention of the hardships she underwent. The foremost thought in her mind, which evidently overshadowed all other feelings, was the speedy delivery of her precious message.

In Mrs. Currie's "Story of Laura Secord," she is quoted as saying: "I left early in the morning, walked nineteen miles in the month of June to a field belonging to a Mr. De Camp, in the neighborhood of the Beaver Dam." The narrative, of which this is a part, was furnished by her forty years after her perilous adventure, and even in the telling of it at that distant date she glides rapidly over those nineteen miles and does not deem it worth her while to refer to a single incident upon that weary march, although it is well known that one bridge was carried away and that she had to cross the stream by creeping along the trunk of a fallen tree, and that the general condition of the country was such, owing to the recent

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## LAURA SECORD

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rains, that her endurance must have been put to the severest test.

When a short distance from FitzGibbon she found herself in an Indian camp. The stories of the cruel tortures inflicted by the savages upon the whites who fell into their hands were enough to strike terror into the heart of the strongest, and Mrs. Secord was terrified at finding herself apparently at their mercy. Her fears were not allayed when several of the warriors came running towards her shouting "Woman!" She, however, preserved her presence of mind, and singling out one of their number whom she took to be a chief, she gave him to understand by signs that she had an important message for FitzGibbon, and that the safety of the Indians themselves depended upon its speedy delivery. The Indians, who proved to be FitzGibbon's friends, conducted her to his station at Beaver Dam, where she communicated to him all she had learned the night before from the incautious American officers. She was then conducted to a place of safety, where she enjoyed much-needed rest of both body and mind.

FitzGibbon, taking advantage of the information thus received from such an unexpected source, prepared to meet the enemy. The following official despatch sent by him to Major

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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De Haren gives in his own words an account of what is generally regarded as the most brilliant achievement of the campaign:

“ Township of Louth, June 24th, 1813.

“ Sir,—At De Cou’s this morning, about seven o’clock, I received information that about 1,000 of the enemy with two guns were advancing towards me from St. David’s. I soon after heard firing of cannon and musketry, and in consequence rode in advance two miles on the St. David’s road. I discovered by the firing that the enemy was moving for the road on the mountain. I sent off Cornet McKenzie to order out my detachment of the 49th, consisting of a subaltern and forty-six rank and file, and closed upon the enemy to reconnoitre.

“ I discovered him on the mountain road and took up a position on the right of it. My men arrived and pushed on in his front to cut off his retreat, under a fire from his guns, which, however, did no execution. After examining his position, I found it difficult to approach him, there being no wood in front or on the flanks to cover the Indians, and his force (apparently 600) I could not approach. I was here informed that he expected rein-

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## LAURA SECORD

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forcements. I therefore decided upon summoning him to surrender.

“ After the exchange of several propositions between Colonel Boerstler and myself, in the name of Lieut.-Colonel De Haren, Lieut.-Colonel Boerstler agreed to surrender on the terms stated in the articles of capitulation. On my return to my men to send an officer to superintend the details of the surrender—you arrived.

“ I have the honor to be, etc.,

“ (Signed) J. FitzGibbon,  
“ Lieutenant 49th Regiment.”

Captain William Kerr, a son-in-law of Brant, with about two hundred and fifty Indians, had for some time been engaged with the enemy. This was the firing referred to in the foregoing despatch. By a clever ruse FitzGibbon convinced the Americans that he was at the head of a large force, and represented to them that he would be unable to hold the Indians in check unless terms of surrender were immediately agreed upon. The American commander surrendered upon the following terms:

“ First.—That Lieut.-Colonel Boerstler and the force under his command shall surrender prisoners of war.

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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“Second.—That the officers shall retain their horses, arms and baggage.

“Third.—That the non-commissioned officers and soldiers shall lay down their arms at the head of the British column and become prisoners of war.

“Fourth.—That the militia and volunteers with Lieut.-Colonel Boerstler shall be permitted to return to the United States on parole.”

FitzGibbon reluctantly consented to the fourth article when he learned that Dr. Chapin and his plundering band of guerillas were included among the militiamen. He had sufficient reason, however, to be content with his morning's work, and the chagrin of the Americans may well be imagined when they learned that over 600 of their number had laid down their arms to a wily Irishman and forty-six trusty followers. That he gave due credit to Laura Secord for the success of this far-reaching victory is quite evident from the following letter written by himself:

“Thus did a young, delicate woman brave the terrors of the forest in a time of such desultory warfare that the dangers were increased tenfold, to do her duty to her country, and by timely warning save much bloodshed and disaster.”

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## LAURA SECORD

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James Secord was rewarded for his services by an appointment in the Customs Department at Chippewa and a pension, both of which he enjoyed until his death in 1841.

There was no official recognition by the Canadian Government of the services rendered by his loyal wife. The present King, upon the occasion of his visit to Niagara Falls in 1860, learned her history, and His Royal Highness was so impressed by her loyalty and heroism that he sent her a cheque for £100 sterling. This might be construed as a silent but stinging rebuke to our Government for having taken no steps to provide for the deserving widow. She lived to the ripe old age of ninety-three years, esteemed and honored by all of her countrymen.

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## LAURA SECORD

BY CHARLES EDWIN JAKEWAY, M.D.

On the sacred scroll of glory  
Let us blazen forth the story  
Of a brave Canadian woman, with the fervid  
pen of fame ;  
So that all the world may read it,  
And that every heart may heed it,  
And rehearse it through the ages to the honor  
of her name.



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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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In the far-off days of battle,  
When the musket's rapid rattle  
Far re-echoed through the forest, Laura Secord  
    sped along  
Deep into the woodland mazy,  
Over pathways wild and hazy,  
With a firm and fearless footstep and a cour-  
age staunch and strong.

She had heard the host preparing,  
And at once, with dauntless daring,  
Hurried off to give the warning of the fast  
    advancing foe ;  
And she flitted like a shadow  
Far away o'er fen and meadow,  
Where the wolf was in the wildwood and the  
    lynx was lying low.

From within the wild recesses  
Of the tangled wildernesses  
Sounds mysterious pursued her 'long the  
    winding forest-way ;  
And she heard the gutt'ral growling  
Of the bears, that, near her prowling,  
Crushed their way through coverts gloomy,  
    with their cubs in noisy play.

Thus for twenty miles she travelled  
Over pathways rough and ravelled,  
Braving danger for her country like the fabled  
    ones of yore,

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## LAURA SECORD

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Till she reached her destination,  
And forewarned the threatened station  
Of the wave that was advancing to engulf it  
    deep in gore.

Just in time the welcome warning  
Came unto the men, that, scorning  
To retire before the foemen, rallied ready for  
    the fray ;  
And they gave such gallant greeting,  
That the foe was soon retreating,  
Back in wild dismay and terror on that glorious  
    battle-day.

Few returned to tell the story  
Of the conflict sharp and gory  
That was won with brilliant glory by that brave  
    Canadian band,  
For the host of prisoners captured  
Far outnumbered the enraptured  
Little group of gallant soldiers fighting for their  
    native land.

Braver deeds are not recorded  
In historic treasures hoarded,  
Than the march of Laura Secord through the  
    forest long ago ;  
And no nobler deed of daring  
Than the cool and crafty snaring  
By the band at Beaver Dam of all that well-  
    appointed foe.

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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But we know if war should ever  
Rage again o'er field and river,  
And the hordes of the invader should appear  
within our land,  
Far and wide the trumpets' pealing  
Would awake the same old feeling,  
And again would deeds of daring sparkle out  
on every hand.

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## VIII.

### ABIGAIL BECKER.

MY next heroine is chosen from the humbler walks of life. The incident I am about to relate is by no means an isolated case, but it serves to illustrate many unrecorded acts of bravery of common occurrence.

Every autumn brings with it its long list of shipwrecks upon our great lakes, and many a thrilling tale could be told of the experiences of the brave men who sail these inland seas. The month of November, 1854, was a particularly severe one. The three-masted schooner *Conductor*, laden with grain, was overtaken by a furious blizzard as she headed for the Welland Canal, and in her efforts to seek shelter at Long Point, she foundered upon the bar in spite of the efforts of the skilled Captain Hackett and his trained crew of six sturdy sailors and a cook. The vessel listed to one side, and the rigging alone showed above the tempestuous waters.

All night the eight victims of the storm clung to such treacherous foothold as they could gain. Daylight still found them battling

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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for their lives. The sea had not abated. The huge waves came roaring towards them, and, as though bitterly disappointed at their inability to reach the chilled mariners upon their insecure footing, they angrily dashed the spray over them, so that their clothing soon was saturated with the ice-cold water.

Not far distant, in a lonely cabin, lived a poor trapper named Becker, who was away at the time, having left his wife Abigail with their young children in charge of the humble home. The roaring of the storm disturbed her slumbers, and she passed a restless night; it may be, indeed, that unknown spirits were summoning her to the aid of the despairing creatures upon the wreck. In the early morning, as she went to the lake for a pail of water, she saw the ill-fated schooner. She made her way down the beach far enough to learn the pitiable plight of the distressed sufferers. The angry waves were still contending for their prey, and for the men to attempt to swim the distance would mean certain death. She immediately returned to the house and, taking from her scanty store of supplies a quantity of tea, a tea-kettle and some matches, retraced her steps towards the wreck.

Upon arriving at a point nearest to the vessel she set about gathering driftwood to kindle

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## ABIGAIL BECKER

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a fire, and upon it heaped all the material she could get, in order that the wretched men might know that help was at hand and might have the much-needed warmth should they succeed in reaching shore.

The hearts of the half-frozen sailors, who had a short time before despaired of receiving any assistance, were rejoiced at the preparations they witnessed on the shore, and above the roaring of the waves there fell upon the ears of the toiling woman and her two little boys, who were assisting her, three faint cheers from the rigging of the submerged vessel. Then the question arose, how could she aid the perishing sailors in their distress? No boat was at hand, and even if she had one she would be powerless to control it in that awful sea. Quickly deciding on a plan of action, she dashed into the water and waded towards the ship and with outstretched arms beckoned the sailors to make an effort to reach her. It was their only hope. Against the entreaties of his crew, the Captain, removing his coat and boots, plunged into the ice-cold water and pluckily swam towards his would-be rescuer. A huge wave engulfed him and he disappeared from sight. He reappeared, but only for an instant. A heroic struggle ensued. Abigail with cries and gestures encouraged the

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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already exhausted man to bear up, if only for another minute, but the strong frame, tossed about on the crests of the merciless waves, could no longer contend against such fearful odds. An enormous roller broke over him. He was caught in the undertow and was being dragged by the victorious waters out to the open lake. The sailors were stricken with horror as they viewed what they believed to be the awful death of their captain, feeling that they, too, must soon share his fate. Abigail saw the danger, and, plunging deeper into the surf, she grasped the drowning man and carried him safely to shore, where he speedily revived before the roaring flames.

The second mate was the next to make the attempt. The elder of the two boys, a poor cripple upon crutches at the time, fired with the same spirit that animated his brave mother, endeavored to assist her in bringing the mate to shore, but his weakened limbs could not bear up in the chilling water, and the undaunted woman with her son in one arm and the drowning sailor in the other, dragged them both to the welcome fire. With remarkable tenacity, she plunged in again and yet again, and one by one bore her precious burdens to the shore, until but one lone figure remained clinging to the rigging. It was the cook, who,

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## ABIGAIL BECKER

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unable to swim, was left to the cruel mercy of the storm and sea. With apparently no thought of her own comfort and safety, the drenched and tired woman heaped more fuel upon the fire, and gave the benumbed sailors each a hot cup of tea. In a short time they were able to undertake the trip to the cottage. Wrapping her shawl about their shoulders, and placing her own shoes upon their benumbed feet, she conducted them, one at a time, to her humble home.

By the following morning the men were sufficiently restored to undertake the rescue of the forsaken cook, who, before the departure of his friends for the shore, had lashed himself to the rigging. The storm had abated and the sailors, by means of a hastily-constructed raft, were able to reach the wreck and bring the almost lifeless form of their companion to the Becker house. His feet were frozen and he could not have endured much longer the awful exposure he had been subjected to for thirty-six long hours. These eight lives must be placed to the credit of this poor woman.

The merchants and sailors of Buffalo presented Abigail Becker with a substantial purse, and for years she proudly wore upon her breast a gold medal awarded by the American

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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Humane Association; but what she prized more highly than either of these was a letter from another woman whose kind and sympathetic heart never failed to recognize true merit, no matter where it might be found. The writer of this letter was none other than Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria, who did not consider it beneath the dignity of the sovereign of the greatest nation of the world to send her greetings to the noble wife of the poor trapper of Long Point.

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## IX.

### SARAH MAXWELL.

THERE is no class of women in Canada upon whom a greater responsibility is cast than that laid upon the teachers in our public schools. The educational requirements are maintained at a high standard, so that several years of diligent study are necessary in order to acquire the desired qualification. Their duties are most exacting and call for the prudent exercise of tact, self-control and patience, in order to maintain discipline and at the same time preserve the good-will of the pupils. We are familiar with the trials they daily undergo, but are slow to acknowledge our appreciation of the services rendered by them. The registers of every district bear testimony to the unselfish devotion to duty of the young women who have taught in the schools. Floods and snowdrifts may render the roads almost impassable, but the faithful teacher will be found regularly at her desk during all kinds of weather. Rarely do we find her wanting in practical sympathy in case of sickness or distress. We find her liberally contributing from her slender purse to almost every charitable

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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cause. She freely gives her time and talents to the many organizations in connection with our churches and philanthropic institutions. How often has our attention been called to some bright young woman who, overcome by the nervous strain or repeated exposure, has been forced reluctantly to resign her position! Broken down in health, she has retired from the profession she adorned and passed out of our life. Had we taken the trouble to examine the circumstances and to follow her career, perhaps for a few months only, we might have been awakened to a realization of the fact that that young life had been sacrificed for our children.

We frequently hear reports of acts of heroism of our women teachers, but there appears to be no provision for obtaining or preserving the particulars. If some organized effort were made to collect from all parts of Canada the records of those instances in which these devoted women have voluntarily risked their own lives for the safety of the little ones committed to their care, I venture to assert that the list would be a long one.

The death of no single individual has been more universally mourned in recent years than that of Sarah Maxwell, principal of the Hochelaga School, Montreal. She found her-

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## SARAH MAXWELL

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self face to face with death in its most terrible form, yet her sole anxiety appeared to be for the safety of the little ones, not only those in her charge, but in the other departments of the school as well. It may be that she did not take full advantage of all the means of escape that were within reach, but in passing judgment upon her conduct we must bear in mind the fact that, without a moment's warning, she found herself placed in a most perilous situation that threatened the lives of hundreds of frantic and helpless pupils. With marvellous courage and devotion, she steadfastly refused to leave the burning building while those who looked to her for protection were still in danger, and she heroically gave her life for the tender children she loved so well. Truly of her it may be said: "Greater love hath no man than this."

Following is the story of her death as told by a prominent citizen of Montreal, who was an eyewitness of the fire:

"On the morning of Tuesday, February 26, 1907, Sarah Maxwell, principal of the Hochelega School, Montreal, gave her life rather than leave the helpless children of her kindergarten to perish by fire. Seventeen of her charges were burned to death with her. She could easily have escaped after she had handed

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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to safety all the children who were near her, but just as the firemen made ready to escort her to safety, she cried out, 'There must be some more children inside,' sprang back from the window, and rushed through the smoke and heat in the attempt to find the missing children. The firemen instantly followed her, but it was impossible to continue and live. Nothing more was seen of Miss Maxwell, her charred body, and those of the dead children, being found the next day.

“What happened on that morning in February can never be wholly known, because it would appear that Miss Maxwell herself was the first to note the presence of smoke and to seek for the cause. It is fair to suppose that she underestimated the danger, for the fire spread with terrible rapidity. The other teachers, observing the smoke, started the fire drill, but the children were driven back by the rapidly rising smoke and flame. Some of them lost their way and perished behind a door they could not open. Meantime the teachers had gone back, opened the windows, and sought relief there. Miss Campbell, one of the teachers, was awarded a gold medal for her coolness and courage in face of the imminent danger. Closing the doors and opening the windows, she succeeded in saving all

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## SARAH MAXWELL

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of her class. Miss Maxwell, meanwhile, had gone to the topmost floor, where the kindergarten class was held. There were delays before any relief was available. The windows were thirty feet from the ground. Fire escapes there were none. Precious minutes were lost before the attention of those outside was attracted, and when the firemen did come the condition was desperate. When the ladders went up, Miss Maxwell stood to her post until all the children near her were handed out. Then, when it seemed to be her own turn to leave, and the anxious crowd in the street were waiting for her to descend, it was borne in upon her that there were still other children needing her aid, and with the words, 'There must be more children inside!' she darted back, without an instant's hesitation, to duty—and to death. She had found another child, and had struggled to reach the window with it. Their dead bodies were found together."

The devotion of the teacher, as exemplified in this final act of sacrifice, was but of a piece with her conduct in daily life. She gave her whole mind and heart to the service of the children, and there seems to have existed between her and them a perfect understanding. The grief for those school children who were lost was tempered by admiration for the

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## HEROINES OF CANADIAN HISTORY

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teacher's heroic conduct, and the sympathy of the whole community was manifested by the presence of thousands who marched in procession on the day of the funeral. More, the people of Montreal determined that the salutary example should not be lost to memory, and a voluntary subscription was promptly organized, to which people from all parts of Canada contributed the magnificent sum of ten thousand dollars. When the fund was complete it was felt that, as Miss Maxwell had given her life for the love of the little ones, the proper way to honor her memory was to join her name to a work designed for the relief of suffering children, and accordingly the money was used, with the unanimous consent of the contributors, to endow a wing of a children's hospital. The Protestant School Commissioners of Montreal, moreover, determined upon another form of recognition. The school building in which Sarah Maxwell and her pupils lost their lives, as the official inquiry designated, was lacking in many essentials. A new school building has been erected, in the construction of which all has been done that knowledge and forethought could suggest for the benefit of the children and to provide for their safety in case of sudden danger, and it has been called the Sarah Maxwell School.

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### THE UNRECORDED HEROINES.

HISTORY records the deeds of very few of the genuine heroines who lived during the formative period of our country. Those who have been singled out owe the distinction to their having been associated with some event attracting public attention at the time, and their brave and noble acts became a matter of record, and were thus preserved.

But what about the countless hundreds who braved the dangers of the frontier, who lived noble lives and died heroic deaths? Concerning this vast multitude history is silent, save as they have been commemorated in the general narrative of the struggle that our forefathers endured in paving the way for the generations that were to follow. It was no trifling matter to battle with the impediments that nature placed in the way of the early settlers. The rigors of a severe winter brought sore trials that we, with the comforts and luxuries of the twentieth century, can scarcely appreciate.



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In the earlier days of the French colony, before the settlers became acclimatized, the dreaded scurvy decimated their ranks, and many a widow and orphan was left without the aid of the strong arm of husband or father to battle for life in the wilderness of the New World.

We have no conception of the terrible experiences of the pioneers with the bloodthirsty savages, who lost no opportunity to wreak their terrible cruelties upon the unprotected females in the white settlements. The lonely wife never knew what it was to feel that sense of security which we daily enjoy as a matter of course. Time and again her husband would be summoned away to take part in an expedition to punish a marauding band for some horrible massacre that had been perpetrated by the red demons. What anxious hours, days and weeks she spent awaiting his return! Every sound would startle her, as she never knew when the stealthy enemy would be lurking near. Too often, alas, when he did return, she would not be there to greet him. The smouldering ruins of his cabin home, containing the charred remains of the faithful wife, would alone tell to the settler the story of the struggle that had ended in a cruel death.

Many a brave woman has fallen victim to

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the merciless tomahawk of the Indian, or been borne away a captive, to be subjected to ingenious tortures or more horrible indignities. Hundreds of loving mothers, faithful wives and tender sisters have thus laid down their lives. Their names do not appear in history's roll of honor, but their heroic sacrifice makes them none the less worthy of that distinction. What country can boast of a nobler record? Gaunt famine more than once stalked over this happy land, where now we have plenty and to spare, and left misery and desolation in its track. As recently as 1787—known as the "Hungry Year," or year of famine—provisions were scarce and the Government was unable to meet the wants of the settlers. Many a mother labored in the forests digging the roots of the wild plants or eagerly gathering the buds from the trees in order to secure some scanty nourishment for her starving children, who were in time to become the stalwart founders of the civilization and prosperity which they left as a rich heritage to the generations which now fill their places.

Of all the honorary titles which it has pleased the sovereign of Great Britain to confer upon our fellow-Canadians there has been none more worthily bestowed than that represented by the words United Empire Loyalist,

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for whatever may be said of other dignities, all will concede that this title "was purchased by the merit of the wearer." If Canadians are ever to boast of an aristocracy, no better starting-point for such a class will be found than the Royal Commission which authorized these loyal settlers to write the letters U. E. L. after their names.

The sufferings and sacrifices of the U. E. Loyalists should appeal to us with an especial force. Their only offence was that of loyalty to their rightful sovereign. For this they underwent the most extreme persecutions, and that, too, at the hands of a people whose professed watchword was Freedom. In those very States where freedom of speech and action were so strongly advocated, acts were placed upon the statute books providing for the seizure and confiscation of the property of any one acknowledging his allegiance to the British Crown. To this sufficiently harsh penalty was added the liability to imprisonment, and in some states the offence was treated as high treason, and capital punishment was not deemed too severe. These coercive measures were impotent to affect the loyalty of thousands, who steadfastly declined to trample upon that flag which had for ages been to them the emblem of freedom. As

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a result the most heartless persecution followed.

The late Dr. Ryerson, whose parents were victims of this policy of oppression, truly wrote—"The persecutions to which the emigration of the Puritans from England is attributed were trifling indeed in comparison with the persecutions, imprisonments, confiscations, and often death, inflicted on the loyal adherents to the Crown of England in the United States, and which drove the survivors among them to the wilderness of Canada. The privations and hardships experienced by many of these Loyalist patriots for years after the first settlement in Canada were much more severe than anything experienced by the Pilgrim Fathers during the first years of their settlement in Massachusetts."

The late Canniff Haight, whose grandparents were among the number who preferred exile to disloyalty, in a public address at Picton, in 1859, said: "We can form no correct idea of the difficulties which beset these early inhabitants, nor of the hardships and privations they endured. They were not infrequently reduced to the very verge of starvation, yet they struggled on."

The experience of the wife of Jacob Bowman, a prosperous landowner on the Susque-

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hanna River, is not an isolated case. Owing to the illness of his wife, Bowman did not join the British army, but remained at home, a non-combatant, with his family when the Revolutionary War broke out. One night in November, 1775, his house was surrounded by a small Revolutionary force and he and his eldest son, a lad of sixteen years, were carried away as prisoners to Philadelphia, where they were kept in close confinement for eighteen months. Their inhuman captors stripped the house of nearly all the bedding, clothing and provisions, leaving but one blanket to cover the prostrate wife, who gave birth to a son within half an hour of their departure. The helpless mother, with her six young children and the new-born babe, was thus left destitute at a time when she was most in need of tender care. But for the timely assistance of some friendly Indians the entire family would have perished, as the eldest son left at home was only eleven years old. The unfeeling wretches who had carried away his father and brother were so eager to deprive the family of every necessary of life that they had taken away even the coat and boots of this young boy. In his bare feet he cut fuel for his mother's stove and drew it half a mile on his handsleigh to their home.

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The family struggled through the long winter, managing to exist upon the scanty supply of provisions furnished by the Indians. Still this brave woman did not despair, nor was her loyalty shaken in the least. She determined to emigrate with her family to the north, where she believed she would find protection and assistance. In the early spring, pale and haggard, and clothed with such remnants of her pillaged wardrobe as she could collect, with her tender babe clinging to her neck, she trudged along the muddy roads, leaving far behind her the scene of her recent troubles. Who can conceive the trials of that weary journey? The little ones were ragged and hungry. Ignorant of the fate of her husband, tired and footsore, she cheered them on the way and told them of that country to the far north where they would find shelter and food. No murmur escaped her lips. After taxing her slender frame to its utmost limit, she finally reached the Mohawk River.

Believing herself to be, for the time at least, beyond the reach of her persecutors, Mrs. Bowman decided to remain in this locality for the summer, in the hope that some intelligence of her husband and son might reach her. She at once began to provide for the famished family by planting corn and potatoes. With

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the greatest difficulty she managed to obtain sufficient food to barely keep them alive. In the following November they were conducted to Fort George, at Niagara, by a band of Indians who had been sent by the British commander to bring in this and four other destitute families whose pitiable condition had become known to him. The party consisted of five women and thirty-one children, all of whom related similar experiences of sorrow and suffering. Some idea of their miserable plight may be had when it is stated that there was only one pair of shoes among them all, and this, too, in the month of November.

It is worthy of note that one of these ragged and bootless families bore the name of Secord, a name which in after years was further immortalized by the loyalty of James Secord and his wife Laura, to whom reference has already been made.

Mrs. Bowman and her family were sent to Quebec, where they were, in a manner, cared for by the Government. But the barracks and soldiers' rations were a poor substitute for the comforts of a home. Although she had already suffered severely from the effects of the war, and was still in doubt as to the fate of her husband and eldest son, Mrs. Bowman did not hesitate to encourage her next son,

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then thirteen years old, to enlist under Colonel Butler in the spring of 1777. With him she sent as a fifer another son, only nine years old. Her husband and son were released from the Philadelphia prison through an exchange of prisoners and were sent to New York. Having received no news of his family, and believing them to be at the home where they had left them, Bowman, with his son, started for the farm on the Susquehanna. Three days after their departure they were fired upon by some American scouts. The father was unhurt, but six shots took effect upon the son. They were both recaptured and taken to the nearest station, where as a special act of consideration the father was permitted to nurse his wounded boy. As soon as he began to recover they were again requested to renounce their allegiance to their King, which they again refused to do, whereupon they were lodged in Lancaster gaol and treated as felons of the lowest type. Father and son were riveted together by a band of iron about their arms. Around their ankles were placed fetters and chains weighing nearly a hundred pounds, fastened by a ring and a staple to the floor. Thus confined like savage beasts, they suffered cruel torture for years, until the heavy fetters wore away the festering flesh and the



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bones were laid bare. As the result of this cruel imprisonment the father was but a wreck of his former self. He spent nearly a year in hospital before he was able to walk.

After a separation of eight years, crowded with loneliness, torture and degradation, the stricken parents, broken down in health but not in spirits, were reunited at Quebec. With difficulty and further privations such as all Loyalists necessarily underwent, they made their way to Niagara, where, under the protection of the flag for which they had undergone so much, they began life anew and became the founders of a long line of descendants, who rightfully cherish the memory of their honored ancestors as entitled to first rank among the heroes of Canada.

Hundreds of the U. E. L. mothers suffered the same cruel separation from members of their families, and fragments of their experiences have come down to us, not as complete in each individual case as is the history of Mrs. Bowman, but all pointing to the same cruel treatment, the same loyal hearts, and the same patient endurance. One is tempted to single out a name here and there, owing to some sad story that has been handed down from one generation to another, but all agree in the general outline, differing only in minor

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details according to the varying circumstances of each particular case. For years following the Revolution there was a constant stream of weary pilgrims, remnants of broken families, seeking a refuge in Canada. In many cases the heads of these families had been imprisoned or done to death, and the burden of caring for those who remained fell upon the already overtaxed mothers. Those who from various causes were unable to migrate remained in their original settlements to suffer the taunts and insults of all who chose to vent their animosity upon them, and the State afforded them no protection. At the conclusion of hostilities, a too-confiding Home Government trusted the new republic to make restitution to those who had remained loyal to the British cause, but all such were doomed to bitter disappointment. The same antagonism that was exhibited during the war remained unabated after the conclusion of hostilities. Seeing no possibility of being restored to their former rights and privileges, whole colonies of the Loyalists banded themselves together, collected such effects as had been spared them and could be readily transported, and set out for Canada.

Where now we see snug farms and neat villages the solitary forest then held sway.

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Here the Loyalists chose to make their homes rather than submit any longer to the arrogance and ill-treatment of their new rulers. The woodman's axe was heard ringing along the banks of lake and river. There soon appeared small clearings. In the centre of each was the log cabin. The clearings kept expanding, roads were laid out, townships were organized, and before a generation had passed away the wilderness had been broken by many thrifty settlements. The same fortitude and zeal which had enabled these hardy pioneers to maintain their loyalty in the face of insult, rapine, starvation and death, aided them in their patient struggle to overcome the difficulties of nature in their new home. The task was a long and trying one, but they were found equal to the undertaking.

Throughout our land there are neglected graveyards containing the remains of those silent sufferers, who bravely bore up under trials that would to-day be considered too great to be endured. The little mounds and moss-covered tombstones "have nothing to tell of the courageous, high-minded mothers, wives and daughters who bore themselves as bravely as the men, complaining never, toiling with the men in the fields, banishing all regrets

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for the life they might have led had they sacrificed their loyalty."

Is it any wonder that the sons of Canada have always gladly responded to the call to arms, and in the field of battle have acquitted themselves like veterans? Is it any wonder that our fair Dominion is regarded as the brightest gem in the Empire, and that the loyalty of Canadians can always be relied upon?

From the time the first settlers landed upon these shores to the present day, the Canadian women have shown an heroic zeal in upholding the honor and good name of Canada. While we point with pride to the noble records of our generals and statesmen, let us not forget the heroic women who have suffered and died for Canada. While we exalt the brave soldier in the ranks, let us not forget the braver wife at home. The son may carelessly shoulder the musket and march to the front, but who can weigh the love and sacrifice of that loyal mother who gave that son to her country? Canada owes much to the men who have fought her battles and borne the burdens of state—but she owes as much, yea, more, to the noble women who instilled the principles of loyalty and devotion in the breasts of their sons, and were never found wanting

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when the call came to them to sacrifice their loved ones, and what was esteemed of less value by them, their own lives, for the country they loved so well.

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## THE LOYALISTS

BY SARAH ANN CURZON.

O ye who with your blood and sweat  
Watered the furrows of this land,  
See where upon a nation's brow,  
In honor's front, ye proudly stand!

Who for her pride abused your own,  
And gladly on her altar laid  
All bounty of the older world,  
All memories that your glory made,

And to her service bowed your strength,  
Took labor for your shield and crest,  
See where upon a nation's brow  
Her diadem you proudly rest!