



*Madame Hébert Watching the Departure  
of the French after the Capture of  
Quebec, 1629.*

*"She and her family would cling to their  
own soil."*

The  
Backwoodswoman

A Chronicle of Pioneer Home Life  
in Upper and Lower Canada

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TO THE MEMORY OF  
ALEXANDER MURPHY  
THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED BY HIS DAUGHTER

*“The knowledge of past times is naturally growing less in all cases not of publick record; and the past time of Scotland is so unlike the present, that it is already difficult for a Scotchman to imagine the economy of his grandfather.”*

Samuel Johnson to James Boswell,  
October 27th, 1779.

## PREFACE

**F**EW WOMEN are enrolled among the Makers of Canada. Yet in all save the earliest years they have formed nearly half the population and have done almost half the work. But historians, absorbed in the annals of war and politics and business, tell us little of the part they have played. The woman's stage was set not in the limelight, but in the firelight. Only rarely would the glare of battle light up for an instant the heroic daring of a Madame de la Tour or a Laura Secord and etch their names on history's page.

This book is an endeavour to present briefly some characteristic glimpses of Canadian women pioneers. They not only met the needs of their own day, but laid lasting foundations for ours.

The treatment of the subject varies with the circumstances. In the earlier period, thanks to the faith and customs of the people, it is possible to find distinct pictures of individual women who are yet typical of their time. In the beginnings of New France settlement was confined within a limited area, the life of the colony was lived closely under the eye of the authorities in Church and State, and the presence of official, and particularly of missionary, recorders, trained to write and eager to report the slightest incident that might make for the edification of those at home, ensured the preservation of many individualized details of pioneer activities.

But in the later period only a composite portrait can be made. The ordinary woman, whether of French or British or foreign race, had arduous duties in the new

land. Only shining exceptions like Mrs. Moodie or Mrs. Traill had the leisure or training necessary to leave behind a record of her own days, and no Boswell followed the backwoodswoman's busy steps. Moreover, where all faced similar experiences, there was no reason for an outside observer to single out one more than another for notice. Thus their way of life must be pieced together from various sources.

The women of Canada to-day have a proud heritage in the memories of their pioneer predecessors. We owe them homage as we owe devotion to the land they helped to make.

I. M. S.

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# The Backwoodswoman

## CHAPTER I

### *Marie Hébert: The First Woman Settler in Canada*

CANADA in the seventeenth century called none but the brave. Whether patriotic explorer or soul-saving priest, money-loving fur-trader or home-seeking settler, the first requisite was dauntless courage and the second untiring patience and perseverance.

At the outset the long, dangerous voyage barred the weak and the faint of heart. The French proverb, "whoever would learn to pray to God must go upon the sea," dates from this age. It was a perilous undertaking to put to sea in a sailing vessel of two hundred tons and become the sport of every wind and wave for any time from fifty to ninety days. The discomforts of life on board these wooden prisons can scarcely be conceived. Even fresh drinking water was a luxury beyond their reach, very often from the outset, and always after four or five days. Mother Marie de l'Incarnation mentions that her greatest suffering came from thirst, as all the water had become bad before the ship left the roadstead. Another nun, explaining her unbounded delight over the poor, cramped accommodation awaiting her at Quebec, writes, "But poverty and discomfort in homes that are built upon the land seem palaces and riches to those who come forth from a house floating at the will of the winds

and waves." Winds and waves, however, were not the only dangers. When the French captain eluded his English, Dutch and Spanish rivals of the high seas, he had still to face the fog-wrapped icebergs and the dangerous rocks and currents of the great gulf and river. No wonder Father le Jeune left the boat with a clearer understanding of David's words, "I hold my soul always ready at any moment to sacrifice it to God."

Wild and strange was the new land's greeting. The white whales floundering in the gulf, the seals, the walruses and the screaming wild fowl, the solitary inhabitants of the islands in the Lower St. Lawrence, gave their welcome a distinctly arctic setting. Pines, firs and birches, interspersed by huge, desolate rocks, made up a frowning landscape, whenever their little boat sailed closely enough by either shore to see it, and over all this vast sweep of water and wood hung solitude and silence supreme. "Dull would he be of soul who could pass by" this stern poetry of the wilderness without a solemn realization that life in that great beyond was going to call forth whatever of the patient, the courageous and heroic in him lay.

Rarely below Tadoussac would the voyager meet even a prowling Indian. But once this earliest trading post was reached the Red Men swarmed about in appalling numbers. When the Récollet Friar, Gervais Mohier, met here his first band of savages, he was greatly frightened, suspecting them to be demons. His experience was not unique. We find many comments on the terrifying aspects of those hundreds of bold, hilarious savages in the first flush of excitement from barter and newly acquired wealth. At Tadoussac, too, the newcomers made their first unpleasant acquaintance with the insect

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life of the woods. As one writer describes it, "I went ashore at Tadoussac and I thought I would be eaten up by mosquitoes, which are little flies troublesome in the extreme. . . . They are disagreeable beyond description. . . . Some people are compelled to go to bed after coming from the woods, they are so badly stung. I have seen men whose necks, cheeks and faces were so swollen that you could not see their eyes." One of the Récollet fathers who came over with the Héberts in 1617 celebrated his first mass at Tadoussac in a chapel built of branches, while two sailors stood beside him with green boughs to drive off the mosquitoes.

The way was rough and the welcome wild, but few were the French who proved this. More than eighty years elapsed after the brave Breton, Jacques Cartier, had explored the St. Lawrence and claimed its banks for his king before a real settler made his home there. A few stray fur-traders, about the close of the sixteenth century, were the first to come, but they always hurried home after a brief summer visit. Then, in 1608, there came a company bolder than the rest, who decided to risk a permanent stake in the country, since this would give them a tremendous advantage over all competitors. The leader of this enterprise was an experienced trader, de Monts, and he had with him the king's geographer, Samuel Champlain, to whom, of course, was delegated the important part of choosing a suitable site for the future trading post. As every school child knows to-day, Champlain's choice fell on the rock of Quebec, and our famous city had its beginning in a fur-trader's warehouse and winter "habitation." The record of this first winter at Quebec, 1608-9, while in no degree unique in early colonization experience, was not likely to make

spending the winter in Canada a very popular idea. Only eight of the twenty-eight men left behind were alive to greet the ships the next spring.

No, there was no clamour of men and women in France to emigrate to Canada. A land of ice and snow and scurvy did not appeal to any as a future home. Nor was there any call from Canada for men. The fur-traders had no desire for settlers, particularly as the king would send such people over at their expense, in part payment for the monopoly of trade he granted to them. But the king was not pressing this part of their agreement. The reorganization of old France, rather than the planning and building of New France, filled his mind and ambitions. Nevertheless, Old France was soon to found a colony in the New World. One man achieved this. Samuel Champlain, the founder of Quebec, was the founder of French Canada also.

Champlain had no definite plan of his life-work before him in 1608. The exigencies of the time and his own high ideals of patriotism and duty unfolded it to him gradually. He had now almost a decade of achievement in the New World, in the West Indies and Acadia, to his credit. This reputation had won for him the position of geographer for his sovereign in connection with the fur-traders' expeditions. The fur-traders welcomed him on these terms. Each journey of exploration he made inland enlarged their trading area and brought them pelts from new tribes.

For Champlain himself this work seemed but a stepping-stone to a yet dearer project. His innermost desire was to find through the New World a short cut to China. Lescarbot writes of him three years before, "Champlain promises never to cease his efforts until he

has found either a western or northern sea opening the route to China," and adds the ominous summing up, "which so many have thus sought in vain." If such a sea was to be found Champlain was the man to do it. He was a born explorer. His life and aspirations rang true to the old Ulysses spirit:

"I cannot rest from travel: I will drink  
 Life to the lees: all times I have enjoy'd  
 Greatly, have suffered greatly, both with those  
 That loved me, and alone. . . .  
 . . . . . I am become a name;  
 For, always roaming with a hungry heart,  
 Much have I seen and known. . . .  
 . . . . . Come, my friends,  
 'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.  
 Push off, and, sitting well in order, smite  
 The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
 To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
 Of all the western stars, until I die."

It was not to be. The fates decreed that Champlain's later years should be given to the Telemachus part of exercising "slow prudence," and carrying out "common duties," as he sought to plant and preserve a French colony in the new land. But in this uncongenial work it was given him, too, to prove his heroic strength "to strive, to seek, to find and not to yield."

In 1609 Champlain looked on Canada as merely his stepping-stone to China. His next five years of travel and exploration changed his attitude. The inevitable happened. The magnificent country wove its spell around him. He became enamoured with its charms and possibilities. The grandeur of the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes, the beauty of Lake Champlain and the

Falls of Montmorency, both discovered and named by him, and the vastness of the Ottawa valley and the inland country it drained, had, by 1616, converted the explorer's heart into a founder's and builder's. He had noticed that the farther up the St. Lawrence he went the richer became the soil and the prospects for settlers. "As for the country, it is beautiful and pleasant, and brings all sorts of grains and seeds to maturity. There are all the kinds of trees there that we have in our own forests, . . . and a great many fruits . . . . such as walnuts, cherries, plum trees, vines, raspberries, strawberries, green and red gooseberries, and a good many other small fruits. . . . There are several kinds of good herbs and roots. There are plenty of fish to be caught in the rivers and there are a great many meadows and an enormous quantity of game."

Certainly it was a goodly land. If the French did not enter in now and possess it, how long until their rivals, the English or Dutch, would do so? Champlain's patriotism was stirred. Yet he knew well the cost. Neither his unbounded faith for, and admiration in, the new land, nor his patriotic love for the old and its prestige, blinded him to the humdrum, prosaic business it would be to plant and nurse a colony on the rock of Quebec. He saw clearly the inherent difficulties. He had spent too many fearful winters with the Fur Company's labourers sickening and dying around their smoky caboose fire of green wood, with nothing to eat but salt pork and musty flour from France, not to realize the practical difficulties and the dearth of men fitted and willing to cope with <sup>all</sup><sub>2</sub> them and to make homes for themselves and families on those densely wooded shores.

With exultation Champlain remembered, in his hour

of question and need, one man and one woman who could build up a genuine home under such untoward conditions. He had met them some dozen years before in Acadia. In 1604, he and his comrades of de Monts' Fur Company had founded their first trading post in New France, and their most efficient helper had been Louis Hébert at St. Croix; after a horrible winter there they moved the following year to Port Royal, on the Bay of Fundy, and after another winter here Hébert returned to France, but in 1610 sailed again for Port Royal with his wife. Champlain was perfectly satisfied now that if he could persuade these Port Royal friends to come to Quebec, to be a pattern, so to speak, for his other settlers, all would be well with his colony. It was on the practical, solid, sterling worth of Louis Hébert and his wife Marie that Champlain's hopes for the future of New France were builded. Time was nobly to prove how staunch a bulwark he had chosen.

Louis Hébert was the apothecary at Port Royal and one of the most trusted and useful men there. Lescarbot writes, "Apart from the training he possesses in his profession, he took pleasure in working the soil." After the destruction of this settlement by the English in 1613, he returned to a chemist shop in his native city, Paris. Champlain now promised him, partly as the representative of the King's Government in New France, and partly on behalf of the Fur Company, which was obliged by its agreement with the King to undertake the expense of settlers, that if he would bring his family to Quebec they would be supported for two years and paid two hundred crowns for three years. On this understanding Hébert and his wife sold their Paris shop to buy the equipment needed for the new home, and set sail

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with their three children from Honfleur, April 11th, 1617. No sooner had the Company been able to pledge the Héberts, than it broke faith. It would give them only half the money, and this on condition that they all agreed to serve the Company during the said three years. Besides, whatever they grew was to be sold to the Company at home prices and to be paid in merchandise at Canadian prices. They were bound by writings to take no part in the fur trade. Lastly, the apothecary was always to serve the Company professionally without reward.

It was a hard bargain, and it was a hard prospect ahead. A few wooden houses, more or less dilapidated, since they had been run up quickly out of green lumber eight years before, made up Quebec in 1617. In the semi-clearing about them there was only an arpent and a half in cultivation, the garden of peas and onions of the Récollet Friars, who had come as missionaries to the trading post two years before. Few domestic animals or fowl were in sight, for the stock had been sacrificed in the general dearth of food before the arrival of the long-expected supply boat. Its coming brought only cruel disappointment. The callous, money-grasping Company, while forbidding food to be grown at Quebec for fear the interest in hunting would be diminished, grudged to send out ample supplies from France. The length of this voyage, about sixty-five days, caused a characteristic shortage. The settlers' supplies had been largely eaten up on board, as well as a large part of the stores which Madame Hébert had packed for her own family's use: it did not take long, evidently, for Madame Hébert's kind and provident ways to become known to her neighbours. For the famishing men at

Quebec there was left but a barrel of pork, so small that Father Sagard relates that one man carried it on his shoulder from the dock to the warehouse.

The newcomers were met by a motley throng. First they would be petrified by the numerous Indians, who, were at that time in a very riotous temper. The strife and rivalry of the traders debauched them in every possible way. They had unlimited supplies of drink and not a few firearms. Eight years later, when, however, they were more restrained, as an attempt had been made to set up an administration of justice in the meantime, a Jesuit father writes: "In fact, since I have been here I have seen none but drunken savages; they are heard shouting and raving day and night; they fight and wound each other, they kill the cattle of Madame Hébert, and when they have returned to their senses they say to you, 'It is not we who did that, but thou who gavest us this drink.'" In 1617 the Indians were in a very sullen mood, due to the unjust dealings and disorderly acts of many of the traders. Shortly after the Héberts landed they murdered two Frenchmen, and although Champlain was too openly at their mercy to punish them, they became fearful of results, and, mustering four hundred strong, determined to annihilate the French. Champlain was able to buy them off, like children, with generous gifts of food, but this expedient left the victors to face, unarmed, their more deadly foes, famine and scurvy, during the following winter.

But among the Indians Madame Hébert would soon spy out some of her own people. In 1617 there were three families at the "habitation" in the employ of the Company. They were Abraham Martin, with his wife Marguerite Langlois and their daughter Anne; Pierre

Desportes, and his wife Marie Françoise Langlois and their daughter Hélène, who in the years to come was to marry a son of Louis Hébert; and Nicolas Pivert and his wife Marguerite Le Sage, who had no children. Besides, there were about fifty other Frenchmen then at Quebec as workmen for the Company.

Champlain returned to France in the autumn and left the Hébert family alone with their neighbours for the next three years. And eventful years they were for them. During the first their daughter was married and died. And then her husband died also. This first marriage of New France, when Anne Hébert became the wife of Etienne Jonquest, a native of Normandy, was celebrated in the little wooden chapel of the Récollet Friars, and in the midst of a forest splendid in its autumn dress of bronze and red and yellow frost-touched leaves. It is sad to remember that Madame Jonquest was not only the first white bride in New France or New England, but also the first white mother to lay down her life for her child. Neither her mother's nursing nor her father's medicine could counteract the first winter of famine and disease, and she died in child-birth in the spring. And very shortly after his wife's death Etienne Jonquest fell a victim to the same cruel conditions.

What terrible days of sadness and sorrow for the poor mother! Her husband, in accordance with his agreement, was away most of the time superintending the Fur Company's trade at Tadoussac, or taking charge of their boats down the river. Louis Hébert had a hard, busy life, full of the usual drudgeries of pioneer labour, but he shared it with bold companions in the open amid the most magnificent surroundings of forest and streams. The stout-hearted wife whom he left behind faced a

harder lot. Since she had reached the new land the area of her exploits had been very limited. She knew only the narrow quarters of her rude home and scarcely larger gardens. Among the burnt stumps of their unsightly clearing she could find consolation only in her work—heavy and unremitting, yet done in the spirit of love and ambition for her dear ones—and in her religious faith. Change, recreation, friendly intercourse with neighbours and other such homeland comforts were not for her.

But Marie Hébert never wavered. With unflinching energy and self-reliant courage she worked on. Two years later Sagard gives us the result in an attractive, if modest, picture of the little clearing up on the height, a mile away from the first houses on the water. He speaks of their stock, and of their field of Indian corn and peas, and of their garden, which contained a young apple tree brought from Normandy. This apple tree had a characteristic ending—some Indians tore it up one night in drunken sport. The Héberts' stump clearing was only seven acres in extent, but their house was of stone, thirty-eight feet by nineteen. It had fitted doors and windows, and probably a chimney for the smoke to escape, which would make it a veritable mansion in those days of caboose heating.<sup>1</sup> Champlain's view of the Hébert home and surroundings is given by Madame Laura Conan thus:

"Champlain viewed with profound joy the building of this house. It appeared to him a flower of hope under the wide blue sky. The day the family settled there

<sup>1</sup>A room heated by a caboose had merely a fire built in the centre, and the smoke from this was allowed to escape at its own pleasure through a hole in the centre of the roof.

was for him a day of joy. He had at last a true fireside in New France. . . .

"With what happiness Hébert kindled the first fire on the hearth! Very sweet was that hour. The flame of the fire, the thousand little cracklings of the burning sticks, carried joy to all hearts. Instead of a tent soaked with dew, they had at last a solid roof over their heads and the comfort of warmth and shelter. Their household furnishings, brought from Paris, saw again the light of day. It could be forgotten that they were in a savage land and in a forest without bounds.

"Madame Hébert, with bright and shining eyes, went to and fro, placing her furniture, arranging her linen in cupboards, and setting on the dresser her pretty dishes and near the fire her copper bake-kettle.

"It was with deep feeling that Father Joseph Le Caron blessed the household of the pioneer. It was as if he were celebrating the alliance of man and the soil of Canada. Further, he saw, as in a dream, the workers of the earth, all those valiant pioneers who, axe in hand, thrust their way into the forest, to establish there their hearths, and he offered to God their heavy labour and heroic sacrifices."<sup>1</sup>

The Hébert dwelling, if not the very first, was one of the first two stone buildings erected in New France. Until this year, when the Récollet Fathers built a lime kiln, everything had been built of wood. The friars began their stone monastery and Indian school this year, as well as their chapel, Notre Dame des Anges, but these larger structures were not completed until Champlain's return with more funds for them from friends in France. However, they seem also to have built a small stone house a mile from the Fort, beside the Hébert clearing, and if so, those neighbouring abodes would be of the

<sup>1</sup>Translated from a passage cited by Abbé Azarie Couillard Després in his "Louis Hébert et sa famille."

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same age. Le Jeune's picture of a similar enterprise some years later brings home to us what labour the building of such a house involved. "It must be confessed that the work is great in these beginnings; the men are the horses and oxen, they carry or drag wood, trees or stones. . . . We must look after the cattle, the little ground we have must be tilled, the harvest must be cut and gathered in. We must prepare firewood, which they have to get at some distance away and without a cart. . . . They have made boards, have gone to the woods to get trees, . . . . have made some furniture, tables and stools."

By the way, it is interesting, while we are surveying these new homesteads, to count the stock about the door of the Récollet Friars, since probably their neighbours' was then much the same. We find several hogs, a pair of asses, a pair of geese, seven pairs of fowl and four pairs of ducks.

The prosperous appearance and prospects of the Hébert household in 1620 derived not a little nurture from the optimistic enthusiasm which Champlain that year radiated everywhere on his return from France, while, in its turn, this small nook of order and comparative plenty must have cheered and strengthened the zealous leader's sorely-tried faith in his own dreams of success. The foundation of his "castle in Spain" rested on Fur Company promises which had been made in France only to be broken in Canada. The Company had agreed to send eighty new settlers, some of whom were to help him rebuild the "habitation" and erect a new stone fort. They promised forty muskets, four arquebuses, and twenty-four pikes to defend the fort, and twenty-four spades and twelve reaping-hooks were to

make up the pathetically primitive equipment for the men who were to plant and reap the harvest on the forest-clad promontory of Quebec. Two corn mills are mentioned, but they never got past Tadoussac. The increasing of the live stock was left most conveniently vague. They were to bring over "two bulls and as many heifers and sheep as they could." Poor as were these supplies, Champlain and his wife set sail in good spirits, feeling that a new day of prosperity was dawning. It needed all their high hopes to face the condition of things on their landing. Three years' absence had wrought havoc in his house. "I found the 'habitation' so tumbled down and ruined it made me sad. The rain came in at all parts and the wind entered between the joinings of the planks, which had shrunken in drying. One wing had tumbled down."

In this dilemma we are tempted to picture Madame Hébert's hospitable roof becoming a haven of rest and encouragement for the weary and beautiful Helen Champlain. It so proved itself very often for others. The Récollet Friars and their Jesuit successors, when tired and disgusted by their labours in the unspeakable filth of the Indian wigwams, came to this "estimable family" to enjoy the comforts of a clean French home, and they found there always a warm, heart-cheering welcome. Even the Indians were kindly treated there, and a little negro waif made it his home. But Madame Champlain, although stranded in Canadian wilds, evidently did not forget her rank. The Ursuline chronicles tell us definitely that during her four years' sojourn in Canada she saw no other white woman than the three of her own household whom she brought with her. Let us hope the Ursuline Mother was not accurately informed.

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It would darken our tradition of Madame Champlain's beauty and goodness if we had to believe that the four solitary women in the "habitation" and the three other solitary women in the little farm-house a mile away had no cheering intercourse with one another.

But whether Marie Hébert had the honour of Madame Champlain's acquaintance or not, there is no doubt that her husband was fast becoming one of the foremost men in the little settlement. In their first Court of Justice, established in 1620, he was King's Procurator, and in the following year his name appears as one of the influential settlers, on a petition against the Fur Company presented to the king. However, it is to be feared that Marie Hébert had little time just then to discuss this petition with her husband, as only six days after the signing of it, on August 26th, 1621, their only remaining daughter, Guillemette, was married to Guillaume Couillard. Couillard was a carpenter who had been in the employ of the Company since 1613, and was looked upon as one of their intelligent and trustworthy men. Champlain praises his energy and excellent disposition. The Couillards had ten children, six daughters and four sons.

Guillaume Hébert, Louis, and Marie's other child, did not marry until 1634, when Hélène Desportes became his wife. They had three children, two sons and one daughter. From these grandchildren and the Couillards have sprung some of our most illustrious French-Canadians—the families of Joliet, De Lery de Ramesay, D'Eschambault, Fournier, as well as Mgr. Taschereau, Archbishop Blanchet of Oregon, and Mgr. Taché of Red River.

On February 4th, 1623, the Héberts' industrious



cultivating of their clearing had its reward. The Duc de Montmorency, then Viceroy of Canada, granted them free and full possession of their enclosure, which was to be henceforth known as the Seigneury of Sault au Matelot. In 1626 they acquired another grant, that of St. Joseph, situated on the River St. Charles, and with it was joined the title of *Sieur d'Espinay*.

The ever-growing prosperity of this plucky family shines out brightly in its setting of stagnation and adversity. Never did man strive harder than Champlain, and never did one batter himself more vainly against a stone wall of opposition than it was his lot to do from 1620 until his surrender of Quebec to the Kirkes in 1629. It mattered not whether he was trying to build a fort, or to establish a stock farm among the rank meadows of Cape Tourment, or to placate the Indians by the exchange of hostages and prisoners, he gained nothing. The Fur Company could pay a dividend of forty per cent., but they had no funds to bring out settlers, no funds to provide supplies for their own traders there, no funds to fortify Quebec, although rival merchants could always sell firearms to the Indians, and lastly, no funds for the establishment of justice and a strong government at their post. No wonder Champlain wrote in simple bitterness: "When a Company holds the purse in a country such as this and when they buy and assist those things only which seem good to them, those who command for the king are but little obeyed."

In these discouraging circumstances, Champlain and the poverty-pledged Récollets turned—very reluctantly, it must be admitted—to the Jesuits. The great material resources of this Order, their influence at Court, and their

well-known energy and perseverance made our ill-starred, but tenacious, colony builders believe that if the impossible could be done, these were the allies to help them to do it. Arrangements were made accordingly, and 1625 saw the first Jesuit Fathers, Lalemant, Brébeuf and Massé, arrive at Quebec. They started at once in a most workmanlike and practical way to redeem both mission and colony. Workmen and supplies were brought over, land cleared and houses built, but the hand of fate was against them, as against Champlain. A fatal disaster in the early summer of 1627, in which their reinforcements and supplies from France were all lost in shipwreck off the Isle of Canseau, compelled Father Lalemant to send his followers home that autumn, and to abandon their undertaking, at least for a season. He left six to hold the mission.

The year 1627 brought other griefs to the little band huddled around Cape Diamond, besides the withdrawal of the Jesuits. On January 26th, Louis Hébert, the patriarch of the colony, had a fall which caused his death. Father Sagard recounts in touching words the brave exhortation the unfortunate man addressed to his family. And surely there were never survivors left more in need of comfortable words of counsel and faith to strengthen their hearts than Marie Hébert and her children.

When at last it became evident that some misfortune had befallen the colony's supplies this year, despair seized all but the bravest. Some threw themselves on the charity of the savages and went off to winter with them; others attempted to make Gaspé, one hundred and thirty miles away, in hopes of reaching France by a fishing-boat from there. Champlain selected some of

the most weak and helpless—women and children whom the Company had sent out in their callous irony to augment the number of the settlers he was always so urgently demanding—and having built a boat with the aid of Couillard, commanded him, as the most skilful and able-bodied man left, to pilot the boat and its passengers to Gaspé. But Couillard, afraid of being killed on the way by Indians, refused, even when threatened with imprisonment for disobedience. It is not hard to understand the feelings of his wife and her mother at this critical time. Only nine months before they had lost the head of their family, and if now their mainstay was to be snatched from them, what could they do? Share their last ounce of peas with hungry neighbors would they gladly, but to encourage their dearest to undertake this danger-fraught venture—they simply could not and would not.

The next spring, however, finds Madame Hébert and her son-in-law a lesson to all. Their colony may have fallen on evil days, but they have still unshaken faith in the future, as their great innovation of getting the first plough in the district bears ample testimony. But, alas! more was needed than Madame Hébert's buoyant, thrifty energy could accomplish. Once more succour for New France was started out plenteously from the home shores—this time by the Company of New France, generally called the Company of the Hundred Associates, which had just been founded by Richelieu on a much grander scale than its predecessor delinquents—but once more the help reached not the starving sons on the rock of Quebec.

The same spring of 1628 which saw the fleet of the Hundred Associates sail from Dieppe saw a very similar

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fleet leave an English port. It, too, was destined for Quebec. War had broken out again between France and England, and this small English squadron, under the command of the Kirke brothers, was intended to capture New France. When the Kirkes appeared before Quebec, Champlain's bold answer decided them to defer conclusions for that season. They turned back down the St. Lawrence instead, burning the buildings and killing the animals on the stock farm at Cape Tourment. Then followed their supreme good fortune. They fell in with the French supply boats and were able to capture them all.

Two years had passed since provisions and ammunition had been received from home. Quebec was thrown entirely on her own resources. How inefficient these were is painfully revealed in the extremity of that following winter. None of the inhabitants about the fort had prepared even that most elementary necessity of Canadian winter life, summer-cut and summer-dried wood. Champlain tells us that in the depth of winter the cutting and dragging of their wood some two thousand paces exhausted all their strength. None of them had planted a single field. None of them could fish. The eel fishing was good, but the Indians took advantage of their need and ignorance and made them sacrifice a new beaver skin for ten eels. Yet, so great was the necessity, they would sell their very coats to get them at this price. It would even seem that few of them could trap or hunt. Champlain speaks of one moose being taken, but devoured like wolves by the slayers, only twenty pounds being left to share with the others. True, gunpowder was very scarce. At the fort there was only thirty or forty pounds left, which all agreed should be

kept for some greater emergency. It was not hard to imagine such arising, surrounded as they were by Indians well aware of their weakness and want. Champlain seriously thought of leaving the sick, the women and children what little food they had and leading the men on an expedition against the Iroquois in hopes of seizing the buried stores of maize in some Iroquois village. But at this juncture Madame Hébert came to the rescue and gave the colonists two barrels of peas. Seven ounces of these became the daily allowance for each until the end of May, when they, too, failed. Men, women and children betook themselves then to the woods, hunting for roots and leaves.

In July the Kirkes returned and Quebec became theirs without a struggle. Champlain had then to bid farewell to his little colony, as had also the Récollet Friars and the remaining Jesuits. Other inhabitants were encouraged by a gift of twenty crowns apiece to remain. It was a hard decision for our heroine to make. On one side her religion and her motherland drew her. On the other she was held by all the roots and feelers which had been stretching ever deeper and firmer into Canadian soil for the past twelve years. The latter were too strong for her. She had become too good a Canadian settler to be uprooted at once. No, she and her family would cling to their own soil in the hopes that brighter days might dawn. Then if they did not, it would be time enough to face an upheaval.

On the 16th of May that year, Marie Hébert had been married to Guillaume Hubou. We know very little of her second husband, but that little is good. He was of Norman blood and an honourable man. On the 18th of the same month her first grandson was born, who was

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later to inherit his grandfather's title of Sieur de l'Espinau.

Marie Hubou made the same name for herself with the English that she had with her own countrymen. They looked upon her as the one kind, efficient woman in the settlement, whose heart and house were always large enough to welcome one more. Champlain on his departure entrusted three Indian girl hostages to her; the English, on theirs, left her a little negro waif.

When the French returned in 1632, the Jesuit Fathers give us a joyful picture of her:

“We went to celebrate the holy mass in the oldest house in this country, the house of Madame Hébert, who settled near the fort in the lifetime of her husband; she has a fine family, one of her daughters being married to a respectable Frenchman here. God is continually blessing them. He has given them beautiful children, their cattle are flourishing, their land bears fine grain. This is the only French family settled in Canada. They were trying to get back to France, but learning that the French would soon return to Quebec, they took courage and resolved to stay. When they saw the white flags on the masts of our ships, their joy was indescribable; but when they found us in their own house saying holy mass, which they had not heard for three years, God! what joy! Tears of gratitude fell from their eyes. Oh, how heartily we all sang the *Te Deum Laudamus!*”

After the return of her countrymen Marie Hubou lived for seventeen years. She spent this evening of her life very fittingly, considering that her family worries and active pioneering were over. Her time was given freely to others. The Jesuit Fathers sent for her from far and near to nurse the sick, to care for little

children and to stand sponsor for the dying converts who were to be baptized. She devoted much time and care to little Indian girls—clothing, training and bringing them up. Many of them lived in her own house. For some of these the Jesuits paid the board, but for others she cared at her own expense. Indeed, so many little Indian girls did she look after that her home might well be considered as the forerunner of the future Ursuline School.

Although none could call Marie Hébert a celebrity, yet how admirable have we found her in all the obscure vicissitudes of her life. Well this is, since she, and she alone, has to speak to us to-day for the countless hundreds of silent French-Canadian frontierswomen who shared with their husbands the hardships and dangers of the early life, and at the same time brought up those large families of sons and daughters that have ever been the pride of their nation. Of Marie Hébert, the first of them, and simply on account of the novelty of her being the first, and a worthy first, the historians have handed down many little glimpses. We have followed the course of her life and have seen the surroundings in which it was passed. The woman herself we can only picture as we find her in them. She must have had a wonderful constitution, with good nerves and a sane mind.<sup>1</sup> She was a thrifty, provident, hospitable matron, an excellent manager of her house and her resources. She was ambitious and a woman of strong character, but just and kind and deeply devoted to her Church and religion.

Her day drew to its close, but not so the way of life

<sup>1</sup>Even Father Le Jeune says that three years in the country had left him so that he started at his own shadow.

she and her husband established. This backwoods settler class which they so excellently typify came to be the backbone of our nation. Champlain's colony had to pass through dark days, but none the less did time justify Le Clercq's words: "But we may say the most fortunate thing he effected was his persuading Sieur Hébert to go to Canada with all his family, which has produced, and will hereafter produce, good subjects, the most important and zealous in the colony." And could Champlain come back to-day and see the flourishing land that is possessed and peopled by the descendants of just such settlers as were his Héberts, he would realize how auspicious had been his efforts. His grain of mustard seed has flourished exceedingly.





*Marie de l'Incarnation Teaching  
Indian Children under the Oak Tree  
at the Ursuline Convent.*

## CHAPTER II

### *Mother Marie; The Nun as a Frontierswoman*

#### I

IF MARIE HEBERT could come back to-day to tell us about the difference in her life and surroundings after the restoration of the French in 1632, she would at once burst forth in exclamations of enthusiasm and praise: "Oh, my dear country then became a land where a woman might live! That terrible time of misery and hunger and brandy-crazed savages was gone, gone for ever. We enjoyed security and peace, with plenty to eat, and good, God-fearing neighbours to share it with. Our country prospered after the restoration and became a happy land—a land with real French homes and with hospitals, schools and churches."

Certainly, from a woman's point of view, the change was all for the best when the step-mother Fur Company was obliged to yield first place in the management of the colony to the paternal Jesuits. The lapse of time and the sinking of so many of their freight boats had shaken the confidence of the new merchant company, the Hundred Associates, so that they did not enter on their vast inheritance with as independent and domineering a bearing as their predecessors had maintained. Their weakness proved the Jesuits' strength. Two of their Order came over with the very first boat and began at once to exert a powerful and sometimes imperious control over all future colonization. They stood for encouraging a clean, law-abiding and modestly effi-

cient settlement. Father Le Jeune, in his "Relation" of 1636, has a very picturesque description of the transition as he saw it, and as his subjects such as Marie Hébert felt it. "In contemplating the progress of affairs in New France, I seem to see an aurora emerging from the profound darkness of the night, which, lighting up the surface of the earth with its golden rays, finally changes into that great ocean of light brought in by the sun. . . . The Lilies died here in their birth. . . . In short, these immense Provinces could aspire to no higher fortune than to be made a storehouse for the skins of dead animals. . . . Behold to what height the glory of New France could attain under the bondage of the foreigner, or under the administration of those who loved it only for its spoils! But . . . that night has been scattered; and now the dawn of a mild and peaceful prosperity is spreading over our great river."

The rays of the new dawn were few. The most important was considered to be that New France was now to be better protected against the Indians. Alas! this was a false light—or merely a rushlight, perhaps—which flickered out in a few years, leaving the black dread of night to engulf the Iroquois-terrified land. No doubt, at the beginning the new Company tremendously surpassed the old in building fortifications and providing ammunition, but they left undone the one thing Champ-lain, with his long experience and clear insight, urged them to do. Knowing the tenacity and strength of the Iroquois, he asked Richelieu, shortly before his death on Christmas Day, 1635, for "one hundred and twenty men, light armed for avoiding arrows," by whose aid, with two or three thousand savages whom he

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could assemble, he was confident the Iroquois could be conquered. But this petition met the usual Champlain fate, and in a little while the "terrestrial paradise" of peace became a very hell of impotent fear and torment. It was not until 1666, when the Marquis de Tracy first chastised the Iroquois, that the dawn of a new day really broke on the long-afflicted land.

However, for a few years there was a deceiving lull. Father Le Jeune held out tranquillity as the all-powerful inducement to would-be settlers. He foretold how they would enter the forests "as if into the bosom of peace. . . . where with the blessings of earth they would far more easily find those of heaven and the soul." He pictured for them an idyllic land, a veritable Forest of Arden, "far remote from the Gehenna of a thousand superfluous compliments, the tyranny of law-suits, . . . . the din of palaces." He assured them it was a country where "deceits, thefts, rapes, assassinations, treachery, enmity, black malice," were seen "only once a year, in the letters and Gazettes which the people brought from Old France."

The Jesuit Father spoke truly. His interest for the material prosperity of the land never outstripped his zeal for what he considered its true welfare. "I beg all those who shall come, to come with a desire to do good." And once they did come there was no danger of their desire cooling in the atmosphere awaiting them. Prayers, masses, confessions, penances, Indian baptisms and religious processions were the first things. At any time the building of the fortifications could be dropped to allow the Governor and his followers to attend the baptism of an Indian papoose or the funeral of its converted father. The bell on the new chapel beside the

fort rang morning, noon and night for prayer, and rang not unheeded. Indeed, delinquents were severely punished. Drunkards and blasphemers underwent the ignominious torture of riding the chaplet or wooden horse which had been conveniently erected at the very doors of the fort and church. This was so effective that the following Lent the godless soldiers and debauched artisans are reported as most devout in their fastings and even inflicting upon themselves religious discipline. The Red Indian, too, became a law-abiding citizen under a régime which not only punished the drunken savage but fined the Frenchman who gave him the brandy.

Unfortunately these tranquil charms, so thankfully enjoyed by the staunch remnant who survived the old régime, and so enthusiastically extolled in Le Jeune's "Relation," seemed but negative advantages to the middle-class French Roman Catholic (his Huguenot fellow-countryman was forbidden to come), amid the blessings and comforts of his civilized home. In fact, they did not counteract the positive chill he received at the outset on finding the narrative dated "from the midst of a forest more than eight hundred leagues in extent, at Kebec." That spoke volumes to him of the price he would have to pay for the tranquillity. Nor did the Fur Company come to the rescue with more substantial attractions. In spite of their seemingly fair beginning the Hundred Associates soon proved conclusively the close bonds of kinship between themselves and their delinquent predecessors. They were pledged to bring over from two to three hundred persons per annum, but, from 1632 to 1660, there came over for Quebec, on an average, only eight settlers a year.

A very "mild prosperity" that, surely, but yet prosperity; the settlers were of the right kind. Small farmers from Perche took the lead from 1632, and Normandy, Picardy, Champagne, and Maine also sent their quota. A better class for the new land than the typical Percheron settlers could not have been found in France. They came with their families, their cattle and their farm implements, and having been accustomed to a forest-clad country they knew at once how to set about clearing a farm and building a home. Robert Giffard, who, like Louis Hébert, had had the advantage of some training in the science of healing and medicine, for he was a surgeon, was such a one. He obtained, in 1634, the first Seigneury from the new company. It consisted of land at Beauport, near Quebec, running for a league along the river and a league and a half in depth. With the help of seven men whom he brought with him he cleared twelve arpents the first year and grew eight puncheons of wheat, two of peas and three of Indian corn.<sup>1</sup> In short, at the end of two years Sieur Giffard's harvest was sufficient to maintain twenty persons. What abundance this must have seemed to the survivors of the former era! And the self-sufficiency of his establishment was also a joy and benefit. He had chosen his men with wonderfully foresighted discrimination. Before long he had a stone-mason, a carpenter, a tiler, a blacksmith, a miller, a shoemaker, a leather-dresser and a couple of weavers. Such a community would quickly come to possess comfortable homes, warm, durable clothing and plenty of plain, nourishing food.

<sup>1</sup> Some idea of the capacity of this measure is gathered from the fact mentioned later in the same context, that a puncheon of flour made about seven hundred pounds of bread.

But man lives not by bread alone. Le Jeune relates, "A number of very respectable persons can assure us that they never would have crossed the ocean to come to New France, if they had not known there were persons there capable of directing their consciences, of procuring their salvation and of instructing their children in virtue and in the knowledge of letters." It was not long until this latter need was supplied as a by-product, so to speak, of another work at that time considered a greater,—the civilizing and Christianizing of the Red Men.

Although New France had few attractions to offer the ordinary lay settler bent on his own worldly success, it was for his religious and missionary-inspired brother a magnificent field, boundless in extent and white for the harvest. The words of Major Closse, that brave, dauntless hero of Montreal—"I have come here only that I might die for God, while serving Him in the profession of arms. If I did not expect to die here I should leave the country to go to serve against the Turk and not be deprived of that glory"—were typical of the Sir Galahad spirit, "If I lose myself, I save myself," which actuated many of the finest and bravest of the first comers. The women of France were kindled by the same ardour of devotion and self-sacrifice, mingled with missionary zeal, as the men. The "Relation" tells us, "The Carmelites are all on fire, the Ursulines are filled with zeal, the Nuns of the Visitation have no words significant enough to show their ardour, those of Notre Dame implore permission to share the sufferings which must be undergone among these peoples, and the Hospitaliers insist that they be brought over here next year."

But the practical Superior of the Jesuits at Quebec, while he saw the good the nuns might do there, yet emphasized when writing all these good sisters, "that they be very careful not to urge their departure until they have here a good house, well-built and well-endowed, otherwise they would be a burden to our French, and could accomplish little for these peoples."

The Duchesse d'Aiguillon, niece of Cardinal Richelieu, was the first to solve this difficulty. She decided to "aid the salvation of the poor savages" by founding a hospital in New France to be put in charge of the Hospital Nuns of Dieppe, a House of Mercy which had existed since 1250, and which at that time was particularly noted for its excellent discipline and service. The Jesuits considered it the best regulated in Europe. But the Duchesse d'Aiguillon was not the only woman of means who felt she might pave the way for some Sisters to go to the New World. Madame de la Peltrie, a rich young widow of Normandy, decided to go to Quebec herself and build a seminary for the Ursulines, who were teachers. The carrying out of this determination made straight and clear the path for the coming to Canada of the most important woman Quebec had yet greeted, or was to greet, during the whole period of French colonization—the Venerable Mother Marie de l'Incarnation, who became the first Superior of this new Ursuline Convent.

## II

Mother Marie de l'Incarnation was an admirable representative of her sex to come to a new land. She was well equipped to take a helpful part in its initial activities and to direct it into paths of useful and intelli-



gent endeavour and religious steadfastness. She set an efficient example to the women about her in managing and dealing with all practical affairs of housekeeping and larder furnishing. For the mothers she was a tower of strength, keeping ever before their eyes, by both word and deed, the high and true ideals of Christian womanhood which were apt to be forgotten in those youthful days when examples of tempting license were met on every side. And at the same time her untiring missionary devotion towards the Indians, clothing, feeding, and nursing them, and mastering three of their dialects, was the marvel of her religious co-workers. In short, she came in touch with the pioneer life about her at every point: she shared in the manual labour of the poorest men and women, and she had her part equally in the intellectual and spiritual life and development carried on by the leaders and founders of her Church and country.

Marie Guyard, to use her unfamiliar maiden name, was a woman of forty when she arrived in Canada, August 1st, 1639. As the proud descendant "of the holiest man in his kingdom," whom Louis IX had sent in 1485 to escort to France, from the Calabrian coast, the celebrated hermit, François de Paule, for consolation in his dying hours, and as the daughter of a father so noted for his honesty that his neighbours often chose him arbiter of their disputes, and of a mother whose motto to her children was, "Ever watch and ever pray," it is easy to understand what a deeply moral and religious setting was given her early life and training.

Naturally her biographers record many prophetic stories of her childhood. Both her spiritual experiences and her deeds of charity and loving-kindness began when she was very young. Like another great woman who

was to have her life upon this earth a little more than two centuries later, Florence Nightingale, Marie Guyard was conscious from her youth of a very special "call" to her life-work. In both lives it would seem that the question of marriage first gave voice to this latent feeling. Florence Nightingale, with complete understanding of her position, refused all offers of marriage in order to remain entirely free to fulfil the capacities in her of which she was conscious, "of high purposes for mankind and for God." "Death," she wrote, "is often the gateway to the garden where we shall no longer hunger and thirst after real satisfaction. Marriage, on the contrary, is often the initiation into the meaning of that inexorable word 'never,' which does not deprive us, it is true, of what, 'at their festivals the idle and inconsiderate call life,' but which brings in reality the end of our lives, and the chill of death with it." This was the mature expression of the nineteenth-century woman. Her prototype in the seventeenth spoke more simply after the manner of her age and training, but it is easy to see the same feeling underlying both. Marie Guyard, when her parents proposed she should marry at the age of seventeen, said, "My dear mother, since it is a settled plan and my father wishes it absolutely, I feel myself obliged to obey his will and yours. But if God grants me the favour of giving me a son, I promise Him from the present to consecrate him to His service, and if, afterwards, He give back to me the liberty which I am about to lose, I pledge myself equally to consecrate myself then." The chief difference between these women was that Florence Nightingale made the sacrifice with no assurance of appointed work, while Marie Guyard felt that to become a nun would provide hers.

Eight years of restless convent life, during which she felt she was there "only in passing, as in a warehouse from which God would call her some day," shows very forcibly how fundamentally alike their instincts were.

The marriage, however, far from limiting Marie Guyard's opportunities for service, increased them. Her husband, M. Martin, was a man of wealth and considerable prominence in their native city, Tours, and his wife found herself in a position where she might have enjoyed the things which the world most envies, but "Our Lord made me entirely lose my affection and taste for them." Instead, she became wonderfully wrapped up in their business—a large silk factory—and took over the control of the commercial side of it. At the same time she became a mother to their many employees and was interested in helping their worldly needs as well as their spiritual salvation.

A famous statesman has said, "Wherever thou art, it is with the poor that thou should'st live." This would have been a precept after Madame Martin's own heart. She tells us that she never felt so happy or so much at home as when with the poor, and when "causing to shine a ray of light in the night of their misery." During her married life she was able to help them in many ways. One time we find her before the scandalized Court of Justice, pleading the cause of an honest citizen unjustly imprisoned. Little as the authorities may have liked her interference, they had to admit the justice of her plea, and before the end her "protégé saw his chains fall off." Another characteristic act of her warm, loving sympathy was shown to a poor mother almost demented with grief over her son, who had gone astray. Madame Martin first tried to soothe her with pious

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words, but soon was overcome by an irresistible impulse to kiss the unhappy woman and clasp her tenderly to her breast. This act of sisterly affection brought the needed calm and resignation to the poor soul.

Filled with such deeds of kindness and pity, the two short years of her busy married life sped by, and then in one supreme moment, when only nineteen, she was bereft of fortune, home and husband. Her clearly-appointed place in the world had vanished, and she was left with the infant son and the liberty which before her marriage she had so solemnly consecrated to God. The little son, however, was now a perplexing factor in her problem of life. She was too good a daughter of her Church not to feel that the desirable thing was to become a nun, but she could not do so and leave her young child alone in the world. She compromised by remaining with him for twelve years and by living herself during the interval as austere a life of chastity, poverty and obedience as she could have done in a convent. These years, spent first in her sister's house, and, at her own wish, as a servant there, and then as superintendent of a large forwarding business of her brother-in-law, proved to be verily one long, severe castigation of her proud, strong spirit and loving heart. The pain of her final oblation, the eternal farewell to her son, may be imagined from his heart-rending grief when she left him in the Jesuit school. The lonesome little fellow, in his frantic longing for his mother, ran away from his classroom and broke into her sacred retreat many times. Finally his sore and baffled spirit found its consolation and revenge in an irreligious and worldly way of life. His mother's early training and influence, however, had not been for naught. After ten years of waywardness he repented

and was admitted into La Congregation des Benedictins de Saint-Maur. Many long years after, his mother's farewell message to him from Canada was: "*Dites-lui que je l'emporte en mon cœur dans le paradis.*"

During all her season of probation, Mother Marie de l'Incarnation found her greatest solace in the life and teachings of St. François de Sales. As his ardent neophyte she soon became a mystic of the most intense school. After seven years of penances and unthinkable mortifications she enjoyed the ecstasy of a vision in which Christ said to her, "*Sponsabo te mihi in fide, sponsabo te mihi in perpetuum.*"<sup>1</sup> To many people to-day there seems much that is purely disordered fancy about this part of her creed. It would not be necessary to touch on it at all, were it not that in Canadian years much of her fortitude and confidence in the future drew nourishment from this same belief. This mystical, devotional fervour demanded before all things the complete surrender of her own will to her heavenly Father's will. Her constant rule of life was to ask not what she wished from God, but what God would wish for her. Once the work in Canada was established Mother Marie's whole heart and soul were in it—if they could be said to be in anything earthly—yet, in 1650, when the whole Catholic mission seemed on the brink of being swept away by Iroquois savagery, Mother Marie wrote, "Seeing Christianity at ruin's door, my heart suffered an agony I cannot express . . . yet my soul is, it seems to me, in a position to leave Canada at any minute if such was the Divine good pleasure; it is in that alone I find my peace and repose." Here, then, lay

<sup>1</sup>She beheld this vision on the anniversary of the Incarnation, and hence her name in religion.

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the secret of the magnificent perseverance, patience and self-renunciation which carried Mother Marie through all hours of need.

The twenty long years between her husband's death and her coming to Canada, and her mystical creed, are dwelt upon only because they gave her a rich spiritual culture. But might it not be possible to lay too much stress on the idea that the severe discipline of body, heart and spirit during those years was responsible for her peerless calm and quiet strength of character? Might it not have been a native gift? However, as she herself understood it, those painful years in the wilderness before her apostolic work began helped her to cultivate humility, renunciation and faith. The twelve years of servitude she spent in her sister's home, "when nobody but God Almighty knew what it cost" to keep her vow of obedience, no doubt added both patience and tenderness to her nature. The parting with her son, whom she never had kissed after he was two, for fear she would not have the strength to leave him when the time to enter the convent came, was her supreme sacrifice. Nothing could ever be so hard again. "It seems as if my very bones were disjoined and twisted from their place, so great was my grief in leaving you." And harder still were the obstinate questionings which assailed her after the irrevocable step was made: "I found myself in distress so extreme for the fear I had on account of my separation from you . . . that I could hardly live. One time the devil gave me great temptation. He filled my imagination with certain ideas in such a way that I was compelled to leave the house and to withdraw to seclusion. I thought that I should die of grief. My recourse, nevertheless, was to

Him who had promised to take care of you. . . . A little while after I heard of your withdrawal from the world into religious life . . . which gave me life again as by resurrection from the dead." She passed through another terrible experience. We know what a devoted daughter of the Church she was and what implicit faith she had in all its ways. She had sacrificed all at its direction, but instead of gaining peace, a spiritual dejection overwhelmed her, once for as long as two years, in which she "felt a supreme disgust for the things of God." To Mother Marie these seasons of distress and morbidness showed conclusively the terrible power of the devil. To many of us they show how tremendous was the force of the desire for action which was latent in her, and the strength of her mind's opposition (unconscious though it were) to her pent-in surroundings. If only she could have heard the Divine command telling her to do something helpful and useful for her fellow-men, with what passionate readiness would she have hastened to do it!

Whether her virtues were spontaneous or acquired by sore discipline, when she entered upon her Canadian work her character could hardly be better described than by some of the lines of Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior:"

"It is the generous spirit, who, when brought  
 Among the tasks of real life, hath wrought  
 Upon the plan that pleased his boyish thought:  
 Whose high endeavours are an inward light  
 That makes the path before him always bright:

(But) makes his moral being his prime care;  
 Who, doomed to go in company with Pain,

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And Fear, and Bloodshed, miserable train!  
Turns his necessity to glorious gain;

Whose powers shed round him in the common strife,  
Or mild concerns of ordinary life,  
A constant influence, a peculiar grace;  
But who, if he be called upon to face  
Some awful moment to which Heaven has joined  
Great issues, good or bad for human kind,  
Is happy as a Lover; and attired  
With sudden brightness, like a Man inspired;  
And, through the heat of conflict, keeps the law  
In calmness made, and sees what he foresaw;  
Or, if an unexpected call succeed,  
Come when it will, is equal to the need."

### III

Soon after Mother Marie entered the Ursulines, a restlessness which she could not banish kept agitating her with a feeling that this was not her abiding city. Silent, with closed lips, she fought it for two years, when a strange vision came to accentuate it, and compelled her to seek light and guidance on the subject. She confessed the whole matter to Father Dinet, Rector of the Jesuit College at Tours, and told him about her vision, in which she saw herself led by an unknown woman away to the westward, across the sea. They entered a glorious land of mists and mountains, where were awaiting them, sitting on a throne, the Virgin and her infant Son.

Father Dinet surprised her greatly by telling her he was convinced this land in the west was Canada. Until now Mother Marie had thought Canada was only a bogey land kept to frighten children. Shortly after this a Jesuit Father sent her Le Jeune's "Relation,"



and by degrees her enthusiasm for the missionary work in Canada, and the Jesuits' knowledge of her character, ripened into a settled plan that she should go to Canada as soon as the unknown woman to lead her there would be revealed.

At the identical moment that the Jesuits' plans for Mother Marie were blocked for lack of a patron, in another part of France they were the custodians of rather an embarrassment of riches in the person of the young and beautiful Madame de la Peltrie and her fortune. She longed to found an Ursuline Convent in their far-off mission, but such a scheme could be only a dream until a suitable Superior was found.

It is easy to surmise in these circumstances under what happy auspices Madame de la Peltrie and Mother Marie would quickly be brought together. Madame de la Peltrie, under the fostering care of her supposed husband, M. de Bernières, visited the Convent of Tours in November, 1638, when all details were arranged for their enterprise, as well as the choice of a third companion—Mother St. Joseph, a very lovable, light-hearted, merry disciple of Mother Marie, then only twenty-two years of age. They were all eager to undertake the mission as soon as possible; so it was decided to sail with the Company's boats the following spring.

Busy were those winter months, gathering and making the equipment for the new convent in the far-away land. And strangely lifted out of convent monotony were the lives of Mother Marie and Mother St. Joseph. Their journey from Tours to Dieppe by way of Paris was one long triumphal march, filled with attention and kindness from high and low. In Paris they had an audience with Queen Anne of Austria, noteworthy as giving us a

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really human little glimpse of Mother Marie. We hear she was somewhat confused, for the one time on record, by the Queen's gracious greeting.

On the fourth of May, 1639, they set sail for Canada. The passenger list of this voyage is a most typical one of early French colonization. There were three Jesuit Fathers, Father Vimont (who was to be the new Superior at Quebec), and Fathers Chaumonot and Poncet. There were three young Hospital Nuns to take charge of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon's Indian Hospital, Mothers St. Ignace, St. Bernard and St. Bonaventure. The oldest of them was twenty-nine and the youngest twenty-two. And there was our little band, consisting of Madame de la Peltrie, with her maid, Charlotte Barré, in a few years to be known as Mother St. Ignace, since she was to be rewarded for her courage and devotion by being allowed to enter the Ursulines as their first Canadian recruit, and Mothers Marie de l'Incarnation, St. Joseph, and Cécile de Sainte-Croix, one of the Ursulines of Dieppe who had been allowed to join them. As for the rest of the passengers, they were all men and officers of the Fur Company. There seems to have been no settler with his family, nor any other woman but those mentioned.

The dangers which beset the crossing were also typical, and an explanation characteristic of the time is found in the following: "I do not know whether the demons foresaw some great blessing from this passage, but it seemed as if they desired to engulf us from the time we left the roadstead. They raised up the whole ocean, unchained the winds, and excited such horrible and continuous tempests that they almost made us perish in sight of Dieppe." The first alarm arose from

a Spanish vessel sighted immediately on leaving France, and escaped only by their veering far north. This then brought them into the foggy iceberg region. One morning, when they were singing the last verses of the office, a cry of fear sounded from the poop. In an instant all were on the bridge, and could perceive through the thick fog a mountain of ice, so near that they could hear the sea breaking on its sides. Mother Marie gives us some personal and very human details of this moment. "During all this disorder, my spirit and my heart were in the greatest calm which it is possible to enjoy. . . . Madame de la Peltrie kept herself glued to me that we might die together, and I arranged my skirts in order to feel myself in a seemly condition when the boat would break." However, by miracle, the boat did not break, and Mother Marie lived to sum up her woman's view of sea voyages in these words: "Although we were treated and lodged as well as one could be at sea, and in a very good ship, provided with everything, yet there was so much to suffer for persons of our sex and our condition that it is necessary to experience it to believe it. For me, I thought I should die of thirst, because the fresh water was spoiled from the time we raised anchor, and my stomach would not support strong drink. I spent almost the whole voyage without sleep, and this sleeplessness was accompanied by a pain in the head of extreme violence. . . . I did none the less all my exercises and all that was necessary for the service of the day." If this last sentence was changed to read, "I none the less took care of my babies and did all that was necessary to appease them during the day," it would outline the passage of probably

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every married woman coming to New France in the seventeenth century.

They had set sail on May 4th, and arrived at Tadoussac on July 15th. They were still two weeks from their goal. These last two weeks, spent in the small river boats and with a sole and unvaried diet of uncooked salt codfish, were surely the climax of the whole trip.

This experience of the country's lack of proper food thoroughly aroused Mother Marie's practical nature to consider ways and means of bettering this condition. The trouble was that, in spite of the efforts of such people as Sieur Giffard and Madame Hébert's family, the population as a whole still depended upon the mother country for food, and if by any chance the merchant ship was wrecked or taken by pirates, "we could look to Divine providence alone for daily bread." Now the supplies from France consisted of salt pork, beans and flour—very often mouldy from the damp—varied by smoked cod. Although the cod was caught and cured on the coasts of New France, so absolutely lacking was all trade and commerce, except the traffic in furs, that it had to make a voyage to Old France and back before it could be eaten at Quebec.

One of Mother Marie's first interests was in what the soil would grow and what the native fruits and vegetables were worth. True, it was no smiling garden like her native Touraine, and, in spite of herself, longings now and then escaped her pen for a taste of the old delicious fruits. But she industriously made the best of what she found, and spoke quite sanguinely of the jam and preserves they made from the wild fruits and berries, and of the refreshing salads their convent gar-

den had been made to yield. The very first year she was at Quebec—and be it remembered this was the year of the smallpox, of her initial struggles with the Indian languages, of her worry over the dissipation of her son, and of the strain of trying to work out an harmonious basis of union for the different branches of the Ursuline Convent represented in her own small family—she sent home a kind of cotton plant about which she wanted full information, because if it could be converted into thread and cloth she saw a good industry for Canada.

In no way did Mother Marie, in later years, show her "Canada First" spirit more conspicuously than in her desire to prove that the beauty, the fertility and the abundance of her adopted country made it a goodly place to live and not merely a money-gaining desert to be fled as soon as the profit was secured. Listen to her sing its praises: "Here . . . wheat, vegetables and all sorts of grain grow in abundance. The soil is the soil for wheat. The better acquainted one is with it from cutting down the forests, the more it shows itself fertile and rich. This abundance, nevertheless, hinders not a great number from being poor. The reason of this is that when a family begins a home, they need two or three years to gain sufficient for themselves. These first times of difficulty being past, our people begin to be comfortable, and if they behave properly, become rich in time." She was also most enthusiastic over what she heard of the country south of the St. Lawrence and along the Richelieu River, when it was opened up for settlement by the Carignan-Salières regiment: "It is a marvellous thing to hear accounts of the beauty and fertility of that country. A great extent is already in cultivation; one sees there very fine

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meadows where the grass grows as high as men. The stalks of Indian corn are ten, twelve and thirteen feet in height; the cobs are a fine size and each cob yields more than four hundred grains." With practical foresight she encouraged the people to devote themselves to agriculture rather than to the fur trade. "In the main, while the inhabitants amuse themselves in the traffic of beaver skins, they do not advance their own business so much as if they cultivate the ground and employ themselves in fishing and making oil from whales and porpoises."

But to return to the conditions and problems Mother Marie had to encounter in 1639. The Ursulines' first home was a small cottage with two rooms, situated in Quebec Lower Town, near where the Church of Notre Dame des Victoires stood later. The largest room, about sixteen feet square, served as choir, parlor, dormitory, and dining-room, while in the other they held their classes. Cramped as they were, it was not so bad until smallpox broke out among their Indian pupils, before the end of the first month. "Our house was changed in a few days into a hospital; all our pupils took the sickness . . . four of them died with it. We all expected to take it, because we were day and night caring for them, and the cramped accommodation we had necessitated our being continually the one with the other. . . . As we had no furniture then, all the beds were on the floor, so that it was necessary for us always to pass over the sick; and in this exigency the Divine Majesty gave us such great courage that we felt scarcely any disgust at the disease and the filth of the savages. Madame, our foundress, wished to take first place in this charity, and although she was delicate,

she set herself with marvellous zeal to do services the most humble and revolting."

However, neither the present labour of the smallpox, nor the fear that in the future the Indians, terrified by this inauspicious opening, would shun their school, discouraged Mother Marie. She pushed forward their building on the very site where the Ursuline Convent is found to-day. Then in the midst of the undertaking her mainstay collapsed. Madame de la Peltrie, "who wished to be everywhere, whenever the savages were in question," went down to Montreal with Mlle. Mance to help establish the new mission there. She took with her her maid, and a labouring man who had done the outside work for the nuns, and also her household goods and her endowment.

It is not hard to make allowance for poor Madame de la Peltrie in thus deserting her first project. She had made a supreme sacrifice of both her life and her money for the cause, yet when her little band was established in the New World, she found that except for her money she was a supernumerary in their work. She had no share in its organization, no responsibility. Within her own sphere Mother Marie was an autocrat. She was the brain and she was the will of the convent. If Madame de la Peltrie had executive capacity, it was not utilized, and her intellectual helpfulness and interest were greatly limited by the fact that "she always spoke to them (the Indians) with her eyes, not being able to speak to them in their language." Her days were practically all spent in sewing for the convent and the children of the forest, rather tedious monotony for a young, beautiful and wealthy woman. In the spring of 1640 she had indulged in a trip to Tadoussac to meet the boats which

were bringing over two more nuns; Mother Marie, with her austere singleness of purpose, considered this an unwarranted extravagance. There is no doubt that Mother Marie's wonderful ability, strength of character and fortitude formed the high ideal Madame de la Peltrie admired, but she herself, a clinging, winsome, impulsive and formerly a much-made-of and petted girl, could hardly but feel a little jealous resentment over the other's pronounced ascendancy. For Mother Marie the relationship had become rather irksome. She writes of the desertion, "Giving up this furniture filled me with a great joy in myself." It left her empty-handed, but also free-handed. If Madame de la Peltrie's resources were withdrawn, she had but to exert herself the more to find new ones. That was all. With absolute faith in her own ability and capacity to work, she never gave M. Bernière's suggestion to return to France a second thought. She wrote, it is said, six hundred letters to France that summer, explaining about her work and asking for assistance. As a result Madame de la Peltrie, on her return a year and a half later, after being baffled by the Jesuits in her other plans, found the small community in their new home and Mother Marie with such independent sources of supply that there could never again be any uncertainty as to who was head in their little world. Abbé Casgrain rings now the death knell of Madame de la Peltrie in these words: "Convinced henceforth that God required from her for the accomplishment of His will and the assistance of those abandoned friends, only ardent prayers, ordinary disciplines, and the exercise of charity towards the little savages, she returned to bury herself in her silent retreat in the Ursuline Convent." Remembering this, her dying



words, thirty long years afterwards, "*Laetatus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi: in Domum Domini ibimus,*" rightly or wrongly seem more than a pious quotation. They were the weary thanksgiving of the one-time wayward, but now gentle and long-suffering heart.

Procuring the money by no means constituted Mother Marie's whole share in the building of her convent. Outside, she was the overseer and director of the building, and inside, like other pioneer householders, she had to board her workmen. A labourer's fare in those days was so frugal we are apt to think a woman's work in preparing it would amount to little. As rations, each one was given per week twelve pounds of bread, two of lard and one of dried cod; a pint of peas, two ounces of butter and a little measure of oil and vinegar. For drink they were allowed a pint of cider per day or a quart of beer, "and occasionally a drink of wine on fête-days." In the cold winter mornings they had a drop of brandy. The kind mothers also treated them occasionally to rice, prunes, and raisins, which as a rule were luxuries for the sick.

The demands on the Mother Superior when building the first convent were the ordinary ones to be expected in a new and poor land. But when it was burnt, on December 29th, 1650, she had to rise to an altogether different occasion if the Ursulines were to have a second home. The settlement was then on the verge of extinction. A year and a half of bloody Iroquois terror had followed the martyrdom of Brébeuf and Lalemant in the Huron country, and the panic, and famine-stricken scattering of the remnant of their flock. The fur trade was dead, since every stream and forest path bristled with the rampant Iroquois. And in the convent was

disaster. Her dearest friend, Mother St. Joseph, was in the grip of death; two other nuns worse than dead to her, since, dismayed by the hardships of Canada, they had returned to France. It was not to be wondered at that many heard in the destructive crackling of those convent flames, on that cold, clear, frosty night, the voice of God calling the Mothers home across the sea. However, Mother Marie did not hear it, and when she did not no earthly consideration could shake her courage and determination.

The convent had been burnt through the forgetfulness of a lay sister, who, when setting the bread, had put a pan of live coals in the kneading-box to keep it warm. She had intended to take them out before going to bed, but forgot, with the fatal result. Many early settlers must have lost their homes by similar fires. They had no stoves and used hot coals for heating many things and places. Only two years before the Jesuit Fathers would have lost theirs had it not been for the early rising of the cook. To heat the church for midnight mass on Christmas Eve, they had set out two great kettles of coals, which had been forgotten afterwards. Next morning when the cook found them, at five o'clock, one of them, which had not had so much ashes in the bottom, had burnt the floor all around it.

It is very tempting to pause here and glance in at that midnight mass. What a picturesque scene it is! The general gloom of the little chapel with its two large kettles of burning coals throwing a ruddy light on the silent French and Indian congregation, and the Jesuit Father at the altar, where four candles in an iron bracket shed the only other light. And the music, how strange and fitting it sounds, since our far-away ears do not

detect the fact, so distressing to the Jesuit chronicler, that the German flute and the violin were not in perfect unison with the bass singer.

No, Mother Marie saw no finger of God pointing backward to France when the calamity befell her little flock. She read God's dealings with her country in another way. "God protects us. . . . He blinds them [the Iroquois], for they realize not their strength and our feebleness. If they saw indeed things as they are they would soon have us butchered." And again, "It is a wonderful thing to see in what manner God governs this country. When all seems desperate, He prompts certain resorts hidden from the eyes of the world by means of which He re-establishes and restrains all things. I am as certain that His Divine Majesty has desired our establishment as I am sure of dying one day."

In this faith she determined to rebuild their home. Workmen were scarce and money scarcer; so the nuns themselves, under her dauntless leadership, set to work to clear away the débris. When the pious colonists saw this example, they rallied to their assistance. "There was no more striving among the Israelites when they rebuilt the temple of God than there was to rear again this sanctuary from the ruins."

Mother Marie had proved herself an excellent pioneer leader. Whatever shape the crisis took she was equal to it. If brains were needed she supplied them, and if hands were needed she was equally endowed with strength and will to use hers for the cause. We cannot give due admiration to the visible and material progress she made in her first decade and a half of Canadian life if we do not remember the conditions of physical discomfort in which she was dwelling, the high pressure

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of work and emotion at which she was living, the severe mental strain of her position and the continual phantom of failure—actual collapse and withdrawal to France—ever looming in the background.

But after all the first Mother Superior of the Ursulines had a more delicate task to perform than to supply food, raiment and a roof for her family. Her great work was to bring up, to train and teach the future mothers of the colony. Disciplining and moulding the character of the French-Canadian girls, as Mothers Marie and St. Joseph did, was doing an undying work. It is not too much to say that the clean, true, industrious and self-sacrificing spirit of our French-Canadian homes has no small part of its roots embedded in the sound Christian training of those first critical days.

The French pupils of the Ursulines were of all ages, from little tots of three and four, who had to be kept quiet during prayers with aniseed cookies, up to the girls *un peu grandes*. The former were the regular boarders who might live with the nuns for eight or ten years. Their fathers were the seigneurs and the official members of the colony, yet few of them were able to pay for their children's education in money. The old accounts of the convent credit such curious payments as "a barrel of salted eels," "several cords of wood for heating," "a crock of butter," and even in one case "a fat chicken" seems to have covered the fee. The latter class—the girls somewhat grown-up—were usually day pupils, the daughters of artisans, traders and farmers at Quebec, who were able to have only a few months or a year at most for school. It kept the good mothers pretty busy to teach them "to read, write, count and understand their prayers, Christian manners, and all a woman

ought to know," in that brief space. Mother Marie said they were the children who gave them most trouble, but they also repaid it, as the Jesuits bore testimony. "In glancing over the households of Canada, and each house in particular, it is easy to distinguish, by the Christian education of the children, the mothers of families who have been trained by the Ursulines and those who have not had this advantage."

This was exactly the result Mother Marie was working for. "I regard not the present, but the future," she once wrote when speaking of the extension of French influence over such a vast region. "I consider myself happy to be employed in the foundation of so grand an edifice, as much for the French as for the savages, since the souls of the one and the other are equally dear to the Son of God. Without the education we give during the space of six months to the French girls who are a little grown-up, they would become worse than the savages. . . . The young girls here are in continual danger for their salvation on account of the great liberty which is allowed them."

At the outset Madame de la Peltrie and Mother Marie looked upon their mission as one to the Indian girls, but gradually they came to see that it was among the French their permanent work would be done. Bathing, clothing, nursing and teaching Indian girls was good, self-sacrificing work, and it went on apace, giving the nuns some very satisfactory results. In some ways they cannot speak highly enough about their protégées. "There is nothing so docile as these children. One can bend them as he will. . . . If they are to pray to God, to recite their catechism . . . they are ready at once without murmurs and without excuses. They attend

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holy mass every day and are so attentive—not playing and talking like the little children in France—that we are delighted. They compose their faces, and regulate their actions by ours, except that in their reverences they imitate Madame de la Peltrie.” Speaking of those who had been prepared to make their first communion, Mother Marie writes, “Verily, my good Father, they manifest so much desire to possess so great a blessing that you would say they are about to enter heaven, so much joy appears on their faces.” Mother St. Joseph wrote, “They are very grateful for the love we bear them and the blessings we procure for them. Seeing one day that we had difficulty in learning their language, one said, ‘Oh, how willingly we would give you our tongues.’” And so such quotations might be multiplied endlessly, but still there was something lacking.

Mother Marie’s sagacious reading of the Indian character soon pointed out where the trouble was. They could be Christianized, but not civilized. “The savage life is charming to them on account of its liberty, and it would be a miracle to be able to captivate them to act in the French way. These people delight to work only in the chase, navigation or war. The men take their wives, and even their daughters as soon as they are big enough, to the chase; it is the women who skin the animals, dress the hides, cure the meat and the fish and cut the wood, so that they have charge of all the house-work while the men go hunting. When the men are in the huts, they smoke a pipe and watch the women work. The occupations of the latter, beyond what I have just mentioned, are building the huts, making the cradles for the babies, and the snow-shoes, sledges and bark canoes; the women guide canoes almost as well as

the men. Let us judge from this if it is easy to make them forget habits indulged in from infancy, as it were, and which are second nature to them." And again, writing in the sixties, after more than twenty years' experience, when Louis XIV had in his lordly way decided that the savages were to be civilized and that the Ursulines were to begin with the girls, "Since His Majesty wishes it, we are ready to do it, on account of the obedience we owe him. . . . It is at all times a thing almost impossible to civilize them in this way; experience has shown that amongst all those who have passed through our hands scarcely have we civilized one in a hundred. We find them obedient and intelligent, but when one least expects it, they climb over our palisades like squirrels and are away to join their parents in the woods, where they find more pleasure than in all the comforts of our French houses. The savage temper is this way; they cannot be restrained; if they are, they become melancholy, and melancholy makes them ill."

This admirable and sympathetic summary of the Indian character is a good illustration of the historian's debt to Mother Marie. The extracts from her "Memoir" and countless letters which have been quoted show that she ranks not far below her co-workers, the Jesuits, or Champlain or Dollier de Casson as a sane source of practical information about the details of our early history.

As a religious force in the new colony, Mother Marie de l'Incarnation shares with the Jesuits and Bishop Laval the honour of laying the foundations of her Church at Quebec. It is interesting to remember that when she came to New France first she was on terms of respectful acquaintance, at least, with Angelique Arnauld, Abbess

of the Cistercian Nuns at Port Royal near Versailles. This Port Royal Convent was the chief stronghold of the Jansenists, the Jesuits' most bitter opponents. During the first years the convent at Port Royal was most liberal in its gifts to Mother Marie and her mission. Naturally, however, as time passed by and she had daily evidence of the charity and self-sacrifice of the Jesuits and intimate intercourse with no other teachers of her Church, she came to see things with their eyes. By 1648 she was careful "not to meddle in talk, still less in writing," with the controversies in France, but when eight years more had passed, she was neutral no longer. She spoke out strongly on the Jesuit side. From henceforth, be the trouble what it may, brandy quarrel, "fixation" of cures, or the all-comprehensive one of the relative powers of Church and State, Mother Marie threw her whole weight with Bishop Laval and the Jesuits. Of her numerous religious writings it is impossible here to speak. Suffice to say that such an eminent authority as Cardinal Taschereau thought so highly of her catechism that he wished all his clergy possessed a copy.

In ecclesiastical statesmanship, too, Mother Marie made her place. She solved the difficulties between the different branches of the Ursuline Order, represented from the beginning by the nuns from Dieppe as well as those from Tours in her own convent, and united them into one harmonious sisterhood, on the very same lines which in the outside world have been adopted in this century. Of all her projects, this one, in which she was evidently just two centuries and a half ahead of her time, was the nearest her heart. When war and famine in 1650 threatened to extinguish the colony, the Arch-



bishop of Tours invited his former daughter to return to France. She replied, "No: nothing under heaven will be able to withdraw me from my centre and my paradise unless it is to work for the union of our Congregations, because for such a holy work I would sacrifice all, except to damn myself and to sin." Her biographer says that such was the effect of her prudence and initiative in accomplishing this union, that the people in France spoke as highly of her abilities as of her virtues, and well they might, for Mother Marie de l'Incarnation was a woman of extraordinary light and leading, whether judged by the standards of this world or the next.

At no time did Mother Marie's fellow-countrymen become more thrillingly conscious of this right to leadership her heroic character gave her, than in the terrible thirteen years, 1650 to 1663, when the bloodthirsty Iroquois had determined the French colony should go the way of the Huron nation. Strong and resolute, "a beacon of hope for all her weaker brethren," was Mother Marie then. In the higher and spiritual sense no one could come in contact with her without being re-inspired, so pure and complete was her faith in the ultimate overruling of all by a loving Almighty Father. Her part and theirs was but to do His will and leave the future in His hand. And in a practical, worldly way, her order, courage and fortitude—even in 1660, when she saw her nuns turned out and their home converted into a military fort—left no corner for faint-hearted weakness and despair to creep in. She saw instinctively how to help. She lived at the convent, fed the soldiers, and held herself always in readiness to carry them ammunition whenever the expected attack might be made. Her efficient, thoughtful energy kept

all in healthy activity. They could not be dispirited and panic-stricken when she filled every minute of their time with useful precautions and helpful work. Finally came the climax, the tremendous earthquake of 1663. And still this calm spirit was unshaken, a refuge of comfort and strength for all poor terrified souls.

“Then, in such hour of need  
Of your fainting, dispirited race,  
Ye like angels appear  
Radiant with ardour divine.

“Ye fill up the gaps in our files,  
Strengthen the wavering line,  
'Stablish, continue our march,  
On to the bound of the waste,  
On, to the City of God.”

With the coming of the Marquis de Tracy to subdue the Iroquois and of the Intendant Talon to take charge of the internal affairs, the industries and commerce of the country, “the bound of the waste” seemed very near to this “helper and friend of mankind.” She wrote in August, 1665, “Already he (Tracy) has passed some good regulations. I believe he is a man chosen by God for the solid establishment of this country, for the liberty of the Church, and the ordering of justice. . . . Although sixty-two years of age, he wishes to march in person against the Iroquois, in order that nothing may be lacking to assure success for this expedition.” And no less did she appreciate the practical industrial development Talon initiated. “He has given orders that hemp be grown and made into cloth and serge. This has begun and will increase little by little. He has had a market-place built, a brewery, and also a

tannery, on account of the great number of beasts with hides which are killed in this country. These industries were not established in the past in Canada. If they succeed, they will lessen much the great expense necessary to bring everything from France. The women and daughters are strongly urged to learn to spin, and we are requested to bring our seminarists, both French and savage, up to do this, and are offered the material free." "In short," she concludes in another letter, "the country has done more and business has advanced more since M. Talon has come here as Intendant than since the French first dwelt here."

Throughout this last period of her life it is very beautiful to see how delighted Mother Marie was in the prosperity and future promise of her country and her Church. Although after a severe attack of gallstone colic, in 1664, she never regained her old physical strength, yet she never lost her keen interest in the welfare of her beloved land. Every phase of its prosperity was a satisfaction to her. Even such a little thing—from a cloistered nun's point of view at any rate—as the abundance of silver coinage which came to the colony with M. de Tracy's regiment, was commented upon with pleasure. "They pay in silver for all those things they buy, and this is a great convenience for our inhabitants." Indeed, the French authorities could not satisfy her patriotic ambition. She would have liked to see them become masters of New Holland. It would have made an admirable French colony, near the Iroquois trade, and possessed of a more southern port. Again, it grieved her greatly to hear that Hudson Bay had passed into the hands of the English.

But if these later years were crowned with success

for her country, they brought to herself the usual lot. She had to economize her strength, and to find new things to do with her time. She suffered another attack of the colic in 1669, but again rallied, and it was not until 1672, when other complications seem to have set in, that it proved fatal. It left her the second time, however, too weak for her old strenuous life, but she had still the satisfaction of being useful. She devoted her time in the main to teaching the Indian languages to the young sisters—she had doubtless a vivid recollection of the days when they were so hard for her—“just learning words and words by heart,” as she at that time had written her son, “which, like so many stones, roll about in my head.” She also worked industriously at translations to help them when she was gone. She wrote a sacred history in Algonquin, an Iroquois dictionary—which she said herself was a “treasure”; and a large Algonquin-French and French-Algonquin one. This was her solid work. Her hours of recreation were given to beautiful and artistic embroidery, at which from childhood she had delighted to work. It must have shed an old-world glow of gentle refinement on many a rude altar and bare chapel in New France.

And thus her last earthly days came to an end, filled, like all her others, with the work of skilful hands directed by a cool head and inspired by a loving heart.

#### IV

“Live your life while you have it. . . . But to live your life you must discipline it. You must not fritter it away in ‘fair purpose, erring act, inconstant will;’ but must make your thought, your words, your acts,

all work to the same end, and that end not self, but God." These words were written by Florence Nightingale; they were lived by Mother Marie de l'Incarnation. It is startlingly curious to consider how fundamentally alike these two great women were. First of all there is the outward similarity of their lives. Both were daughters of happy, comfortable, almost luxurious homes, full of varied interests, and many friends. Yet both were restless and discontented in them. When the question of marriage, and the continuance of this ordinary way of life, came up, they both rebelled, as we have seen. Each, then, according to the light of her training and generation, began, in spite of much family opposition, a course of discipline and preparation for herself, that she might be ready for her appointed work when God's good time would make it clear. Mother Marie was forty when hers was shown; Florence Nightingale only thirty-four. During these long years of waiting both did much "kicking against the pricks," and were not always exactly pleasant, companionable folk for ordinary mortals to live with. But no matter how long hope was deferred, neither one lost faith in her special destiny. Were it not for the painstaking preparations and disciplines they set themselves during this interval, such assurance, through so many thwarting years, would seem colossal pride. When at last the call came, the work was hard and discouraging, but the doer found in it her supreme happiness. It was heaven on earth for them to save their own souls by helping their fellow-men.

Nor was it in externals alone they resembled one another. They possessed kindred intellects, endowed with methodical, businesslike and practical efficiency,

and were able to carry through successfully great undertakings which required sane judgment and a well-balanced mind. They were women of action first and foremost, and were endowed with tyrannic wills to push to conclusion any duty clearly seen, no matter what obstacle might defy in the path. They were autocrats in their chosen work, and at times, particularly in their writings, both show a proud consciousness of their great powers, although self-pride was by no means one of their characteristics. It would seem that their intense fervour for the cause they were championing or for the work they were doing made them as oblivious of themselves as of others. When they were not thus absorbed, their true character, one of extreme modesty and humility—yea, even to self-effacement—asserts itself. Florence Nightingale slips home from the Crimean War unexpectedly and by an unknown way, to escape the plaudits of an admiring, grateful nation; Mother Marie requests the Jesuit Fathers to omit all personal mention of her and her work in the "Relations" they sent yearly to France.

Both women lived their real lives alone. Even her sister, proud of her and loving as she was, had no true sympathy with or understanding of Florence Nightingale. Her five years of intercourse with Sidney Herbert, when they worked and planned together so many things to improve the health of the army and the sanitary condition of India, was perhaps the most intimate exception to this in her long life. As for Mother Marie, all her deepest problems and griefs were beyond the fathoming of those around her. Mother St. Joseph, her dearest sister, asking forgiveness on her death-bed for her antagonism toward her in their early Canadian

years, an antagonism which she had been officially ordered to carry on, throws a flood of light on how tragically alone, without confidant or friend, she had fought through those early days of anxiety, doubt and grief.

No matter what the stress, however, whether of external business or internal questionings, both women moved in an atmosphere quiet and unruffled by the usual worries and disturbances of life. Similarly calm, too, was the behaviour of each when preparing to undertake her great mission. Lady Varney's words about her sister, were it not for some minor details of time and place, might with equal truth have been applied to Mother Marie: "No one is so well fitted as she to do such work. . . . She has such nerve and skill, and is so wise and quiet. Even now she is in no bustle and hurry, though so much is on her hands, and such numbers of people volunteer services. . . . She was as calm and composed in this furious haste, with the War Office, the Military Medical Board, half the nurses in London to speak to, her own Committee and Institution, as if she were going out for a walk."

"In tumult they were quiet because they had pondered when at rest." This is the rock on which their wonderful harmony is founded. They were both intensely spiritual and given to introspection and fervent aspirations—often more than tinged with morbidness—to attain perfection in their spiritual life. A good act was not enough; it had to be a good act from the highest motive. For each of them—no less for Florence Nightingale than for the mystic Mother Marie de l'Incarnation—the spiritual life, the life of prayer and contempla-

tion, and the constant struggle after patience and resignation, grew out of the one creed. Each believed it to be her supreme duty to do the utmost in her power for the right, and then, in faith, passively, to leave the future in the hands of a Higher Power. For such strong, masterful characters, for whom patience and resignation were not native gifts, this was a hard creed. In trying and failing to live up to it they suffered seasons of deep dejection. The difference the three centuries made was only this: Mother Marie looked upon those periods of loneliness and depression as dreadful temptations spread for her by the Prince of Darkness, while Florence Nightingale spoke of them as coming from "a morbid peculiarity," or "a loss of resistance to morbid thoughts." It matters not what they called it. The truth remains, Florence Nightingale and Mother Marie de l'Incarnation would have found no difficulty in bridging the chasm of training, religion and time which separated them, for they were mentally and spiritually akin and the ideals which inspired their life and work were the same.

"Abstaining from attachment to the work,  
Abstaining from rewardment in the work,  
While yet one doeth it full faithfully,  
Saying, 'Tis right to do!'—that is true act."





*Loyalist Refugees on the St. Lawrence*

### CHAPTER III

#### *Marie Madeleine de Verchères: The Canadian Heroine*

AMONG all the heroines of New France there was no personality more attractive, nor any more characteristic of the time and its dangers, than Marie Madeleine de Verchères, the fourteen-year-old heroine of the Castle Dangerous of Canada. It was only in the early days of a pioneer country that such fame as hers could be won. Lives of mature and patient determination, of disciplined endurance and of noble endeavour, such as Madame Hébert and Mother Marie dedicated to our land, owed but little of their strength and grandeur to either time or place.

But if, in contrast, Marie Madeleine de Verchères was typical of her land and generation, she was in the supreme degree of her endowment unique. She was a child with the self-possession of a veteran, a sprightly, winsome maiden with a strength and vigour of will potent to exact implicit obedience from cowardly rascals, and a steadfastness of fibre and quiet power unshaken by successive days and nights of great anxiety and imminent peril.

Marie Madeleine de Verchères was a Canadian heroine in the most literal sense of the word. She was born in Canada, in April, 1678. Her father was one of the officers of the Carignan-Salières regiment, which had been sent out under the Marquis de Tracy in the sixties to subdue the Iroquois. This seemingly accomplished, the regiment had been encouraged to settle, the officers

as feudal seigneurs, and the men around them as habitants, on grants of land along the old highway of advance of their still dreaded foe. The fief of Sieur Jarret de Verchères was on the south bank of the St. Lawrence, about twenty miles below Montreal, and so in the direct line of the usual Iroquois raid on Montreal by way of Lake Champlain, the Richelieu and the St. Lawrence. His wife was a woman of strong character and possessed military skill and fortitude of a high order. In 1660 Madame de Verchères had held her husband's fort for two days against the Iroquois, with the aid of only four armed men. This siege of Fort Verchères was part of the aftermath of the barbarous work of the autumn before at La Chesnaye, six miles distant across the river, where the Iroquois had burned all the houses, carried off the inhabitants prisoners and left behind twenty mangled corpses on the snow.

It was but natural, then, for the children of such a father and mother to excel in martial courage and military sagacity. The time itself compelled bravery. The childhood of Marie Madeleine and her two younger brothers was spent under the never-lifting shadow of expected danger. During the wretched administration of Governors La Barre and Denonville, the Iroquois had lost the fear and respect for the French which Tracy's expedition had inspired. They were constantly attacking the settlements about Montreal. To quote Denonville, "I cannot give you a better idea of the war we have to wage with the Iroquois than by comparing them to a great number of wolves or other ferocious beasts, issuing out of the vast forest to ravage the neighbouring settlements. The people gather to hunt them down, but

nobody can find their lair, for they are already in motion." On the occasion of Denonville's expedition into the land of the Senecas, in 1687, which had been shamefully prefaced by his treachery to the Iroquois chiefs called together for the pretended Council of Peace at Fort Frontenac, then captured and sent to France to work as galley slaves, he had been warned by a converted Indian that if he overset a wasps' nest he must crush the wasps or they would sting him. Of a surety he had overturned the nest and of an equal surety he had not crushed the wasps, as such paralyzing, retaliatory disasters as those at Pointe aux Trembles, La Chesnaye and La Chine, the most frightful Indian massacres of Canadian history, bore appalling testimony.

One can imagine the feverish intensity and excitement of the two little boys of seven and nine and the little girl of eleven, when the horrors of the La Chine and La Chesnaye massacres first broke on their terrified ears and imaginations. They were not the stuff—as many of their neighbours had been—to be numbed and paralyzed by them. And with equal clearness can one picture their admiring enthusiasm for the doughty old Governor, Count Frontenac, on his return, and their complete sympathy with his aggressive, if bloody and havoc-making, campaign against the English. Their heroes were Frontenac, François Hertel and D'Iberville, and Marie Madeleine confessed that she herself entertained sentiments which urged her on "to aspire to fame as eagerly as many men."

Not to many girls or women has fortune been so kind in appeasing such a desire. The wished-for opportunity came the year the English and Iroquois attacked the

French in retaliation for the massacres of Schenectady, Pemaquid and other encounters of Frontenac's rapid and bold campaign. Thanks to the simple and unpretentious account of it she wrote herself, at the request of a subsequent governor, the Marquis de Beauharnois, who had been greatly impressed by the romantic story and wished to send the details to the French Court, we to-day may learn the stirring tale.

It happened this way, to follow very closely her own account of the incident. On the twenty-second of October, 1692, her father was away at Quebec on military duty, and her mother at Montreal, she does not say why. About eight in the morning she was down at the river when suddenly she heard several shots nearby and turned to find the Iroquois firing upon the settlers who were working in the field adjoining the fort. She ran at once for the gate, chased by some forty or fifty Indians, who with one accord fired on her when they saw that she could make it before they could take her alive. "I was under fire for quite a time," she relates, and then qualifies it with the naïve remark, "at any rate I found the time long enough." A few brief seconds running through those whistling bullets would have unnerved the majority of girls, but not Marie Madeleine, with her wealth of practical and imaginative experience of such attacks. When nearing the gate she cried, "To arms! to arms!" There was to be no delay about initiating her own campaign of resistance.

Inside the gate she was met by two grief-frenzied women who had just seen their husbands killed in the field. They were pushed aside sternly. It was no time to indulge in lamentations. Their very cries and shrieks

might lead the Iroquois to surmise how few and despairing were the defenders within the walls. In a brave front and bold defence lay the only hope of escaping the fate of the men in the field.

The urgent need of the moment was to mend a couple of breaks in the palisade. Anyone who has seen the heavy pointed logs of one of our old palisade relics will realize the amount of energy, born of desperation, she must have had, to be able to lift these stakes and to stop the gaps even temporarily, with only the two women to help her. She dismisses this physical feat with the explanation of simple faith, "I found by experience that when God gives us strength nothing is impossible."

The next brief acts in this swift-moving drama cannot be given better than in her own words. And when we see her face to face with her cowardly dependants, we are apt to forget what a child in years it is we are watching, with such queenly dignity and strength of character does she bear herself in the crucial moment. "The breaches having been repaired, I betook myself to the redoubt, which served as a guard-house and armoury. I there found two soldiers, one of them lying down and the other holding a burning fuse. I said to the latter: 'What are you going to do with that fuse?' 'I want to set fire to the powder,' said he, 'and blow up the fort.' 'You are a miserable wretch,' I said, adding: 'Begone, I command you!' I spoke so firmly that he obeyed forthwith. Thereupon, putting aside my hood and donning a soldier's casque, I seized a musket and said to my little brothers:

"Let us fight to the death for our country and for

our holy religion. Remember what our father has so often told you, that gentlemen are born but to shed their blood for the service of God and the King!

“Stirred up by my words, my brothers and the two soldiers kept up a steady fire on the foe. I caused the cannon” [a four-pounder she calls it in another place] “to be fired, not only to strike terror into the Iroquois and show them that we were able to defend ourselves, since we had a cannon, but also to warn our own soldiers, who were away hunting, to take refuge in some other fort.” The Indians were always loth to attack a fortified place; so it was a praiseworthy manœuvre for her to deceive them with as great a display and noise of artillery as possible.

While these tactics were being carried out, Marie Madeleine spied one of their settlers paddling up the river trying to reach the fort with his wife and family. She asked her soldiers to go down to the water’s edge and protect them, but the soldiers displayed “but little heart for the work; so I ordered our servant, Laviolette, to stand sentry at the gate of the fort and keep it open, while I would myself go to the bank of the river, carrying a musket in my hand and wearing my soldier’s casque. I left orders on setting out, that if I was killed, they were to shut the gates and continue to defend the fort sturdily. I set out with the heaven-sent thought that the enemy, who were looking on, would imagine that it was a ruse on my part to induce them to approach the fort, in order that our people might make a sortie on them. This was precisely what happened, and thus was I enabled to save poor Pierre Fontaine, with his wife and children.”

It was scarcely to be wondered at that the soldiers did not go to the river. The scene beyond the palisades of

the fort was not calculated just then to inspire their cowardly hearts with valour. The Iroquois were enjoying their usual sports at such an attack, burning the homes of the Verchères habitants, killing their cattle and torturing and murdering any of their number who had not shared Pierre Fontaine's good fortune in reaching the fort.

However terrifying these scenes might be for her weaker vassals, they seem to have been but fuel for Mlle Madeleine's fiery daring. About one o'clock she made another sortie beyond the gates, this time to save three sacks of linen which had been forgotten outside in the morning. Was it the sight of so much wanton destruction of her settlers' homes and property that made this linen all at once so precious in her eyes, or was the errand a foolhardy risk born of the excitement of the day? At any rate it is the one little incident in the whole record which reminds us that it is the bold, dashing spirit of fourteen and not the cool, seasoned courage of forty-four that is conducting this defence.

Thus the first day wore on. By nightfall a severe storm of sleet and hail, driven by a strong north-east wind, gave ideal conditions for the Iroquois to make a united assault. Our heroine thoroughly realized this. "I gathered all my troops—six persons—together, and spoke to them thus: 'God has saved us to-day from the hands of our enemies, but we must be careful not to be caught in their snares to-night. For my part, I want to show you that I am not afraid. I undertake the fort for my share, with an old man of eighty, and a soldier who has never fired a gun. And you, Pierre Fontaine, with La Bonté and Galhet (our two soldiers), will go to the redoubt, with the women and children, as it is the



strongest place. If I am taken, never surrender, even though I should be burnt and cut to pieces before your eyes. You have nothing to fear in the redoubt, if you only make some show of fighting.'

"Thereupon I posted my two young brothers on two of the bastions, the *youth* of eighty on the third bastion, and I took charge of the fourth. Each one acted his part to the life. Despite the whistling of the north-east wind, which is a fearful wind in Canada, at this season, and in spite of the snow and hail, the cry of 'All's well,' was heard at close intervals, echoing and re-echoing from the fort to the redoubt and from the redoubt to the fort. One would have fancied, to hear us, that the fort was crowded with warriors. And in truth the Iroquois, with all their astuteness and skill in warfare, were completely deceived, as they afterwards avowed to M. de Callières. They told him they had held a council with a view of assaulting the fort during the night, but that the increased vigilance of the guard had prevented them from accomplishing their design."

One little occurrence during this night of storms and alarms deserves to be mentioned, since it shows how cautious—supernaturally wise and sagacious—her girlish head could be. Shortly after midnight the old man who was at the gate bastion told her he heard a noise. Together they went to investigate and discovered a few cattle which had evidently escaped the general slaughter of the day before. Her sentry was about to open the gate for them, but "'God forbid,' I answered; 'you do not know all the cunning of the savages; they are probably marching behind the cattle covered with the hides of animals, so as to get into the fort, if we are simple enough to open the gates.'" However, after carefully

watching the cattle for some time, they decided there was little risk about opening the gates for them. Still, to err on the safe side, she had her two brothers come and stand with muskets loaded and primed while the cattle passed through the gate.

So passed the first day and the first night. The details of the other seven—for they were eight days besieged before De la Monnerie, a lieutenant from Montreal, came with forty men and rescued them—she passes over quietly: “I took up my station on the bastion, and from time to time looked after things on the redoubt.” Naturally one day would be very much like another for the pent-up little band, though, as one day after another dragged its weary weight away, the inside foes of restlessness, hope deferred, and general discouragement would grow more obstinate and hard to fight. But the conscientious yet natural buoyancy of the youthful general successfully combatted them too. “I always wore a smiling, joyful face, and cheered up my little troop with the prospect of speedy assistance.”

At long last the glad relief came. “I was dozing at the moment, with my head resting on a table and my musket across my arms. The sentry told me he heard voices on the water. I forthwith mounted the bastion in order to find out by the tone of the voice whether the party were savages or French. I called out to them: ‘Who are you?’ They answered: ‘French! It is La Monnerie come to your assistance.’ I caused the door of the fort to be opened and put a sentry to guard it, and went down to the bank of the river to receive the party. So soon as I saw the officer in command I saluted him, saying: ‘Sir, you are welcome, I surrender my arms to you.’”

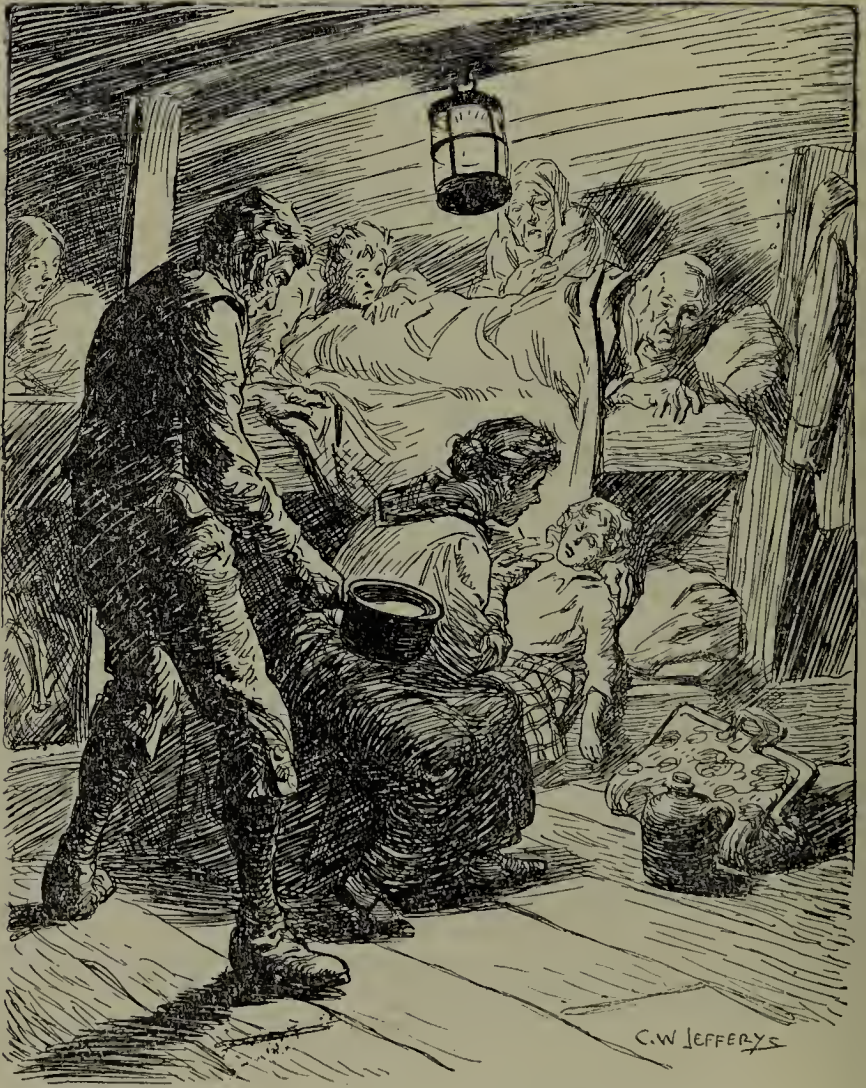
“‘Mademoiselle,’ he answered, with a courtly air, ‘they are in good hands.’

“‘Better than you think,’ I replied.

“He inspected the fort and found it in a most satisfactory condition, with a sentry on each bastion. I said to him: ‘Sir, kindly relieve my sentries, so that they may take a little rest, for we have not left our posts for the last eight days.’”

So the tale ends with this refreshing little act, and our radiant, gallant heroine slips quietly away. She leaves behind, however, a pleasant memory to charm and captivate all lovers of true romance in the ages yet to be.





*In the Emigrant Ship*

## CHAPTER IV

### *The Coming of the Loyalist Mothers*

#### I

THE NEW FRANCE which Marie Hébert and Mother Marie strove to build grew to greatness beyond their imagining, but not to power sufficient to withstand its enemies within and without. The flag of St. George floated at Quebec in less than ninety years after Mother Marie's death, and a generation later hundreds of English-speaking settlers built their homes in "*les pays d'en haut*," which the French had left to the fur-traders and the *coureurs de bois*.

A century and a third, therefore, rolls between the first Frenchwomen and the coming of their earliest Upper Canada sisters. Likewise a century and a third separates the latter from us. A better instance could hardly be found of how little and how much a stretch of years may mean. A United Empire Loyalist mother could pour her tale of toil, endurance, hunger and privation with full abandon into the understanding ears of her French-Canadian forerunners, where before ours she would be dumb. No matter how strong our interest in her, how loving our curiosity, there is a gap of more than time which would instinctively prompt her to meet our questions with the gentle, proud reply: "I would not just like to tell you."

If this reading of character be true, if our great-grandmothers would shrink from revealing to us, who enjoy the ease and refinements of a more advanced and diver-

sified society, the harsh poverty of their lot, the lives of daily toil and sordid care they had to lead, history has been most kind to them. In the case of none is it harder to piece together our various scraps of information into a lifelike whole. Yet the fair charm of no heroine, the sparkling wit of no celebrity, has such paramount claims on our respect and admiration as the great and heroic usefulness of the nameless frontierswomen who builded the first homes of our land.

## II

After the American Revolution and the Peace of Versailles, in 1783, Upper Canada became an asylum for many vanquished loyalists. It was only one of many. From the very beginning of the trouble the loyalists had emigrated of their own accord, or of necessity, from their old homes. The wealthier and better educated had gone for the most part to England. Others, particularly from the Southern States, had sought the Bahamas and West Indies, while some from the North and from New York City had been attracted by Nova Scotia. The pathetic words of one exile were at least partly true. They departed from their homes, as Abraham from the land of the Chaldees, not knowing whither they went. Those who eventually settled in Upper Canada certainly had little idea, when leaving their old lands, where their future lot would be cast.

Not all loyalists, of course, became exiles. A large percentage of them—the passive loyalists, so to speak—were able to remain and suffered little hardship under the new flag. The most authoritative figures estimate that in New York State, out of a population of 185,000,

90,000 were loyalist, and of these 35,000 emigrated, while 55,000 accepted the inevitable and became members of the new State.<sup>1</sup> The colony of New York had furnished more recruits for the loyalists' militia and British army and navy than any other had done. Therefore, from the most sympathetic district not quite thirty-nine per cent. of the loyalists had to flee.

The American Revolution was a war in which the women shared the feelings of the men with wonderful interest and understanding. In colonial days they had been in close touch with local public affairs. Then when the larger issue arose they were prepared to take a keen interest in it. No matter which side they espoused, the women were able to prove of what enduring metal they were made. They had learned much in the stern school of pioneer life. They had gained there a self-sufficiency and a dependableness in emergency which was now to stand their chosen cause in good stead.

It was often said the women were greater Tories<sup>2</sup> than the men. Some of the Revolutionary dames insinuated that this was because many of their weaker sisters allowed themselves to be foolishly dazzled by the red coats. But it required more than dazzling romance to carry the Tory women through the perilous tasks which fell to their lot during this cruel war.

At the outbreak of hostilities it was the policy of both sides to leave their women and children behind on their farms and estates, while the men mustered for the fray.

<sup>1</sup>"Loyalism in New York," by A. C. Flick, pp. 112-113.

<sup>2</sup>"Tory" was the name used in the States for those who remained loyal to Britain.



It was good tactics. The women were able to render their party great practical aid in this way. In one sense they became part of a very efficient spy system throughout the length and breadth of the land. General Marion's advice to the women of the Carolinas is typical of the demands the military leaders made upon them: to "make provisions, keep up communications, and send information to the men in camp." They helped in another sense too. Stopping behind thus bravely, and doing the everyday work of their homes and farms, they were able, in part at any rate, to carry on the ordinary functions of their community. They put in the crops, looked after their families and kept their homes intact. Again, they were frequently in close touch with the fighting and the army encampments. They were constantly providing refugees with lodging and meals. From such direct intercourse they came to know exactly the needs and conditions of their men. They were prepared to help in every way. The contents of many a treasured linen chest was made up into shirts. Garments were patched, stockings were knit and homespun were woven. A brave woman was glad at any time to risk a perilous ride on horseback to bring some much needed supplies from her farm or her larder to her volunteer husband. The story of Mrs. Jackson, of Staten Island, who kept a calf muzzled under her bed all one day, that she might send it by night to the loyal men, is not merely incidental, it is typical of their grit and wit.<sup>1</sup>

During the early campaigns of the war the loyalist women were able to carry on this appointed work, and

<sup>1</sup>"The American Woman," by Ida M. Tarbell. *The American Magazine*, Nov., 1909, page 8.

suffered no unexpected hardships or dangers. But after Burgoyne's defeat in 1777, the warfare, as far as the North was concerned, degenerated into a series of swift, destructive raids made by the opposing parties and their Indian allies on various settlements. No family, rebel or royalist, had any guarantee of safety. The fearsome and uncertain position of the women in their lonely, defenceless homes can be imagined only with horror. And so we find loyalist families seeking, with all the haste they could, protection at the British headquarters in both Canada and New York.<sup>1</sup>

The history of the Whitmore family illustrates what cruel experiences resulted from this border raiding. The Whitmores lived near Jerseytown, in Columbia County. The family consisted of the father and mother, three sons and four daughters. In July, 1779, some twenty Indians and whites entered their house, killed the father, mother and eldest son, and quickly took the others prisoners. The house was then ransacked and set on fire, and the baby killed, since she persisted in crying. Then the conquerors, satisfied with their booty and prisoners, set out for a Delaware camp on the Alleghany. One son and one daughter were adopted by the Indians, and the others taken elsewhere. The son thus adopted was bought by an old neighbour, Captain Daniel Servos, who recognized him and took him later to Niagara with his own family. One sister was rescued and married the American Indian agent to the Senecas; another was found and married by a

<sup>1</sup>From August, 1776, when Lord Howe took possession of New York, until the last British soldier left it in 1783, the loyalists had a sanctuary there.

Mr. Hoople, who settled on the St. Lawrence. The other one was never heard of again, and no inquiry could trace her fate. When Mrs. Hoople was ninety and her brother John nearly eighty, in the year 1851, it was worked out, by mutual friends acquainted with both their tragic histories, that they were long-lost brother and sister. They then enjoyed a happy re-union after seventy-two years of separation.<sup>1</sup>

The emigration of loyalists to Canada began as early as 1775, and continued for several years after the war ceased. It naturally fell into two great movements. The first was composed of those who made their way northward during the war, some of them driven out by persecution and others by fear. And the other consisted of the many who swelled the great exodus at the close of the war, because their cause had been lost.

The loyalist women who fled to Canada during the period of the war reached that haven of refuge usually by very slow, circuitous and painful routes. The gradual stages by which the dwellers, men and women, in the Mohawk valley became pioneers on the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario is a good example of the tedious nature of this Canadian immigration. First their loyalist militia left and mobilized at Montreal, Sorel and Three Rivers; then came the effort, straggling, uphill, prolonged, to gather the wives and children of the volunteers into the same harbour of refuge; next the weary waiting season there, marked by the essential, but none the less irk-

<sup>1</sup>"The Family of Whitmore," by William Kirby, in Publication No. 8, *Niagara Historical Society*.

some and irritating, military discipline and restraint; and finally the rallying of all the exiles, and the big spring move up the St. Lawrence to cast lots for their new homes. The complete process for many of them required a little over eight years.

When war broke out, the famous Johnson family was supreme in the Mohawk valley. They owned magnificent estates in Tryon County, with a thousand Highland Scotch retainers, and had a wonderful ascendancy over the surrounding country, which was settled chiefly by Scotch and Germans. Moreover, they were the Government's agents to the Indians on this frontier. Indeed, the relationship between old Sir William Johnson, who had just died, and Chief Brant, of the Mohawks, had been wholly brotherly, as the Indians looked upon Miss Molly, Brant's sister, as Sir William's rightful wife. These various elements were all prepared to espouse the loyalist cause if Sir John Johnson led them.

Naturally, so many men with pronounced sympathies came into collision with the opposition party. As early as December, 1775, General Schuyler was sent to secure the arms and stores of those Tories and "to apprehend their chiefs." General Schuyler set out for Johnstown with 3,000 men; but Sir John, unprepared for this visit, felt discretion was the better part of valour, and agreed to surrender his arms and stores, to allow his Scotch retainers to swear neutrality, and to promise to induce the surrounding loyalists to do the same.

It was all in vain. Sir John was still suspected, now of sending supplies to the loyalist ranks, and now of inciting an Indian massacre. It was determined to seize him.

Sir John, hearing this, fled to Canada, and became henceforth an out-and-out loyalist, bent on teaching his "rebellious birthplace" a severe lesson.

In his flight to Canada, in 1776, many of his Scotch retainers, under John and Alexander McDonald, and other Mohawk valley loyalists, under Guy Johnson, the Indian agent, and his deputy agents, John and Walter Butler, followed him. The Mohawk Indians, to a man, went on the war path too, under their famous leader, Brant. By the time he reached Montreal, Sir John had a following of three hundred, not counting the Indians. The British welcomed him warmly and gave him a colonel's commission to raise, in his old home neighbourhood, two loyalist battalions of 500 men each, to be called the "Royal Greens."<sup>1</sup>

In retaliation for this hostility, Johnson Hall was sacked and papers to the value of £20,000 destroyed. Lady Johnson was taken a hostage, but finally escaped and made her home in Montreal until the end of the war.

Sir John's regiment played its first important part in the hostilities of 1777. According to the plans of this, the Burgoyne campaign, the Royal Greens, Butler's Rangers and some eight hundred Indians were responsible for the district they knew so well, the country around Fort Stanwix and the Mohawk valley. Here they fought and lost that bloodiest battle of the war, Oriskany. A couple of months later, Burgoyne, too, had to surrender at Saratoga, and thus ended warfare on the grand scale in the North, and thus at the same time began the period

<sup>1</sup>They were called also "The King's Royal Regiment of New York," "The Queen's Loyal New Yorkers," and "Sir John Johnson's Regiment."

of awful anxiety and sometimes unspeakable experiences for the families, and particularly for the women, left behind. On both sides, frontier raiding was the order of the day.

Sir John Johnson and his subordinates became wonderfully successful champions of this kind of fighting. There were several reasons for this. Sir John's old family connection with the Mohawks gave him an unusual hold on "the wavering disposition of the Indians," and the Indians were past masters in this art. They knew every inch of the territory and certainly deserve much of the credit—or discredit—of these "scouts," to use Sir John's euphemistic name for his raids. The officers were naturally anxious to restrain them. Haldimand wrote very emphatically that

"They are to be effectually prevented from destroying women and children. All men in arms, and particularly those who are known to have been most instrumental and active in corrupting the minds of the unhappy people, must expect the consequences of their crimes, either to fall or to be made prisoners; the latter is certainly the most desirable."

But it was one thing to write at Quebec how the Indians ought to act, and another to hold them to it on the Mohawk. Besides, it was a matter of very fine distinctions—probably too fine for the Indian to grasp. Haldimand writes again that

"he approves of the Indians being kept scouting . . . but instead of skulking round the forts, he wishes them to penetrate into the settlements and keep up a perpetual alarm."

There were no half-way measures with the Indians. When they went on a "scout" they were "heartly for the service," and returned "in high spirits, with prisoners, scalps and horses, after they had destroyed grain, cattle and houses." However, the attitude of their superiors had some effect. Several times in the correspondence is mentioned the fact that "the late parties have spared women and old people," or that "the Indians have behaved well; not one prisoner was stripped or insulted after the action."

To fall upon an unsuspecting hamlet and slay its inhabitants seems much worse than to kill opponents in open battle. But as far as men are concerned when nations are at war, the difference is more apparent than real. As for the women and children, the slaughter, in most of these cases, was not indiscriminate. It is unprofitable now to condemn or extenuate either side. *Rivington's Gazette*, for June 5, 1779, gives exactly the attitude of those days:

"The Rebels, in their accounts of these excursions, speak of the refugees as thieves, robbers and murderers, while they represent their people, when concerned in the same kind of transactions, as brave warriors, heroes and demigods."

The loyalist "scouts" from Canada, however, can be explained. They were the outcome of military necessity. The one ever present fear of the British was that a second attack on Canada would be made by way of the Mohawk and Lake Ontario, or by Lake Champlain and the Richelieu. It was most important, therefore, "to compel the inhabitants in these districts to relinquish the rebel interest or be cut off." It was also imperative

to destroy the supplies of cattle and grain which would nourish an attacking force. Besides, such raiding not only distressed the enemy, but it "encouraged the loyalists to come off." Men were always sent in secret a few days before a foray, "to prepare the loyalists for what is to happen." Rarely did an expedition return without recruits as well as prisoners. Besides, the loyalist families escaped under the protection of such parties from their old homes. This was particularly true of many women and children of the Mohawk, Schoharie and Caughnawaga settlements. Sir John Johnson himself always emphasized this side of his work, but it naturally appealed more to an officer of the loyalist militia than to one of the regulars of the British army. For the latter, the women were too useful where they were for them to be in great haste to remove them to another place where they could only be a burden. It was the old tactics over again: "Leave the women behind; they will show no fear and guard the rear!" A correspondence in July, 1781, between Sir John and Governor Haldimand illustrates this clearly. Sir John tells how the Parker family, on the Mohawk, who had been sheltering scouts and bringing intelligence, had been taken and closely confined by the rebels and were to be removed to Albany. His Excellency, in answer, is sorry for the Parkers, but a few days later reminds Sir John how "few there are left in the colonies now who can be useful," and "that the necessity of saving provisions prevents anything being done to bring in the families of the soldiers."

However, the men in the camps at Isle aux Noix, St. John's, Sorel, and other points, grew very restless under these conditions. At different times many of



them threatened to desert unless their wives and families were brought up at once. So we find Sir John again and again, when planning a raid on the Mohawk, the Schoharie or Chemung, stressing the fact that it was an expedition "to favour the escape of the loyalist families." For this purpose his men put their whole heart and ingenuity into the work.

To look somewhat closely at the preparations and route of one of Sir John's scouts throws considerable light on the conditions under which many loyalist mothers reached Canada. In the early spring of 1780 the loyalists on the Mohawk were being hard pressed. They had either to take up arms for Congress or be sent to Albany in irons, their houses destroyed and their property confiscated. They begged Sir Frederick Haldimand for a pilot to get them away. Sir John Johnson's men at the different forts, Sorel, Isle aux Noix and St. John's, were at the same time becoming very restless from the rumours they were receiving "of the wretched condition of some of their families," and also because official steps to have them exchanged were advancing very slowly. His Excellency, therefore, was moved to countenance Sir John making an expedition to Johnstown "to favour the escape of the loyalists and for other purposes."

Everything was put in readiness with the closest secrecy for Sir John to leave with detachments of the 34th and 53rd, as soon as the ice on Lake Champlain was broken. There was but one notable delay, typical of the transportation and commercial facilities of the time. Their start had to be postponed from April 22nd, when navigation first opened, until May 2nd, on account

of "the impossibility of bringing the pay for the seamen from Montreal, owing to the bad roads."

However, once they set sail, all went smoothly. There were three transports for the troops, the *Maria*, the *Carleton*, and the *Lee*, and a special boat, the *Royal George*, for the officers. Besides, they took several empty bateaux to bring back the loyalists, and they "were followed by a heavily laden provision vessel." They left St. John's on the Richelieu on May 2nd, and arrived safely at West Bay, near Crown Point, on the 11th, after a most propitious voyage. The time necessary for this journey is edifying. From it we can imagine something of the magnitude of the undertaking which loomed before the families—in the majority of cases, families bereft for the time of all their male advisers and assistants—in the Johnstown neighbourhood, when a few weeks before the scout messengers arrived "to prepare them secretly for what was to happen." Johnstown was about as far from Crown Point, across country, as Crown Point was from St. John's, only from St. John's to Crown Point was a direct waterway. Such a long journey! It represented a harrowing length of days by both land and water. No wonder they begged for a pilot to get them away.

On arrival at Crown Point the bateaux were sunk "to preserve them." Fortunately "no rebel scouts observed the vessels until Sir John was landed." He at once set out on a night march to Stone Araby, whence he proceeded openly then to Johnstown and the Mohawk, "laying waste all before him." "The day after Sir John's arrival a large smoke was noticed inland," and "five people from the country were taken on board."

So the loyalists, in straggling bands, "entirely destitute," contrived to make their way through the ravished district to the waiting boats, their one hope of deliverance, until Sir John's own triumphant return to Crown Point on June 2nd. He brought with him "about seventy people, who were accommodated on the remaining boats and on the victualler." This is a sample of the many small groups of loyalist mothers and children who sought the Canadian camp for protection, and later made their homes in that land.

Although in the Haldimand papers one finds illuminating incidents connected with various refugees, a brief gathering together of the pathetic circumstances of one of this party, a Mrs. McDonell, will be sufficient here. It shows the nature of the thoughts and forebodings which must have accompanied many loyalist wives and mothers to Canada. On February 21st of this year, Sir John Johnson wrote to Governor Haldimand urging the exchange and relief of Captain McDonell's family. The captain was then in poor health and very anxious that his wife might be brought to Montreal. His Excellency, however, replied that he would await the return of the flag lately sent, before determining what steps he should take to obtain the exchange of Captain McDonell's family. Then, in March, when the plans for the spring scout were matured, he wrote again "that this might be a good opportunity for Mrs. McDonell to escape." She did so, and was once more with her husband by the middle of June. But she had reached her goal almost too late. The shadows were gathering around them. In October Sir John wrote His Excellency that he had allowed Captain McDonell, of the Rangers, to come down to Montreal on account of his

health, and "he hopes to be allowed to remain for the winter." Then the next month he petitioned the Governor "for relief for the two old McDonells . . . ." Thus pass out of history the heads of a family who were not only able to provide at the outset of the war "provisions, linen, etc.," to Major Ross' party, but had to give three sons to be killed.

As has been suggested, such additions as this scout of Sir John's brought to the loyalist ranks did not call for congratulations in every quarter. The British authorities, on account of the small cultivated area they had to draw from, the primitive means of transportation, and the hordes of Indians whose corn lands had been ravished and whom, as allies, they had to feed,<sup>1</sup> were hard pressed for provisions. They frowned, naturally, then, on this "pouring of useless consumers into the province." "Herkimer is said to be collecting women and children," one of them writes of a similar scout later the same year; "he is to be informed that this is not the intention."

Yet, in spite of the authorities, the numbers grew. By July, 1778, there were in Canada almost one thousand loyalists, outside of soldiers, who were being housed, fed and clothed at the British expense.<sup>2</sup> They had managed to reach their goal in different ways. Some came in as Indian prisoners and many were sent under the protection and safe conduct of the American flag—

<sup>1</sup> It is hard to realize the number of Indians they had depending on them. Guy Johnson writes the Governor from Niagara that he is trying to reduce the four thousand Indians at that post to a more moderate number. . . . but owing to their late losses every indulgence had to be shown to them.

<sup>2</sup> There were 209 at St. John's, 208 at Montreal, 196 at Machiche, 126 at Pointe Claire, 87 at Sorel and 27 at Chambly. Can. Archives (1888), Haldimand Collection, 732, 734, 742.

the Americans were likewise anxious to get rid of "useless consumers." An officer callously wrote of some recent arrivals, "they have brought old men unfit to bear arms, some so old that they have lost all their faculties except the power of eating the King's provisions and wearing out clothes." Occasionally such unfortunates were kept inhumanly tramping hither and thither, but finding no land to claim them as citizens. They were ushered out of one country with the ironical excuse that the officer forwarding them "would not add to the distresses attending the present war, by detaining helpless women and children from their families," and they were met at the other end of their fortnight or month of weary travelling by such a welcome as this: "The women and children so far exceed the number that could be conceived, that after those are received to whom no objection can be made, the rest shall be returned by the flag."

At first the British authorities had no place to house such immigrants. So with a double end in view, they billeted them upon the French parishes, "to bring them to their duty." However, as the movement grew, the evils of this system became manifest, and it was discontinued. It was found to be imperative to collect such numbers of unknown people together in such a way that they could be more easily watched and more efficiently cared for, and also where the evil-disposed among them would have less opportunity to contaminate the habitants—by no means as yet too friendly towards the British. Hence came about the system of interim settlements of which we find such flourishing examples at Machiche, St. Ours, and Sorel. Once collected in these centres, the vast majority of the women and

children lived quiet, uneventful lives, patiently waiting for the war to cease, and very thankful, no doubt, that their active part in the struggle was over. A few, however, felt the close watchfulness and strict discipline of military rule most irksome, and several rather unflattering references are to be found to them:

“Sergeants William Long and Henry Close are to remain [at Machiche], they being careful in managing the disorderly set.”

The accommodations for them at these centres, houses or barracks, and occasionally just huts, were built by Conrad Gogy, a practical countryman of Governor Haldimand's. In November, 1778, he reported “twelve houses finished at Machiche, which will lodge comfortably two hundred and forty women and children.” The King's stores at Three Rivers supplied them with beds and household goods generally. Blankets and clothing were also given to the needy, and in some few cases pensions of money asked for and granted, while such work as getting their firewood, cutting their hay and harvesting their crops fell to the engineer department.

Hay and crops at first glance seem incongruous with a women's refuge. But one of the most attractive and practical features of their temporary homes for many a loyalist mother must have been the large gardens and pastures the authorities laid out around them. These gardens were especially encouraged by the Governor himself. In the midst of rushing military supplies to the fortified posts on the Richelieu and Lake Champlain, he would turn aside and with great care specify the vegetable seeds, and fruit trees even, which were

to be sent for the loyalist gardens at Sorel and Machiche. Such gardens, together with the pastures and their herds, were a part of a definite policy in dealing with the loyalists—to help the needy, but to encourage all to be as useful and self-supporting as possible. They also served another end. They provided more wholesome food for the children than could the military commissariat. Besides, the Governor opened up another avenue for fresh provisions. He “made a bargain with the Indians respecting all the cattle captured” and in this way was often able to vary their salt meat diet.

These little settlements were very thoughtfully looked after in other ways. They were cared for in sickness. Liberal supplies of medicine were sent to them. Their children were vaccinated—then a new idea in Canada—or not, as they wished, the military hospitals, “where wine and all articles proper for the sick were allowed,” were open to them, and the army surgeons gave them skilful attention, considering the time and its standards. They also enjoyed religious and educational opportunities of an unexpectedly permanent character. The children gathered together at Machiche were taught by one schoolmaster, Josiah Cass, from November, 1778, until March, 1784. He received £80 a year for his services.

The above is, of course, the authorities’ side of the picture. When reading the official account of these centres and shelters, it is only between the lines the loyalists’ side of it may be found. Sometimes, however, as in Conrad Gogy’s reports to His Excellency, it is stamped very plainly. Gogy slurs over repeatedly “their frivolous complaints,” “their trivial complaints,” “their uniform discontent,” “their turbulent behaviour.”

If one of the dwellers in the Machiche homes, for example, had left us her version of the story of what the authorities did and did not do, there is little doubt that it would be the government's policy of economy—often a most exasperating, petty policy, due to a complete ignorance of the numbers and need of the people involved—which she would score as the root of their discomfort.

After all, however, one does not get the proper perspective by dwelling on the small personal needs. A much fairer idea of the attitude of the authorities can be gained by a survey of the country as a whole. Then, when thrown against this background, the minor interests of the women and children fall into their proper relation and setting.

It was an arduous task and a complicated one which the British authorities faced in Canada—that is, in the triangle between Montreal, Three Rivers, and Lake Champlain. This was the hub of their universe. The spokes might lead to the little loyalist centre and military outpost at Niagara, or to the vanguards at Carleton Island, Cataragui and Oswegatchie, or to the scout the fighting-men were carrying on along the Mohawk or Wyoming, or to the preparations for the loyalist settlements on the Bay of Chaleurs; but it was here—at Three Rivers, Sorel, St. John's, Isle aux Noix, Chambly, Yamaska, Machiche, St. Francis, Lacolle, Lachine, and in a score of other busy neighbouring hives—that the industrial, commercial, military and executive machinery of the nation did its work. The British authorities found this district a comparative backwoods. They converted it during the war into a military stronghold, fortified to block a second American invasion, and into a home-



land capable of housing and feeding an ever-increasing and usually destitute immigration.

This meant tremendous industry and the surmounting of peculiar obstacles. It would be one thing to cover such a district to-day with a perfect network of forts, barracks, blockhouses, powder magazines, provision stores, and all the other needs of a military state, but it was an entirely different thing to do it then, when "timber was bought in the log," when "Mr. Dobie's little mill up the Sorel cut only thirty or forty boards per day, the water being low," when the forges at Three Rivers, from which all iron work was obtained, "stopped for the season in November," and when during many weeks of the spring and fall no hauling of timber, stone or brick could be done on the pioneer roadways. It is one matter to rush the construction of sawmills, gristmills, limekilns, bakehouses, hospitals, prisons, schools, homes and other buildings demanded by a quickly increasing civil community; but it is a vastly harder undertaking to carry on such preparations with workmen who are nettled by or lukewarm to the service. The German soldiers—the Hessians—were paid to fight. It was beneath their dignity to build huts for refugee women. When compelled to do such work, a mysterious fire in the neighbourhood seemed the largest result. The loyalist men also felt this work secondary. Those of them who had not come to Canada determined to fight, came to it seeking a haven of rest. In neither case were they prepared to devote time and labour to heavy constructive work. And for the French habitants it was a bitter pill that their old system of *corvées* should be revived in such a thoroughgoing fashion, for them to make smooth the path of the English invader.

The Quebec Act could afford little protection, it was feared, against such encroaching numbers.

Another imperative need of the war conditions was a provincial navy on both Lake Champlain and the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario systems. Sir John Johnson's eleven-day voyage over Lake Champlain gives an idea of the magnitude of that task. These waterways at the opening of the war were in a state of nature, and utilized only by the fur-traders' bateaux and canoes. By the end of it they were marvellously equipped in many essentials. They had become the homes of no inconsiderable fleets. These were in many instances built on their shores and provided with masts from the noble woods around St. Francis. They had been transformed by "shelters for vessels, building craft, etc.," by "stone piers for winter protection," by wharves, sheds, dams and even locks at the Cascades and Cedars, into comparatively protected channels of communication and transportation.

And the land highways had required attention. Throughout the whole period, in spite of constant repairing and bridge building, their dreadful condition had been the greatest of all drawbacks. Care was even bestowed on the carts and waggons best adapted to their needs. It was found the Canadian carts, built at Isle aux Noix, were superior to the artillery ones.

These are a few of the outstanding features on the crowded, hardworking stage the loyalist mothers found for the first act of their Canadian drama. Small wonder if they and their needs seemed sometimes to be relegated to a rather dark corner of it. And small wonder if the limelight of official letters now reveals only the obstreperous few among them. Naturally it plays on Mary

Seymour, the suspected spy; on the women who sold liquor to the soldiers without license, and on some others who drew it on themselves as "an unusually disorderly crew." But the rank and file of these patient, much-suffering loyalist women are obscure in the shadow. They realized fully the demands of the time and they seconded the efforts of the authorities in their behalf by spending their days as usefully as ever they could.

Having followed at length the fortunes of the Canadian refugees, it is interesting now to glance at what befell their sisters who turned their steps New York-ward when the hour of flight arrived.

Their retreat as a rule provided more varied and lively experiences. Whatever the pinch of need or anxiety of heart, life wore in New York a more smiling mask than in the rough-board barracks of Machiche. One grievance both shared. They found military rule most irksome. New York petitioned the British ministry time and again for civil government, but it could not be established in the midst of a country engaged in active war.

There were hundreds of refugees in New York like the ones who fled to Canada, absolutely destitute and in sore physical want. But they were relieved by various means. Sir Henry Clinton wrote, in 1778, how greatly he was distressed by the hourly applications from a great number of refugees who crowded to New York from all parts of America. As Sir Frederick Haldimand had done under similar circumstances, he used the funds in hand and then asked for approval and aid from his Government. The Government sanctioned what he had done, and suggested his allotting rebel lands

to the loyalists. In this way some refugees built temporary homes, while others appropriated the dwellings of the exiled Whigs and cultivated their lands.

The Government was not their only means of assistance. Their fellow-countrymen came to the rescue in a most liberal way. Charity boards were early organized and certain definite taxes and moneys were put at their disposal. For example, the rent paid by those who lived in Whig homes, the licenses of tavern keepers, and all ferry rent went to such funds. Besides, lotteries were held in their behalf and subscriptions raised directly. "The gentlemen of the army and navy subscribed in a most liberal manner for the relief of the refugees." In the grandiloquent phrase of Rivington, "the hand of charity in the loyal metropolis was ready to aid those suffering for their attachment to our most gracious sovereign."

The wealthier women busied themselves incessantly in relief work. They knit stockings, patched garments and made shirts when the materials could be procured. Their work was unorganized for the most part. However, "the loyalist women of New York City" banded together in 1779 and presented a privateer, *The Fair American*, to the British as a New Year's gift.

There was anxiety and discontent that no open-handed charity or organized relief board could cure. There was perpetual groaning under the heavy war prices. Even the well-to-do refugees found their funds so fast disappearing that they became most apprehensive. Then the billeting of the British officers upon the citizens was another irritation. The officers were haughty boarders, and there were discrepancies between the standards of the guests and the hosts. When their

differences reached a climax, the officer simply clapped his host into the mainguard. The prisoner in turn entered a protest with the commander-in-chief, who in his turn reprimanded the officer. But there was little satisfaction and no legal redress for the citizen in that course of justice.

There was one consolation for the city refugee. No matter how dismal and blue an individual's outlook might be, there were ample means of entertainment to help her forget it. For the sake of the contrast between New York and a backwoods refugee centre like Machiche, and also on account of its own inherent interest, a brief account will be quoted of one such enheartening festivity:

“On the occasion of a celebration of His or Her Majesty's birthday, the host made especial efforts to be entertaining. A pyramid of lamps rose from the base to the top of the flagstaff of Loosely's tavern, and there were fireworks, one piece of which was ‘George Rex with a crown imperial, illumined and finished with a globe of fire.’ But the chief glory was within, where 200 wax lights illumined the scene, and in the centre of all was a transparent painting of their Majesties, ‘with a crown supported by angels elegantly illumined by different coloured lights.’ Above was a canopy of state splendidly decorated, ‘which shone like their Majesties' virtues, conspicuous to the world.’ To the left of the Queen were the figures of Hibernia and Bellona; also a British sailor trampling on the thirteen stripes, signifying that, by the bravery of the navy, American Independence should be no more. On the other side the ‘generous indignation’ of the loyalists was aroused by a view of Congress, ‘whose ambition has almost ruined this unhappy country.’ It was ‘very apropos of the painter to place the devil at the president's elbow, who tells him

to persevere, with so significant a grin as seems to indicate his having no manner of doubt of their making his house their home in the infernal regions.' The statue of William Pitt, without its head, was placed near the Congress, 'as being one of their kidney, and gave a hint of what ought long ago to have been done.'

"Amid these symbols of loyalty

'The festive board was met, the loyal band  
To Church and King devote each heart, each hand,'

as the poet of the occasion expressed it. And when the dinner was begun, a standard appeared, on one occasion, with a representation of the British flag above that of France, with the lilies reversed. Then the company joined in song,

"'Inspired by this auspicious morn,  
When George the Great, the Good, was born.'"<sup>1</sup>

Then into the midst of it all, as for Christian and Hopeful in By-path Meadow, "the night came on and it grew very dark . . . ." The news of peace came and brought home to them the necessity for ultimate flight. When the British troops would be withdrawn from New York, it could be no longer a home and refuge for them.

New York had been their last resort. Even from Charleston and Savannah, the final loyalist strongholds to be evacuated before the peace was signed, hundreds of refugees, instead of going with their fellows to the Bahamas, the West Indies or Nova Scotia, had clung to their native land and fled only to New York. Thus the metropolis was crowded with loyalists from all

<sup>1</sup> "The Loyalists in the American Revolution," by C. H. Van Tyne, pp. 264-266. Van Tyne's quotations are from *Rivington's Gazette*.

parts. They hoped against hope that some way British supremacy would be established and that life would become possible for them in their own land. The treaty of peace sounded the death knell of these fond hopes. Their cause was completely lost, and the individual States refused to enforce the provisions of the treaty intended to secure their comfort. As one loyalist wrote, nothing was left them but "the consciousness of having done their duty."

They had another more material asset, however. The gratitude and generosity of the Mother Country were theirs. Britain could not obliterate the past. The vanquished one could not dictate the terms of the treaty. But she did the next best thing for them. She compensated them for their losses and their sacrifices, from her own treasury and in her own territory. For the vast majority, the easiest way to do this was to transplant them to some undeveloped part of her own empire in America.

Thus the grand exodus from New York City began. General Guy Carleton was in command there at the time, and he was most alert and active in the emigrants' behalf. It was an orderly departure. The rich returned to England, or, if they loved 'adventure, they formed companies and chartered ships to go to Nova Scotia. The poor were transported by the British Government to Nova Scotia or to Canada, as they wished.

The emigration from New York to Nova Scotia was very large. An idea of its importance may be gained from the following figures. Within the period of one year Shelburne grew into a city of "eight hundred houses finished, six hundred in great forwardness, and several hundreds lately begun, with wharves and other

erections and upwards of 12,000 inhabitants." On January 1st, 1784, the total number of "new settlers (loyalists), as nearly as could possibly be collected from returns of the different places where they have set down," is given as 27,700, omitting "free negroes."

However, it is in the remainder, who for the most part decided to go to Canada, that we are particularly interested. To judge from the correspondence between Carleton and Haldimand, they belonged to the "distressed loyalist" class. As early as June 4th, 1783, Carleton was making arrangements for the departure of "two hundred families who wish to settle in Canada," "and he recommends that they be furnished with lands in the vicinity of Frontenac." But at that early date, General Haldimand had no instructions about settling the loyalists, so he could merely assure Carleton that "I have been preparing every succour for the distressed loyalists in Canada that the province can produce;" and that "those sent from New York will meet the same reception."

In spite of the uncertain reception ahead, the loyalists rushed to Canada. By the middle of July eight companies of them, organized as militia, wished to set out and their first contingent embarked for Canada and arrived one month later at Quebec. A second then embarked and also reached Quebec a month later. Then, September 8th, a third company, under Michael Grass and Captain Van Alstine, set sail with loyalists from Rockland, Orange, Ulster, Westchester, Dutchess and Columbia counties. They too required the regulation month to round the Maritime Provinces and pull up the St. Lawrence to Quebec. This sea voyage was in the majority of cases a very trying experience, because



the "Yorkers" usually "arrived with more women and children than men," and in each transport "the generality of them was either down with smallpox and measles, or just recovering from them." These two diseases were prevalent at all the camps that summer. Fortunately they were not of a malignant type. Only five died on the August-September voyage, for example, as the "smallpox was of a favourable sort," and the "bedding and clothing had been purified by fire and smoke."

From our previous survey of the thronged state of Canada, it is easy to surmise how greatly the housing and billeting accommodation of the country would now be taxed by such an unprecedented influx of people. General Haldimand found Soral was the most convenient place to send them. The large German barracks there had been vacated in June when the majority of the men in these foreign regiments—then no longer required—had sailed for the Fatherland. Their quarters were immediately turned over to the loyalists. But even so, the officers in charge found it necessary "to contract them into as narrow a compass as possible on this side of misery."

Meanwhile nothing definite could be arranged for the future. It was only on April 26th that the proclamation for the cessation of arms and the terms of the provisional peace had reached Governor Haldimand. And it was not until July 23rd he received any instructions about land grants for the loyalists. He then at once set energetically about having suitable lands secured and surveyed. Exploring parties were sent along the Ottawa, Rideau, St. Lawrence and Bay of Quinte. It was finally decided that the land on the St. Lawrence oppo-

site the Long Sault and around the forts at Oswegatchie and Catarauqui, as well as those on the Bay of Quinte, were the most desirable. They were chosen not wholly on account of fertility and accessibility, but largely because by the provisional treaty Oswego and Carleton Island were to be given up, and it was felt that to secure the trade and to continue the attachment of the Six Nations, the other posts at Oswegatchie and Catarauqui would have to be enlarged and strengthened. Thus settling the loyalists there, served a double purpose. The one drawback was, these lands had to be purchased from the Indians. This was a delicate matter and required a great deal of time and diplomacy. While the "conduct and forbearance" of the Six Nations "had surpassed expectations," after hostilities ceased, yet when the terms of the treaty which ceded their lands to the Americans became known "their resentment glowed." They looked upon the conduct of the British as treacherous and cruel:

"They told me they never could believe that our King could pretend to cede to America what was not his own to give, or that the Americans would accept from him what he had no right to grant. . . . It was treachery and cruelty of which only Christians were capable; the Indians would not have acted so to friends and allies."

It was therefore as essential for the government to provide lands for their Six Nations allies as for the other loyalists. At the same time, the Canadian Indians who had also helped them and among whom they were all—loyalist whites and loyalist redskins—to live in future, would on no terms sell lands for their heredi-

tary foes, the Mohawks. So the negotiations dragged on, and it was not until November that the purchase from the St. Regis and Mississaugas was really consummated, and the surveying of the land could be carried on with any assurance.

Meanwhile more loyalists had been steadily coming, sometimes overland and sometimes by water. Once the snow came, they drove in by sleighloads, and probably the margin "on this side of misery" in some of the barracks was completely wiped out.

It was a never-to-be-forgotten climax to all their years of warfare, anxiety, pain and grief—this winter in crowded barracks, short of firewood, clothing and blankets, and also often of provisions, the issues of which had to be made with the strictest economy, "owing to the amazing current [Jan. 5, 1784] consumption and the vast demand that will be in the spring." It was a most unsettled time, rife with discontent, friction and disturbances of many kinds.

The perpetual commotion about the camps this winter is in very interesting contrast with the comparative quiet and patient endurance which characterized them when the women and children were there alone. The men simply could not and would not passively tolerate the confinement, the enforced idleness and physical discomforts which the women had put up with for so long.

There was a constant coming and going among them. Distressed loyalists, "whose poverty makes them objects of compassion," were arriving by various ways and routes, and others, "disappointed in the sanguine hopes they had formed of this country," were returning to the States. Some fathers were entreating for permits and

journeying to the States to bring back their families and effects, while other idle fellows were roving about, seeking land or adventures and quite content to leave their wives and children to be provided for by the state.

Then there arose a great distrust of the far-distant "bush" where their future farms were being surveyed. The people were in such a state of present discomfort and uncertainty as to the future that all sorts of busy-bodies, and persons, like one Pritchard, "ill-disposed towards those in authority," could prey upon their ignorance, credulity and fears to any length. Pritchard circulated a wild, but very disturbing, idea among them "that the plan was to take the men to Cataraqui to make slaves of them." Many of them then decided to settle on the surrounding seigneuries or at least go no farther afield than the neighbourhood of Missisquoi Bay. At the first place the Governor was willing enough they should settle provided they "actually sit down upon their lots," but he maintained, "Those who will settle on the King's lands are better entitled to indulgence and will receive the preference." As for Missisquoi Bay, he felt it was impossible, "on account of the inconvenience of settling so near the Americans."

As the spring drew near and preparations for the last lap of their home-making journey advanced, the people began to realize more and more what a tremendous task they had to face and how poorly they were equipped for it. They besieged the Governor with memorials. For a few weeks they seemed almost panic-stricken by the vista ahead and poured in petition after petition for reasonable and unreasonable indulgences, without which they felt they could not begin life in the "bush."

The attitude of the authorities towards this canvassing

of and preparing for their future need was, to say the least, not very sympathetic. The trouble was perhaps that Governor Haldimand had already taken so much upon himself in the way of providing clothes and food that he felt he could not venture upon more until he was authorized. However, as his secretary wrote, "it was painful for him to refuse assistance to the loyalists," and he "incurred much expense entirely at his own risk." Although the authorities might resent their importuning, it was well for the infant colony it had such leaders as Grass and Van Alstine, for instance, who persisted in stating their needs, even if sometimes they overstepped the mark and asked for "extraordinary things."

The supply of cattle for the new settlement may be mentioned as a typical difficulty they foresaw, and by constant application managed to get at least partially solved. It is selected as an illustration of the nature of their needs and demands, since of all the requests it was of most vital importance to the women and children. There is no doubt that where to procure the cows, how to take them to the new settlements, and what to feed them when they got them there, were serious questions. But surely, how women were to feed their young children if they were banished to "the bush" on army rations, was a more serious one still. The matter was broached to the Governor on March 2nd, 1784, "in a memorial signed Grass," but was turned down as "utterly impossible"—"the loyalists will have land and provisions, etc., but not stock." Then, a couple of weeks later, came a petition from "a number of people who wish to settle at Cataraqui, and who have stock which they cannot drive through the woods so early as the 24th April" (the time then set to begin the great move). They

asked "leave for their families to remain in charge of them till the weather shall admit of them being driven up." Their proposed route was to "send the cattle to Chateaugay and there cross in boats." They calculated that "about fifty horses and cattle could be sent in the first drove." On April 5th permission "to remain in their present habitation till the season suits for driving" was granted, but it was again reiterated that there would be no advance made for cattle, as the Governor "is persuaded that as many as can be wanted will be driven to Oswego. If not, it will be easy to send to the Mohawk River or through the country." However, a month later we find his secretary writing that "His Excellency hoped to receive instructions giving him some latitude to afford that assistance [the providing of cows by the time it will be proper," or, as he expresses it another time, "as the circumstances of hay and loyalists shall permit." Finally, on June 24, His Excellency ordered "two bulls to be sent from the Cedars to Sir John Johnson at New Town," and a despatch says "Oxen will be a more distant consideration." A communication forwarded by Edward Jessop to Sir Frederick, in May, 1785, shows clearly how very distant a consideration the providing of the cattle had to be. It states that in September, 1784, there were in the settlement around Oswegatchie only six horses, eight oxen, and eighteen cows. These were to supply 597 settlers, of whom 101 were women, 119 boys and 143 girls.

The movement westward to the new settlements began in March, 1784, and on June 24th is the entry that "all the loyalists have been forwarded from Lachine," as well as "twelve bateaux loaded with provi-

sions." They were sent forward just as fast as possible, each brigade provided with one month's provisions. It was hoped they would get settled early and put in a crop that summer. But such satisfactory speed was not to be. However, in the spring it was all push and hurry. On April 16th the order was sent forth "that the whole of the loyalists must move at once to their settlements," and that "after the departure of the loyalists . . . not a single ration is to be issued, with the exceptions pointed out." The exceptions were only secured after earnest entreaty and just reason had been produced. It was permitted to "the infirm, the widows and children to remain at Sorel and Machiche and to receive provisions till their connections are ready to receive them;" but the rider was added, "the widows should, however, employ themselves and children in earning a livelihood." It is also stated, "A passage will be provided for the worn-out soldiers whose infirmities prevent them profiting by the lands." The matter from the official standpoint is very well summed up in the following letter of the Governor's secretary, Matthews, to Captain Maurer, who had charge of the loyalists for Cataraqui:

"QUEBEC, April 15, 1784.

". . . . Applications are every day coming in for permission to let their families remain in their present quarter, until the new settlements shall be ready to receive them. You are already acquainted with His Excellency's determination that the whole should move in order to enforce the necessity of their settling rapidly and to discourage the idea of the families remaining behind upon the King's provisions. Means will be furnished for encamping the common people, whose wives and children will be useful in many respects from the moment a tree is cut down. The families of officers

and others of the most decent order must, of course, have some preparations made for them and previous to their going upon the ground. I believe His Excellency signified his intention to you of cantoning these upon the inhabitants most contiguous to their respective stations."

By May removal was well under way from all the camps. The authorities realized what a big undertaking it was to transport so many people such a distance, and pushed this part of the work diligently. True, the St. Lawrence route had been greatly improved during the past four or five years, and the loss of life in its rapids much lessened; yet it presented a long, difficult journey for those days. From Lachine to Cataraqi generally required three weeks. But it was one of the most frequented thoroughfares of the country. A couple of years before, during the navigation season, from the 6th of May until the 31st of October, 635 bateaux in 67 divisions had passed up to the upper posts with provisions and stores. When we think of the loyalists to-day as entering the primeval forest, as virtually burying themselves in the bush, while it is true in one sense, it is not the whole truth. We are judging their new settlements by the standards of our own time. When New Johnstown, Oswegatchie, Cataraqi, or the settlement on the Bay of Quinte, are compared with the frontier posts the majority of the new settlers had left on the Mohawk, the Schoharie and Wyoming, it will be found that their Canadian homes were no less in the world than their former. They enjoyed wonderfully direct means of communication with Montreal and Three Rivers, the commercial and industrial centres of their country.



No matter how direct and frequented they may have considered the waterway, the loyalist mothers must have found it a very toilsome one in their clumsy boats. There might be locks at the Cascades and Cedars, but these were only two rapids among many. And the rapids meant continuous hauling and pike-poling on the part of the men, and wading and walking around them on land on the part of the women. They also meant double time, as only half the boats could be manned at once for this work.

A pause to look at their boats is interesting. They were the ordinary bateaux of the time, large, scow-like affairs, built to carry four or five families and a couple of tons of freight. Their full capacity was thirty-five barrels of flour. They were flat-bottomed, drawing when loaded from eighteen inches to two feet of water. Except for one small square sail, they were wholly man-propelled. In still water they were fitted with oars, but in rapids only setting poles could be used. Usually they ran in brigades of twelve, with five men to navigate each boat—four to row and one to steer. A pilot directed the whole, particularly the management of the brigade through the rapids. At these critical spots only half a brigade was taken through at a time, the crew in each boat guiding it with the setting poles, while a crew from one of the waiting boats walked by the water's edge and pulled it up the rapids with a rope fastened to the bow. This work often necessitated the men spending a whole day up to the waist in water and mire. The women and children, whenever able, walked around the rapids to lighten the work.

The brigades travelled only by day, two miles and a half per hour being good average speed. At night they

put into some creek or bay, pitched their army tents, lighted fires, dried their clothes and enjoyed the one grand meal of the day.

Those evening fires and suppers formed a picturesque scene. The men, busy with their preparations for the night or the early morning start, and the women, engaged in their own affairs, some of them crooning little ones to sleep in the shadow of the tents, and others in the ruddy flare of the fire, cooking over steaming camp kettles both the evening meal and the food for the next day's journey—these various elements, taken all in all, composed a picture strange indeed for its small dimensions and intimate human domestic interest, in contrast with its majestic background of giant forest and vaulted sky. Probably about these fires some of the happiest hours were now enjoyed which the poor, travel-weary exiles had known since they left their former homes. The very fact that they were on the move again and the promised land almost in sight, cheered men and women whose hopes and nerves had been worn thin by the confinement of their winter life.

On the whole the voyage left happy memories. What of their first look at the new home awaiting them? Did it leave a recollection of a thrill of joy and a new birth of hope, or of a wave of disappointment and depression? Probably neither. It must have appeared to them very like the new military centres to which they had grown accustomed since their arrival in Canada. As early as September 11th, the year before, Collins, the surveyor, had set out with a party to prepare the headquarters of the settlement. They had repaired the walls of the old French fort and put up a pile of soldier barracks, consisting of eight large rooms, sufficient to

accommodate forty or fifty men. Officers' quarters of six rooms had been erected and others of twenty-four were under way. In addition, they built a provision store, a shed hospital, a bakehouse, a powder magazine, and a limekiln. Moreover, the newcomers found "old residents" to greet them. The families of at least four artisans who came with Collins had spent the winter there. These first loyalist settlers were the Terrys with three children, the Murdoffs with four, the Shaws with two and the Howards with four.

Immediately on their arrival, another feature which had grown strangely familiar was added to the landscape. Their army tents were pitched—pitched buoyantly too, as at that time it was felt their sojourn in them now would be short. In this they were mistaken. As late as the 10th of September, Major Ross, who was then in charge at Cataraqui, reports that he "hopes that before winter, if Mr. Collins is well supported in surveying, each person may know his lot, but that is more distant than he once imagined." And as late as October 10th, "Some of the people are not yet on their lands" was the official report.

There were many reasons for the delay, but probably the chief one was that the city of tents grew most rapidly. When operations began in the spring the authorities had no idea they would have such a large population to settle before the autumn. Numbers of them arrived daily by other routes. A favourite one was by way of the Hudson, Mohawk, Wood Creek, Lake Oneida and Oswego to Lake Ontario and across to Cataraqui. At first it was the intention to give those late comers land only. They were to have "no provisions or douceurs like the loyalists who took an early and active part for the

Government." However, it very soon became apparent that these people too "had suffered in their persons and properties for their inflexible loyalty to their sovereign, obedience to his proclamation and attachment to the British Constitution," and so "His Excellency could not, in humanity, withhold the assistance their wretchedness required."

A letter Major Ross sends to Major Matthews, the Governor's secretary, in July, 1784, gives a very graphic, if not pleasant, picture of the conditions of the settlement the first summer:

"CATARAQUI, July 7, 1784.

"The present situation of these people induces me to mention some circumstances relative to them. The reduction of the ration without any resources this year, creates a general despair. It will be some time yet before they can get upon their lands; there is scarcely any turnip seed. If it was sent, it was embezzled on the road. They have no seed wheat and many not so much as a blanket to cover them in the winter. The wish of a great part is to return at all hazard, in short. Axes and hoes have not yet come up for half of them. It is said Captain Sherwood stopped more than his proportion at Oswegatchie. I do all that I can to content them. . . . Disputes amongst the Loyalists frequently arise. The most material as yet are between the master and servant, where severe correction seems to take place, an evil which requires a speedy remedy. . . . Strange is the collection of people here."

The testimony of another officer, Baron de Reitzenstein, writing on August 18th, bears out all Major Ross says. The Baron prays "that blankets be issued to these poor people, who are obliged to sleep on the ground, exposed to the rain and to the fogs which were almost

daily, causing great suffering to them, to their wives and children." A. Macdonell reports, on Sept. 20th, the same need on the Bay of Quinte: "Some of them have not even a blanket to cover them from heavy rain and pinching frost, or to hold out the damp of the ground they lie upon."

From down the river at Newtown, near Oswegatchie, however, more cheerful news comes, or at least the scribe is of a more optimistic temperament. As early as July 2nd, Captain Sherwood reports "a number of huts built" and that the chief thought is now where to get seed wheat, for if the men cannot get oxen, they intend to hoe in an acre and a half of wheat each. On July 23rd he writes that "the people have got on their farms, are universally pleased, are emulating each other so that every lot in the front of the three townships, and many of these in the back townships, are improved and the country bears a very promising appearance. The reduction of the rations is, however, disheartening the people, and he asks that the allowance be continued for a year."

It is easy to explain the two great needs the settlers suffered during the summer. They had been sent forward without an issue of clothing, on purpose "to prevent impositions," and it was always the intention to muster them at the end of the summer at their new settlements and make a distribution of clothing then. The stopping of their rations was a most unfortunate act, committed through ignorance of the conditions by the Lords Commissioners of the Treasury. However, Governor Haldimand, as in many such cases, proved himself once more the friend of these poor people, and

took upon himself the consequences of allowing a full ration until the King's pleasure should be further known.

Before leaving the loyalist mothers, now that their journey has come to its end, another look may be had at them in a letter Stephen de Lancy wrote Governor Haldimand on Oct. 16th:

“Part of the loyalists have huts ready, and others, by being very industrious, may have them built so as to shelter them from the severity of the winter. Others, from the late date at which their lands were surveyed, cannot possibly build in time. They might be kept comfortably during the winter in the barracks at the different garrisons.”

Thus the loyalist mothers by slow steps came home. But it is the pride and glory of their descendants to-day that loyalism for their forefathers meant hardship and sacrifice. And it would be a pride and joy to the old loyalists themselves, could they know what a mighty member of the British Empire the land of their exile has grown to be.



CWJEFFERYS

*The Journey Through the Woods*

## CHAPTER V

### *From the Old Country to the New. Ocean Travel, 1815-1850.*

A QUARTER of a century may now roll by before we follow the wake of our Old Country ancestors to Upper Canada. These years saw increase about the individual homes of the United Empire Loyalists, but little change in the country as a whole. Their partly cleared farms along the shores of the St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie made but so many portals opening into the vast forest-clad hinterland. True, each year added its quota to the population. The old true blue loyalists were quickly followed by the "late loyalists," whose patriotism may have been somewhat alloyed by the dross of worldly ambition, but whose pioneer labour helped none the less to make smooth the way for those coming after.

Early settlers came from Bonnie Scotland too. The Mohawk Highlanders did not tarry in sending their clansmen the good news of the many vacant townships and the warm Highland welcome which would be theirs in Glengarry. And others came. A remarkable colony of French aristocrats might be mentioned, in passing, as the most incongruous of them all.

Nevertheless it was not until the Napoleonic wars were over, in 1815, that any real immigration into Upper Canada began. England's return to peace, after twenty years of fighting, threw immense forces out of work. During the war there had been great demand for labour and men, and the poor had married and flourished, with



no thought of the morrow. Now peace gave the country a superfluous population. Statistics collected in the early twenties for sixteen parishes in Kent County illustrate how serious the situation was. Their total population was 21,719. Of these, 8,263 were paupers largely dependent on the poor rates, and 682 belonged to a still more destitute class, for whom no work whatever could be found in any part of the year.

Another factor at this time which threw many able-bodied men out of work and out of a livelihood, was the development of inventions in the industrial world. Particularly was this the case in the spinning and weaving trades. The new power looms, with one-sixth the men, were doing more work than the old hand looms. Lancaster and parts of Cheshire, Yorkshire and Cumberland, in England, and in Scotland the counties of Renfrew and Lanark, were the districts most seriously affected by the transition. The poor hand loom weavers, in their vain endeavour to compete with the machinery, were working eighteen and nineteen hours a day, but earning only four to seven shillings a week. In 1800, for the same work, they would have received twenty shillings. The distress among them grew acute, the more so as they were of a proud, independent nature, very different from the habitual pauper class, and shrank painfully from making their needs public. Their clothing and bedding became exhausted. Finally they could not afford a sufficient quantity of the coarsest food used by human beings. One weaver, when petitioning the Government Commission to procure aid for him and his associates to emigrate, admitted that he, his wife and two children, subsisted weekly on a peck of inferior meal and a peck of potatoes. This was just the common lot of hundreds

like him, who had been respectable householders a few years before.

Bad as conditions were in England and Scotland, they were worse in Ireland. The redundant population there was far greater for the size of the country, and the destitute had no poor rates to keep them. Conditions were so hopeless that the evil was in many cases just allowed to cure itself. This it did naturally, more or less speedily, by simply putting an end to the sufferers. Without homes, without food, without money and without care, the poor starved wretches died by scores in the ditches.

Emigration was the one avenue of relief and hope for all this congested land. At first glance it seems strange that it did not set in at once with a great outburst.<sup>1</sup> The pent-up, famished thousands on one side, and the large tracts of fertile, unappropriated land on the opposite, were calling so loudly the one for the other. But the broad Atlantic rolled between. For people as poor in purse as were the would-be emigrants, no matter what the pressure, only a certain number could be equipped at a time to cross the barrier.

By one means or another the beginning was made. Sometimes a Government experiment, like the emigrations from Ireland in 1823 and 1825, under the super-

<sup>1</sup>The yearly immigration into Upper Canada from 1815 to 1847 was astonishingly small. No exact figures can be given, because many, of course, came to Canada via New York and many more went to the States by the cheaper routes of St. John and Quebec. But the number of immigrants arriving yearly at Quebec is a very good index of the growth of the movement. In the early years it was estimated to be about 8,000. By 1820 it had reached, roughly speaking, 10,000. The next decade's growth was 10,000 more, and the average by 1830 was about 20,000 yearly. Then followed two abnormal years, 1831 and 1832, in each of which there came something over 50,000, due largely to the falling off in Austral-

intendence of Mr. Peter Robinson, brought relief and hope to a whole district. Occasionally a benevolent landlord shipped off his surplus tenants to found estates of their own in the New World. Or a charitable organization subscribed funds to give more needy brethren a second chance. Or an overburdened parish decided to mortgage their poor rates and transport some of their paupers (citizens of Montreal and Quebec complained they were mostly helpless widows or young orphans) to a new country which could easily absorb such cares. However, they were sometimes most paternal in their care of widows and orphans. For example, a pauper with four children, from Radstone, near Brackley, Northamptonshire, who had lost his wife, was given aid to go to Canada by his parish, only on condition that he marry a pauper widow also with four children, and that then they both adopt and take with them two boys who were a charge to the parish. Contrary to expectations, this ready-made family flourished exceedingly in the new land.

And every place and all the time, the poor man helped

ian emigration just then. This factor worked in the reverse way in 1838, when Canada got only 3,500—due partly to the popularity of Australia that year and partly to our own political troubles.

1829.....	15,945	1839	
1830.....	28,000	1840	
1831.....	50,254	1841.....	28,280
1832.....	51,746	1842.....	44,692
1833.....	21,752	1843.....	21,807
1834.....	30,935	1844.....	20,245
1835.....	12,527	1845.....	25,575
1836.....	27,728	1846.....	33,025
1837.....	21,901	— <i>Papers relative to Emigration</i>	
1838.....	3,266	— <i>Part I, printed 1847, p. 39.</i>	
— <i>Report of Emigrant Department, Quebec, published 1838, p. 38.</i>			

his brother poor man. It is a reason for self-esteem among Canadians to-day that so many of their ancestors belonged to this class—the strong, the proud, and the independent of the earth. Poverty could not degrade them. It but quickened them to stern determination and bold endeavour. It fired their love and affection and begot deeds of self-sacrifice and brotherly kindness of heroic measure. Fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters struggled and stinted and saved to send a son or a daughter, a sister or a brother, as a forerunner to the land of promise. This one prepared a place there, and was able in turn to help the rest to attain it.<sup>1</sup> The wonderful strength of their family ties, the sacrifices made both in the old land and in the new, so cheerfully, so absolutely as a matter of course, for a brother or sister, father or mother, son or daughter, nay, even for aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins, no matter how many times removed, are the bright and pleasing touches in the otherwise sombre picture of their distress.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Alexander Buchanan, Chief Emigration Officer at Quebec, certified before the Committee to Report on Emigration, 1826-27, that two-thirds of the immigrants had their passage paid in America. —*Report from Select Committee, printed 1826, p. 173.*

<sup>2</sup>“Mary Breen came out from Mr. Noble's estate in Fermanagh, in the spring of 1841, with a family of neighbours from the same estate, of the name of Collins; she obtained service, and sent home for her sister Rose in 1842, who joined her and also obtained service. The two sisters saved from their wages, and sent home money to assist two brothers to come out; the one arrived in 1843, and the other in 1846, and obtained employment; they sent also for their mother, a widow, and a sister of weak health. Another married sister, Catherine, came in 1844, to join her husband, who had arrived in 1842, and they having settled on a farm at Woodstock, received their mother, who came out in 1846; all are now comfortably settled and doing well; there are two married brothers, farmers, in Ireland. The first of the Collins family, an unmarried female, came out ten or eleven years ago, and after being some years in service in Fredericton, married in the province, and sent home funds to

## II

Some seventy or seventy-five years ago, the spring months witnessed many an animated drama and strange act on the Waterloo Dock at Liverpool. Some of them were laughable, some of them pitiful, some of them shameful, and some of them heroic, but all of them steeped in deep human interest. The background was suggestive and picturesque in the highest degree. A perfect forest of masts with all their delicate trceries clear-cut and pointed against the deep blue of the April sky, relieved here and there by the bright blues and reds of the Union Jacks or the Star-Spangled Banners which gaily floated on the freshening breeze, made a setting to stir the roving spirit of the most persistent stay-at-home.

An emigrant ship, passing through the dock gates, invariably held the centre of the stage. It was the old-fashioned sailing type, very romantic and picturesque to look upon, but as uncertain to depend upon as the will of the winds and the waves could make it. In 1840,

bring out her family from Ireland, consisting of her mother, a widow, and several brothers and sisters, who came out in succession, and are all doing well . . . .

Two young women, of the name of Macan, by means of an advance made for their passage out from Inniskillen, on security of repayment, came out to Restigouche in 1841; there they obtained employment in a family on wages, and after remaining there two years, they came to Fredericton, having saved £25. This they remitted to their family, consisting of a father and mother, and from eight to ten brothers; this remittance, with the funds they raised at home, enabled them to emigrate to this province. . . . The cost of passage out is £2, 10s. sterling; the remittances are made through the North American Bank, payable in any part of Ireland. There has been no casualty in either of the above families, except the aged mother of the Macans. All have thriven and done well."

—*Enclosure 5 in a despatch from Lieutenant-Governor Sir W. M. G. Colebrooke, to Earl Grey, dated Fredericton, New Brunswick, 13th July, 1847, printed in "Papers Relative to Emigration," Part I, 20th December, 1847.*

however, only such vessels were known to the emigrant traffic. Steamships had struggled into existence about 1819, but the "poor, mean, mechanical things" were still unworthy of serious consideration. Ten years later they held a different place, and twenty years after that—1870—they had practically pushed their old competitors off the waves. The ships engaged in Canadian immigration were not even primarily intended for passenger boats. Their real mission was to carry freight—timber and ashes—from Canada to the Old Country. Then the emigrant's need became their opportunity. They looked upon any cargo as more profitable than sailing home in ballast, and he was not fastidious about accommodation. For many years they provided him with water—very filthy water it was too—and space for his large chest on board, for the minimum sum of five, or sometimes seven dollars. The price was certainly cheap, but the accommodation even cheaper. On his chest he made his bed and in it he carried his seven to nine weeks' provisions, a sixty pound bag of oatmeal, a couple of dozen eggs and a little pot of butter.<sup>1</sup>

Many were the actors hurrying and scurrying about the departing vessel. Such an uproar, turmoil and confusion can scarcely be imagined now. The critical last moment came as she passed through the dock gates, which were not many inches wider than her deck. One after another the belated ones arrived, panting and shouting as they clambered in hot haste over the side of the

<sup>1</sup> The oatmeal cost 1s. 6d. for a peck of 8 lbs.; the butter 1s. 4d. for a pound of 22 ozs. It cost an emigrant, therefore, all told, from \$7.50 to \$10 for his passage.—*Prices and quantities given in Report of Select Committee on Emigration, published in 1826.*

ship. Their belongings meanwhile were hurled from donkey-carts or from their shoulders with great speed and little concern. Among the late comers appeared every now and then a valiant fellow who had been enjoying "a right gude willie-waught for the days of auld lang syne," and who was very lucky when his jump for the deck did not plunge him into the water beneath. Equally characteristic were a couple of stalwart chaps hoisting what seemed to be an unusually heavy barrel over the side of the vessel, when, lo and behold, the end gave way and a man fell out of it head foremost into the water—a very dazed, shivering and ragged wretch he proved to be, when fished from the water a few minutes later. During such excitement, others were having their own troubles in another quarter. A messenger-at-arms had arrived with a warrant to apprehend a man who had suddenly left his old home without paying his debts. Another hapless wight with a wife and child was held up by his employer to pay for some goods he had damaged in weaving when sick. Care, anxiety and sickness had evidently been the lot of the little trio for a long time. When their hard master appeared, every expression of hope fled from the parents and they were a picture of such utter, heart-broken, woe-begone despair that the sympathy of the crowd went out to them at once. In vain the husband promised to recompense his employer when he met his brother at Quebec. After hearing all the story a poor Irish emigrant instinctively put his hand in his pocket, and the others around followed his example; so in a few moments the amount demanded was paid.

All the time emigrants were arriving helter-skelter in most admired disorder; here a sturdy yeoman or

mechanic with a chest on his shoulder, there a fellow half smothered with his freshly filled straw mattress; here a woman with her flock of little children and there another with her whole array of tinware in her arms. All in all they were a motley throng; young and old, men and women, boys and girls; lively and cheerful, stolid and stupid; bright-eyed and blooming, dejected and worn; sturdy and strapping, squalid and seedy; brawny and rugged, drooping and stooped; fair and comely, serious and thoughtful, empty and giddy, boisterous and loud—there they all were jammed, crammed and dovetailed together on the deck as the vessel cleared the dock.

At an earlier period, say in the twenties, such an animated, crowded scene was very rare. It was then divided into two stages, one the scattered departure of the emigrants from the dock in small boats, the other their boarding the ship, which was waiting for them at anchor some five or six miles out. Thanks to the little steam-tug, the two stages were now united. But union alone was not responsible for the hurly-burly just witnessed. The great uncertainty of the time of departure, not of the hour alone, but of the day, and often even of the week, was at the root of the evil. Especially was this true of the converted freight-emigrant vessels. "Inquire of the captain, mate, and some of the most respectable sailors," ran the advice for would-be emigrants; "from them all a pretty true estimate of the truth respecting the time of sailing may be ascertained." The following little contemporary account tells a usual story:

"When I engaged my passage, the broker told me to hasten on board, as she would sail in a couple of hours; and as she was already a week behind the day advertised,



I thought it probable he might be correct. I was therefore in great fear of her sailing before I was ready, which would involve the loss of my passage money. However, I found afterwards that I might have saved myself a great deal of anxiety, for she did not leave port for three days after, putting the passengers, many of whom had been on board for a fortnight, to great expense for food, as fires were not allowed on board."<sup>1</sup>

The Liverpool Dock Trust allowed no lights or fires on vessels lying in the docks. It was a wise precaution in the days of "hearts of oak" and pail and bucket brigades, but at the same time one which caused great hardship for the poor emigrants.

One peculiar and trying feature of their embarkation has not been mentioned—the unsatisfactory system which was then in vogue for securing a passage. This threw a great many emigrants as ignorant and inexperienced as the Vicar of Wakefield about ships and travelling into the power of an unscrupulous set of brokers. A would-be emigrant could rarely buy his passage direct from the owner or captain of a boat. He secured it from a broker who had bought the whole steerage room on speculation, and was anxious to parcel it out among as many passengers as possible. In the words of one victim, these brokers "were all a set of rascals who, when they got your money, cared nothing what became of you." Many were the crimes laid at the broker's door. If he was filling a ship for Quebec and a possible passenger wanted to go to New York, unless this particular one was better versed in geography than the majority of his customers, nothing was easier than to assure him that Quebec and New York were both on the

<sup>1</sup>"Voyage in an Emigrant Ship," *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal*, Sat., April 13th, 1844.

direct road to America, and it made no difference which ship he sailed in. Many a penniless emigrant and emigrant's family were stranded through such misrepresentations at St. John or Boston, while the son who had forwarded them the passage money waited in vain to meet them in Montreal.

Another glaring evil of the system was the premium it put on overcrowding the vessels.<sup>1</sup> From 1809 the British law had limited the number to be carried. Generally it allowed only one statute adult to every two tons, but sometimes three to every four tons were permitted. Limited as such accommodations were, they were spacious compared with the Guinea Coast slave trade methods the brokers employed when opportunity occurred. A letter in the *Edinburgh North Briton* for June 11, 1832, gives us an idea of what they would attempt:

“WHITEHAVEN, June 11, 1832.

“The *Nancy* was entirely crowded with passengers, when nearly two hundred of us arrived this morning, who had all taken their passage on board of her. We have now lain a week, and will probably have to be nearly another, before the *Magnet* will be ready for sailing, which is to take us away. We are living in private lodgings, which they [the brokers] pay for, but we have

<sup>1</sup>The owners and ship brokers estimated the expense of fitting a vessel this way:

A 300-ton vessel was usually chartered at 21s. per registered ton	£315
Cost of timber for and of building berths	26
Water casks and water	69
Total	£410

Now if 200 passengers were sent in that ship at an average of £2, 1s. per head, the brokers and owners would come out just even. Every one over 200 was so much gain.—*Letter from Agent at Liverpool of the American Chamber of Commerce, giving estimates of the expense of sending emigrants from Ireland to Quebec.* Report for 1826, p. 295.

to provide our own victuals. . . . They have used us most shamefully, having engaged nearly four hundred passengers for a brig conveying only one hundred and twenty passengers . . . .

“THOMAS RICHARDSON.”

It is noticeable in the above letter that the brokers were kindly providing the lodgings. They knew what every man's finances were and just what the traffic would bear. The lodgings they provided were a good introduction to conditions in the steerage, as they duplicated them very closely. The rooms were shelved around just like a steerage, and men, women and children, all together, slept there in appallingly close and narrow beds. It mattered little to the brokers whether the boat they had over-filled was detected by the customs officer or tide-surveyor and the surplus turned ashore or not. If they escaped, the broker had made his extra profit simply by overcrowding; if they were turned on shore, they were his prey, until they did sail. As Pickering put it, “emigrants will be dogged by them in every street . . . . so that the emigrants' means are often exhausted before they can sail.” The emigrant stores, too, were often run by the same brokers. Their motto was, “The poorest goods at the highest price, for we hope never to see our customers again.” No wonder the defenceless emigrant was adjured in every guide manual, book and pamphlet written for his learning, to keep his eyes open, to examine all things for himself, for he would meet with sharpers at every turn, who would try to take advantage of him.

Nowadays we are apt to imagine the emigrant's farewell to his native land in a very emotional and sentimental light. It is customary to picture the shedding of

tears and the wringing of hands on shore and on deck as the emigrant ship weighed anchor, and to hearken to pipes on the distant hill wailing forth the universal heartache in such songs as "MacCrimmon's Lament," and "Lochaber no More." But so far as the final part of embarkations was concerned, such scenes are pure fiction. The emigrant's true farewells, in the majority of cases, were said miles away and days before his ship put to sea. When the final hour of departure came, some woman may have wept from fatigue, some children cried with hunger or exhaustion, but to have sentiment in the maelstrom they were then caught in was impossible. It was rather the long-looked-for moment come at last. Their native land had been in all probability an unkind mother, a country of suffering and distress. They had made up their minds for a long journey, they saw the star of hope beckoning them on, and they gave a mighty cheer the instant they felt the first move of the ship towards it. The crowds on shore took up the shout, and so lusty did it grow that often in busy Liverpool it could be heard a mile away.

While the steam-tug was drawing them up the Mersey, two special ceremonies had to take place. The search for stowaways and the roll-call had to be completed while there was still an opportunity to send superfluous passengers ashore. The first move was to order all the passengers to the deck. Many of the inexperienced obeyed in fear and trembling, wondering what unknown regulation they had now transgressed. When all had assembled, a rope was drawn across, and seamen stationed at the gangways to prevent anyone going down again to the lower parts of the vessel.

Down in these regions the search for stowaways began. The mate, with some of the crew, proceeded to the steerage, carrying lights and armed with long poles spiked at the end, to poke under the berths and into dark corners, and with hammers to thump the straw mattresses or any suspicious-looking soft bundles. Not a nook or cranny escaped them. Every large barrel and trunk received an extra toss. They tumbled them over, jolted them about and rolled them upside down so that any human being inside would have to scream for relief. But all in vain; such vigilance was rarely rewarded. Yet none of the seekers felt much surprise if a couple of weeks later brought some of the "creatures" to light.

They generally turned up in some dramatic way like this. Midnight, all quiet and dark on board, the sailing-ship plunging steadily forward through the mid-Atlantic. Suddenly a couple of sailors hear groans beneath them. A scouting party follows a leader with a candle in an old tin lantern down into the hold. In the all-pervasive darkness there they stumble on a man—if man that wild, cadaverous, fiendish-looking wretch could be. Before they realize it, another appears skulking behind a water cask a little farther on. Half crazed with hunger, they have been fighting over half a sea biscuit. One is now devouring it and the other shows a gash in his cheek. Hence the tell-tale noise which awoke the sailors, and also no doubt many a sailor's ghostly yarn, when time had mellowed it.

A picturesque trial on deck was the sequel. The castaways were led before the captain. The steerage passengers quickly collected around, for they had been disturbed by the unusual noise, and life on shipboard

was too dull to miss such a thrilling event. A large lantern was placed so that the captain might plainly see and measure the culprits. They in the meantime peered out on the circle of spectators, pressing close on the lantern's small ring of light, with hardened indifference. It was a puzzling case for a captain. He could neither drown nor starve the intruders, and anything less was mild, compared with what they had willingly suffered to reach America. But they presented no problem for the steerage. Sometimes stowaways had accomplices there, and when this was so, their lot on discovery was not very different from the others. But when they were friendless, every man's hand was against them. That they had committed some crime, and were fleeing from justice, was the universal conclusion, and that they should be hurled overboard at once the universal verdict. A typical conversation in the steerage after such a trial is related in an early magazine :

"I daresay the like of this was never heard of," said a woman. "The ship is worse than a jail now. We will all be killed and robbed by such desperadoes."

"We'll be murdered in our beds before morning."

"It's a shame that such vagrants should be allowed to dwell among Christians."

"Don't speak of their usage, for it is too bad. Instead of hanging them, he has ordered that they should get provisions like us. Think of that! We honest folk are obliged to pay a heavy fee for our passage, while vagabonds like them get across the seas without putting down a stiver, and are served with meat. Nothing but wickedness thrives in this world."

"It is my private belief that the Captain is no great things himself. I suspect these two fellows are friends of his own in disguise, and he has taken this method of

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smuggling them out of the country, to hinder the Government from getting air of the transaction."<sup>1</sup>

and so on without end the changes were rung by the indignant, virtuous steerage.

During the interval of the stowaway search in the steerage, the "roll-call" was proceeding on deck. As we have seen, the passengers had all been collected there and roped in. Taking his stand on some high platform, a chest or barrel, that he might overlook the crowd, the clerk of the agents produced his list and began to call over the names. Perhaps we can best appreciate this ceremony by quoting the graphic account of an eyewitness of it:

"The first upon the list were Patrick Hoolaghan, his wife, Bridget Hoolaghan, and a family of seven children. The Hoolaghans, after some little difficulty, were all found; and, room being made for them, they passed to the gangway, produced their tickets, and were then ushered to the steerage, free to their berths and to all the privileges of the passage. The next was Bernard M'Dermott and a family of six. Not making his appearance with proper speed, the man on the rail raised a loud shout for 'Barney,' and made a touching appeal to his justice not to keep the ship waiting. Barney turned up in due time, and proved to be an utter Irishman—in face, voice, gesture, and attire—and skipped triumphantly down the gangway with his ticket in his hand, followed by the whole of the younger generation of the M'Dermotts. The next were Philip Smith, his wife and eight children—a congregation of Smiths whose name and numbers excited a shout of laughter among the passengers. A request was made by some one in the

<sup>1</sup>*Blackwood's Magazine* for Nov., 1821. "The Emigrant's Voyage to Canada," Vol. 10, pp. 464-465.

crowd that if there were any more Smiths on the list their names might be called out at once, so that the whole tribe might be done with. The man on the rail was condescending enough to comply, and five other families of Smiths were duly called and as duly made their appearance amid the laughter and jeers of the assemblage. Patrick Boyle was next in order. Patrick, it appeared, was rather deaf, and did not answer to his name—

“ ‘Paddy Bile,  
Come here awhile,’

shouted the man on the rail. The rhyme had no effect, and it was begun to be surmised that Paddy was not on board, when he was led forward by the collar by a fellow-passenger, as if he had been a culprit who had been caught in the act of picking a pocket. He looked nothing abashed or angry at the treatment, and, after fumbling in his breast, in his coat, and in his waistcoat pocket, produced a proper receipt for his passage money, and was ushered down the gangway amid expressions from every side that were far from complimentary to his beauty or his sagacity. ‘Joseph Brown’ was told to ‘come down’; ‘William Jones’ was asked to ‘show his bones,’ and various other rhymes were perpetrated upon the names of the laggards, to the great amusement of all the people on deck. The whole ceremony lasted for upwards of an hour and a half, and offered nothing remarkable but the discovery of an attempted fraud on the part of a very old couple of Irish people. In procuring their ticket they had represented their son, who was to accompany them, as under twelve years of age, and had only paid half price for him. The boy of twelve years of age, on being compelled to show himself, turned out to be a strapping young man of eighteen or nineteen. ‘You must pay the full price,’ said the man at the rail, ‘or I shall be under the necessity of taking “this little boy” ashore with me, and of allowing you to go to New York without him.’ The old woman burst into tears,



and expressed her determination not to be parted from her child. The old man thrust his hands into his pockets and said nothing. 'Come, pay the money,' said the agent. 'I have not a penny in the world, nor so much as a farthing,' replied the old man; 'so you must just put us all ashore.' 'Get up their luggage and send them ashore,' was the order given; but the old man said they need not trouble themselves, they had no luggage, nothing but the clothes they stood up in, and tin cans for their day's allowance of water. The old woman, all this time, was weeping bitterly, and clinging fast hold to her son, whose breast heaved violently, although he neither shed a tear nor spoke a word. It afterwards appeared, from the old man's statement, that he had a son in a situation in New York, and some of the passengers came forward and offered to be security that the son in New York would pay the amount of his defalcation. After considerable discussion, it was agreed that if they would pay 10s. down, the lad should be permitted to cross the Atlantic, and the sum was speedily raised by subscription among the passengers.—This ended the roll-call."<sup>1</sup>

As the passengers pass the rope and seek the steerage after roll-call, it is a favourable time to go down and discover the comfort and accommodation it afforded. With part of the throng on deck, we felt very crowded and circumscribed in limit, but as we now follow our three hundred and twelve fellow-passengers down the gangways into the semi-darkness of their own long, low, narrow domain, suffocation is the only word to describe our feelings. The vessel was a timber boat of four hundred tons. The law allowed it to put in temporary accommodation between decks to carry two hundred statute adults. But roll-call demonstrated

<sup>1</sup>"Departure of Emigrant Vessels," Littell's *Living Age*, Sept. 7, 1850. Vol. 26, p. 495.

that this meant three hundred and twelve persons, since two children under fourteen or three under seven were only equivalent, as far as space was concerned, to one adult, and infants under one year were not counted at all. Now the steerage in a four-hundred-ton ship measured seventy-five feet long by twenty-five feet wide. To accommodate all the passengers, it had to be double-berthed along each side, with berths ten feet wide, and supposed to hold six persons each. In other words, there were thirteen five-foot-long berths above, and thirteen five-foot-long berths below, which bedded a hundred and fifty-six people on one side of a five-foot aisle, and there were exactly the same numbers with the same accommodation on the other side of the aisle. Needless to say, it was a matter of some difficulty to make one's way through the five-foot corridor—bundles, boxes, chests, tubs, sacks, loaves of bread and sides of bacon, and tin cooking utensils blocked the way between the berths, while amidst it all scrambled or crawled a perfect multitude of young children.

It was a terrific Babel of noise and confusion. Some were trying to collect their own clothes, provisions and cooking utensils beside their own berths, and to make a line of demarcation between their own and their neighbour's chattels. Others were regaling themselves with cups of coffee, oranges or Everton toffee which they had procured from the fifty or more merchants of small wares who swarmed over the boat before they left the dock. Some were making their beds and preparing already to occupy them, with a bear-like feeling that to pull the bed-clothes over their heads and shut out as much of the sights and sounds around them as possible, and sleep, or pretend to sleep, through the long night-

mare of the voyage, would be the easiest solution. But for the children it was a most hilarious season. Some of them sitting up on their berths, shouting and yelling in pure delight at the tornado around them, added in no inconsiderable degree to the noise and din of the place.

It was just about this time that the ironic suitability of the regulation by which two children under fourteen and three under seven were equivalent to one adult would strike any observer. Seriously, this regulation all through the old emigration period legalized one of the most injurious conditions of the traffic. In the words of one report, "The habits and infirmities of infants soon point out that they require as much room as an adult. Hence a serious evil arises from excessive numbers." The records of a couple of Australian passenger ships illustrate the possibilities of danger. One ship, with one hundred and fifty-one adults and one hundred and forty-one children, lost twenty-six children with scarlet fever; another sailed with one hundred and twenty-two adults and one hundred and seventy-eight children, of whom seventy died with measles. Among the adults, in both those ships, there was no unusual mortality.

It has been mentioned that the berths were simply a double row of shelves made of rough planks, each capable of holding six persons. Each person provided his own bedding, both mattress and covers. These were the most primitive, but also the most usual, sleeping accommodations provided by the timber boats. Of course there was a time, before 1809, when there was no accommodation provided and emigrants merely spread their bedding wherever they could on the lower deck or on their own chests. During the twenties, thirties and forties, in the better-class boats, there was another

system of berthing in vogue. Down each side of the steerage were a number of little doorless closets about six feet square. They were fitted with six substantial shelves, twenty inches wide, two on each side and two along the end. These shelves had a board fastened along the outer edge to form them into a kind of case, but there was no other indication that they were designed for sleeping on. It was felt by some that the ventilation of a steerage fitted up in this stateroom style was not so good as in the dormitory system. However, the six people in such a closet would have a little more privacy, at any rate.

The whole subject of berthing was in a decidedly primitive, pre-adamite stage. For example, it was not until 1847 that the Government regulations included such a clause as the following: "Adult passengers of different sexes, unless husband and wife, shall be separately berthed." The disposition of the passengers had been looked after in various ways. It was part of the duty of the Government Emigration Agent at the port of departure to regulate the berthing of the people. The plan adopted by the agent at the Port of London, in 1838, was as follows:

"All the single women and girls above fourteen are placed in the after berths; . . . adjoining to them, and next to their daughters, I berth (as a kind of safeguard to the whole) the oldest and most respectable married couple. The married people I place in the upper berths, taking great care to put relations, friends, and persons from the same neighbourhood alongside of and near each other, which is an advantage also in messing them. Their children are put in the berths immediately under them, observing to separate boys and girls above seven years of age, and avoiding, if possi-

ble, putting more than three children in each berth. . . . The single men and boys above fourteen are berthed in the forepart of the ship in the space partitioned off for the purpose of separating them from the rest of the people."

In many boats, moreover, the Captain required the married men, in rotation, to keep watch in their part of the 'tween decks during the night. There were two in each watch, and the night was divided into three watches, the first from eight p.m. until midnight, the second from midnight till four, and the morning watch from four to seven. The business of the watch was to prevent irregularities, to assist persons taken ill and to attend to the hatchways, seeing that they were open or shut according to the weather.

This attending to the hatchways naturally brings up the question of ventilation. There were no fresh air fiends in those days. The emigrants of the early nineteenth century held more in common with Mother Marie's theory that many died on shipboard in the Gulf from breathing the fresh air too freely on the first opening of the portholes, than with us who incline to feel it was the foul air before they opened the portholes that proved fatal. At any rate, there was no danger from fresh air in the steerage. The law required it to be at least five feet and a half high. It was five feet and a half high, double berthed! There could not have been ten minutes wholesome respiration for the two or three hundred men, women and children so closely packed in a room five feet six inches high. They would be continually steeped in their own foul air. Choose a berth near the hatchway, and when there are two, near the hind hatchway, ran all advice to emigrants. Until

the Passenger Act of 1847, when the experience of the Irish famine and plague was bearing its fruit, the sole ventilation of the steerage was by the hatchways. Very often during their long voyages stormy weather overtook them. Then all the hatches had to be battened down, thus producing at once a condition of darkness and foulness of atmosphere in the steerage which defies imagination. A letter given in William Cobbett's "Emigrant's Guide" brings such conditions home to us forcibly:

" . . . . I will not grieve your hearts with all our sufferings, for my paper will not hold it. Little Mary was very ill with fever that so many died with, seven children and one woman; to hear their cries and moans, it was very bad. I was so ill myself that I was forced to crawl out of my bed and lay on the floor while John made the bed. If you know of any coming here, tell them never to come where the vessel is so full, for we were shut down in darkness for a fortnight, till so many died, then the hatch was opened."<sup>1</sup>

Another thing which often caused the pollution of the steerage was the ramshackle floor or lower deck in many of the boats. When fitting up the timber boats for passengers, no unnecessary expense was incurred. Many of them, therefore, which had no lower deck, merely put in a temporary platform, laid on pieces of wood, chiefly supported by ballast. Such a loosely laid floor allowed the atmosphere always to be tainted by the foul-smelling bilge water of the hold, as well as by any undesirable cargo, such as green hides, which might be stored below. Again, on such a deck no water

<sup>1</sup>"The Emigrant's Guide in Ten Letters," by William Cobbett, published 1829, p. 79.

could be allowed to be used for the purpose of washing and cleaning. An extreme example of how filthy a ship with this kind of a platform deck could become was the *Elizabeth Grimmer*, which arrived at St. Andrews from St. Stephens, during the summer of 1847. According to the report of the emigrant officer:

“One of the great causes of the mortality on board of ships coming out this season is their carrying freight. The deck on which the passengers are placed is merely temporary; consequently no water is allowed to be used for the purpose of washing and cleansing below. Such was the case with the *Elizabeth Grimmer*, of St. Stephens. She was in this filthy state after she had been discharged from quarantine, so that persons could not be had to go near her, for the purpose of throwing out the ballast, for three weeks, and then even tempted only by extraordinary wages.”

The Passenger Act, passed in 1842, tried to improve these conditions by enacting that the lower deck had to be one and a half inches thick and secured to hold beams. But it was one of the rules most frequently evaded, as a very brief reading of the emigrant officers' reports will show. Indeed, the directions sent out by the Colonial Land and Emigration Office to the ship owners would seem to play into their hands on this point. They were to inculcate a most limited use of water in the steerage. “The lower deck,” so their directions read, “ought to be cleaned by dry rubbing, and the people ought to clean themselves on deck.” That meant on the deck proper up above. There were some other rules for cleanliness, but they were all of about the same “dry rubbing” efficacy. The bedding of each and every passenger was to be aired by exposure upon the deck at least twice a

week if the weather permitted, and the berths were to be "dry scrubbed" in the meantime. The decks were to be cleaned at nine by "holy-stoning or scraping." No smoking was permitted between decks. The ship was to be fumigated with vinegar twice a week. Finally the regulations end with "Two Remarks" which it was desirable the emigrants should bear in mind. The first one reads as follows:

"First—That it must depend very much on the attention they pay to the rules provided for cleanliness and airiness, whether they reach their destination in high health and spirits, as many do, or, on the contrary, suffering under some of the infectious disorders which proceed from dirt and negligence at sea."<sup>1</sup>

What irony, when passengers were wedged into a steerage where they had both to sleep and to eat, to spend their days and their nights, to get seasick and to get well, and where they were forbidden to do any cleaning except by "dry holy-stoning and scraping!"

Before getting away from the steerage, probably another of its many charms would obtrude itself—or themselves. Rats! Rats! Rats! Rats in such numbers that a successful hunt would pile up four hundred of them in a day and the next day there would be no perceptible diminution. One very consoling bit of information, however, the squeamish passenger was always given, was that rats "would never gnaw the outer timbers of a vessel, being too wise for that."

On emerging from the steerage one almost always stumbled into the cooking grates. There were generally

<sup>1</sup>"Reports and Correspondence Respecting Emigration to the Colonies." Printed 19th August, 1839, pp. 23 and 24.



two grates, one on each side of the ship, beside the long boats. They were allowed to be kindled in fine weather at seven in the morning, and had to be quenched at sunset. If the day were stormy or windy, no fires were allowed and only cold victuals served. The fires were in constant demand, and many were the squabbles and not a few the pugilistic encounters over the right of priority to use them. The early regulations did not require the boats to carry a regular cook, but there was generally such a person whom it was considered wise to go on board well prepared to conciliate. "Take brandy with you to be judiciously administered in bribes to the cook. He would bid you toss your money into the sea, but he will suck down your brandy," ran the sage advice of experienced travellers. Usually three or four young men of the steerage were chosen in daily rotation to assist the cook in getting up the provisions, weighing the quantities, carrying the coals and water, filling the water cisterns and keeping the upper deck clean and dry. Each family used their own saucepans, pots and kettles. A frequent warning sent back by their experienced fore-runners to friends about to emigrate was to have the handles of their tinware riveted, not soldered on, and on no account to purchase any at the emigrant stores, whose wares were of such an evanescent nature a family might lose their breakfast and put out the fire when one suddenly sprang a leak on a busy morning. By 1848 the law required a ship with more than one hundred passengers to employ a cook and instal a proper cooking apparatus.

All regulations regarding food, its quantity and quality varied greatly during our period. When emigration to Canada first began, the emigrant supplied

his own provisions and brought them practically all cooked. All the ship guaranteed to supply him was water. The great staple of the early emigrants was oat bread or oat cake. The writer as a little girl often heard an old woman who came to Canada in the early 'teens say that the only food her family brought, and the only food a great many neighbours who emigrated with them brought, was oatmeal cakes, which had been baked long until very hard and dry and then packed end to end as close as could be in a box with dry "oaten meal" sifted all around over and through them. This dry meal made their porridge and gruel. Six or seven weeks on this homely fare no doubt left the newcomer "pretty snappish" by the time the land of plenty hove in sight.

Then about the middle 'teens it became customary for the ships to supply the food. There is a very good picture of how they did this given by the Rev. Mr. Bell, who came out to Canada in 1817 to minister to the new Scotch Presbyterian settlement of Perth. The captains were obliged to put in a store of a half pound of meat; one and a half of biscuit or oatmeal, and one half pint of molasses per day for all who did not find their own provisions. This they evidently had to do, but according to the experience of the Bell family, there ended the compulsion. They were not compelled to serve out the supplies unless they liked. It required something like a rebellion on board for the passengers to procure their supplies.

Good water was harder to get than good food. It was usually terrible. It was carried in casks, sometimes in spirit casks, and sometimes in others well charred. At some ports quick-lime was thrown in, to help keep it fresh. Some ships just took their water from the river

out of reach of the tide, others got it from the city water-works. But the trouble very often was, as the Bells found out, that the casks were not freshly filled for each voyage.

“Our water for some time past had been very bad. When it was drawn out of the casks, it was no clearer than that of a dirty kennel after a heavy shower of rain, so that its appearance alone was sufficient to sicken one. But its dirty appearance was not its worst quality. It had such a rancid smell that, to be in the same neighbourhood, was enough to turn one’s stomach. Judge then, what its taste must have been. I do not know what I would not have given at this time for a draught of good water. What we brought from Stromness was good to the last, but what came from Leith was now [May 8, when one month at sea and still three weeks from Quebec, where they landed June 2nd] horrid. The stink it emitted was intolerable. Some said that its being put in port wine pipes was the reason it was so bad; others, that Leith water is always bad after it has been some time at sea. But the boy informed us that it had been in the casks near six months.”<sup>1</sup>

The pilots coming out from Quebec to meet the ships knew well a cask of fresh water was the greatest treat they could bring with them. Nearly every writer of those days, describing his voyage, goes into ecstasies over his first taste of American water. In the staid Mr. Bell’s words, “I assure you that wine would not have afforded me half the pleasure.”

While it was customary at this early stage for the ship to provide supplies, many passengers brought their own, and by 1820 this was looked upon as the more comfort-

<sup>1</sup>“Hints to Emigrants,” by the Rev. William Bell, published 1824, p. 26.

able way to do. However, the more or less complaining, and often the real suffering from the poor and insufficient supplies of food carried on many boats, moved the Government, in 1823, to require quite a sumptuous bill of fare on emigrant boats. Provisions were required for each passenger as follows: five pints water, one pound bread or biscuit, one pound beef or three-quarters of a pound of pork, daily; and two pounds flour, three pounds oatmeal, peas or barley, and one-half pound butter, weekly. In addition a penalty of £500 was imposed for relanding provisions. These stores could be provided by either the ship or the passenger. The captain had to inspect the passenger's supplies if he were catering for himself, and be assured he had the proper quantity. To us to-day this looks like a decided step in advance, a wholly good measure. Not so to many people in 1823. The Act had to be partially repealed two years later, and wholly in 1827. It was a check on emigration. Almost eleven thousand had sailed in 1822, but the year after the Act passed, the number dropped to seven thousand. Now emigration, at that time, was absolutely the only relief to the redundant population of the British Isles. Besides, there had been no gross abuses or unusual suffering under the old system. The numbers crossing were not great enough to tax the full capacity of the vessels employed. In the late forties, when the crowds fleeing from famine-stricken and plague-ridden Ireland swamped all records and accommodation, it is well known what complete and dreadful disaster fell upon the traffic. In the twenties it was another question. There was hardship and suffering, but it fell on backs well fitted by years of hardship and suffering to bear the burden. Thousands of would-be emigrants,

in England, Scotland and Ireland, who would have been able to pay the two pounds passage under the old system, but could never hope to attain the four to five pounds needed by the new, envied sorely such an opportunity as fell to the lot of some Scotch settlers Mr. R. J. Uniacke told the Government Committee about. Some three hundred poor people in the North of Scotland, "where the custom house regulations were not so strictly enforced,"<sup>1</sup> found a way to embark in three or four vessels in 1824. Their passage cost them only fifty shillings on an average, because they provided for themselves. Every man brought a pound of oatmeal for every day the master of the vessel calculated the passage to run. In this case it was between four and five weeks. And for each

<sup>1</sup>Mr. A. C. Buchanan, Chief Emigrant Agent at Quebec, and a man who had crossed some twelve times with emigrants himself, and was, so far as an official so intimately acquainted with them could be, sympathetic to the emigrants, commented in his evidence on the lax enforcement of this law.

Question—Do they possess among themselves that food which would be quite sufficient for their passage, and more suitable in point of expense?

Mr. Buchanan—Generally more so, and more favourable to their health, being food they are accustomed to . . . . If you give an Irish peasant beef and biscuit and salt pork and coffee, they will be all over scurvy before they get to North America. The present Act requires the provisions to be found by the ship, *but the fact is, it is not so; for the Collectors of His Majesty's Customs, and the people charged with the clearing out of the ships, know that it would be impossible to adhere literally to that.*

Question—Do you mean that the law is evaded?

Mr. Buchanan—It is not intended to be evaded, but instead of the ships finding provisions the emigrants prefer to find them themselves . . . . The only thing is the quantity of provisions provided by the Act; if it were strictly enforced, the emigrant could not pay for them.

Question—Is the price of passage very much enhanced by the regulation?

Mr. Buchanan—If put into rigid operation, I should think it would be increased more than one-half.

—*Report on Emigration, printed 26th May, 1826, pp. 172-173.*

child there was half the quantity provided, "with perhaps half a pint of molasses, a little butter and a few eggs." They came out without sickness or mishap, and settled in Cape Breton. Mr. Uniacke ends his history of them with the inspiring words, "I doubt whether there is in Scotland to-day so happy a set of people as those."<sup>1</sup>

It is easy to understand from this the force of the cry, "Let the emigrant go with his bag of oatmeal, without anybody disturbing him." In 1828 it virtually became law. Every captain was to provide, or see that there was provided, fifty pounds of bread, biscuit or oatmeal for each passenger. That was all. As the Commissioners explained, this was not supposed to be a complete diet for a man; it was merely intended as a guarantee against starvation. Unfortunately, it was too often his sole subsistence, and, in a voyage of more than seven weeks, meant great need before Quebec was reached.

Mrs. Moodie came to Canada in 1832. She gives us the captain's report to the doctor at Grosse Isle. It read: "Scotland, sailed from Port o' Leith, bound for Quebec—Montreal—general cargo—seventy-two steerage—four cabin passengers—brig *Anne*, one hundred and ninety-two tons burden, crew eight hands. . . . Tedious, baffling winds, heavy fogs, *detained three weeks on Banks*—foul weather making Gulf—*short of water, people out of provisions, steerage passengers starving.* . . . All sound as crickets." This was a very characteristic summary of many a voyage, and it was also a typical list of passengers. It must not be forgotten all immigration to Canada was not by steerage. A few cabin passengers, like Mrs. Moodie's family, came on each

<sup>1</sup>"Report on Emigration," printed May 26th, 1826, p. 38.

passenger ship. But the preponderance of the other class, even on those boats, and their exclusive use of the lumber ships, make it desirable to treat of their conditions in detail rather than of that of the more favoured people. When the hardest is known, the easier lot may be better imagined.

The steerage method of taking meals was quite unique. There were no tables in the steerage, so a family, or the members of one mess, generally six to ten, ate their meal off the top of a box or cask or wherever there happened to be room. Each mess was advised to have

1 wooden mess kit,	1 tea kettle—3 qts.,
1 bread bag,	1 tin quart pot,
1 water keg—3 gallons,	2 tin platters,
1 small keg for vinegar,	spoons, and drinking mugs.

They were also advised to bring a net if they wished to cook potatoes or vegetables, so that each one might get his own, but no more than his own, when the general pot was boiled.

On most voyages there was one dinner long looked forward to, much talked of afterwards and greatly relished at the time—the dinner they caught on the Newfoundland Banks. It was a universal custom to wait there for a few hours' fishing, and poor indeed was the emigrant who did not come prepared for this sport. Unfortunately their lines were generally too light and too short; so the captain and the seamen monopolized the luck of the party. The proper line had to be at least sixty fathoms long to allow for the ship drifting, and of the quality called log line. At any rate all shared alike in the catch and agreed in the following ver-

dict: "Whether it proceeded from the relish of returning appetite, or from the intrinsic excellence of the fish . . . I can safely say, that I never tasted anything so delicious."<sup>1</sup>

No passage in those days was fast enough to escape a storm. Sometimes, if it delayed a couple of weeks in overtaking them, some of the younger emigrants began to long for the experience. Proudly equipped with their brand new nautical vocabulary, they felt equal to any blast. Indeed they were sure that the sailors exaggerated the perils of the deep, and that they held no terror for *them*. A few hours in a gale of wind and rain undeceived them. The steerage during a storm was indescribable. The hatches were battened down to keep out the waves which broke over the deck. There was no light but a few candles shaded in old tin lanthorns. Naked lights could not be allowed between decks. There was no going up on deck. There was no cooking, not even the warming of some water, or the making of a cup of tea. Everybody went to bed. But not to find repose there. They were so surrounded and engulfed in noise—noise of the elements, the waves beating against the ship and the storm blowing and raging above her; noise of the ship herself creaking and quivering in every timber; noise of the rattling on the deck, from the falling of ropes and the tramping of the sailors, the bawling of the speaking trumpet and the doleful answering of the sailors in the shrouds; noise of the furniture, tinware and earthenware tossing and crashing about; noise of their comrades, men, women and children, cursing, shrieking and crying—that it drove the weak and weary almost mad.

<sup>1</sup> "Authentic Letters from Upper Canada," by T. W. Magrath. Published 1833, p. 67.



A silver lining the storm cloud had, however. The conversational aftermath was a new joy to numbers who had become very bored by their neighbours' twice told tales and for ever harping on the same string themselves. The same reporter who recorded for us the steerage views on stowaways has also preserved their reflections after a storm.<sup>1</sup>

“‘The hand of Providence alone preserved us from the deep,’ said an old man; ‘I warrant ye the best sailor never saw such weather before. I’ve been in the way of seeing Lloyd’s lists, and getting a notion of nautical affairs, but yesterday’s tempest beats all I’ve yet read about.’

“‘We’re no’ accustomed to such adventures,’ returned another of the emigrants, ‘and so we think more of them. The captain took little heed of the weather—there was a greater stock of courage in his little finger than in all us passengers put together.’

“‘Say nothing about the captain,’ cried a woman; ‘his behaviour made my blood curdle cold—instead of saying his prayers, or thinking about the preservation of the Christian people on board this ship, he passed his time in turning round that bit wheel there’ (pointing to the apparatus for moving the tiller).”

Some reflections by the Rev. Mr. Bell, in an entirely different strain, might be added to these. Most ocean travellers will agree that they are as pertinent to-day as they were one hundred years ago:

“I could have enjoyed the sublime aspect which the sea at this time presented, could I have obtained a firm station from which to view it; but the violent vibrations of the ship produced so much corporeal uneasiness that the mind could enjoy nothing.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>“The Emigrant’s Voyage to Canada.” *Blackwoods*, Vol. X, p. 457.

<sup>2</sup>“Hints to Emigrants,” by the Rev. William Bell, p. 11.

The one great solace and entertainment for the steerage was music. And music accompanied by a dance was even better. A man who could pipe, a man who could fife, or a man who could fiddle, freely gave of his accomplishment and was a godsend indeed to all ages. The young and vigorous required but little space for the energetic steps of a Highland fling or an Irish jig, as one or two couples only danced at a time. When one couple had performed until flesh and blood could endure no longer, another took their place. In the meantime the old folks and children formed a pleased and very interested audience around them. The elders generally watched with critical, grave delight, which broke into applause only when some remarkably active couple had surpassed themselves. But the children were in ecstasies always, and made up by the stamping and clapping in time to the music for any quiet undemonstrativeness on the part of their parents.

So it was the long voyage dragged its weary length away. To-day scudding before the wind with every sail set and the sea running high; to-morrow becalmed on a sea as smooth as glass, and the next day drifting anywhere under bare poles. One meal enjoying hot gruel and the next hard oat cake. One morning airing between decks with a little swinging stove of burning coke, and the next spreading bedding on the clothes-lines among the masts. Watching a herd of porpoises play to-day and a spouting whale disport himself to-morrow. Counting a flock of Mother Carey's chickens at sunset and of circling gulls above the waves at dawn. And then at last came the event of all events, the meeting with a pilot some place near Father Point. From then on high spirits reigned and every one talked of going ashore.

Before that joyful event, however, one more delay detained the ship. The quarantine station at Grosse Isle, twenty-five miles below Quebec, had to be visited, or, if the vessel were bound for the Maritime Provinces, there was a similar one at Partridge Island, near St. John. These stations had been the outcome of the cholera epidemic in the late twenties and early thirties. They were the scenes of some of the most trying experiences the poor steerage passengers had to endure. If the vessel had no sickness on board, it was merely detained at the island for a general clean-up; but if it had the misfortune to fly the yellow flag—the symbol of disease—the steerage passengers and crew had to land, the sick ones to go to the hospital and the well to attend to the washing, airing and fumigating of their bedding and clothing on the shore.

Such gentlewomen as Mrs. Traill and Mrs. Moodie can draw, from the distance and aloofness of cabin passengers, who were not required to partake in this purification, very picturesque descriptions of the different scenes and groups of emigrants on the shore:

“You may imagine yourself looking on a fair or crowded market, clothes waving in the wind or spread out on the earth, chests, bundles, baskets, men, women, and children, asleep or basking in the sun, some in motion busied with their goods, the women employed in washing or cooking in the open air, beside the wood fires on the beach; while parties of children are pursuing each other in wanton glee, rejoicing in their newly-acquired liberty. Mixed with these you see the stately forms and gay trappings of the sentinels, while the thin blue smoke of the wood fires, rising above the trees, heightens the picture and gives it an additional effect.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Traill “The Backwoods of Canada,” p. 21.

When the same pens, however, come to portray the nearer view, they are not so wholly to be relied upon. The very artistic refinement and gentle training that made them so appreciative of the distant picture robbed them of all sympathy with and understanding of it at close range, and blinded them to the deep human pathos and tragedy—the toil, the poverty and the sickness which formed its details:

“A crowd of many hundred Irish emigrants had been landed during the present and former day, and all this motley crew—men, women, and children, who were not confined by sickness to the sheds (which greatly resembled cattle-pens)—were employed in washing clothes or spreading them out on the rocks and bushes to dry.

“The men and boys were *in* the water, while the women, with their scanty garments tucked above their knees, were tramping their bedding in tubs or in holes in the rocks, which the retiring tide left half full of water. Those who did not possess washing tubs, pails, or iron pots, or could not obtain access to a hole in the rocks, were running to and fro, screaming and scolding in no measured terms. The confusion of Babel was among them. . . . I shrank, with feelings almost akin to fear, from the hard-featured, sunburnt women as they elbowed rudely past me. . . .

“The people who covered the island appeared perfectly destitute of shame, or even a sense of common decency. Many were almost naked, still more but partially clothed. We turned in disgust from the revolting scene.”<sup>1</sup>

True, too true, no doubt. A gently nurtured woman, in those days before slumming had familiarized her either personally or vicariously with the appearance of

<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Moodie, “Roughing it in the Bush,” pp. 30, 31.

the very poor en masse, could scarcely have felt otherwise. Had she herself been thrown into the surroundings of these poor steerage women on Grosse Isle, and been compelled to wash in public her only frock at those primitive tubs and boilers, would it not have taken the observer at least a little while to detect her native refinement?

Again, if added to these trying disadvantages it be remembered that these particular people had been nine weeks at sea with provisions for only seven, still greater allowance will be made for their acts and appearance. Even if some indulged too freely in the only "drap o' comfort" to be had, it was hardly surprising.

The quarantine stations' accommodations, like those on shipboard, did not break down to any scandalous degree until the Irish famine-driven rush of 1847. Like those on shipboard too, it was not because they were not inefficient and crude enough, but simply because their capacity had never been taxed. The cold grey phrases of official reports paint for us the appalling conditions of 1847. Maybe for brief and comprehensive reference some extracts from the report of the visiting physicians to Partridge Island will be most enlightening. They are also characteristic of conditions at Grosse Isle, where, however, much larger numbers were handled. At the end of May that season, there were already twelve thousand detained there. Mr. A. C. Buchanan, the chief emigration agent at Quebec, was very alert and energetic. Early in May he sent ordnance tents to Grosse Isle sufficient for ten thousand, thanks to which things there were far from as bad as they might have been:

“ . . . . We attribute the prevalence of emigrant fever . . . . lastly and principally to exposure, impurities, want from insufficient attention, and hospital deficiencies at the quarantine station at Partridge Island, and to the deficient supply of wholesome water. In reference to the exposure, we may observe that many of the emigrants have slept all night in the open air upon the damp ground, with no other covering except their wearing apparel. We found patients suffering from fever and dysentery in this destitute and neglected condition. . . . In reference to impurities upon the island, we may state in the first place atmospheric impurity arising from the filthy condition of the tents, the filthy habits of the people and the exhalations from the burying-ground, where upwards of forty bodies are deposited in one hole, without a sufficient covering of earth, and many others are buried with only a few inches of earth over the bodies, which are not protected by a coffin; . . . . In reference to “want from insufficient attention,” we feel ourselves called upon to state that in many instances the sick have suffered from want of food and water; and that in some cases we believe the unfortunate patient has died in consequence of this want. . . . We found many emigrants suffering in their tents from want of a sufficient supply of straw for bedding, some were sleeping on the ground, and exposed to cold and wet after every rain, and others were lying upon spruce boughs.

“In reference to the hospital deficiencies . . . . the almost entire want of hospital conveniences, such as bedsteads . . . . emigrants, generally speaking, sleep on the floor, both sexes crowded in the same room.

“In reference to the deficient supply of wholesome water, we consider this a great cause of generating and perpetuating disease. There is one small spring from which a precarious supply is obtained, and when we visited the island there was not a gallon of water in it. There is another well contiguous to the lower hospital and burying ground, the water of which is unfit for use,

but necessity has compelled the emigrants to drink it. . . . It is unnecessary to comment upon a quarantine establishment thus supplied with water, for several hundreds and sometimes upwards of a thousand individuals.<sup>1</sup>

“We, in the course of our inquiries, examined the stores and cook-house . . . supplies are given out to such emigrants as can go personally, or procure some friend to receive them. This practice of supplying is attended with many evils, and is altogether objectionable as regards the emigrant, and wasteful as regards public expenditure. The sick and friendless emigrants frequently receive no supplies; others again receive them but are unable to cook them. We saw in many of the tents various quantities of tea and sugar which had been accumulating from day to day . . . .”<sup>2</sup>

What a lamentable report! And it would make equally shocking reading were we to follow the thousands of emigrants the quarantine sheds could not pretend to accommodate, but had to allow to pass on to Quebec and Montreal, where they too fell sick in a couple of weeks, and where the “hospitals were in a very unprepared state from want of bedding, etc.” But that is beyond our province just now.

Our visit to Grosse Isle is over, and we are once more under way and floating up the river with the tide for Quebec. It is a moment of retrospection. There was a silver lining—if sometimes sadly tarnished—to life on the ocean wave one hundred years ago. Swift steamship service has given us much, but it has taken a

<sup>1</sup> The total admitted to the hospital from May to August 30 was 1,148. Of these 213 died, 377 were discharged and 558 were still in hospital on August 30.

<sup>2</sup> Enclosure 3 in No. 28, a despatch from Lieut-Gov. Sir W. M. G. Colebrooke to Earl Grey, Sept. 28th, 1847; Papers relative to Emigration, printed Dec. 20, 1847, pp. 122, 123.

little. What an intimate acquaintance eight weeks of cloud and sunshine, peace and gale, gave one with Father Neptune! The memory could be stored with sunsets, with magnificent displays of aurora borealis, gigantic icebergs and every possible ocean phenomenon. In after years the old traveller would likely have more to think on than the man to-day with a dozen crossings behind him. But brighter touches to the picture affected only the young, or the happy, healthy, carefree few. For the mother taking care of her children by the pale light of the lanthorn in that five-foot-six-inch-high compartment between decks, or stirring her porridge when her turn at length came at the cooking grates, the sunsets and the nocturnes, the gulls, the porpoises and the whales, the fishing and the dancing, bulked not very large in her days—or her recollections.





C. W. JEFFERYS

*The Spinning-wheel*

## CHAPTER VI

### *Making a Settlement*

OWING to the great number arriving, all the people are not yet settled. The settlement has made rapid progress, but the people are disheartened on account of the want of seed wheat, although there is ground enough cleared. The savages are beginning to steal and kill the cattle, and are threatening the women and children. They sell all their provisions at Oswegatchie for rum, and are then induced from hunger to steal from the settlers."

This statement of Captain Sherwood's, written in October, 1783, sums up forcibly the hardships and drawbacks the loyalist settlers had to meet at the beginning. Fortunately such an accumulation of obstacles could not long be called typical of Upper Canada settlements, although any one of them might be a settler's lot for many years.

The first difficulty undoubtedly was of common occurrence up till as late as 1820. Each year Upper Canada's increase of population rolled up a little too fast for the number or the activity of the Government's surveyors. A great many loyalists had to spend the winter of 1784-85 in the barracks at the different garrisons. In the same way, later, many an old-land immigrant mother who had counted and re-counted the days until she would be able to care for her family once more in a home of her own, found all her calculations upset. There was no land surveyed to grant them, so her family, with many others, would be held at leash in the idle

barracks of Cornwall or Brockville. As the Rev. William Bell recorded of the first winter's experience of the Perth settlers in 1815-16:

“To those who had large families this delay was a serious loss, for though they received rations all the time they remained [in the Brockville barracks], yet they stood in need of clothing and other necessaries, which they could ill afford to provide. To those who had no families, and were willing to labour, it was an advantage; for they had time to lay by a little for future use, money being then plentiful and workmen in demand.”

Once the land was surveyed for the loyalists, their lots were assigned to them in a democratic fashion. The officers of the various corps agreed among themselves (or were made to agree) which townships of the new survey should belong to them and their men. The township's lots were then numbered on small slips of paper, which were thrown into a hat. Each in turn, in the presence of the Government land agent and of his superior officer, drew his number from the proper hat. Afterwards, no doubt, there was a certain amount of trading of lots among different families. One would prefer a lot beside another and the other would sooner have one farther away from So-and-so.

In this awarding of the land it is pleasant to find the authorities mindful of the part the women had played:

“And for every person in their family, fifty acres,”

was the first provision for them. In November, 1789, a still more generous portion was allotted:

“And it is also ordered that the said Land Boards may in every such case provide not only for the sons of

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those loyalists, as they arrive to full age, but for their daughters also of that age, or on their marriage, assigning to each a lot of two hundred acres, more or less . . .”

To our loyalist mothers these lands were for the most part an embarrassment of riches. In the words of one critic, explaining why the large grants to the U. E. Loyalists had been so little improved:

“A great portion of such grants were to unmarried females, who very readily disposed of them for a small consideration, frequently from £2 to £5 for a grant of two hundred acres.”

But the sisters were not singular in this. Their brothers made even poorer bargains. Their mess of pottage was often only a gallon of whiskey.

Besides the gift of a farm, the Government continued to extend to the early loyalists other aid. Flour, pork and clothes—chiefly Indian blankets—were supplied for three years or “until they were able to provide these articles for themselves.” At the outset, also, they received a quantity of grain and vegetable seeds, together with certain implements. An axe, a hoe and a spade were given to every family, the iron for a plough, for which they made themselves the handles and frame, to every two families; and a whip saw, a cross-cut saw and a set of tools to every four or five families. Considering the time, it was a fairly efficient equipment. The tools, of course, were not as handy as those of to-day. A few of them which have come down to us seem more like relics of the Stone Age, they are so heavy and clumsy. The axe, the most important of them all, was very inferior for the work it had to do. It was a short handled

ship axe, and as awkward an implement for chopping down trees as one could well devise.

Such was the starting point of the individual loyalist home. What of their settlement? A petition the settlers drew up and sent to the Governor, Lord Dorchester, in December, 1786, reveals in what a social, intellectual and religious void, so far as her surroundings were concerned, the loyalist mother lived during the first few years. They asked the Government for aid to establish a Church of England and a Church of Scotland. They petitioned, among other things, for three schools, three post offices, and three markets to be established between Montreal and Cataraqui. At first blush, to-day, one is apt to feel resentment that they had to live so long without such elementary advantages. But in their time, and in the land they had come from—the frontier of New York and Pennsylvania, which skirted the hunting grounds of the Oneidas, the Mohawks and the Cayugas, or the more inland farms of the same States where they had been accustomed to plough with a wooden bull-plough, sow their grain broadcast, cut it with a scythe and thresh it on a barn floor with a flail—these advantages were almost equally remote.

The circumstances of the loyalists were hard enough, but they did not greatly differ from those they would have endured in their old homes or from those of other pioneer settlers in the Canadian forest. Once they were settled and the first three or four years over, the average family could see clear before them a highway to independence, comfort and prosperity, with often wealth and honour in the background.

“What is to be done on landing in Quebec?” This is Dr. Dunlop’s suggestive title to the third chapter of his

“Upper Canada.” He prefaces it by the well-selected motto from the “Irishman’s prayer in the woods between New York and Canada, A.D. 1784—‘Lord have compassion upon me, a poor unfortunate sinner, three thousand miles from my own country, and seventy-five from anywhere else.’”

Taken together, these sentences vividly sum up the feelings and questions which assailed the immigrant from the old land when he first set foot on the new. His solution varied with his resources. For the family of ample means there was no difficulty. For those sent out by the Government or charitable associations there was none as a rule either. Quebec was only an incident in the through journey to their new home. For the voluntary immigrants it was well when this was the case too. A few of them, however, the very lean-of-purse, had to stop there. The father could find work at once loading and unloading vessels at the dock. Indeed, he could put in quite a profitable summer this way, but the first winter was apt to be one of hardship and suffering. In both Quebec and Montreal at this time there were a number of miserable hovels filled year after year by such poor stranded Britishers. An incident in the fortunes of a family of this class at Montreal, in the early 'thirties, reveals the dire straits to which they were sometimes reduced, and the sturdy independence which survived through it all. In the cold of winter one of their children died. They kept the little frozen body until the spring, when work was again to be had, and a coffin and proper burial could be independently obtained.

The vast majority, however, of the voluntary immigrants had sufficient means to reach their friends or kinsmen in some definite new settlement on which their

heart had been set in the Old Country. They left Quebec and Montreal with all despatch. They usually changed boats at Quebec, but it was quickly and simply done. Almost as soon as the ocean vessel arrived, the river steamer for Montreal came alongside. This steamboat service dated from 1809, when John Molson's *Accommodation* led the way at four miles per hour.

Many of the immigrants spent their last day on the sailing ship boiling pork or beef and making ready provisions as well as they could for their future journey. The river steamer gave them no cooking rights, but provided them with boiling water to brew their tea. Neither had it sleeping accommodations for its steerage passengers. Their fifteen-shilling ticket to Montreal gave them only the privilege of sitting upon the open deck—often of standing up merely—during the twenty-four- or thirty-hour journey. In dry weather it was tolerable, in wet it put the poor wretches in a deplorable plight. They soon became drenched, and had no means of changing their clothing, as their chests were locked up in the hold below.

The day after their arrival in Montreal they generally managed to make Lachine by cart. There two paths lay before them. They might take bateau for Kingston, or for Point Fortune if the Ottawa valley was to be their destination. At Point Fortune or St. Andrews, across the river, they again resorted to carts for the twelve miles around the rapids to Grenville. From there they went by bark canoes to Hull. In 1819 Philemon Wright revolutionized navigation on this last lap by operating a steamboat of his own.

The bateau trip to Kingston by the other route is familiar to the reader. It presented few difficulties or

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hardships to the present travellers in comparison with those their U. E. Loyalist predecessors had endured, or in comparison with those before and behind themselves. It was when they turned their backs on the long, narrow belt of settlement along the St. Lawrence, Lake Ontario and Lake Erie, that they entered on untrodden ways.

It is pleasant to read about the charming country they found when they entered the loyalist settlements. Here, at any rate, the savage wilderness had disappeared. In its stead were white frame and substantial stone houses, with orchards and gardens, wheat fields and green pastures. Immigrants were now able to make the acquaintance of the backwoods by easy stages. As they advanced inland and these loyalist townships on the river front were passed, the all-surrounding bush encroached gradually upon the scene. In one place they would meet a beautiful hardwood tract, in another a noble hill of pines and evergreens which, maybe, a little farther on merged into a dark cedar swamp. But large settlements appeared every few miles, settlements not so finished and prosperous as the early loyalist homes, but yet speaking very plainly of thrift and rude plenty. These in turn gave place to smaller ones where the bare log houses and their huddle of pigmy sheds promised little comfort for man or beast. Their irregular Lilliputian fields, divided by heavy stump fences, did not cheer a beauty-loving soul.

Fences bulked large on the landscape in those days. Their type in many cases was a good index of the stage which had been reached. In a new settlement they were generally makeshifts. The zigzag rail, the stump fence and the brush fence were the natural products of the semi-cleared stage when burnt stumps, charred logs



and blackened rampikes dominated every scene. In the older townships the neat post and rail or the old-fashioned log fence, built with the ends of the logs of each panel overlapping those of the next on cross-pieces termed bunks, were a rather picturesque addition to the vista, particularly after they had settled a little into the soil, and goldenrod, hop-vines and summer weeds and flowers grew along or over them at random.

Pushing still inland, the traveller found the last or most recent openings. Larger, denser tracts of forest separated them, and the clearings themselves were tinier. It was with a glad surprise he came on one of these little oases of sunshine and life. There might be merely one shanty, in its bower of stumps and corn ears, but it made a break in the all-covering canopy of shade, and disclosed the bright blue sky above.

Dark and solitary as was the land under the shadow of the great green wood, the spirit the newcomer found in the settlements was fresh, buoyant and exhilarating. There might be lack and bareness, but there were no distressing signs of poverty and want. Beside the pinched and starving misery of the crowded old world, the rude Canadian home entombed in the encircling bush revelled in joy and wealth:

“An’ God be praised this day.

Plenty sits smilin’ by me own dear dure;  
An’ in them years I niver waunst have seen  
A famished child creep tremblin’ on me flure.  
’Twould make yer heart lape just to take a look  
At the green fields upon me own big farm;  
An’ God be praised, all men may have the same  
That owns an axe an’ has a strong right arm.”

Kindly indeed was the welcome the old settlers gave to the immigrants. They treated them to the best food and the best bed their shanty could provide. Often such accommodation had little to recommend it but the spirit of hospitality in which it was given. But after a hard day's tramping, which was the way in which the majority of immigrants had to do their land travelling, the supper of large "flap-jacks" made of Indian meal, roasted before the fire, first on one side and then on the other, as a *garnish* for generous slices of salt pork, probably tasted better to them than it sounds to us, while a more sumptuous one of potatoes, roast pigeon, fried pork, milk and "china tea" must have seemed the food of the gods. Either one would be a natural supper for the newcomer to enjoy by the settler's board. The guest chamber was in most cases a bunk in the kitchen or a blanket by the fire. No doubt the weary travellers enjoyed thus many a refreshing rest disturbed only by an occasional gust of wind stealing through the chinks and fanning into flame the blackening coals and embers on the hearth.<sup>1</sup>

Such was man's welcome to his brother man. Nature was not so kind. Nor was she a respecter of persons. The gently nurtured and the hardy peasant shared alike when face to face with the bush. No, not alike. The bush, which generally gave the poor man all the blessings of a happy, prosperous home in return for his labour, very often brought the rich man for his toil and exhaustion only wasted means and saddest memories. Mrs. Moodie, telling her own experience in "Roughing it

<sup>1</sup> Details are gathered from "Reminiscences of a Canadian Pioneer," by Samuel Thompson, pp. 45, 46.

in the Bush," speaks to-day for this latter class. Her first weeks in Canada were very lonesome. "The homesickness was sore upon me." But the climax was reached on the day she and her husband left their boarding-house in Cobourg and drove inland to settle on their new farm and home. It was a cold, wet September afternoon. Mrs. Moodie had been sent ahead alone in a more comfortable vehicle with her baby and servant while her husband was to follow later with the teams and luggage. The drive was a rough and dangerous one, and her driver one of the daring, spectacular type who had all her nerves unstrung before his brilliant finale—a great dash down a particularly deep and stony hill and then a quick jerk up at the foot in the midst of a field of stumps where "she would find herself to hum." The "hum" turned out to be a dilapidated old doorless shanty, just then doing duty as a cattle pen. "I was perfectly bewildered—I could only stare at the place with my eyes swimming in tears. . . . I begged the man to stay until he [Mr. Moodie] arrived, as I felt terrified at being left alone in this wild, strange-looking place." But the driver laughed loud at her fears, cracked his whip and drove away.

The prospect appeared dreary indeed to the timid, horror-struck woman. But, as she remarked herself, "When things come to the worst, they generally mend." The men arrived. All set about making the hut habitable. The very activity warmed and cheered them.

To turn to the hardier class of settler, however, does not alter the story of difficulties and obstacles. When they left the water's edge, the less fortunate had no choice but to tramp back through the settlements until

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they reached the outlying district where their location ticket gave them the right to the land. It was often a heartrending sight they presented. They made their way back with their families and bundles in parties of fifty or sixty or even more. The weather naturally had much to do with their spirits and comfort. Mr. Bell writes:

“In a fine day when the roads are good, they are seen trudging along to the promised land with happy faces; but in rainy weather you see them carrying their children on their backs, and wading through the deep mud, grumbling out their reproaches against themselves for their folly in leaving comfortable homes for a howling wilderness, where nothing but hunger and hardships are to be met with. Often have I seen females sitting at the side of the road, resting their weary limbs, or crying till they were sick, and expressing unavailing wishes that they were back to their native country.”<sup>1</sup>

Beyond the kindness of the settlers to them as they passed along, they had often no food but the same oat-meal hard cakes and ship biscuit they had prepared for their voyage in Scotland or Ireland, some three months before. The testimony of one who often sampled those immigrant cakes assures us that our present-day hard tack would be dough compared with them. No statistics tell us how many of the weary wayfarers, after having performed the perilous voyage and toilsome journey, after having shed many hot tears of loneliness and discouragement, were overcome at last by fatigue and sank into untimely graves just in sight of the long-striven-for goal. Mr. Bell, in referring to the sad death

<sup>1</sup>“Hints to Emigrants,” by the Rev. William Bell, pp. 154, 155.

of a young mother under such circumstances, ends with the significant words, "Many instances of this kind could I relate."<sup>1</sup>

At last they reached the long-desired end—their own bush lot. Many and varied were the conditions under which the early settlers acquired their land. Old soldiers and loyalists were given liberal grants which many a man sold for a jug of whiskey. Small grants were obtainable by other needy settlers at practically no money outlay, but conditional on performance of settlement duties such as clearing so many acres, opening such a length of road and building a log house. Others again bought for cash or on time from the Canada Company or some of the countless private speculators.

Easy as it was to obtain a right to the land, yet the outlook to many seemed impossible. In the words of Mrs. Jameson's little emigrant driver:

"They couldn't stand it noways. Some died; and then there were the poor children and the women—it was very bad for them. Some wouldn't sit down on their land at all; they lost all heart to see everywhere trees and trees, and nothing beside. And then they didn't know nothing of farming."<sup>2</sup>

As in Mrs. Moodie's case, the absolute necessity to do something and to do it quickly was their salvation at this point. For the first few days, a shelter of cedar or hemlock boughs was made on the bank of a creek or river, and here, with the protection of a mosquito-dispelling blaze, the family life centred until trees were felled and their shanty raised. In after years these

<sup>1</sup> "Hints to Emigrants," by the Rev. William Bell, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," by Mrs. Jameson, Vol. II, pp. 167, 168.

first camping grounds often came to be hallowed spots. Many a staunch old pioneer sleeps his last sleep where he pillowed his head the first night after his soul had felt the "joyous anguish" of the words, "the ground that is mine own."

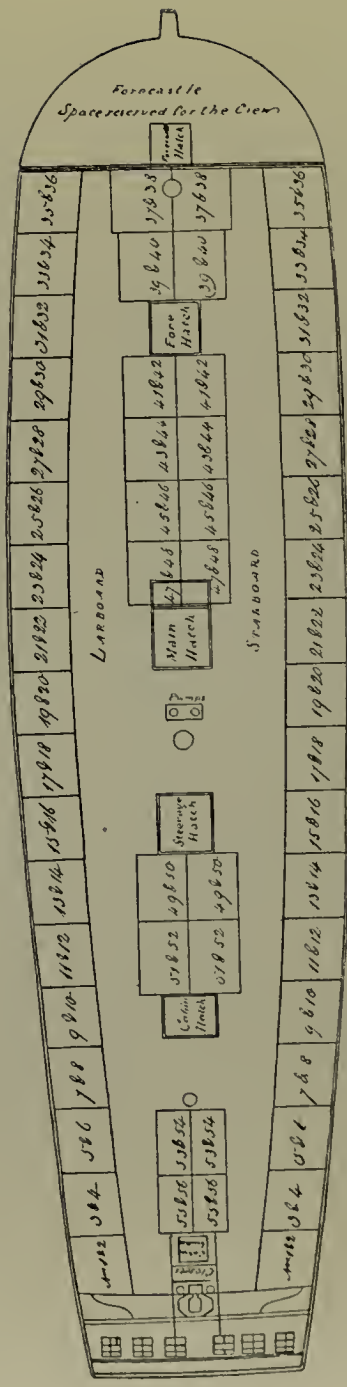
A family required to have a little means to begin at once in the backwoods as we have just pictured them doing. To build his shanty, to make his clearing and to wait for the corn sown on it to feed them, the pioneer required about sixteen months and on an average £10 per head for provisions and necessary articles. A father, mother and three children would, therefore, need to have between three and four hundred dollars at least when leaving the Old Country, if they were to be wholly independent and settle at once on their own farm.<sup>1</sup> Naturally, some could only do this by slow degrees. They hired out with older settlers or received aid from kinsmen in the majority of cases.

Probably no general account of the many vicissitudes which beset the path of the immigrant family will give as clear an insight into their needs and experiences as one or two concrete examples followed step by step. In the spring of 1821 a very typical party of 1883 Scotch emigrants set out from the counties of Lanark and Renfrew. Four boats were chartered for their conveyance, the largest, the *Earl of Buckinghamshire*, a boat of six hundred tons, the *George Canning*, the *Commerce* and the *David*. The *Greenock Advertiser* for May 2nd, 1821, in giving an account of their departure, speaks of the accommodations on the *Earl of Buckinghamshire* as "being

<sup>1</sup>Lieutenant-Colonel Cockburn, Superintendent of the Military Settlements in Upper Canada, estimated that the Government should allow £110 per average family.—May, 1826.—Select Committee Report, pp. 217-223.

*Edw. Hamond Esq*

*Plan of the Interior Deck of the Ship East of Cheating Forward*



Berths from N<sup>o</sup> 1 to N<sup>o</sup> 36 on each side inclusive is 72. In this 2 Full Passengers each is 288  
 From N<sup>o</sup> 37 to N<sup>o</sup> 52 do do 16 32 do do 512 each is 96  
 From N<sup>o</sup> 53 to N<sup>o</sup> 56 do do 4 16 do do 64 each is 46  
 100 Low at 2 Passengers for every 3 gone 270

NB The odd numbers are in the upper range of Beds.

36.30

as excellent of their kind as they are extensive." A plan of the between decks of this ship has come down to us; so we know exactly how very excellent and extensive they were. At first glance it appears not unlike a modern plan, but when we realize there were six hundred and seven passengers in this apartment, that each one of those five-foot-square cubicles at the sides held eight "statute adults," four sleeping on the upper berth and four below, and that the aisles between the side berths and the centre berths were only five feet wide, we feel that the meaning of the word "extensive" must have changed. They set sail on April 29th, and arrived at Quebec June 15th. On this one boat were six births and one death during the voyage. But the ship owners had provided "extensive accommodations" for such emergencies too. They had a small temporary cabin, containing eight berths, fitted up "for the use of married females who may have occasion for retirement during accouchement on the passage."

Between Quebec and Montreal the settlers were drenched on the steamer deck by a heavy thunderstorm, which also damaged their meal and bread. When they carried these provisions in Montreal from the steamer to the waggons for Lachine, they had become "a veritable dough." The next day the commissary allowed them twenty-four hours, "which was very acceptable," to dry their clothes. On the day after, they left for Prescott in flat-bottomed boats. About this time many of them began to get sick, partly from the heat, and partly from drinking the river water. Their week's experience on the bateaux, wading in the water, hauling the boats, working hard and perspiring greatly during the day and then sleeping on the river bank at night, "where our nightcaps and blankets became so soaked



with the dew that we might have wrung them in the morning," quickly made matters worse. Many of them became so ill from the effects of the river journey they had to be left at Prescott for three weeks.

Their five-day trip from Prescott to "New" Lanark, a distance of seventy-four miles, was made in waggons over roads which had become almost impassable with the recent heavy rains. Ten hundredweight was a waggon load, and it was often lying in the mud. It was a not-to-be-forgotten journey! Rain came on them again and again. All their bedding and clothing was wet through time and again. Sometimes they were able to get dried out at a farmhouse fire and to sleep in the barn amongst new hay, and sometimes they slept in the woods, kindled a fire, cooked their supper and dried their clothes. Several of their waggons were upset, and many of the immigrants badly hurt. One man had his arm broken, another his rib, while a boy was killed. One horse stuck fast, and even when unharnessed from the waggon, the poor animal could not pull its own feet out of the mud. They had to pry them out with hand-spikes.

When they finally reached Lanark, they lodged in the usual temporary huts, until each family acquired a shanty of its own.

After such a long and fatiguing experience the cheerful optimism of the following letter, written scarcely a month later, is very exhilarating:

"LANARK, Upper Canada,  
August 24, 1821.

"I never was so happy in my life. We have no desire to return to Glasgow to stop there, for we would have to pay a heavy rent, and here we have none; in Glasgow, I had to labour sixteen to eighteen hours a day and could

earn about six or seven shillings a week; here, I can, by labouring about half that time, earn more than I need; there I was confined to a damp shop, but here I enjoy fresh air; there, after I had toiled until I could toil no more, I would have the mortification of being a burden, but here two or three years' labour will give me more than will keep me in sickness, as well as in health; there it is all dependence, here, it is a fair prospect of independence. Now, dear sister, if I had to come here again, I would come readier than before."<sup>1</sup>

And it is very pleasant to look on the settlement again in a few years and see what progress they had made. The following letters are only typical and culled from many:

“From James Dobbie to his Father and Friends:

LANARK, U. C., 24th April, 1826.

“ . . . . I and my family are still taking well with this country, and I really do bless God, every day I rise, that He was ever pleased in the course of His Providence to send me and my family to this place. We are not without difficulties here, but they are nothing in comparison to your wants in Glasgow: we have always had plenty to eat and drink, and have always had a little to spare. Next to my own happiness, I wish you were here; I wish you would try and do all you can to come out; you will find plenty of work, and hard work, but be assured it will pay you, and that well. My stock of cattle consists of one yoke of oxen, three milk cows, and three young ones. I have got up a very handsome new house, with the assistance of fifteen young men; it was raised in one day; it is 24 feet in length, and 15 in breadth. . . . . All this settlement is striving to

<sup>1</sup>Letter written by A. Boag to his sister, quoted in “A Narrative of the Rise and Progress of Emigration from the Counties of Lanark and Renfrew,” by Robert Lamond, Secretary and Agent, pp. 103, 104.

do well; were you here, and seeing the improvements that are going on amongst us, you would not believe *that we were once* Glasgow weavers."<sup>1</sup>

"Peter Monro, to John McLachlan:

DALHOUSIE, 6th May, 1824.

". . . . If it had been so ordered that you had come here when I came, you would, by being industrious, have had plenty to eat of the best flour, Indian corn, and potatoes, and to drink of the best milk, maple sap, molasses and honey. Last harvest, I laid in 140 bushels of potatoes, besides grain of all sorts. . . . For your encouragement, I will tell you, upon my arrival at Greenock from Paisley, depending on a certain friend for the supply of a few pounds to pay my passage, I was disappointed; but there were a few more in the same predicament; we were, in all, £27 short, but raised the sum by subscription. We then got orders to put our luggage aboard. John, I never was happier in my life than with that order; and now, have I not reason?"<sup>2</sup>

Enough. It is useless to trouble more with these letters. All appear entirely to agree. "Tell our old masters at home that we would not exchange situations with them," was the burden of each elated message.

An Irish immigration may next be cited. Its vicissitudes, from the very hour of leaving its native shores, until each individual family was the proud possessor of a lowly shed in the Peterborough backwoods, were typical of the time and its accommodations. Besides, enlightening details of every phase of the enterprise are available and depict vividly for us, in the convenient history of this one expedition, the many and tedious

<sup>1</sup>"Emigration Report," printed 29th June, 1827, p. 166.

<sup>2</sup>"Emigration Report," printed 29th June, 1827, p. 166.

stages by which a settlement in the backwoods was reached.

The party set out in eight ships as they were embarked and inspected between the 9th and 23rd of May, 1825. They left Cork 2,024 strong, and had a remarkably short ocean voyage to Quebec. Only one transport was more than thirty-one days at sea. By the 28th of July, the greater part of the settlers had been forwarded to Kingston, where they lived in tents until wholesale accommodations could be provided to carry them farther on their journey. The beginning of August was extremely hot. The thermometer stood at 100 degrees in the shade for ten days; so that in spite of the care of a surgeon, many of them took ill, and eighty-seven died from heat and fever while in that city. Half of this number, however, were children, many of them only a few days old. On the passage they had lost eleven children and four adults—another instance of the folly and cruelty of reckoning two children under fourteen and three under seven as equivalent to one adult in the steerage space of a ship.

From Kingston they were taken by steamboat to Cobourg. The first party, numbering five hundred, set out on August 11th. One trip a week was made after this, with the same number each time. By the middle of September, the last of the immigrants were pitching their tents at Cobourg. In the meantime the first arrivals had spent ten days repairing the twelve miles of road between Lake Ontario and Rice Lake. Over this were transported three large boats, especially constructed to draw little water but carry large burdens. The people were then transferred in relays by these boats twenty-five miles up the Otonabee river. Here a

depôt was established and the settlement begun. The first party to ascend the river consisted of twenty experienced axemen and thirty emigrants. This vanguard built a small log house for each head of a family on his respective lot, and set about opening up roads through the different townships. They had a sorry time of it too, as not one man of them escaped the ague or fever, and two of them died. The others in the meantime were sick in their tents at Cobourg with the same fever. They were gradually brought forward to their new homes, just as circumstances and provisions would permit. Fortunately they were all located before the winter set in.

Besides the little shanty and his hundred-acre lot the Government gave to each of these families the following equipment: one felling-, one hand- and one pick-axe; one reaping- and one bill-hook; one broad and one narrow hoe, nine harrow teeth and an iron wedge; a carpenter's hammer and fifteen pounds of nails, a lock and key, a latch and hatch; two gimlets, two files, an auger and an adze; a pitchfork, a hand-saw and a spade. Each man and woman was given a blanket and every two children also. A Flanders kettle and a frying-pan constituted the housewife's particular share, and probably the cow each family was given might be called the children's part. Besides, for every concession there was a grindstone, a whip-saw, a cross-cut saw and a set of files.

Given this start, it is very easy to imagine how such a pioneer settlement would grow.

“ . . . the settler finds  
His solitary footsteps beaten out  
With the quick rush of panting human waves.”

Attention was attracted to the district, various commercial interests became engaged there, enterprising young men of the professional class followed, villages grew up, mills were built and the highways and roads between the different points were improved.

A few unfortunate families would be exceptions to this widespread thrifty advance of fortune. Through no fault of their own, seemingly, failure, mishap, and disaster would dog their steps. The chance of summer sickness, fever, dysentery and ague among people whose habitual diet had been largely changed, and of winter illness for those who had to face the severe cold with poor, thin clothing, was found to be great for the first season. The newcomers were accustomed to neither the axe nor the canoe, and for this reason many received bad wounds in chopping and many others lost their lives on the rivers—practically all transportation being done by water. Another frequent misfortune to overtake a settler and his family was a fire, begun when clearing their land. People unaccustomed to burning off land often allowed a fire to grow beyond control, and before they realized it, it had swept away their little all in its path.

Happily such calamities in Upper Canada were not the rule. The quick improvement in the personal lot of the emigrant and in the district life around him was astonishing.

“We’ve got a tidy place, the saints be praised—  
As nice a farm as ever brogan trod—  
A hundred acres—us as never owned  
Land big enough to make a lark a sod.”

The Canada Company in 1841 published an analysis of returns from seven hundred and twenty-four of their

settlers, scattered in thirty-eight different townships. It was a very satisfactory record. Three hundred and thirty-seven of these people had arrived with no money; in 1840 they possessed, on an average, £344, 17s. 9d. each. Eighty-nine had owned £20 or under when they landed, which they had increased to an average of £429, 7s. 3d., and two hundred and ninety-eight who had arrived with £20 or over, had averaged £568, 2s. 8d. each.<sup>1</sup>

Much of the initial success in the bush arose from the wonderful self-sufficiency and independence of the new settlers. It was their habit from the beginning to pay out money for nothing they could grow or make themselves. They acquired their food, their clothing, their utensils, their furniture and their buildings, all by their own hands:

“I grow my own lamb, my own butter and ham;  
I shear my own sheep and I wear it,”

ran one of their popular songs, and their whole domestic economy proclaimed it.

But the change was not alone one of material prosperity. All visitors and commentators were surprised at how a few years' residence in Canada brightened the intellect of the labouring man. The reason was obvious. Necessity was the mother of invention. He was driven to think, to contrive and to manage for himself. Besides, he saw on all sides what perseverance and industry would do. He had a clear motive ever before him to put forth the best energies of his mind and body. As a consequence he became a more energetic, intelligent and resourceful man than he could ever have been, faced by

<sup>1</sup>Report made at Canada Co. Office, Toronto, Dec. 31, 1840, by Fred Widder.

the hopeless servitude and stultifying poverty of his Motherland.

Compared with the beginning his father—a United Empire Loyalist probably—had had to make, or what his contemporary, the old land immigrant, had to face, it is interesting to contrast that of the native Canadian who, from ambition or need, left his father's farm on the frontier and entered one of the back settlements to fight his own way. He had the practical experience and training needed, so that his methods were as direct and efficient as the age would permit. The systematic entering of the first white settler, Ira Honeywell, into Nepean township, Carleton County, illustrates the ease which foreknowledge could produce in laying the foundations of a pioneer home. Ira, the son of a U. E. L. family at Prescott, went back in the summer of 1810 by himself to Nepean, where he had drawn a location ticket for one thousand acres. He worked away diligently until he cleared four acres. Then, with the help of his nearest neighbours, probably from Hull, some few miles distant across the Ottawa River, he raised his shanty. At first blush one is inclined to pity Ira, a mere boy in his early twenties, leading for so many months such a solitary existence within sight and sound of nothing but trees and their wailing fall. But Ira himself saw his life not so. He was getting on, getting on well. Each day saw his clearing grow or some finishing touch added to his shanty. He owned the soil and he fought his fight for love. He was happy thinking much of a certain fair maiden back in Prescott, and of the time she would be with him in Nepean.

In February, 1811, he had all his preparations made; so he went back to Prescott and married his sweetheart,



a Welsh girl named Andrews. The happy couple left at once for their honeymoon journey home, on a jumper drawn by a yoke of steers. If Mrs. Honeywell had a taste for philology, she probably appreciated, before that sixty-six-mile journey behind those steers was completed, the nice discernment of the man who first called their particular style of marriage-car "a jumper."

History tells not how their household goods and supplies stood the trip, only that they brought some with them on the jumper.

The first part of their journey to Merrickville was through new settlements where a warm welcome was always theirs, whether it was a meal or night's lodging they needed. But at Merrickville they left behind the last house to be seen until their own roof would greet them at the end of the long, bleak thirty-five-mile stretch of river road they had still to travel. They followed the Rideau now straight through to the Hogsback. The twenty-seven miles of the "Long Reach" must have seemed interminable as their steers slowly plunged along, breaking the track on the deep, snow-covered ice. They left Merrickville in the cold, grey dawn, and the stars alone witnessed their home-coming that night.

But once home, what wealthy, independent people they were, with their thousand acres of land, their yoke of steers, their finished shanty and their larder well stocked with pork and flour! The world and its cares touched them not. Surely, if ever lovers might, they could "fleet the time as they did in the Golden Age." No doubt the days of chopping in sight and hearing of the little cabin, and the evenings round its fire, high blazing with fat pine knots, were all too brief for them, wrapped up in their happy "honeymoon of hope."





E.W. JEFFERYS

*Early Soap-Making*

## CHAPTER VII

### *Building and Furnishing a Home*

THE BUILDING of their shanty was the family's first care. No sooner had they reached their lot than the father and sons set about getting out their logs and cutting them the proper length and breadth for the house planned. Then came the exciting day when their neighbours mustered for the raising bee. What an interesting, bright picture a painting from life of one of those bees would make—the beautiful green background of noble hardwood trees or stately evergreens, the little clearing with its patch of blue sky above and the men piling up the new logs with their best skids and stoutest handspikes below. In the early days, when the dimensions of a building were small, a raising was not a heavy or dangerous job. But in later years, the building of the large log barns, with their two big mows and threshing floor in the centre, required strong and skilful men to rear them safely to the plate. Once this timber on which the rafters would rest was laid, it was the ambition of each young man present to be the first to mount the dizzy height and swing a bottle there three times around his head before heaving it into a distant field. If the bottle was unbroken, shouts of congratulation followed, for this was considered the best of omens for prosperity in the new house. A raising bee was generally an hilarious occasion. The host always provided plenty of whiskey for his helpers, and thus created an atmosphere very congenial for boasting, daring, swearing and fighting to almost any degree.

When the raising was over, the family found themselves possessed of an oblong of logs, piled one above the other to form the body of their future home. The logs had been notched deeply at the corners so that the open spaces between the rows were as narrow as possible. Later on these spaces were chinked with moss and well wrought clay. The front was built somewhat higher than the back, and a scoop roof laid across. The scoops were basswood logs cut a little longer than the house was broad, then split in two, hollowed out in the middle, and laid concave and convex.

“Our houses, too, were logs of wood,  
Rolled up on squares, and corked with mud.  
If the bark was tight, the roof was good  
For a new country.”

An opening was next cut in the front for a door. But the door itself was often lacking. When sawmills were few and far between, a blanket saw service, in many a home, as that appendage. The making of planks and boards for doors, partitions, floors and furniture, such as tables, bunks, shelves, etc., was difficult work. One way was to saw the boards out by hand with a whip-saw. Another way, often resorted to, was called slabbing. A straight-grained pine tree was selected and a log of eight or ten feet cut from its cleanest part. The slabs or planks were split off this by means of wedges. Afterwards these planks were hewn fairly smooth with a broad-axe.

Windows were a luxury. Many shanties had none. The gaps between the chinks supplied their every purpose nicely. The most extravagant had only two—

one of four panes, in the sleeping loft, and the other, of six or eight panes, in the room below. The panes varied in size; some were six and a half by seven and a half, others eight by ten or ten by twelve.

The hearth and chimney demanded the most "trade" for their erection. A good square place for the hearth stones was first dug out and filled with flat stones, plastered in with hard blue clay. A fireback of field stones was built from this, and above it the chimney, formed of similar stones, if they were plentiful; if not, of a small wicker work of poles and branches. The stones or poles were plastered together with clay, which became with heat and time a regular cement. It will be readily understood that to build the arch stones in, properly bevelled for the chimney, to fix a wooden centre-piece, slightly curved to support the weight of the arch across a span of five feet—a usual width for their fireplaces—was a difficult part for the pioneer with the tools he had.

The floor was sometimes just the well-trodden earth, but usually it was of split logs, hewn into some approach of evenness with an adze. In later shanties it was often of plank, very green when laid; so lifted in a year or so, and smoothed with a jack-plane. In the floor was a trap door which led down below to a little dugout hole—the family cellar. This cellar in the early days had practically no ventilation, and was considered by many the cause of much of the ague-like sickness which prevailed. It was frequently supplanted by a cave-like roothouse in the side of a clay bank.

Such in general outline were the homes prepared for the bush chatelaines of Upper Canada. They varied a little in size. The Government, when fostering immi-

gration, built snug little bungalows of twenty by twelve by seven—all in one room. Individual enterprise usually soared to twenty by fifteen, or twenty-four by sixteen, and built high enough for a sleeping loft above the room below, reached by a ladder from either outside or inside. A shanty which began with these modest dimensions, however, very often expanded with the increase of the family and family means. A ten-foot addition was a common first supplement. The next step was a "lean-to" with a slant roof, built along the back of both the annex and the original. At the same time, the front was ornamented by a "stoop" or rustic portico, such as John Galt describes at "The Priory."<sup>1</sup>

In details, the shanties of one locality and one decade varied from others. The scoop roof was the more general, but not the only type. The U. E. Loyalists built their roofs of the bark of the elm or swamp oak, cut into shingles four feet by two feet, and laid overlapping one another. These shingles were fastened by withes to poles laid lengthwise across the walls of the building. A lineal descendant of this bark-shingled roof was the later one of cedar shingles four feet long, each course of which was held down by a heavy pole laid across the roof and fastened at the ends. These cumbersome devices for holding the shingles in place had to be resorted to on account of the scarcity of nails. The Government allowance to immigrants in 1817 was fourteen pounds of nails, one pound of putty and nine panes of glass. But many had not the Government at their back and had to use their own ingenuity. Thus resulted

<sup>1</sup>It was "formed with the trunks of trees, in which the constituent parts of the Ionic order are really somewhat intelligibly displayed."

many unique wooden contrivances. The first doors all creaked on wooden hinges,<sup>1</sup> and opened and shut with wooden latches and wooden bolts. It was surprising how simple and how admirable many of these fixtures were. They served their purpose always and had nothing about them to get out of order. The well-known wooden latch is a standing example. It was lifted from without by means of a leather string, which was simply pulled inside to lock the door. On this was based the old hospitable saying, "my latch string will always be out for you."

Such was the dwelling. What of its furniture, in which the generality of womankind has greater interest? The plinishin' and gearin' fell almost wholly in her sphere in the good old days when underbrushing, chopping, logging up, burning off, fencing and such stern necessities of a bush farm filled every moment of men's waking hours. What the man of the house absolutely had to do was very soon knocked together in a rough and ready way. The stools, for instance, on which the women and children clustered round the fire, were in the earliest

<sup>1</sup>Thomas Conant, in his "Upper Canada Sketches," gives the details of such hinges: "The most ingenious parts of the construction, however, were the hinges. Iron hinges he had not, and could not get. With the auger he bored a hole through the end of a square piece of wood, and sharpening the other end with his axe, he then bored a hole into one of the logs of the house, constituting in part a door-jamb, and drove the piece of wood into this hole. This formed the top part of the hinge, and the bottom part was fashioned in exactly the same way. Now to the door, in like manner, he fastened two logs of wood with holes bored through their ends. Placing the ends of the hinges above one another, they presented the four ends with holes leading through them, the one above the other. Next he made a strong pin with his handy jack-knife, cleaning a rim at one end of it, and making it long enough to reach from the top to the lower hinge. Through the holes at the ends of the hinge this long pin was placed, and thus the door was hung."



times merely pieces of logs, sawn off short, deprived of their bark and polished well by constant use. A bench was another favourite seat, since it was simple in construction and large in capacity. It very often developed into a bunk, a bench by day, a bed by night.<sup>1</sup>

Chairs and tables were solid, substantial affairs. The tables were usually made of pine with square legs tapering to the floor. Their white tops were kept clean-scrubbed with sand or lye, and the family meals were served from them without a table-cloth. When the first hard struggle was over, finer tables were procured. The walnut and cherry drop-leaf became the pride of the goodwife's heart. The company dinner spread on these was always graced by a double damask cloth.

Their chairs, like their tables, were heavy wooden ones, often made by a local carpenter. Some had split seats, like a woven rush seat, made of elm or willow bark. Many of these chairs are in existence to-day, and, with their full complement of rungs and legs all tight and sound, put to blush many more expensive ones of much later vintage, which have not now a leg to stand upon. During all this time these old-timers have done their work with great efficiency and satisfaction. Besides, they possess an individuality very apt to be lacking in our factory-made products. This harmonized them perfectly with their early surroundings and adds greatly to their interest to users to-day.

The old bedstead was called a catamount bed. It was a frame made of four posts and four poles, two long ones for the sides and two short ones for the ends. The centre of this frame had a woven mattress of elm bark

<sup>1</sup> The bunk was a broad bench with back and ends and a hinged box seat, where the bedding was stored in the daytime.

very like the seats of the chairs. As years went by, this bark mattress gave place to one of cords and pegs which could be more readily tightened up when it began to sag. It was no small task to put up a bedstead with cords. The person doing it had a special wrench for drawing the cord as tight as she could through the holes in the frame, and when she had it taut, she hammered a peg into the hole to keep it so. Thus she had to go all around the bed. The cradles for the little people are often pictured of the sap-trough variety, but many a proud father spent considerable time and thought on the construction of this piece of furniture. A specimen handed down to us to-day has not only a protective hood over the head, but convenient handles for rocking it at the foot, and knobs for tying the covers to at the sides. The little trundle bed, a sort of deep drawer on wooden wheels, with rope handles for pulling it out of its hiding place under the mother's couch, provided another snug nest for little bairns to cuddle doon.

The number of years the family had been in the bush could be computed by the superstructure on the family beds. The first year they were cushioned with hemlock twigs, no doubt redolent of turpentine and health. This was followed by a straw mattress or tick, freshly filled once or twice a year with the cleanest and nicest straw to be had. The tick to hold the straw was made not exactly like a bag, because both ends were sewn across and the opening, two or three feet long, was in the centre of the top side. This allowed the woman making the bed to put in her hand and adjust the straw without any danger of scattering it. Lastly, when the farmer's wife became the proud possessor of a poultry yard, there was a second tick, filled with feathers, added on

top of the straw one. This completed a gigantic mountain of luxury, which almost required a ladder to get into, but which all who have sampled retain a weakness for, even in our super-hygienic days. The filling of the feather tick was a matter of time, as the following story will show. In 1822, the synod of the United Presbyterian Church appointed three clergymen "to itinerate in Canada for three months or thereabouts." One of them spent a wakeful night in the township of Dumfries, although he lay on probably the only feather bed in the settlement. It was but a sprouting one, however, and the straw tick below was decidedly corpulent. So copiously was the straw tick stuffed, "that it had fairly assumed a round figure, so the feathers very naturally divided themselves in the centre and lay over the straw like a pair of saddle bags upon a horse. When I went to bed, I poised myself as well as I could upon the centre, but with a good deal of doubt about my ability to retain my position. My fears were not groundless, for no sooner had I closed my eyes in sleep than down I rolled upon the floor . . . ."<sup>1</sup>

The bedcovers sometimes included heavy homespun linen sheets. Not always, however, as the culture of flax and hemp was never widespread in Canada. The owner of such sheets acquired them only at the cost of much labour. Her work had all to be done by hand, with inferior implements very rudely made. When the flax reached its growth it was pulled and tied into sheaves. These were dried and seeded, and then spread out in the sun to be cured, i.e., to rot the pith partially so that the fibre would readily come off. The breaking or pound-

<sup>1</sup>"Reminiscences of the Early History of Galt, and the Settlement of Dumfries," by James Young.

ing the flax between sets of long wooden knives was the next step, followed by the scutching, a very dusty performance, and the hackling. This last was a sort of combing to separate the good silky fibre from the coarse tow, and it was sometimes done with the large prickly head of the teasel plant. Not until after this was the fibre ready to spin. The cloth, when first made, even of the finest fibre, was very hard and stiff, and required much washing, bleaching and pounding, before it became the beautiful article we associate with the words homespun linen.

The blankets, too, were homespun. In every stage of their making the housewife had had an active part. From the day the fleece was washed upon the sheep's back in the creek at her door, through the shearing, the picking, the sorting, the greasing, the pulling and carding of the wool, until finally she was able to weave her soft, warm blanket out of her fine spun yarn, she understood every detail and how to handle and use her material to the best purpose. In the earliest days, before sheep could be kept safely on bush farms, an Indian blanket or the skin of a bear or deer made warm bedcovers for those who could procure them. But all could not, and much ingenuity was displayed in acquiring blankets without either money or wool. One woman, who lived not fifteen miles from Belleville, the story says, wove her first blanket from hair picked out of the tanner's vat. She cleaned it, carded it, and worked it up with a hemp-like weed she found growing in the yard. This thread she doubled and twisted before weaving it into the blanket.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "History of the Province of Ontario" by Willam Canniff p. 214.

Finally in the dressing of the bed came the counterpanes. One characteristic kind was really a homespun blanket, but the yarn had been dyed various colours and woven into a pattern. The more usual, however, was the patchwork quilt, which abounded in endless variety of pattern and combination. Some of the more familiar patterns were log cabin, flower basket, single Irish chain and double Irish chain, etc. Their names were legion. The beauty of the quilt depended not on the pattern alone, but on the colours and the skill of the stitching.

The achieving of pretty and varied colours for both her house furnishings and her wardrobe opened up a large and interesting field of activity for the pioneer woman. Her dyes were mostly home-made. Indigo was used for blue, madder for red, butternut husks or sumach blossoms for brown, onion skins, waxwood or goldenrod for yellow, and beech tree bark for drab. Green was made by first steeping in yellow dye and then in blue. By similar combinations the dyer could obtain a great variety of shades, even if she found it very hard to duplicate them. To variegate or cloud her yarn light and dark, she wound tight bands of cotton about her skeins at equal distance from each other, before dipping them into the dye tub. A pair of stockings knit from such clouded yarn was often the dearest bit of finery in a little girl's wardrobe.

Their floor rugs, when the time came for such luxuries, claimed close kinship with the counterpanes. They owed their origins to the same ragbag, the same dye pot and the same thrifty fingers. Their rag carpets were woven sometimes in lively strips, and sometimes in a pattern, or rather no pattern, known as "hit and

miss." This was thus described by one Irish admirer: "They do be throwing in a bit of stone colour and a bit of red madder, and a bit of crimson and a bit of stone colour again, and believe me, it is nice stuffs they do make that you'd never ask to take your eyes from it." This verdict was quite true; so vivid were the colours and startling the combinations that one's eyes were held glued to them spellbound. At the same time the bright rag carpet or woollen homespun had a beauty and distinction of its own amid the primitive surroundings of the settler's home. It was often the one touch of colour in the room. In the evening, when the soft firelight played over and blended its various hues, it gained and in turn shed an almost Eastern splendour on the otherwise bare, cold-looking abode.

Very often a tanned and dyed sheepskin was used as a door-mat or warm hearth-rug. But maybe the earliest attempt of all at something of this kind was the small mat made of corn sheathing—the fine husks which enveloped the Indian corn. The husks were first braided into a thick rope and sewn into a round or oval mat. Before twine was plentiful for such sewing, the tough inner bark of the cedar tree was used, or a single blade of the husk threaded through the large eye of a wooden needle.

Such were the chief household effects of the pioneer. If he was a half-pay officer or one of the few more fortunate in the land, we might add a tester bed, a writing bureau, a grandfather's clock or a chest of drawers, but such treasured heirlooms are almost, one is tempted to think, more plentiful to-day than in our grandfathers' time; so description of them is quite unnecessary. A clock, for instance, was a very rare possession in pioneer

days. The shadow of the door post moving across the kitchen floor indicated the time of day in many a shanty, and as for the watches of the night, probably the howl of the wolf alone marked them for the restless sleeper.

“In the rough old times,  
In the tough old times  
Of twenty years ago,  
There was nae a clock in the settlement  
To tell how the time went on;  
But we kened very well when the day began,  
And we kened very well when 'twas o'er,  
And our dinner-bell was the gude-wife's shout  
When the sun reached the nick in the door.”

In the general dearth of furniture in the shanties, hardwood pegs driven into the log walls and the open rafters of the ceiling contrived a manifold debt to pay. They served as cupboards, larders, chests and wardrobes, accommodating sundries of infinite variety and interest. If some present-day descendants could step back into their grandmothers' homes, it would not be the furniture proper which would arrest their eyes, but the number and strangeness of the puzzling array of utensils, tools and wearing apparel hanging about the walls. How many women to-day would recognize at first glance a bootjack, a powder horn, a flax hackle or a flail? How many would understand the significance of a bundle of deer sinews, a string of dried apples, reaves of spun yarn, a dinner horn, a peacock feather duster or an old-fashioned tin lanthorn with the perforated front, hanging conveniently around the living-room-kitchen? It would be, however, when at last the grand-daughter's comprehensive glance swept the corner by the fireplace, that the riot of utensils would seem

to her most higgledy-piggledy. The cook of a hundred years ago had few implements compared with our assortment, but what she had were all in evidence. There was no cupboard, no pantry, no kitchen cabinet at her disposal. Her iron bake-kettle, pots and pot-hooks, her long-handled frying-pans, forks and toaster, her stand to support the handles of her pans while the meal was cooking, her ladles, tongs and shovels, her candlesticks, snuffers and moulds, her wooden rolling-pin and potato-masher (or pounder, a more exact name for the small wooden commander of the past), her warming-pan, tinder-box, and stout hickory-stick poker, all sought refuge with her earthen and pewter-ware dishes beside the fire. Some stood on the hearth, others on the mantel shelf and others hung from pegs near by. It was a homely assortment, very suggestive of both what our grandmothers had, and had not.

Their scanty movables, however, rarely had to face the cold, grey light of common day. They basked always in the ruddy rays of the glorious jewel of the household—the capacious fireplace with its glowing bed of coals and high-dancing flames.

“We piled with care our nightly stack  
Of wood against the chimney back;  
Heard the sharp crackle, caught the gleam  
On whitewashed wall and sagging beam,  
Until the old, rude-furnished room  
Burst, flower-like, into rosy bloom.”

Whatever might be lacking in the new country, it was not wood. The quantity which was piled in an old-time fireplace for one burning would last a modern family a week.



The building of a fire was no small labour. The back-log was first rolled into the back of the fireplace. So large was it, that stories are current of it having required a team of oxen to drag it into place. But such are metaphorical. As a matter of fact, it was usually a stick as long as the fireplace would take and a foot or fifteen inches in diameter. In front of it the bed of coals was arranged, and other logs, as long, but not so large, were piled on top. At night the coals were very carefully banked in the ashes to keep them alive until morning, for if they died, a flint and piece of tinder or spunk had to be resorted to, to start the fire. Many a family kept a bundle of finely split pine sticks tipped with brimstone, for starting a fire. With those, a fire was quickly kindled if there was but one small red coal left.

If one had a near neighbour, the live coals could be brought from her hearth in an emergency. This was an errand which would brook no delay, so it became a proverbial saying with the settlers, when any one made a hurried call, "Why! you must have come for a coal." If, when the would-be coal-borrower arrived at his neighbour's, he found the goodwife churning, he would have been considered a deep-dyed scoundrel, indeed, had he suggested taking the live coals out of the house then. In the emphatic, if not very enlightening, verdict of one old pioneer, "to take fire out of a house when a woman was churning was a thing no man would do."

All in all, the shanty living-room was full of a beauty and distinction of its own. The walls and ceiling beams were either toned by the smoke to a soft brown, which blended in beautifully with the silver greys and creamy yellows of the unpainted furniture and floor, or else they

were whitewashed and made a background of cleanness itself for the large black pots and bake-kettles to stand out against. Every article had almost a personal character. The spinning-wheels and flint-lock muskets, the homemade tables, chairs, and bedsteads, and the cradles, churns, brooms and brushes, even, were full of individuality. Besides, they were shaped and fashioned from the trees that grew around the door. This gave to them a simplicity and harmony with their surroundings which added greatly to their intrinsic worth.

In conclusion, it can only be said that the settler's log shanty, with its rude handmade furniture, its hearth of fieldstones, and its magnificent fire, built of the forest trees around them, was a natural link between the people and the new world they were making their own.



*The Dance*

## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Backwoodswoman: In House and Field*

THE LORD did anoint thee with his odorous oil to wrestle, not to reign." This was the portion of the Backwoodswoman. But her wrestling was not un-blessed. It brought her a wide development, a varied knowledge and skill, and a strong, active mind that she might not have had if her lines had been cast in easier places.

The typical pioneer woman had a wonderful independence and broad field of labour. Outdoors she could garden, milk cows, care for poultry and bees, manage calves, lambs and pigs; she was a skilled horsewoman and could paddle a canoe with verve and dexterity. She managed her indoor world with great self-sufficiency. She could bake bread, dress butter, press cheese, cure meat, boil potash, provide maple sugar, manufacture soap and candles and even clothe her family, from straw hats to homespun suits, without the shopkeeper's help. Moreover, she nursed the sick, compounded and prescribed their medicine, bound up the wounded, ushered the newly born into life and sewed the shroud and lined the coffin for the dead.

Her work changed with the seasons. It was heavy and exacting, but not monotonous and dull. The dangers and hardship of her life and the long hours she often spent alone brought her some of the serenity, poise of character and deep feelings, that are considered to be usually the result of learning and culture alone.

The pioneer woman's work dealt with the primary necessities of life. Keeping house in a shanty gave little excuse for wasting time over frills. For a floor of tramped earth or split logs there was no question as to whether the finish should be varnish, wax, paint, enamel, oil or stain. If the children scratched the furniture or carved their names upon the wall it did not line their mother's face. Of housekeeping and housecleaning in the modern woman's sense of the words her great-grandmothers required to do very little. And it was well for them they did. Their appliances for such work were very few and very crude. A cedar or hemlock broom, made by tying a flat bundle of boughs to a handle and trimming them broom shape with an axe, was the one most generally found. Its chief competitor was the splint broom, or, when diminutive, called the splint brush. It was made out of a stick of green hickory, birch or blue beech. The wood was splintered fine with a sharp knife for the required depth and the unsplintered end was shaped for a handle. A homemade corn broom was the next development. What a simple little trio to place in juxtaposition with our whisks, brooms, dustless mops, floor polishers, carpet-sweepers and electric vacuum cleaners.

At other times the simplicity of their equipment meant more work, not less, for the house-mother. The old oaken bucket, the dash churn, the river-side laundry among the stones, are conspicuous examples of this class. Cooking over the open hearth fire, where the poor cook was scorched and roasted almost as thoroughly as her joints, was strenuous work compared with preparing the same meal on a modern stove.

Cooking over the shanty fire was an art that grew and became perfected only by slow degrees. During the first years in the bush it was seldom a question how to cook, but what to get to cook. When the Government provided rations for the immigrants it meant pork and flour. When they did not, pork, potatoes and Indian corn were the staples. Wheat flour and white bread were dainties highly prized, but often very hard to obtain in the first years.

Wheat was grown as well as corn, but to convert either into flour was the difficulty. To have it done in the ordinary way meant a long tramp through the bush to the mill, carrying the bag of grain on one's shoulder. The roads through the bush—hillocks, stump, boulders, fallen trees, corduroy bridges, rank swamps, deep holes of rotted leaves and water—were terrible, and the distances often very great. During the first three years of the U. E. Loyalist settlement there was only one mill at Kingston Mills; so that families as far east as Cornwall and west as Clark had their wheat ground there. However, in such a case as this, several men banded together and made the journey with their grain by batteaux or canoe. William Canniff tells us such expeditions sometimes took six weeks or more, so that the women left behind often became worried, and began to fear the boats had foundered or other accident happened. Then they could only console each other in a good hearty cry together.

All these things considered, it is little wonder that flour was such a highly prized dainty, and that many substitutes were contentedly used. Some had coffee mills in which small quantities of grain could be ground at a

time. Others erected a "plumping mill." This was simply a large mortar made from a log about six feet long and from fifteen to thirty inches in diameter. One end was planted firmly in the ground three or four feet, and the other was scooped and burnt out to form a bowl. The pestle was usually of iron wood, about thirty inches long and six inches thick, rounded at the bottom and the middle made a convenient size for the hand. Sometimes this was the complete "mill," and the grain was pounded by hand in the mortar. At other times the pestle was fastened to the top of a spring pole to give it more purchase. When the corn was pounded, it was sifted, the fine meal used for bread-making and the coarse for porridge or hominy.

But many a family used no mill. Their grain was boiled whole and eaten as mush. This was by no means as simple to prepare as it sounds. First the corn was parboiled in weak lye for about an hour. Then it was drained and put in a pan before the fire to dry. When the fine outside skin began to burst with the heat, it was tied in a bag and beaten until all the grains were free of the bran, which was then easily blown away as the grain was sifted through the hands. Then, and not till then, was the clean corn returned to the pot and boiled until soft—a process which, as the corn grew old, required almost a whole day. For many who brought, as the saying went, only health and hands into the bush, corn-meal, so cooked and served with milk, constituted the chief bill of fare for many a day.

There was another department of their meagrely equipped commissariat affected by their distance from towns and shops, and partly also by their need to econo-

mize. The provident settler far surpassed German scientists in concocting substitutes for tea and coffee. These beverages were scarce, and except in the larger centres could be procured only in very poor qualities. But almost every shanty had a brew of its own which its devotees pressed on the unwary guest, as not only a pleasant drink, but also "first rate bitters." Such tea was infused from herbs like sage, thyme, chocolate root, sassafras root, cherry-tree bark and hemlock boughs. The coffee was derived from roasted peas and barley, toasted bread and acorns, and from dandelion roots. The dandelion root was considered the most satisfactory, and its preparation is fully described by Mrs. Moodie in "Roughing it in the Bush."<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally the early settlers shot some partridges or pigeons, a bear or a deer, but the typical bush farmer was not a hunter. Besides, powder and shot were scarce. Fish were always plentiful, but the men had primitive tackle, and little time for the sport. In the spring, a few evenings' spearing was often indulged in by the light of a torch or blazing pine knot held in the

<sup>1</sup>"I threw aside some of the roots, and when we left work collecting a sufficient quantity for the experiment, I carefully washed the roots quite clean, without depriving them of the fine brown skin which covers them, and which contains the aromatic flavour which so nearly resembles coffee that it is difficult to distinguish it from it while roasting.

"I cut my roots into small pieces, the size of a kidney-bean, and roasted them on an iron baking-pan in the stove-oven, until they were as brown and crisp as coffee. I then ground and transferred a small cupful of the powder to the coffee-pot, pouring upon it scalding water, and boiling it for a few minutes briskly over the fire. The result was beyond my expectations. The coffee proved excellent—far superior to the common coffee we procured at the stores."—"Roughing it in the Bush" by Mrs. Susanna Moodie. Reprinted 1913, p. 395.



front of a canoe or dugout. Such additions of game to the larder were pleasant and by no means unusual exceptions, but they were not the rule.

As months passed by and raw material increased, so did women's work with the food and cooking. The first bee at Adolphustown may have been provisioned with "eggs beaten up in milk flavored with rum,"<sup>1</sup> although higher criticism is prone to ask what fed the hens and kept the cows to supply a home with milk and eggs that was destitute of everything else; but in later years a woman's preparations for a raising bee would not be made so simply. Once the clearing about the shanty assumed something like the proportions of a farm, with stock, poultry, garden and orchard, the people lived well, but on the women the whole work of it devolved. They had to be prepared to handle and preserve the raw material in an economical and satisfactory way. When butchering was done, for example, all the pickling, curing and smoking, the preparing of head-cheese and sausages, the rendering of suet and lard, and the making of candles and soap, fell to the women's lot. At other times they had to provide even the raw material as well as work it up. Preserving and pickling are good instances of such undertakings. They picked the wild fruits, they grew the vegetables, they gathered and dried the seasoning herbs, made the vinegar and sugar. In this connection it is interesting to remember that even their baking soda was often home-made, being leached from ashes of burnt corn cobs.

Breadmaking is a common example of their ability to provide the elementary ingredients which modern

<sup>1</sup>"The Settlement of Upper Canada," by William Canniff, p. 201.

housewives buy in the prepared state. We begin operations with a compressed yeast cake; our grandmothers began with the hops on the garden wall. They had to make good, pleasant-tasting "barm" before they could think of bread. They had different kinds, but salt-rising, milk emptyings and yeast from hops were the usual. When the loaf was finally ready to bake there were several ways this might be accomplished. Some had bake-ovens built outside, as may be seen in parts of the province of Quebec to-day. These were first heated by hot coals and ashes, then brushed out and the bread put in to cook before the temperature had time to lower. Others had a smaller, but similar, oven built beside the fireplace in the house. Others, again, had reflectors similar to the ones used to-day by mining or prospecting parties of men when compelled to bake their bread at an open camp-fire. But the vast majority of early settlers baked their bread in a bake-kettle and turned out many a wholesome shanty loaf from the clumsy pot.

The bake-kettle was a round, iron, flat-bottomed pot, standing on three low feet. It had also a flat iron lid. The sponge was allowed to rise in it about half an hour before the pot was buried in the warm ashes and coals of the fireplace. Experience alone could teach a woman how thick a scattering of coals to put below and above her kettle to bake her bread a delicate brown, and not to burn it a black crust with a dough centre. Many a sweet loaf when finished had a little ring of ashes round the bread near the top where the sponge in rising had lifted the lid.

Cake-making in the shanty was a simple process. There were two main divisions, frying-pan cakes and bake-kettle cakes. The first included the famous potato

cake, and the second plum cakes, seed cakes and loaf cakes generally.

Have we gained or lost by the multiplicity of our cakes and cake-baking utensils? It is scarcely a simple craft to-day. If we were to take, as some people like to do, the cakes as a measure of an age, some more or less questionable philosophy might be evolved from a comparison of ours with those of one hundred years ago. The earlier productions might be considered to typify the meagre equipment, the crude homeliness, the rough and ready efficiency of the older society, while our efforts "to teach sugar to slip down your throat a million of ways," indicate our scientific, laboratory-like methods and utensils, our greater demand for beauty and attractiveness and the danger of wasting both time and energy in straining for effect. To fry a milk-pan full of doughnuts in their day was but straightforward work for an efficient woman. The result was a generous provision of nourishment in an appetizing form for her family. To prepare a similar quantity of chocolate éclairs in our day demands the *finesse* of a specialized professional chef, and the result, at best, is but a toothsome sweetmeat.

Whatever our verdict on the cakes may be, there is no doubt there was one department, at least, in early days which lacked sadly the scientific methods and convenience of the present. The dairy and its products involved a great deal of unsatisfactory, heavy work on the part of the pioneer woman. This does not mean that our grandmothers could not make good butter and cheese. There were among them many such thoroughly clean and capable women that, in spite of all deficiencies and

obstacles, they were able to turn out an excellent article of both. But, on the whole, as far as these supplies were concerned, there was not a little ground for such criticism as Dr. Dunlop's. He says, in his racy "Sketches of Upper Canada," that the proverb, "God sends meat and the devil cooks," was never so fully illustrated as in this country. In the dairy work, at any rate, there were extenuating circumstances. Had the witty "Backwoodsman" had to milk the cows exposed to the cold and discomforts the women had to endure in the miserable sheds and straw-stack shelters which the men in those days felt were ample protection for their cattle; and had he then had to care for this milk in cellars and root-houses neither cool enough nor airy enough in summer, nor warm enough nor properly ventilated in winter, he might have quoted another proverb: "Patience doth conquer by outsuffering all."

It is easy to understand why women were at such a disadvantage in their dairy work. Cattle and the brute creation generally had suffered terribly in the first years. Many of them died from starvation and cold. Hence milk, butter and cheese were always very scarce in new settlements. Now arrangements which would answer very well when milk and all its products were used while absolutely fresh, fell down sadly when the herds grew with the clearings and large quantities of their produce had to be handled and stored. The blame indeed rests largely on the storage facilities of the local merchant. The farmers' wives sold their butter and cheese sweet and fresh, but after it had been kept five or six months in the merchant's cellar, without ice or any protection from the hundred and one other commodities there, it was scarcely to be wondered at if its

flavour was impaired when finally transported to the market at Toronto or Montreal.

All the utensils in use one hundred years ago in caring for milk seem unusually antiquated to-day. The earthen crocks and bowls, the wooden firkins and tubs, the wooden milk pans even, made like trays four inches deep with peg holes in the bottom for letting off the milk, the thick glass pans and later the tin ones lined with zinc, the clumsy wooden cheese presses with their long lever weighted down by one or two big stones, and the little barrel dash churns, make up a curiously edifying assortment for people accustomed to cream separators, cheese factories, creamery stations and dairy-school methods.

The barrel churn has not wholly passed off the stage yet. All are familiar with it. But all do not know what an improvement it was over its backwoods predecessor. Many a bush mother had to make butter a long time before she owned a smooth barrel churn with its all-but-undiscoverable seams. An old pioneer woman described minutely her first churn. It was simply made of four planks her husband nailed together on a bottom. "I made as good butter in that churn," she ended reminiscently, "as any I ever made in my life, but I needed to watch the seams carefully, you understand." Yes, one can well understand what the work of keeping those seams sweet and clean would be, and what a labour-saving machine a tightly finished barrel would appear after such an apprenticeship.

Cheesemaking, an industry which the modern dairy-maid practically never undertakes, was a great business for her grandmother. She was mistress of the whole process. Not only did she make the cheese, but she

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made the rennet. She cleaned thoroughly, then salted, dried and preserved the first stomach or maw of a sucking calf, then with a solution of this she separated her curds and whey. Cheesemaking, as carried on by the wives of the early settlers, was a work very typical of the time. The clumsy press and its huge stone weights, the bulky cheeses themselves which had to be lifted and rubbed so many times before being properly dried and seasoned, constituted very heavy labour which the worker had no appliances to lighten. Main strength and native skill alone promoted success.

Candlemaking is another trade which has passed out of women's province. In the old days it was one of their autumn tasks. There was then a large quantity of tallow rendered down after the killing of beef and mutton; so the economical housewife, acting on the theory that candles which were made some time before burnt longer and better than fresh ones did, made her yearly store as soon as possible, and packed them away in a cool place, safe from mice.

Although their lighting systems were never very brilliant, yet there were candles and candles. In other words, there were moulds and dips. Many an old man's voice to-day grows tender with self-pity as he tells you feelingly about the hardships he suffered as a small boy cooling "dips" outside the door, until his hands "were as blue as whetstones." To make dips, several pieces of cotton wick were suspended in a row along a slender stick. Such wick was thready-looking, not soft and yellow like lampwick, and it came in balls at from seven to fifteen cents each. The tallow required to be very clean and well strained. To attain this requisite purity

most women poured it through a flannel stretched over a colander. The wicks on the stick were dipped into the hot tallow and when they had taken up as much of it as they would hold, the little boy's act in the drama began. He held the stick out in the cold while other similar ones were being dipped and exchanged with him when his became cool and the coating of tallow hard. It was again dipped and cooled, and the others in turn dipped and cooled, in what seemed to the chafing, woebegone cooler, no doubt, a never-ending line. Some families, where children were scarce, perhaps, or the mother preferred more spotless methods, had a small frame made to suspend the sticks in while the wicks were hardening.

The moulds were not nearly so tedious or picturesque in manufacture as the dips. It is gratifying to know, too, they were not so durable. They were simply made by drawing the wicks through the holes in the bottom of the separate tubes of the moulds, and holding them firm and straight in the centre of the tubes while the tallow was poured in around them.

During the first season, when the poor settler had no cattle in the bush, his thrifty wife burnt no candles. A tin cup of fat with a bit of twisted rag provided the only light, and a most uncomfortable, suffocating one it was. It filled every eye and nose with, not light alone, but soot. Thus the much despised candle of to-day belonged to the crown of things a hundred years ago. It was one of the many comforts the first settlers looked forward to owning and providing for themselves.

Women were, however; by no means confined to indoor work. They hoed and planted in the garden, they bound and shucked the sheaves after the sickle in the

field, they helped in the sugar bush and toiled over the potash kettle. It was accepted as a matter of course by bushmen and women in the new settlements that women should help to the limit of their time and strength in everything which went to the building up of the new farm and home. Such universal sanction for heavy work being placed on the woman's shoulders was many a lazy man's opportunity, just as in a community where the opposite tradition holds a lazy woman may more easily shirk. A story handed down in one country district provides an amusing illustration of the lengths to which such imposition might be seemingly unconsciously carried. In the early days of cradling, a certain Mr. C. was noted for always being behind with his crop. His brother-in-law, who had finished his, thought he would walk over, some six miles distant, and see how C. was coming on. As he approached his sister's home, he saw the said C. sitting up on the fence smoking.

"Good morning, C., and how are you getting on with your crop?"

"Oh, very slow, very slow—But we can't expect anything else when there is just her and me."

"Why don't you get to work at it, then?"

"Sure, what would be the good of me cutting it down sooner than she can tie it up?"

The making of maple sugar was done under trying conditions; yet the "females of the house, with the assistance of the children," were left in many homes to attend to this minor chore. It had to be done during the great spring break-up, when the snow in the bush was still deep, but soft and slushy with the April sunshine, showers and wind.

The chief requirements of the sugar bush were many



small sap troughs, one large store trough, large iron kettles for boiling down, and cedar "spiles" for conducting the sap from the gash made by an axe in the tree (the reckless old-fashioned way of tapping) to the sap trough. The sap troughs were usually of black ash, although pine or cherry were considered suitable woods also; but not basswood—it was too open. An ash tree about a foot thick was chosen, and cut into three-foot lengths. These pieces were split through the middle and the halves hollowed out with an adze, leaving the ends about an inch thick and the sides and bottom about half an inch. The store trough was the trunk of a large pine tree, hollowed out to contain from fifty to one hundred pails of sap.

As soon as sufficient sap had been collected, the iron kettles were filled and the firing and boiling began. The boiling apparatus was composed of two stout forked posts driven into the ground, one at each side of the fire, and an ironwood pole placed in the forks from which the kettle swung over the flame. Occasionally the kettle was swung with the aid of heavy pothooks, but usually it was by means of a peculiarly double-forked stick which the seeing eye had spied out in the forest and adapted to its need. A hoop with a clean flannel sewn on it served as a strainer for the sap.

When the sap was boiled to a thin syrup, it was cooled and strained into another kettle with broken eggs—six to clarify fifty pounds of sugar was the recipe—and again swung up to boil. When just on the point of boiling it had to be well scummed at once if the sugar was to be pure. This kettle of syrup now demanded very careful attention to prevent it boiling over. There were many simple devices to ward off such a calamity.

Some rubbed butter or lard about the edge of the pot, on the theory that the hot syrup would recede whenever it met the fat. Others, on the same principle, suspended a piece of fat pork to touch the boiling pan at the psychological moment, but it was also wise to have cold sap or syrup near by to throw in quickly whenever the tide rose threateningly. When the syrup boiled in a thick yellow foam all over the kettle and would hair at once when poured from the ladle, it was ready to pour into the buttered pans and solidify into sugar.

For the childish helpers sugar-making time was one of the grand delights of the year. A boy of ten or twelve could ask no better sport. Collecting his sap with the oxen and jumper was rare fun for him, testing the syrup by spreading it on the snow or ice was a favourite device, and for once having all the sweets that he could eat and more was a blissful state of things long to be remembered. For his mother, sitting on a log in the wet bush, watching her boiling kettles, often waiting wearily by them far into the night to "sugar off," it was by no means such a romantic season. Still, she too enjoyed a wonderful satisfaction in surveying the result of her work afterwards, in several hundred-weight of sugar and gallons of rich molasses.

"Oh it's bubble, bubble, bubble, bubble goes the pan—  
Furnish better music for the season if you can.  
See the golden billows, watch their ebb and flow—  
Oh! is not this the jolliest fun the sugar makers know?"

Another large outdoor industry in which women had no small share, if not the whole responsibility, was the making of potash. As every one knows, this was the first crop of the Upper Canada pioneer. If his land was

covered with good hardwood, he would have such a quantity of ashes as would very nearly repay him for the clearing. Ten acres of good timber produced about five barrels of potash, each barrel containing five hundred-weight. A barrel of potash sold in Montreal for thirty dollars.

Every traveller writing of Canada in the clearing days, every emigrant sending home to his friends accounts of the country and its typical scenes, every old pioneer we have still with us attempts to paint a word picture of the vast heaps of burning logs which the clearing necessitated, and from which the ashes to make the potash were obtained. They made a splendid sight. Isabella Valancy Crawford makes the scene most real for our imagination:

“Then roared the crackling mountains, and their fires  
Met in high heaven, clasping flame with flame.  
The thin winds swept a cosmos of red sparks  
Across the bleak midnight sky, and the sun  
Walked pale behind the resinous black smoke.”

Such were the fires from a picturesque point of view. From a practical work-a-day one, they were decidedly different—a very hot and grimy business. During the first stages of the burning, while the logs were very heavy, the men kept the piles rolled up and arranged so that they would burn to good advantage. Then as the charred brands grew smaller, the women and children were able to manage them. It was interesting and fascinating work, too, tending these log heaps. Everybody loves to poke a fire, but not everyone has had the pleasure of rousing up the dying flames and supplying fresh fuel to such a giant conflagration as these old-time log-heaps were.

After the fire came the collecting of the ashes, clean

and fresh before rain had weakened them, and then the making of the potash. The alkali was extracted from the ashes by means of water filtering through them when packed in large vessels called leaches. These leaches were wedge-shaped containers about four feet long and built of two thicknesses of plank with the joints broken. Three or four of them were placed in a row along a platform of boards which sloped downwards into a large trough to receive the lye. It was a customary thing to find such a potash works—the leaches, the troughs of raw lye and the boiling potash kettles—located on the bank of a stream. The filled leaches were located at the top of the bank, where a continuous supply of water was pumped up and distributed among them by wooden gutters, and next came the tank or reservoir trough of raw lye which, as it was needed, could easily be conducted from there to the potash kettle, yet a little lower down the hill.

The leaches were scientifically filled. First some straw was put in the bottom, then unslacked lime scattered upon that and finally the ashes packed in and pounded down until the whole receptacle was quite full but for the hollow in the top of the ashes to hold the water. As the water soaked in, more was continually added until the leaches began to run; that is, the lye began to filter out at the bottom and run down the sloping platform into the large trough. From this the lye was conducted to a reservoir trough or tank above the potash kettle. This tank was usually connected with the kettle by a pipe with a faucet so that the flow of raw lye into the kettle could be controlled at will. Often, however, the lye had simply to be dipped up and transferred from the different containers in iron pots.

The potash kettle was an immense iron pot about five feet in diameter. It was sprung out at the top so that it might rest on the stones which built it in and formed the open-air fireplace in which it sat and boiled.

The filling and watering of the leaches was always considered men's work, but the watching and boiling down of the lye fell to the women's lot. It usually took a week to make a barrel of potash where only one kettle was used. For the first two or three days the boiling would be done only during the daytime, and there would be a steady, regulated flow of raw lye into the kettle from the tank above. Then, as the contents of the kettle became thicker and darker, the faucet was closed, no more raw lye was added and the boiling had now to be carried on without interruption, even should it prove an all-day and all-night job, as it usually did. From this stage on, the watcher had to keep it constantly stirred, which she did with a large spoon about the size and thickness of an ordinary frying pan, which had an iron handle from three to five feet long and a wooden one six feet long added to that. When finished the kettle of potash was a dark red colour and looked like molten metal, and over the top of it a blue blaze flitted about incessantly.

The potash was then baled with the long-handled iron spoon into a second large pot called a cooler. This required to be first heated to receive it. As it now cooled it became one solid mass. By means of ropes this coolerful was later put into an oak barrel with the round side down, and another similar coolerful, when made, was turned in on top, round side up—the two flat sides together in the centre—and thus was completed the barrel of potash which sold for thirty dollars.

It was tremendously hot, heavy, dangerous work. It speaks volumes for the careful watch and forethought our ancestors must have exercised, when busy over it, that we have records to-day of practically no tragic accidents, in spite of all the dipping up, pouring and working with that boiling lye there must have been about the settlers' homes sixty and seventy years ago.

The authentic record of one woman's achievement in potash-making bears striking witness to the monetary value of the pioneer woman's work. During the season she boiled eight barrels of potash. Such a performance reveals much. It is a revelation of her physical strength, her courage, her clear, concentrated mind and her careful management. In her feat we see what giants the women were in those days. The summer she made the potash this wonderful woman also took care of seven young stirring sons; yet she accomplished her task without the slightest mishap to one of her children, to herself or to any of their cattle—which, as we know, always have a crazy desire to meddle with lye and must be constantly looked after when in its neighbourhood.

As we see this mother in the centre of her rough potash works, on that stern hillside, her baby rolled up asleep near by or very contentedly sucking a rag in which was tied a lump of maple sugar, and her other children trying to help, or playing at safe distance, she seems a noble type of women's life and work in pioneer days. Her labour was heavy and taxing, but it brought her satisfaction and honour. It was worthy and useful. The world was the richer for her toil, and her days were spent in a true partnership with her husband, making a home for their family and laying the foundations of their fortune.

## CHAPTER IX

### *Outings and Social Intercourse*

ONCE the early pioneer woman reached her home, it was only dire need that drove her abroad. She became emphatically a stay-at-home body, very thankful that all her travelling by sea and land was done. Her first expeditions away from home were never undertaken for pleasure. They were usually portaging trips, which she made instead of her husband, in order that his work might not be interrupted.

County histories and county traditions without number bear witness to the pluck and bravery the first women showed in facing these heavy tramps. A Carleton County mother helped her son carry six barrells of flour from the nearest port on the Ottawa River to their home, nine miles distant. Their path lay through a rough, swampy bush; yet she manfully carried her fiftyweight each trip, while her son brought one hundred. An Essex woman, during the first two years of their home-making in the bush, did practically all the family portaging from Sandwich, thirteen miles distant. She is credited with having carried one hundred pounds on several occasions.<sup>1</sup> These are examples from opposite ends of the Province, but they are typical of its whole length and breadth. But to Mrs. David Darling, of the Scotch Block, in Trafalgar township, belongs the crown for such achievements. In the year 1818, shortly after her family had settled on their new lot, they felt

<sup>1</sup> "The Irishman in Canada," by Nicholas Flood Davin, p. 339, published 1879.

they could manage no longer without a logging chain. It was one of the first essentials of bush life and clearing. Mrs. Darling rose to the occasion. She had a tub of butter packed and this she carried forty miles through the bush to York, where she traded it for the all-important chain, and then, turning round, carried it home.<sup>1</sup> One can almost hear at this distance the triumphant thud with which the brave, tired woman let that great chain fall on her shanty floor when her eighty-mile tramp was done.

It was only, of course, in the very earliest years that women's outings were such an heroic achievement. Afterwards their trips to market, for example, although still heavy and serious undertakings, partook somewhat of the nature of pleasant diversions. Going to market was a most popular method of holiday-making. It combined for our thrifty forefathers both business and pleasure. They disposed of their produce to better advantage and they satisfied some of their rarer needs and more ambitious longings than were catered to by the country store, the fall fair or the pedlar's pack. Their trips to the large markets were epoch-making events in their quiet days, by which all happenings before and after could be correctly dated during the rest of their lives.

Let us accompany in fancy a farmer's wife on such an expedition in the early thirties. She plans to go in the autumn or early winter when the first snow and hard weather have come, so that the long drive may be as easily done as possible over the country roads at their best. Besides, she can then have all her market supplies

<sup>1</sup> "Rob Roy," in the *Weekly Sun* for March 10, 1915.



prepared and fresh. The killing will be over, so that fowl, pork and mutton and frozen quarters of beef will pile their sleigh-box high behind them. Down in the bottom, safely packed in the horses' feed for the way, will be the woman's own peculiar part—candles, soap, cheese, butter, eggs, home-made yarn and blankets, hand-knit socks and mitts. Many of these commodities she trades regularly at the country store, but she has been hoarding them lately in hopes of a higher price at the larger counters.

The market holiday always made up in length anything it may have lacked in joy and felicity. In order to reach their destination in good time, the farmer and his wife had to start very early, perhaps at two or three o'clock in the morning. They found the drive a cold one, in spite of being well wrapped up in buffalo robes, blankets and sometimes even quilts from the beds, and in spite of the hot bricks that were often carried.

For the woman it was likely to prove doubly cold and tedious. All the settled country districts then were perilously well supplied with inns, or taverns, to use the old-time name. The seventh line of Esquesing is a pertinent example. Along the twenty-four miles between Oakdale and Ballinfal there used to be twenty-one places where liquor was sold. Usually the average ran a tavern to a mile, but many miles doubled and quadrupled that modest allowance. The farmer, therefore, had ample opportunity to warm himself whenever he felt inclined, but his wife's part in the meantime was to hold the horses in the cold at the door. It was not until the homeward trip, however, that she was likely really to suffer from this cause. They were early afoot, the inns were hardly open, her husband was sober and

bent on one purpose with her. But in the evening, when returning, he had money in his pockets and the spirit of jollification properly aroused in his breast; so she often became a most pitiful, shivering, weary wreck, waiting at the door of one of those miserable whiskey-selling huts. And lucky it was for her then, when her husband and his friends at last appeared, if he was in a mood to drive home quietly. A horse-race home with his neighbour, who was in the same hilarious condition, was a very frequent ending to such a market day.

But our good dame is just at the outset of her journey, not at the end, so it is a pity to borrow trouble. Her John may not indulge too freely and the nigh colt may be better broken than she thinks. So she sits during the long drive very quietly beside her husband, wrapped up in her great shawl, worn over her head and pinned under her chin, and in very pleasant fancies of her own. If we could see her face deep back in that poked hood of her shawl, it would be a gentle smile and a far-away gazing eye that would be disclosed. She is thinking "Gamble & Birchall's, on the corner of King and George, had a lovely grey silk two years ago. I believe it would fair stand alone. Perhaps if they have it still—" Or, "There was Parker's new checkered store on King St. His cashmeres and fine India dimities—."

Her thoughts are rudely interrupted. They are entering the suburbs now. What is that new fashionable-looking equipage swirling past? From this on the eager countrywoman is awake, alert to all the unfamiliar sights and sounds of the metropolis she expects to experience that day.

It is rather disconcerting for the modern lavishly-catered-to daughter of Eve to follow her ancestor on a

shopping tour. The stores seemed built for men. "Men's stuffs," not "Women's stuffs," monopolized the aisles, the counters and the shelves. Besides, it was durability, not fashion, which was the watchword of the day. When John bought his suit of broadcloth, he bought it to last his lifetime, and to bequeath, little the worse of the wear, with his cattle and his farm, to his son. Likewise when Mrs. John bought her silk gown, or a long ostrich plume, she was investing her money in an enduring possession.

Naturally there were exceptions. While careful, thrifty buying, putting by and hoarding up for the future was the attitude of the vast majority, there were many others who found their greatest pleasure in lavishing the money they had never known what it was to possess until they reached their El Dorado. A letter from a Mary Jane Watson, quoted by William Cobbett, is a perfect example of such elation. Mary Jane's family had been sent out by the Parish of Sedlescomb, near Battle, in Sussex. Mary Jane had prospered and was anxious to spread the good news among all her old friends, that they might profit by it. Any more substantial assistance to them than encouragement and example poor Mary Jane never dreamed of bestowing. However, she wrote to her grandmother a very inspiring account:

"I have been very fortunate. I have got good clothes and I can dress as well as any lady in Sedlescomb. I can enjoy a silk and a white frock and crape frock and crape veil, and morocco shoes, without a parish grumbling about it. If you are not well dressed here you are not respected. The girls here that go out to doing housework, dress as well as any lady in Sedlescomb. I don't

think of going to meeting with leather shoes on; we wear morocco and prunello. Altogether Leghorn hats are worn here very much. Straw bonnets are very fine and handsome; I have got one cost about twenty-four shillings. I had a present of a very handsome, long Kersey-mere shawl, by Captain Champlin, he brought it me from London; it cost forty-eight shillings. You cannot tell the poor from the rich here; they are dressed as good as the other. . . . It was the best thing that father ever did for his family to take them to America. Tell Aunt and Uncle William they must not be discouraged about coming, but be sure and come if the parish will send them."<sup>1</sup>

Beyond their marketing and shopping expeditions the pioneer women's outings for business or pleasure were few. The majority of them—at any rate, of the second generation—were good horseback riders, but it is surprising how little riding they really did. Most families have traditions of one ancestress who had the restlessness and the daring to accomplish one or more memorable journeys in this way. "She sat her horse well; she looked her best in the saddle; and she several times rode as far as one hundred miles on horseback. One time she carried her infant son over one hundred miles that way," so the various legends run.

The first generation of native-born Canadian girls had none of their immigrant mother's experienced timidity of water. They were usually brought up beside the lake or river brink—then the highways of the land—and they were at home in the water just as their little brothers, the embryo lumbermen and raftsmen of the future, were at home in it. Abigail Becker's heroic

<sup>1</sup>"The Emigrant's Guide, in Ten Letters," by William Cobbett. Published 1829, p. 58.

rescuing of eight men on the storm-dashed shore of Long Point was a characteristic feat. Yet once those river nymphs grew up, they forsook completely their aquatic sports.

Judged by modern standards the pioneer woman with money and leisure was stationary. She did no globe-trotting, took no summer holiday at mountain camp or seashore resort, she sought health at no fashionable spring sanatorium, she belonged to no club or institute, very often she could attend not even a church. She had no part in outdoor sports. Mrs. Grundy reigned for her supreme in the Canadian bush. Mrs. Traill, when explaining the charm of backwoods life for men and its irksomeness for women, found the chief reason for it in this. Men had their hunting, shooting, fishing and boating, and they had their taverns, their horse-races and their military training day also. But "in none of these can their sisters join." Indeed, seventy years ago in Canada it was not proper for a girl to skate, much less play hockey, curl, or enjoy a round of golf or set of tennis. Canniff Haight grows quite poetic reminiscencing on the boys' delight in skating on the bay, but tells us incidentally, "the girls did not share in this exhilarating exercise then: indeed, their doing so would have been thought quite improper."<sup>1</sup>

When to this long list of "did nots" and "could nots" is added the general dearth of interesting books, magazines and papers in the days gone by, the deadly tedium which must often have settled down upon the pioneer woman's soul, and the sinking of the tone of her mind and reflections to a gloomy, inert, vague resignation and

<sup>1</sup> "Country Life Fifty Years Ago," by Canniff Haight, published 1885, pp. 35-36.

dejection, will be faintly understood and sympathized with to-day. Libraries in the early times were few and far between. Their books were chiefly dry works on theology, biography and history, "well calculated," as some one put it, "to supply in great measure the lack of Christian teaching," but not exactly to wile away a girl's idle hour while her brother was cutting exquisite eights on the polished face of the pond near by.

Mrs. Traill and Mrs. Jameson, two very shrewd and detached observers of the life of Canadian women of their day, saw very clearly this monotonous waste of time and consequent discontent on the part of women of the leisure class. Mrs. Jameson quotes the following conversation with the husband of such a woman, as illustrating a typical case in point. The husband considered himself a prosperous man, and would have been very happy were it not for his wife, who fretted and pined continually after her "home."

"'But,' said I, 'surely wherever you are is her *home*, and she ought to be happy where she sees you getting on better, enjoying more of comfort and independence than you could have hoped to obtain in the old country.'

"'Well, yes,' said he hesitatingly, 'and I can't say but that my wife is a good woman; I've no particular fault to find with her; and it is very natural she should mope, for she has no friend or acquaintance, you see, and she doesn't take to the people and the ways here; and at home she had her mother and her sister to talk to; they lived with us, you see. Then I am out all day long, looking after my business, and she feels quite lonely like, and she's a-crying when I come back—and I am sure I don't know what to do.'"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"Winter Studies and Summer Rambles in Canada," by Mrs. Jameson. Published 1838, Vol. II, p. 132.

Mrs. Jameson then goes on to say that never in her life had she met so many repining and discontented women as in Canada.

"I never met with one woman recently settled here who considered herself happy in her new home and country. I *heard* of one, and doubtless there are others, but they are exceptions to the general rule. . . . Can you imagine the position of a fretful, frivolous woman, strong neither in mind nor frame, abandoned to her own resources in the wilds of Upper Canada? I do not believe you *can* imagine anything so pitiable, so ridiculous, and, to borrow the Canadian word, 'so shiftless.'"

Mrs. Traill comes to the same conclusion. Women, to be happy in Canada, must be sufficient unto themselves and must have intellectual resources to ward off melancholy. She urges them particularly to study botany and natural history as a preparation for their life in the forest. Such knowledge would fill the world around them with new meaning and beauty for themselves, and, besides, it would be something refining to teach their children and to help to keep them from the "gross tendencies" by which she felt they were encompassed in the rude, ignorant, workaday world where they had to grow up. It was admirable advice. Unfortunately it would appeal most to those who had least need of it.

After all, however, Mrs. Traill and Mrs. Jameson generalized on too limited data. They were familiar with the lives and feelings of the women of the higher class only, of women who had left pleasant homes and congenial ways of life behind them and who had, no doubt, to pass through a tremendous ordeal in becoming

acclimatized to the New World. They saw them, too, at the raw beginning of the process. We look back on the finished work, and with all honour can testify that while a few of the weak and frivolous fell by the way, the leisure class of women as a whole rose nobly to the situation. They overcame its difficulties and limitations with a wonderfully cheerful and efficient spirit. They became loyal, loving daughters of their adopted land, and could at the end of their days join truthfully with Mrs. Moodie in saying:

“ . . . my love for the country has steadily increased from year to year, and my attachment to Canada is now so strong that I cannot imagine any inducement, short of absolute necessity, which could induce me to leave the country where, as wife and mother, some of the happiest years of my life have been spent.”<sup>1</sup>

It was only the very small minority, however, the few women with means who came to Canada and found it a land of exile. The vast majority had left a motherland where, in the poet's graphic phrase, “just to draw the breath of life was one long, hungry pain.” For these, Canada was a land of promise, a land of hope. They became at once absorbingly wrapped up in their work and the prospects of better, fuller lives they saw opening before themselves and their children. They had, of course, a latent desire for diversion, but for the present it was very secondary to the desire to make good, to get along. It was therefore in social intercourse which had some direct bearing on their work, some vital connection with the main purpose of their lives, that they found congenial refreshment and recreation.

<sup>1</sup>“Roughing it in the Bush,” by Susanna Moodie, p. 7.



It was the "bees," to which reference has already been made, that provided such entertainment most naturally. They were looked upon as a festival, and from the moment the work was taken in hand there was a constant whirl of laughter and talk until it was ended. It was a direct slight not to be invited to a bee, although it was contrary to all rules of pioneer etiquette to wait for an invitation to make an ordinary visit. "If she doesn't want to come to see me, I am sure I don't want to see her," was the attitude of the hostess. A visit had to be a spontaneous act on the part of the guest; not so a bee. The members met by special invitation and it was a point of honour with them to advance their host's work as far as they possibly could in the day. The host and hostess, in their turn, laid themselves out to please their guests in every way. Whiskey was plentiful and the meats were the best the house could afford.

Bees varied. Logging bees and raising bees were very different functions from corn-huskings and apple-parings. At a logging or raising the work was tremendously heavy, and cheap, strong whiskey flowed very freely. At such times it almost seemed predestined to keep the heart and strength in men who did such "horse work" for such long hours. But it wrought sad havoc. Many a bee ended in fatal, foolhardy exhibitions of reckless bravado, or in wrestling bouts or boxing contests between a couple of old grudge-bearing rivals in vigour and skill. A wild strength of will and enduring hatreds were fostered by the isolation of men's lives in those days. They did not meet their fellow-men often enough. They had little but their own feelings and work to think upon between times. Sport, politics,

religion, books, newspapers played a very minor part. Therefore, when they met at such gatherings as a bee, there was much combustible material for a mischief-maker or a tipsy impulse to set afire. Fierce and bloody were some of the brawls which ended such bees.

The lighter and later bees usually had a happier close. After the work was done, the men and the women who had been assisting the hostess maybe merely joined in an hour of pleasant chatting by the fire. Probably we could in no way realize so well how great a change has come over people's attitude towards life as by joining one of these old-time hearth-fire circles. For a little while all would seem natural, as the conversation flowed, with slight variation, round their neighbours and their crops. But that was merely the froth of such an evening. Sooner or later the real topic of perennial interest silenced all other. It was ghosts. Three or four neighbours scarcely ever met for a chat about a backwoods fire that the conversation did not take a weird and superstitious turn. Then, as the bright sparkling fire sank into blackening coals, and the romancers realized they had to go home through the dark woods and past the graveyard, they were in the proper frame of mind to see and dream more thrilling sights than ever to relate at the next session. The children, in the meantime, supposed to be asleep in the bunks along the wall, had also heard the ghostly tales and were lying paralyzed, seeing all kinds of monsters growing in the flickering shadows of the dimly lighted room.

Very often, however, the day's work had a more wholesome ending for young and old. A rollicking old-time dance brought the festivities to a close. This dance was always of the same type, the country square

dance. It was a unique performance which required to be seen and heard to be fully appreciated. In the early days the music was generally supplied by a fiddler or two, although if the neighbourhood could not boast such musicians, a "jew's harpist" or an expert on a paper stretched over a comb have been known to prove acceptable substitutes. Not so for the "caller-off." There could be no deputy for this all-important functionary. He stage-managed the dance. He shouted his directions in loud sing-song, which gave perhaps the original impulse for "*vers libre*" to-day. At any rate his canzonet could scarcely have been classified as either rhyme or blank verse. The following fragments native to one district will give an idea of the style—of course each bard, worthy of his position, had moments of happy inspiration when new lines were added, old ones altered, and thus he established a formula in that neighbourhood peculiarly his own.

"Ladies in the centre,  
Gents take a walk,  
Salute your own and pass her by,  
Don't be shy,  
Balance to the next and all swing out.  
Gents hook on, ladies bounce back,  
Join your hands and circle half.  
Partners swing  
Right and left back to the same old thing.  
Around the hall, gents, take your partner for a promenade,  
Stand her by and swing to the next,  
Then bring her back with a half galopade."

There were some communities which on religious principles were opposed to dancing. With them an

evening's fun took the form of games. Of these there was a great variety; but they could all be resolved, to quote the "caller-off," "to the same old thing"—the paying of forfeits which gave the boys a chance to kiss the girls.

Both the dancing and the games no doubt often brought forth more energy than grace. They encouraged, too, a free and easy boisterousness which would shock many unaccustomed to homespun mirth. Our hardworking forefathers were inclined to give too unreserved sanction to Shakespeare's words:

"Ceremony was but devised at first  
To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes,  
Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown;  
But where there is true friendship, there needs none."

Ceremony there was none in pioneer merrymaking, but there was a spirit of fun and honest abandonment which was very refreshing.

Usually the supreme occasions on which friend seeks friend are at births, marriages and deaths. Strange as it may seem to-day, among the early settlers of Upper Canada the last was the greatest of these three. Births caused little commotion. The women usually managed their confinements among themselves without any trained assistance. In most cases all went well, but sometimes a horse was galloped in desperate haste for the doctor, when it was too late.

Getting married, too, was an ordinary event and interrupted very little the even tenor of their ways. The matter-of-fact circumstances attending Surveyor Macdonald's wedding provide a good example of frontier despatch. In 1825 this young man was stationed by

the Canada Company at Goderich. Naturally he wanted a home there, so when he heard that Judge Mitchell, of Long Point, just one hundred and fifty miles away, had two fine daughters, he realized his opportunities at once. He set out on horseback for Long Point, where he was acquainted with the Harris family, on whom he relied for guidance and help with the matter in hand. He arrived at their home early one morning. On being taken into his confidence, Mr. and Mrs. Harris recommended the older daughter and kindly accompanied him to the house of their neighbour, Judge Mitchell.

What of the lady's part? Miss Mitchell was evidently a kindred spirit to Jane Austen's Charlotte Lucas. Charlotte prudently explained her sudden engagement to Mr. Collins in these words: "I am not romantic . . . I ask only a comfortable home; and, considering Mr. Collins' character, connections and situation in life, I am convinced that my chance of happiness with him is as fair as most people can boast on entering the marriage state." This was exactly Miss Mitchell's philosophy. She married Mr. Macdonald that afternoon, and left next morning for Goderich, mounted on a pillion behind her husband.<sup>1</sup>

Such celerity and despatch were unusual. Long delays were much more likely to be the fate of pioneer lovers. For a long time people authorized to marry them were few and far between. When the settlements were first formed and under military rule, the commanding officer at the military post, or the adjutant or surgeon acting as chaplain of the regiment, frequently performed the ceremony. As the country passed under

<sup>1</sup> Edward Harris gives many of the details of this marriage in the "Transactions" of the U. E. Loyalist Society for 1898.

civil jurisdiction this privilege fell to the magistrates. Before 1798, no ministers but those of the Church of England and Roman Catholic faith were officially recognized and allowed to solemnize matrimony. After that date ministers of the Church of Scotland, and Lutherans and Calvinists, were given the same rights, but it was not until 1831 that the clergymen of such large religious bodies as the Methodists and the Baptists were recognized by the law of the land.

So it was that Cupid's victims had often to journey far or suffer a weary wait before the nuptial knot could be legally tied. Such expeditions in search of a priest or squire provided an excellent excuse for many a merry honeymoon. Generally the happy couple set out alone, but if the distance was not too great they were accompanied by a number of young friends. A levy was made on the horses of the neighbourhood and a merry cavalcade of mounted men and women, single or double, joined them to assist in the ceremony. They raced their horses along the way, and if an unskilful horseman or horsewoman was put *hors de combat*, as frequently happened, it only added to the fun. Sometimes instead they all rode together packed in a jolly load in a waggon box or open sleigh. According to one old lady of Ameliasburgh, when the waggon was used the box was arranged with chairs and each gallant was supposed to support his partner upon his knee, so that there might be plenty of room for all. It is very easy to picture the fluctuations and oscillations—and osculations—possible on such unsteady seats travelling thus over the forest roads of those days. Such a wedding party usually ended in a dance at the largest tavern on the way home.

What did the bride wear? Unfortunately, our

accounts have filtered through male pens as a rule, so there has been much left for our own imagination to supply. Roger Bates in his memoir tells us, "The ladies had no white dresses to spoil or fancy bonnets. With deerskin petticoats, homespun gowns, and perhaps squirrelskin bonnets they looked charming in the eyes of their lovers, who were rigged out in similar materials." This seems almost too idyllic a picture to be accepted. It is to be feared the bride was able to furbish up some finery, old or new, found in her mother's chest or the pedlar's pack, to mar the pastoral simplicity of the squirrel and deerskin combination.

Of characteristic marriage fees we have more definite information. And, truth to tell, they harmonize nicely with the homespun and deerskin. Squire Sherwood, one of the first magistrates appointed by Governor Simcoe, for the County of Leeds, told of one young man who, when making his arrangements, stipulated that the fee should be "a good wheat fan," an implement much in use at the time, and which he was an adept at making. Another swain tendered him "a good corn basket with oak splints so tight that I will warrant it to hold water." It was the Rev. Dr. Boomer, however, of Galt, who enjoyed the juicy perquisite of a tub of fresh sausages on such an occasion. After the ceremony the bride stepped briskly up and whispered in his ear that they had no money, but would send him, the next day, their marriage fee in sausages. The promise was generously fulfilled.

No account of old-time weddings would be complete that did not mention the charivari. It was one of the last things on the programme, and generally got up by

the young men of the neighbourhood not included among the wedding guests. They mustered around the house of mirth after dark with masked or blackened faces and made a most ear-splitting uproar. All sorts of "physical bodies capable of emitting sound" were requisitioned for the night. A typical array of such instruments is graphically depicted by one writer thus:

"Two corn baskets full of cowbells tied to saplings; a score and a half of frying-pans beat with mush sticks; two and thirty Dutch oven and skillet-lids clashed as symbals; fifty-seven small barrels drummed with fists and corn-cobs; one hundred and ninety-five quills, prepared and blown as clarionets; forty-three tin whistles and baby-trumpets, blown till they all cracked; two small and one large military drums with six fifes, blown on D in alt., or *thereabouts*—add imitations of scalp and war cries, and inhuman yells, screams, shrieks and hisses, of the most eminent vocalists!"<sup>1</sup>

Usually fun only was designed, and the serenaders retired when the bride and groom had shown themselves, treated them to whiskey and received in turn their rough congratulations. But very often the entertainment celebrated the wedding of an old bachelor or a widower or some objectionable person whom the boys delighted to tease or were determined to annoy. Under these circumstances it was very easy for "the spirit of frolic, aided by the spirit of the still," to work considerable havoc before the orgies of the night were done. Frequently the bridegroom or his friends lost all patience with his tormentors and resorted to fire arms, sometimes with serious consequences.

<sup>1</sup> "The New Purchase," by Robert Carlton (Baynard Rush Hall), edited by James Albert Woodburn, p. 447.



Various troubles beset the early settlers, but death, barring accidents, remained strangely aloof. This was their greatest blessing. Had it been a land where sickness and death prevailed, the pioneer shoulders could not have borne the load. There were too few assuagements for bodily pain and heart-breaking sorrow in the Canadian bush. No matter where the "fell mortality" overtook them, in village centres or lonely shanty homes, there was a bare cruelty about it that very few people have to face to-day.

The one form of sickness which made the new settlements tremble was the outbreak of an epidemic. Scarlet fever, diphtheria, smallpox were terrible foes they could not fight. But the King of Terrors for them was the Asiatic cholera. How completely a neighbourhood could be obsessed by it is illustrated by its characteristic visitation on Galt in 1834. A travelling menagerie company brought it when they gave a performance there on Monday, after one of their members had died with the disease. By Wednesday and Thursday the cholera was raging:

"Nought was heard but the sound and stroke of the coffin maker's hammer, as he nailed the rude and unsmoothed boards together. . . . Even the noise of the waggons to and from the burying ground struck you as having something ominous. . . . Now and then your attention was arrested by the echo of the distant trampling of coming horse, whose lathered sides and expanded nostrils showed his headlong haste, while the anxious features and sunken visage of the rider, told . . . he came for the assistance of the doctor. . . . So passed Thursday, and the sun of that day had not set when the last of thirty-five unceremonious burials had taken place. . . ."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Reminiscences of Galt and Dumfries," by James Young; published 1880, pp. 99, 100.

The making of the green board coffins, the rattling of the waggons past to the graveyard, the galloping in of spent horses and riders—with what painful trappings did the grim reaper go forth to winnow his field!

It was harder still in the distant, isolated shanty. The harrowing, but typical, details of one family's sorrow reveal such possibilities of grief and loneliness in a never-to-be-forgotten way. A man and his wife, with two young children, settled in the spring in the Township of Ops, eight miles back from their nearest neighbour. During the summer the father managed to put up his shanty and make a clearing for his first crop. Then he took ill. Frost came. Winter set in. The snow fell deep. The little family became stormbound in their tiny hut. Wolves, seeing no one about, howled around the door. Finally the sick man died. His wife attempted to dig his grave, but she could not pry up the ice-locked earth. With heaven-born instinct she turned where their hearth-fire wood was piled outside the door. She rolled the logs away one after another and to her joy she found the ground underneath scarcely frozen. She dug the grave, rolled the body gently in and covered it with the clay she had taken out, and then piled back the wood to protect it from the hungry wolves.<sup>1</sup>

In neither of these exceptional cases just described could there be the mustering of the friends and neighbours which a death as a rule called forth. The whole countryside belonged to one family in the hour of pain. Neighbours in the bush were so dependent upon one another to promote happiness or comfort sorrow, that it was naturally so.

Besides, the immigrants had brought with them their old customs and superstitions. Among these was none

<sup>1</sup> "Upper Canada Sketches," by Thomas Conant, p. 61.

more deeply rooted than the "arvill," as the North of England man called it, or the "wake," to use the familiar Irish name in Canada for this watch by the dead. It had been with them for centuries a time of lavish hospitality. Mrs. Gaskell, in her "Life of Charlotte Brontë," gives a very good insight into what it was in England in the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the early Canadian emigrants left their native land:

"The sexton, standing at the foot of the open grave, announced that the arvill would be held at the Black Bull, or whatever public-house might be fixed upon by the friends of the dead; . . . the arvills at Haworth were often far more jovial doings. . . . At the funeral of Mr. Charnock . . . above eighty people were bid to the arvill, and the price of the feast was 4s. 6d. per head. All of which was defrayed by the friends of the deceased. As few 'shirked their liquor,' there were very frequently 'up-and-down fights' before the close of the day; sometimes with the horrid additions of 'pawsing' and 'gouging' and biting."

The custom had sprung out of the old necessity of furnishing some refreshment for those who came from a distance to pay their last mark of respect to a friend. In Canada there was the same reason for maintaining it. But unfortunately the ever present, cheap, strong whiskey made only too fertile a soil in which the objectionable features might flourish as well as the good.

It is easy to understand how, in a country where diversions were so few, a gathering at which such extremely lavish hospitality was shown and where every one met would become a very popular and enjoyable occasion. For many of the old settlers a "burying," with its accompanying wake, was by far the most enjoy-

able social gathering they ever had an opportunity of attending.

There was another side to the wake, however. In Ireland it had been accompanied from the earliest times with extravagant and formal demonstrations of grief. The whole gamut of emotion must be run between the wailing of the "keen" and the conviviality of the feast. This wild crying for the dead became a recognized custom in the majority of Canadian settlements. People sent many miles for old women known to be famous in raising the "keen." Their peculiar wail was a most passionate shriek of grief, uttered again and again as they rocked themselves, with covered heads, to and fro. It must have had on the spectators a somewhat similar effect to watching a terrible tragedy acted upon the stage.

"This grief of the 'keen' is no personal complaint for the death of one . . . but seems to contain the whole passionate rage that lurks somewhere in every native of the island. In this cry of pain the inner consciousness of the people seems to lay itself bare for an instant and to reveal the mood of beings who feel their isolation in the face of a universe that wars on them with winds and seas. They are usually silent, but in the presence of death all outward show of indifference or patience is forgotten; and they shriek with pitiable despair before the horror of the fate to which they all are doomed."

A better interpretation than this of John M. Synge, of the emotion back of and aroused by the Irish cry, as he heard it in Inishmaan, and as it repeatedly sounded in the funeral processions and over the graves of the Canadian pioneers, could not be put into words.

If a quaint, pleasant pastoral of the early-day life

of our province was devised, such scenes as the charivari and the wake could easily be dispensed with. But it would not be true. There were too many details of ignorance, of superstition, of coarseness, of fierce lawlessness, sometimes of positive violence in those annals, for all to be omitted without making impossible a perfect and sympathetic understanding of the social life of the women of the time. The people, of course, were cut off by great distances, by notoriously bad roads and by the isolation of the bush from the amenities and civilization of the world. This in large measure explained their social backwardness. Besides, they were making their homes in the old fastnesses of the Indian, the fur-trader, and the *coureur de bois*, and easily became imbued with some of the wild spirit of the place. Again, they had among themselves a large element of the usual type of the unrestrained population of a frontier.

The cruel flogging of her children at school, the innumerable taverns, quarrels and fights, the low "shebangs" dotted along the bank of every lumbering stream where whiskey and squaws lay in wait for the light heart and heavy purse of the returning shanty boy, the obstreperous charivari and the boisterous wakes were some of the outward and visible signs of the peculiar form of society in which the pioneer woman moved and had her being. Few, indeed, are the sections of Ontario to-day where an inquirer will not be told: "This was a terrible district in which to bring up a family seventy or eighty years ago. There was a tavern on every corner of that two hundred acres."

Yet, when all is said, it points only to a certain wild-

ness and roughness—evils generated by isolation and too much cheap whiskey—that is all.

There was nothing fundamentally wrong with the heart of the people. There was, instead, a warm kindness and hospitality alike to neighbour and to stranger, an energetic spirit of interest and helpfulness towards one another. This must be qualified in only one way. The great mass of early settlers had a solemn hatred of class distinction, which sometimes blinded them to hardships and sufferings they might have lessened. Their contempt for a leisure class and the things which pertained to it was largely justified by their own industry, their great respect for labour and their efficiency in work. Every man and woman possessed a dogged determination to be self-sufficient and independent.

In such lives of battle and strain there was often little room for the things of the spirit. Dreamers, poets, artists and prophets rarely interrupted them with their visions. But all manifestations of the nobler sides of men with which they did come into understanding touch won their ready homage and respect. To the upright man of sterling character they bowed down. Considering the primitive condition of the settlers and the country, they showed an admirable interest in religion, education, and the things of the spirit. As we have seen, the first petition of the U. E. Loyalists to the Government asked for a Church of England and a Church of Scotland to be established amongst them, and for three schools to be built. Mrs. Jameson was much surprised to find the members of parliament, many of whom were scarcely able to read themselves, eager to provide educational facilities for their children. Many of the immi-

grants had brought a few cherished books with them. These were perpetually exchanged, one with another. Such was the beginning of little libraries like the Dalhousie Library at Lanark. Lord Dalhousie, being impressed by the zeal of the settlers for good books, made several contributions to their hoard. Their aim and his was to provide books of "solid instruction and sound piety" which would make their children both "useful and upright men of integrity and knowledge."

Their commercial relations were very simple and based to a large extent on trust in their fellow-men. Money was scarce, and there was much resort to credit. The merchant in the small town bought the farmer's potash. He paid him partly in goods at the time, and the rest was allowed to stand on account. The farmer in turn paid his help with an order for goods to the merchant. So the system grew. Yet the book-keeping remained very simple. Written agreements were seldom used. A broad, plain honesty marked their transactions. A man's word was as good as his bond, and no one ever thought of locking a door in the new settlements.

Strong family affections and deep respect for parental authority pervaded their home life. If the husbands were inclined to be a little autocratic and domineering, their wives were patient and industrious. In spite of the manifold temptations around them, practically all the women—very, very few were the exceptions—maintained habits of absolute soberness. Yet they recognized that there were great excuses for the men who could not, and looked upon drinking as just one of the inevitable troubles of married life.

The virtues of the backwoodswomen—their practical efficiency, their shrewd common sense, their industry,

their thrift, their energy and self-devotion in providing for farm and family, their warm-hearted charity and loving-kindness towards the poor and the sick, their wholesomeness and purity and in many cases their innate gentleness and high ideals—tempt one to enlarge unduly upon them. The pioneer mothers laid broad and deep the foundations of the future state, and for what is soundest and most enduring in the life of Canada to-day we owe to them a debt of love and gratitude that never can be forgotten. But they do not ask for eulogy. Their best praise is the record of their deeds. In their day they had work enough, love enough, and faith enough, and these are the essential things.

THE END





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