

Life in the Clearings vs the Bush

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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK LIFE IN THE CLEARINGS VS. THE BUSH *****

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Life in the Clearings versus the Bush

by Mrs. Moodie

Author of "Roughing it in the Bush," &c.

"I sketch from Nature, and the draught is true. Whate'er the picture, whether grave or gay, Painful experience in a distant land Made it mine own."

TO

JOHN WEDDERBURN DUNBAR MOODIE, ESQ.

SHERRIFF OF THE COUNTY OF HASTINGS,

UPPER CANADA,

THIS WORK IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY HIS ATTACHED FRIEND

AND WIFE,

SUSANNA MOODIE

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INTRODUCTION

"Dear foster-mother, on whose ample breast The hungry still find food, the weary rest; The child of want that treads thy happy shore, Shall feel the grasp of poverty no more; His honest toil meet recompense can claim, And Freedom bless him with a freeman's name!" S.M.

In our work of "Roughing it in the Bush," I endeavoured to draw a picture of Canadian life, as I found it twenty years ago, in the Backwoods. My motive in giving such a melancholy narrative to the British public, was prompted by the hope of deterring well-educated people, about to settle in this colony, from entering upon a life for which they were totally unfitted by their previous pursuits and habits.

To persons unaccustomed to hard labour, and used to the comforts and luxuries deemed indispensable to those moving in the middle classes at home, a settlement in the bush can offer few advantages. It has proved the ruin of hundreds and thousands who have ventured their all in this hazardous experiment; nor can I recollect a single family of the higher class, that have come under my own personal knowledge, that ever realised an independence, or bettered their condition, by taking up wild lands in remote localities; while volumes might be filled with failures, even more disastrous than our own, to prove the truth of my former statements.

But while I have endeavoured to point out the error of gentlemen bringing delicate women and helpless children to toil in the woods, and by so doing excluding them from all social intercourse with persons in their own rank, and depriving the younger branches of the family of the advantages of education, which, in the vicinity of towns and villages, can be enjoyed by the children of the poorest emigrant, I have never said anything against the REAL benefits to be derived from a judicious choice of settlement in this great and rising country.

God forbid that any representations of mine should deter one of my countrymen from making this noble and prosperous colony his future home. But let him leave to the hardy labourer the place assigned to him by Providence, nor undertake, upon limited means, the task of pioneer in the great wilderness. Men of independent fortune can live anywhere. If such prefer a life in the woods, to the woods let them go; but they will soon find out that they could have employed the means in their power in a far more profitable manner

than in chopping down trees in the bush.

There are a thousand more advantageous ways in which a man of property may invest his capital, than by burying himself and his family in the woods. There never was a period in the history of the colony that offered greater inducements to men of moderate means to emigrate to Canada than the present. The many plank-roads and railways in the course of construction in the province, while they afford high and remunerative wages to the working classes, will amply repay the speculator who embarks a portion of his means in purchasing shares in them. And if he is bent upon becoming a Canadian farmer, numbers of fine farms, in healthy and eligible situations, and in the vicinity of good markets, are to be had on moderate terms, that would amply repay the cultivator for the money and labour expended upon them.

There are thousands of independent proprietors of this class in Canada—men who move in the best society, and whose names have a political weight in the country. Why gentlemen from Britain should obstinately crowd to the Backwoods, and prefer the coarse, hard life of an axeman, to that of a respectable landed proprietor in a civilised part of the country, has always been to me a matter of surprise; for a farm under cultivation can always be purchased for less money than must necessarily be expended upon clearing and raising buildings upon a wild lot.

Many young men are attracted to the Backwoods by the facilities they present for hunting and fishing. The wild, free life of the hunter, has for an ardent and romantic temperament an inexpressible charm. But hunting and fishing, however fascinating as a wholesome relaxation from labour, will not win bread, or clothe a wife and shivering little ones; and those who give themselves entirely up to such pursuits, soon add to these profitless accomplishments the bush vices of smoking and drinking, and quickly throw off those moral restraints upon which their respectability and future welfare mainly depend.

The bush is the most demoralizing place to which an anxious and prudent parent could send a young lad. Freed suddenly from all parental control, and exposed to the contaminating influence of broken-down gentlemen loafers, who hide their pride and poverty in the woods, he joins in their low debauchery, and falsely imagines that, by becoming a blackguard, he will be considered an excellent backwoodsman.

How many fine young men have I seen beggared and ruined in the bush! It is too much the custom in the woods for the idle settler, who will not work, to live upon the new comer as long as he can give him good fare and his horn of whisky. When these fail, farewell to your _good-hearted_, roystering friends; they will leave you like a swarm of mosquitoes, while you fret over your festering wounds, and fly to suck the blood of some new settler, who is fool enough to believe their offers of friendship.

The dreadful vice of drunkenness, of which I shall have occasion to speak hereafter, is nowhere displayed in more revolting colours, or occurs more frequently, than in the bush; nor is it exhibited by the lower classes in so shameless a manner as by the gentlemen settlers, from whom a better example might be expected. It would not be difficult to point out the causes which too often lead to these melancholy results. Loss of property, incapacity for hard labour, yielding the mind to low and degrading vices, which destroy self-respect and paralyse honest exertion, and the annihilation of those extravagant hopes that false statements, made by interested parties, had led them to entertain of fortunes that might be realised in the woods: these are a few among the many reasons that could be given for the number of victims that yearly fill a drunkard's dishonourable grave.

At the period when the greatest portion of "Roughing it in the Bush" was written, I was totally ignorant of life in Canada, as it existed in the towns and villages. Thirteen years' residence in one of the most thriving districts in the Upper Province has given me many opportunities of becoming better acquainted with the manners and habits of her busy, bustling population, than it was possible for me ever to obtain in the green prison of the woods.

Since my residence in a settled part of the country, I have enjoyed as much domestic peace and happiness as ever falls to the lot of poor humanity. Canada has become almost as dear to me as my native land; and the homesickness that constantly preyed upon me in the Backwoods, has long ago yielded to the deepest and most heartfelt interest in the rapidly increasing prosperity and greatness of the country of my adoption,—the great foster-mother of that portion of the human family, whose fatherland, however dear to them, is unable to supply them with bread.

To the honest sons of labour Canada is, indeed, an El Dorado—a land flowing with milk and honey; for they soon obtain that independence which the poor gentleman struggles in vain to realise by his own labour in the woods.

The conventional prejudices that shackle the movements of members of the higher classes in Britain are scarcely recognised in Canada; and a man is at liberty to choose the most profitable manner of acquiring wealth, without the fear of ridicule and the loss of caste.

The friendly relations which now exist between us and our enterprising, intelligent American neighbours, have doubtless done much to produce this amalgamation of classes. The gentleman no longer looks down with supercilious self-importance on the wealthy merchant, nor does the latter refuse to the ingenious mechanic the respect due to him as a man. A more healthy state pervades Canadian society than existed here a few years ago, when party feeling ran high, and the professional men and office holders visited exclusively among themselves, affecting airs of aristocratic superiority, which were perfectly absurd in a new country, and which gave great offence to those of equal wealth who were not admitted into their clique. Though too much of this spirit exists in the large cities, such as Quebec, Montreal, and Toronto, it would not be tolerated in the small district towns and villages, where a gentleman could not take a surer method of making himself unpopular than by exhibiting this feeling to his fellow-townsmen.

I have been repeatedly asked, since the publication of "Roughing it in the Bush," to give an account of the present state of society in the colony, and to point out its increasing prosperity and commercial advantages; but statistics are not my forte, nor do I feel myself qualified for such an arduous and important task. My knowledge of the colony is too limited to enable me to write a comprehensive work on a subject of vital consequence, which might involve the happiness of others. But what I do know I will endeavour to sketch with a light pencil; and if I cannot convey much useful information, I will try to amuse the reader; and by a mixture of prose and poetry compile a small volume, which may help to while away an idle hour, or fill up the blanks of a wet day.

Belleville, Canada West, Nov. 24th, 1852.

Indian Summer.

By the purple haze that lies On the distant rocky height,
By the deep blue of the skies, By the smoky amber light,
Through the forest arches streaming. Where nature on her throne sits dreaming,
And the sun is scarcely gleaming Through the cloudlet's snowy white,
Winter's lovely herald greets us, Ere the ice-crown'd tyrant meets us.

A mellow softness fills the air— No breeze on wanton wing steals by,
To break the holy quiet there, Or make the waters fret and sigh.
Or the golden alders shiver, That bend to kiss the placid river,
Flowing on and on for ever; But the little waves seem sleeping,
O'er the pebbles slowly creeping, That last night were flashing,
leaping, Driven by the restless breeze, In lines of foam beneath yon trees.

Dress'd in robes of gorgeous hue— Brown and gold with crimson blent,
The forest to the waters blue Its own enchanting tints has lent.
In their dark depths, life-like glowing, We see a second forest growing,
Each pictur'd leaf and branch bestowing A fairy grace on that twin wood,
Mirror'd within the crystal flood.

'Tis pleasant now in forest shades;— The Indian hunter strings his bow To track, through dark entangled glades, The antler'd deer and bounding doe; Or launch at night his birch canoe, To spear the finny tribes that dwell On sandy bank, in weedy cell, Or pool the fisher knows right well,— Seen by the red and livid glow Of pine-torch at his vessel's bow.

This dreamy Indian summer-day Attunes the soul to tender sadness: We love, but joy not in the ray,— It is not summer's fervid gladness, But a melancholy glory Hov'ring brightly round decay, Like swan that sings her own sad story, Ere she floats in death away.

The day declines.—What splendid dyes, In flicker'd waves of crimson driven, Float o'er the saffron sea, that lies Glowing within the western heaven! Ah, it is a peerless even! See, the broad red sun has set, But his rays are quivering yet Through nature's veil of violet, Streaming bright o'er lake and hill; But earth and forest lie so still— We start, and check the rising tear, 'Tis beauty sleeping on her bier.

LIFE IN THE CLEARINGS

VERSUS THE BUSH

CHAPTER I

Belleville

"The land of our adoption claims Our highest powers,—our firmest trust— May future ages blend our names With hers, when we shall sleep in dust. Land of our sons!—last-born of earth, A mighty nation nurtures thee; The first in moral power and worth,— Long mayst thou boast her sovereignty!

Union is strength, while round the boughs Of thine own lofty maple-tree; The threefold wreath of Britain flows, Twined with the graceful fleur-de-lis; A chaplet wreathed mid smiles and tears, In which all hues of glory blend; Long may it bloom for future years, And vigour to thy weakness lend."

Year after year, during twenty years' residence in the colony, I had indulged the hope of one day visiting the Falls of Niagara, and year after year, for twenty long years, I was doomed to disappointment.

For the first ten years, my residence in the woods of Douro, my infant family, and last, not least, among the list of objections, that great want,—the want of money,—placed insuperable difficulties in the way of my ever accomplishing this cherished wish of my heart.

The hope, resigned for the present, was always indulged as a bright future—a pleasant day-dream—an event which at some unknown period, when happier days should dawn upon us, might take place; but which just now was entirely out of the question.

When the children were very importunate for a new book or toy, and I had not the means of gratifying them, I used to silence them by saying that I would buy that and many other nice things for them when "our money cart came home."

During the next ten years, this all-important and anxiously anticipated vehicle did not arrive. The children did not get their toys, and my journey to Niagara was still postponed to an indefinite period.

Like a true daughter of romance, I could not banish from my mind the glorious ideal I had formed of this wonder of the world; but still continued to speculate about the mighty cataract, that sublime "thunder of waters," whose very name from childhood had been music to my ears.

Ah, Hope! what would life be, stripped of thy encouraging smiles, that teach us to look behind the dark clouds of to-day for the golden beams that are to gild the morrow. To those who have faith in thy promises, the most extravagant fictions are possible; and the unreal becomes material and tangible. The artist who placed thee upon the rock with an anchor for a leaning post, could never have experienced any of thy vagrant propensities. He should have invested thee with the rainbow of Iris, the winged feet of Mercury, and the upward pointing finger of Faith; and as for thy footstool, it should be a fleecy white cloud, changing its form with the changing breeze.

Yet this hope of mine, of one day seeing the Falls of Niagara, was, after all, a very enduring hope; for though I began to fear that it never would be realized, yet, for twenty years, I never gave it up entirely; and Patience, who always sits at the feet of Hope, was at length rewarded by her sister's consenting smile.

During the past summer I was confined, by severe indisposition, almost entirely to the house. The obstinate nature of my disease baffled the skill of a very clever medical attendant, and created alarm and uneasiness in my family: and I entertained small hopes of my own recovery.

Dr. L——, as a last resource, recommended change of air and scene; a remedy far more to my taste than the odious drugs from which I had not derived the least benefit. Ill and languid as I was, Niagara once more rose before my mental vision, and I exclaimed, with a thrill of joy, "The time is come at last—I shall yet see it before I die."

My dear husband was to be the companion of my long journey in search of health. Our simple arrangements were soon made, and on the 7th of September we left Belleville in the handsome new steam-boat, "The Bay of Quinte," for Kingston.

The afternoon was cloudless, the woods just tinged with their first autumnal glow, and the lovely bay, and its fairy isles, never appeared more enchanting in my eyes. Often as I had gazed upon it in storm and shine, its blue transparent waters seemed to smile upon me more lovingly than usual. With affectionate interest I looked long and tenderly upon the shores we were leaving. There stood my peaceful, happy home; the haven of rest to which Providence had conducted me after the storms and trials of many years. Within the walls of that small stone cottage, peeping forth from its screen of young hickory trees, I had left three dear children,—God only could tell whether we should ever meet on earth again: I knew that their prayers would follow me on my long journey, and the cherub Hope was still at my side, to whisper of happy hours and restored health and spirits. I blessed God, for the love of those young kindred hearts, and for having placed their home in such a charming locality.

Next to the love of God, the love of nature may be regarded as the purest and holiest feeling of the human breast. In the outward beauty of his creation, we catch a reflection of the divine image of the Creator, which refines the intellect, and lifts the soul upward to Him. This innate perception of the beautiful, however, is confined to no rank or situation, but is found in the most barren spots, and surrounded by the most unfavourable circumstances; wherever the sun shines and warms, or the glory of the moon and stars can be seen at night, the children of genius will find a revelation of God in their beams. But there is not a doubt that those born and brought up among scenes of great natural sublimity and beauty, imbibe this feeling in a larger degree, and their minds are more easily imbued with the glorious colouring of romance,—the inspired visions of the poet.

Dear patient reader! whether of British or Canadian origin, as I wish to afford you all the amusement in my power, deign to accompany me on my long journey. Allow me a woman's privilege of talking of all sorts of things by the way. Should I tire you with my desultory mode of conversation, bear with me charitably, and take into account the infirmities incidental to my gossiping sex and age. If I dwell too long upon some subjects, do not call me a bore, or vain and trifling, if I pass too lightly over others. The little knowledge I possess, I impart freely, and wish that it was more profound and extensive, for your sake.

Come, and take your seat with me on the deck of the steamer; and as we glide over the waters of this beautiful Bay of Quinte, I will make you acquainted with every spot worthy of note along its picturesque shores.

An English lady, writing to me not long ago, expressed her weariness of my long stories about the country of my adoption, in the following terms:—"Don't fill your letters to me with descriptions of Canada. Who, in England, thinks anything of Canada!"

Here the pride so common to the inhabitants of the favoured isles spoke out. This is perhaps excusable in those who boast that they belong to a country that possesses, in an eminent degree, the attributes bestowed by old Jacob on his first-born,—“the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power.” But, to my own thinking, it savoured not a little of arrogance, and still more of ignorance, in the fair writer; who, being a woman of talent, should have known better. A child is not a man, but his progress is regarded with more attention on that account; and his future greatness is very much determined by the progress he makes in his youth.

To judge Canada by the same standard, she appears to be a giant for her years, and well worthy the most serious contemplation. Many are the weary, overtaken minds in that great, wealthy, and powerful England, that turn towards this flourishing colony their anxious thoughts, and would willingly exchange the golden prime of the mother country for the healthy, vigorous young strength of this, her stalwart child, and consider themselves only too happy in securing a home upon these free and fertile shores.

Be not discouraged, brave emigrant. Let Canada still remain the bright future in your mind, and hasten to convert your present day-dream into reality. The time is not far distant when she shall be the theme of many tongues, and the old nations of the world will speak of her progress with respect and admiration. Her infancy is past, she begins to feel her feet, to know her own strength, and see her way clearly through the wilderness. Child as you may deem her, she has already battled bravely for her own rights, and obtained the management of her own affairs. Her onward progress is certain. There is no *if* in her case. She possesses within her own territory all the elements of future prosperity, and she must be great!

The men who throng her marts, and clear her forests, are workers, not dreamers,—who have already realized Solomon's pithy proverb, "In all labour is profit;" and their industry has imbued them with a spirit of independence which cannot fail to make them a free and enlightened people.

An illustration of the truth of what I advance, can be given in the pretty town we are leaving on the north side of the bay. I think you will own with me that your eyes have seldom rested upon a spot more favoured by Nature, or one that bids fairer to rise to great wealth and political importance.

Sixty years ago, the spot that Belleville now occupies was in the wilderness; and its rapid, sparkling river and sunny upland slopes (which during the lapse of ages have formed a succession of banks to the said river), were only known to the Indian hunter and the white trader.

Where you see those substantial stone wharfs, and the masts of those vessels, unloading their valuable cargoes to replenish the stores of the wealthy merchants in the town, a tangled cedar swamp spread its dark, unwholesome vegetation into the bay, completely covering with an impenetrable jungle those smooth verdant plains, now surrounded with neat cottages and gardens.

Of a bright summer evening (and when is a Canadian summer evening otherwise?) those plains swarm with happy, healthy children, who assemble there to pursue their gambols beyond the heat and dust of the town; or to watch with eager eyes the young men of the place engaged in the manly old English game of cricket, with whom it is, in their harmless boasting, "Belleville against Toronto-Cobourg; Kingston, the whole world."

The editor of a Kingston paper once had the barbarity to compare these valiant champions of the bat and ball

to "singed cats—ugly to look at, but very devils to go."

Our lads have never forgiven the insult; and should the said editor ever show his face upon their ground, they would kick him off with as little ceremony as they would a spent ball.

On that high sandy ridge that overlooks the town eastward—where the tin roof of the Court House, a massy, but rather tasteless building, and the spires of four churches catch the rays of the sun—a tangled maze of hazel bushes, and wild plum and cherry, once screened the Indian burying-ground, and the children of the red hunter sought for strawberries among the long grass and wild flowers that flourish profusely in that sandy soil.

Would that you could stand with me on that lofty eminence and look around you! The charming prospect that spreads itself at your feet would richly repay you for toiling up the hill.

We will suppose ourselves standing among the graves in the burying-ground of the English church; the sunny heavens above us, the glorious waters of the bay, clasping in their azure belt three-fourths of the landscape, and the quiet dead sleeping at our feet.

The white man has so completely supplanted his red brother, that he has appropriated the very spot that held his bones; and in a few years their dust will mingle together, although no stone marks the grave where the red man sleeps.

From this churchyard you enjoy the finest view of the town and surrounding country; and, turn your eyes which way you will, they cannot fail to rest on some natural object of great interest and beauty.

The church itself is but a homely structure; and has always been to me a great eyesore. It is to be regretted that the first inhabitants of the place selected their best and most healthy building sites for the erection of places of worship. Churches and churchyards occupy the hills from whence they obtain their springs of fresh water,—and such delicious water! They do not at present feel any ill-consequences arising from this error of judgment; but the time will come, as population increases, and the dead accumulate, when these burying-grounds, by poisoning the springs that flow through them, will materially injure the health of the living.

The English church was built many years ago, partly of red brick burnt in the neighbourhood, and partly of wood coloured red to make up the deficiency of the costlier material. This seems a shabby saving, as abundance of brick-earth of the best quality abounds in the same hill, and the making of bricks forms a very lucrative and important craft to several persons in the town.

Belleville was but a small settlement on the edge of the forest, scarcely deserving the name of a village, when this church first pointed its ugly tower towards heaven. Doubtless its founders thought they had done wonders when they erected this humble looking place of worship; but now, when their descendants have become rich, and the village of log-huts and frame buildings has grown into a populous, busy, thriving town, and this red, tasteless building is too small to accommodate its congregation, it should no longer hold the height of the hill, but give place to a larger and handsomer edifice.

Behold its Catholic brother on the other side of the road; how much its elegant structure and graceful spire adds to the beauty of the scene. Yet the funds for rearing that handsome building, which is such an ornament to the town, were chiefly derived from small subscriptions, drawn from the earnings of mechanics, day-labourers, and female servants. If the Church of England were supported throughout the colony, on the voluntary principle, we should soon see fine stone churches, like St. Michael, replacing these decaying edifices of wood, and the outcry about the ever-vexed question of the Clergy Reserves, would be merged in her increased influence and prosperity.

The deep-toned, sonorous bell, that fills the steeple of the Catholic church, which cost, I have been told, seven hundred pounds, and was brought all the way from Spain, was purchased by the voluntary donations of the congregation. This bell is remarkable for its fine tone, which can be heard eight miles into the country, and as far as the village of Northport, eleven miles distant, on the other side of the bay. There is a solemn grandeur in the solitary voice of the magnificent bell, as it booms across the valley in which the town lies, and reverberates among the distant woods and hills, which has a very imposing effect.

A few years ago the mechanics in the town entered into an agreement that they would only work from six to six during the summer months, and from seven till five in the winter, and they offered to pay a certain sum to the Catholic church for tolling the bell at the said hours. The Catholic workmen who reside in or near the town, adhere strictly to this rule, and, if the season is ever so pressing, they obstinately refuse to work before or after the stated time. I have seen, on our own little farm, the mower fling down his scythe in the swathe, and the harvest-man his sickle in the ridge, the moment the bell tolled for six.

In fact, the bell in this respect is looked upon as a great nuisance; and the farmers in the country refuse to be guided by it in the hours allotted for field labour; as they justly remark that the best time for hard work in a hot country is before six in the morning, and after the heat of the day in the evening.

When the bell commences to toll there is a long pause between each of the first four strokes. This is to allow the pious Catholic time for crossing himself and saying a short prayer.

How much of the ideal mingles with this worship! No wonder that the Irish, who are such an imaginative people, should cling to it with such veneration. Would any other creed suit them as well? It is a solemn thing to step into their churches, and witness the intensity of their devotions. Reason never raises a doubt to shake the oneness of their faith. They receive it on the credit of their priests, and their credulity is as boundless as their ignorance. Often have I asked the poor Catholics in my employ why such and such days were holy days? They could seldom tell me, but said that "the priest told them to keep them holy, and to break them would be a deadly sin."

I cannot but respect their child-like trust, and the reverence they feel for their spiritual teachers; nor could I ever bring myself to believe that a conscientious Catholic was in any danger of rejection from the final bar. He has imposed upon himself a heavier yoke than the Saviour kindly laid upon him, and has enslaved himself with a thousand superstitious observances which to us appear absurd; but his sincerity should awaken in us an affectionate interest in his behalf, not engender the bitter hatred which at present forms an adamant barrier between us. If the Protestant would give up a little of his bigotry, and the Catholic a part of his superstition, and they would consent to meet each other half way, as brothers of one common manhood, inspired by the same Christian hope, and bound to the same heavenly country, we should no longer see the orange banner flaunting our streets on the twelfth of July, and natives of the same island provoking each other to acts of violence and bloodshed.

These hostile encounters are of yearly occurrence in the colony, and are justly held in abhorrence by the pious and thinking portion of the population of either denomination. The government has for many years vainly endeavoured to put them down, but they still pollute with their moral leprosy the free institutions of the country, and effectually prevent any friendly feeling which might grow up between the members of these rival and hostile creeds.

In Canada, where all religions are tolerated, it appears a useless aggravation of an old national grievance to perpetuate the memory of the battle of the Boyne. What have we to do with the hatreds and animosities of a more barbarous age. These things belong to the past: "Let the dead bury their dead," and let us form for ourselves a holier and truer present. The old quarrel between Irish Catholics and Protestants should have been sunk in the ocean when they left their native country to find a home, unpolled by the tyrannies of bygone ages, in the wilds of Canada.

The larger portion of our domestics are from Ireland, and, as far as my experience goes, I have found the Catholic Irish as faithful and trustworthy as the Protestants. The tendency to hate belongs to the race, not to the religion, or the Protestant would not exhibit the same vindictive spirit which marks his Catholic brother. They break and destroy more than the Protestants, but that springs from the reckless carelessness of their character more than from any malice against their employers, if you may judge by the bad usage they give their own household goods and tools. The principle on which they live is literally to care as little as possible for the things of to-day, and to take no thought at all for the morrow.

"Shure, Ma'am, it can be used," said an Irish girl to me, after breaking the spout out of an expensive china jug, "It is not a hair the worse!" She could not imagine that a mutilated object could occasion the least discomfort to those accustomed to order and neatness in their household arrangements.

The Irish female servants are remarkably chaste in their language and deportment. You are often obliged to find fault with them for gross acts of neglect and wastefulness, but never for using bad language. They may spoil your children by over-indulgence, but they never corrupt their morals by loose conversation.

An Irish girl once told me, with beautiful simplicity, "that every bad word a woman uttered, made the blessed Virgin *blush*."

A girl becoming a mother before marriage is regarded as a dreadful calamity by her family, and she seldom, if ever, gets one of her own countrymen to marry her with this stain on her character.

How different is the conduct of the female peasantry in the eastern counties of England, who unblushingly avow their derelictions from the paths of virtue. The crime of infanticide, so common there, is almost unknown among the Irish. If the priest and the confessional are able to restrain the lower orders from the commission of gross crime, who shall say that they are without their use? It is true that the priest often exercises his power over his flock in a manner which would appear to a Protestant to border on the ludicrous.

A girl who lived with a lady of my acquaintance, gave the following graphic account of an exhortation delivered by the priest at the altar. I give it in her own words:—

"Shure, Ma'am, we got a great scould from the praste the day." "Indeed, Biddy, what did he scold you for?" "Faix, and it's not meself that he scoulded at all, at all, but Misther Peter N—— and John L——, an' he held them up as an example to the whole church. 'Peter N——' says he, 'you have not been inside this church before to-day for the last three months, and you have not paid your pew-rent for the last two years. But, maybe, you have got the fourteen dollars in your pocket at this moment of spaking; or maybe you have spint it in buying pig-iron to make gridirons, in order to fry your mate of a Friday; and when your praste comes to visit you, if he does not see it itself, he smells it. And you, John L——, Alderman L——, are not six days enough in the week for work and pastime, that you must go hunting of hares on a holiday? And pray how many hares did you catch, Alderman John?'"

The point of the last satire lay in the fact that the said Alderman John was known to be an ambitious, but very poor, sportsman; which made the allusion to the *hares* he had shot the unkindest cut of all.

Such an oration from a Protestant minister would have led his congregation to imagine that their good pastor had lost his wits; but I have no doubt that it was eminently successful in abstracting the fourteen dollars from the pocket of the dilatory Peter N——, and in preventing Alderman John from hunting hares on a holiday for the time to come.

Most of the Irish priests possess a great deal of humour, which always finds a response in their mirth-loving countrymen, to whom wit is a quality of native growth.

"I wish you a happy death, Pat S—," said Mr. R—, the jolly, black-browed priest of P—, after he had married an old servant of ours, who had reached the patriarchal age of sixty-eight, to an old woman of seventy.

"D— clear of it!" quoth Pat, smiting his thigh, with a look of inimitable drollery,—such a look of broad humour as can alone twinkle from the eyes of an emeralder of that class. Pat was a prophet; in less than six months he brought the body of the youthful bride in a waggon to the house of the said priest to be buried, and, for aught I know to the contrary, the old man is living still, and very likely to treat himself to a third wife.

I was told two amusing anecdotes of the late Bishop Macdonald; a man whose memory is held in great veneration in the province, which I will give you here.

The old bishop was crossing the Rice Lake in a birch bark canoe, in company with Mr. R—, the Presbyterian minister of Peterboro'; the day was rather stormy, and the water rough for such a fragile conveyance. The bishop, who had been many years in the country, knew there was little danger to be apprehended if they sat still, and he had perfect reliance in the skill of their Indian boatman. Not so Mr. R—, he had only been a few months in the colony, and this was the first time he had ever ventured upon the water in such a tottleish machine. Instead of remaining quietly seated in the bottom of the canoe, he endeavoured to start to his feet, which would inevitably have upset it. This rash movement was prevented by the bishop, who forcibly pulled him down into a sitting posture, exclaiming, as he did so, "Keep still, my good sir; if you, by your groundless fears, upset the canoe, your protestant friends will swear that the old papist drowned the presbyterian."

One hot, sultry July evening, the celebrated Dr. Dunlop called to have a chat with the bishop, who, knowing the doctor's weak point, his fondness for strong drinks, and his almost rabid antipathy to water, asked him if he would take a draught of Edinburgh ale, as he had just received a cask in a present from the old country. The doctor's thirst grew to a perfect drought, and he exclaimed that nothing at that moment could afford him greater pleasure.

The bell was rung; the spruce, neat servant girl appeared, and was forthwith commissioned to take the bishop's own silver tankard and draw the thirsty doctor a pint of ale.

The girl quickly returned: the impatient doctor grasped the nectarian draught, and, without glancing into the tankard—for the time

"Was that soft hour 'twixt summer's eve and close,"—

emptied the greater part of its contents down his throat. A spasmodic contortion and a sudden rush to the open window surprised the hospitable bishop, who had anticipated a great treat for his guest: "My dear sir," he cried, "what can be the matter!"

"Oh, that diabolical stuff!" groaned the doctor. "I am poisoned."

"Oh, never fear," said the bishop, examining the liquid that still remained in the tankard, and bursting into a hearty laugh, "It may not agree with a Protestant's stomach, but believe me, dear doctor, you never took such a wholesome drink in your life before. I was lately sent from Rome a cask of holy water,—it stands in the same cellar with the ale,—I put a little salt into it, in order to preserve it during this hot weather, and the girl, by mistake, has given you the consecrated water instead of the ale."

"Oh, curse her!" cried the tortured doctor. "I wish it was in her stomach instead of mine!"

The bishop used to tell this story with great glee whenever Dr. Dunlop and his eccentric habits formed the

theme of conversation.

That the Catholics do not always act with hostility towards their Protestant brethren, the following anecdote, which it gives me great pleasure to relate, will sufficiently show:—

In the December of 1840 we had the misfortune to be burnt out, and lost a great part of our furniture, clothing, and winter stores. Poor as we *then* were, this could not be regarded in any other light but as a great calamity. During the confusion occasioned by the fire, and, owing to the negligence of a servant to whose care he was especially confided, my youngest child, a fine boy of two years old, was for some time missing. The agony I endured for about half an hour I shall never forget. The roaring flames, the impending misfortune that hung over us, was forgotten in the terror that shook my mind lest he had become a victim to the flames. He was at length found by a kind neighbour in the kitchen of the burning building, whither he had crept from among the crowd, and was scarcely rescued before the roof fell in.

This circumstance shook my nerves so completely that I gladly accepted the offer of a female friend to leave the exciting scene, and make her house my home until we could procure another.

I was sitting at her parlour window, with the rescued child on my lap, whom I could not bear for a moment out of my sight, watching the smoking brands that had once composed my home, and sadly pondering over our untoward destiny, when Mrs. ---'s servant told me that a gentleman wanted to see me in the drawing-room.

With little Johnnie still in my arms I went to receive the visitor; and found the Rev. Father B---, the worthy Catholic priest, waiting to receive me.

At that time I knew very little of Father B---. Calls had been exchanged, and we had been much pleased with his courteous manners and racy Irish wit. I shall never forget the kind, earnest manner in which he consoled with me on our present misfortune. He did not, however, confine his sympathy to words, but offered me the use of his neat cottage until we could provide ourselves with another house.

"You know," he said, with a benevolent smile, "I have no family to be disturbed by the noise of the children; and if you will accept the temporary home I offer you, it is entirely at your service; and," he continued, lowering his voice, "if the sheriff is in want of money to procure necessaries for his family, I can supply him until such time as he is able to repay me."

This was truly noble, and I thanked him with tears in my eyes. We did not accept the generous offer of this good Samaritan; but we have always felt a grateful remembrance of his kindness. Mr. B--- had been one of the most active among the many gentlemen who did their best in trying to save our property from the flames, a great portion of which was safely conveyed to the street. But here a system of pillage was carried on by the heartless beings, who regard fires and wreck as their especial harvest, which entirely frustrated the efforts of the generous and brave men who had done so much to help us.

How many odd things happen during a fire, which would call up a hearty laugh upon a less serious occasion. I saw one man pitch a handsome chamber-glass out of an upper window into the street, in order to *save* it; while another, at the risk of his life, carried a bottomless china jug, which had long been useless, down the burning staircase, and seemed quite elated with his success; and a carpenter took off the doors, and removed the window-sashes, in order to preserve them, and, by sending a rush of air through the burning edifice, accelerated its destruction.

At that time there was only one fire engine in the town, and that was not in a state to work. Now they have two excellent engines, worked by an active and energetic body of men.

In all the principal towns and cities in the colony, a large portion of the younger male inhabitants enrol

themselves into a company for the suppression of fire. It is a voluntary service, from which they receive no emolument, without an exemption from filling the office of a juryman may be considered as an advantage. These men act upon a principle of mutual safety; and the exertions which are made by them, in the hour of danger, are truly wonderful, and serve to show what can be effected by men when they work in unison together.

To the Canadian fire-companies the public is indebted for the preservation of life and property by a thousand heroic acts; deeds, that would be recorded as surprising efforts of human courage, if performed upon the battlefield; and which often exhibit an exalted benevolence, when exercised in rescuing helpless women and children from such a dreadful enemy as fire.

The costume adopted by the firemen is rather becoming than otherwise;—a tight-fitting frock-coat of coarse red cloth, and white trousers in summer, which latter portion of their dress is exchanged for dark blue in the winter. They wear a glazed black leather cap, of a military cut, when they assemble to work their engines, or walk in procession; and a leather hat like a sailor's nor-wester, with a long peak behind, to protect them from injury, when on active duty.

Their members are confined to no particular class. Gentlemen and mechanics work side by side in this fraternity, with a zeal and right good will that is truly edifying. Their system appears an excellent one; and I never heard of any dissension among their ranks when their services were required. The sound of the ominous bell calls them to the spot, from the greatest distance; and, during the most stormy nights, whoever skulks in bed, the fireman is sure to be at his post.

Once a year, the different divisions of the company walk in procession through the town. On this occasion their engines are dressed up with flags bearing appropriate mottoes; and they are preceded by a band of music. The companies are generally composed of men in the very prime of life, and they make a very imposing appearance. It is always a great gala day in the town, and terminates with a public dinner; that is followed by a ball in the evening, at which the wives and daughters of the members of the company are expected to appear.

Once a month the firemen are called out to practise with the engine in the streets, to the infinite delight of all the boys in the neighbourhood, who follow the engine in crowds, and provoke the operators to turn the hose and play upon their merry ranks: and then what laughing and shouting and scampering in all directions, as the ragged urchins shake their dripping garments, and fly from the ducking they had courted a few minutes before!

The number of wooden buildings that compose the larger portion of Canadian towns renders fire a calamity of very frequent occurrence, and persons cannot be too particular in regard to it. The negligence of one ignorant servant in the disposal of her ashes, may involve the safety of the whole community.

As long as the generality of the houses are roofed with shingles, this liability to fire must exist as a necessary consequence.

The shingle is a very thin pine-board, which is used throughout the colony instead of slate or tiles. After a few years, the heat and rain roughen the outward surface, and give it a woolly appearance, rendering the shingles as inflammable as tinder. A spark from a chimney may be conveyed from a great distance on a windy day, and lighting upon the furry surface of these roofs, is sure to ignite. The danger spreads on all sides, and the roofs of a whole street will be burning before the fire communicates to the walls of the buildings.

So many destructive fires have occurred of late years throughout the colony that a law has been enacted by the municipal councils to prevent the erection of wooden buildings in the large cities. But without the additional precaution of fire-proof roofs, the prohibition will not produce very beneficial effects.

Two other very pretty churches occupy the same hill with the Catholics and Episcopal,—the Scotch Residuary, and the Free Church. The latter is built of dark limestone, quarried in the neighbourhood, and is a remarkably graceful structure. It has been raised by the hearty goodwill and free donations of its congregation, and affords another capital illustration of the working of the voluntary principle.

To the soul-fettering doctrines of John Calvin I am myself no convert; nor do I think that the churches established on his views will very long exist in the world. Stern, uncompromising, unloveable and unloved, an object of fear rather than of affection, John Calvin stands out the incarnation of his own Deity; verifying one of the noblest and truest sentences ever penned by man:—"As the man, so his God. God is his idea of excellence, the compliment of his own being."

The Residuary church is a small neat building of wood, painted white. For several years after the great split in the National Church of Scotland, it was shut up, the few who still adhered to the old way being unable to contribute much to the support of a minister. The church has been reopened within the last two years, and, though the congregation is very small, has a regular pastor.

The large edifice beneath us, in Pinnacle street, leading to the bay, is the Wesleyan Methodist church, or chapel, as it would be termed at home. Thanks to the liberal institutions of the country, such distinctions are unknown in Canada. Every community of Christian worshippers is rightly termed a church. The Church is only arrogated by one.

The Wesleyans, who have been of infinite use in spreading the Gospel on the North American continent, possess a numerous and highly respectable congregation in this place. Their church is always supplied with good and efficient preachers, and is filled on the Sabbath to overflowing. They have a very fine choir, and lately purchased an organ, which was constructed by one of their own members, a genius in his way, for which they gave the handsome sum of a thousand dollars.

There is also an Episcopal Methodist church, composed of red brick, at the upper end of the town, by the river side, which is well attended.

You can scarcely adopt a better plan of judging of the wealth and prosperity of a town, than by watching, of a Sabbath morning, the congregations of the different denominations going to church. Belleville weekly presents to the eye of an observing spectator a large body of well-dressed, happy-looking people,—robust, healthy, independent-looking men, and well-formed, handsome women;—an air of content and comfort resting upon their comely faces,—no look of haggard care and pinching want marring the quiet solemnity of the scene.

The dress of the higher class is not only cut in the newest French fashion, imported from New York, but is generally composed of rich and expensive materials. The Canadian lady dresses well and tastefully, and carries herself easily and gracefully. She is not unconscious of the advantages of a pretty face and figure; but her knowledge of the fact is not exhibited in an affected or disagreeable manner. The lower class are not a whit behind their wealthier neighbours in outward adornments. And the poor emigrant, who only a few months previously had landed in rags, is now dressed neatly and respectably. The consciousness of their newly-acquired freedom has raised them in the scale of society, in their own estimation, and in that of their fellows. They feel that they are no longer despised; the ample wages they receive has enabled them to cast off the slough of hopeless poverty, which once threw its deadening influence over them, repressing all their energies, and destroying that self-respect which is so necessary to mental improvement and self-government. The change in their condition is apparent in their smiling, satisfied faces.

This is, indeed, a delightful contrast to the squalid want and poverty which so often meet the eye and pain the heart of the philanthropist at home. Canada is blessed in the almost total absence of pauperism; for none but the wilfully idle and vicious need starve here, while the wants of the sick and infirm meet with ready help and

sympathy from a most charitable public.

The Wesleyan Methodists wisely placed their burying-ground at some distance from the town; and when we first came to reside at Belleville, it was a retired and lovely spot, on the Kingston road, commanding a fine view of the bay. The rapid spread of the village into a town almost embraces in its arms this once solitary spot, and in a few years it will be surrounded with suburban residences. There is a very large brick field adjoining this cemetery, which employs during the summer months a number of hands.

Turn to the north, and observe that old-fashioned, red-brick house, now tottering to decay, that crowns the precipitous ridge that overlooks the river, and which doubtless at some very distant period once formed its right bank. That house was built by one of the first settlers in Belleville, an officer who drew his lot of wild land on that spot. It was a great house in those days, and he was a great man in the eyes of his poorer neighbours.

This gentleman impoverished himself and his family by supplying from his own means the wants of the poor emigrants in his vicinity during the great Canadian famine, which happened about fifty years ago. The starving creatures promised to repay him at some future period. Plenty again blessed the land; but the generous philanthropist was forgotten by those his bounty had saved. Peace to his memory! Though unrewarded on earth, he has doubtless reaped his reward in heaven.

The river Moira, which runs parallel with the main street of the town, and traverses several fine townships belonging to the county of Hastings in its course to the bay, is a rapid and very picturesque stream. Its rocky banks, which are composed of limestone, are fringed with the graceful cedar, soft maple, and elegant rock elm, that queen of the Canadian forest. It is not navigable, but is one great source of the wealth and prosperity of the place, affording all along its course excellent sites for mills, distilleries, and factories, while it is the main road down which millions of feet of timber are yearly floated, to be rafted at the entrance of the bay.

The spring floods bring down such a vast amount of lumber, that often a jam, as it is technically called, places the two bridges that span the river in a state of blockade.

It is a stirring and amusing scene to watch the French Canadian lumberers, with their long poles, armed at the end with sharp spikes, leaping from log to log, and freeing a passage for the crowded timbers.

Handsome in person, and lithe and active as wild cats, you would imagine, to watch their careless disregard of danger, that they were born of the waters, and considered death by drowning an impossible casualty in their case. Yet never a season passes without fatal accidents thinning their gay, light-hearted ranks.

These amphibious creatures spend half their lives in and on the waters. They work hard in forming rafts at the entrance of the bay during the day, and in the evening they repair to some favourite tavern, where they spend the greater part of the night in singing and dancing. Their peculiar cries awaken you by day-break, and their joyous shouts and songs are wafted on the evening breeze. Their picturesque dress and shanties, when shown by their red watch-fires along the rocky banks of the river at night, add great liveliness, and give a peculiarly romantic character to the water scene.

They appear a happy, harmless set of men, brave and independent; and if drinking and swearing are vices common to their caste and occupation, it can scarcely be wondered at in the wild, reckless, roving life they lead. They never trouble the peaceful inhabitants of the town. Their broils are chiefly confined to their Irish comrades, and seldom go beyond the scene of their mutual labour. It is not often that they find their way into the jail or penitentiary.

A young lady told me an adventure that befell her and her sister, which is rather a droll illustration of the manners of a French Canadian lumberer. They were walking one fine summer evening along the west bank of

the Moira, and the narrator, in stooping over the water to gather some wild-flowers that grew in a crevice of the rocks, dropped her parasol into the river. A cry of vexation at the loss of an article of dress, which is expensive, and almost indispensable beneath the rays of a Canadian summer sun, burst from her lips, and attracted the attention of a young man whom she had not before observed, who was swimming at some distance down the river. He immediately turned, and dexterously catching the parasol as it swiftly glided past him, swam towards the ladies with the rescued article, carried dog-fashion, between his teeth.

In his zeal to render this little service, the poor fellow forgot that he was not in a condition to appear before ladies; who, startled at such an extraordinary apparition, made the best of their heels to fly precipitately from the spot.

"I have no doubt," said Miss ---, laughing, "that the good-natured fellow meant well, but I never was so frightened and confounded in my life." The next morning the parasol was returned at the street door, with "Jean Baptiste's compliments to the young ladies." So much for French Canadian gallantry.

It is a pretty sight. A large raft of timber, extending perhaps for a quarter of a mile, gliding down the bay in tow of a steamer, decorated with red flags and green pine boughs, and managed by a set of bold active fellows, whose jovial songs waken up the echoes of the lonely woods. I have seen several of these rafts, containing many thousand pounds worth of timber, taking their downward course in one day.

The centre of the raft is generally occupied by a shanty and cooking apparatus, and at night it presents an imposing spectacle, seen by the red light of their fires, as it glides beneath the shadow of some lofty bank, with its dark overhanging trees. I have often coveted a sail on those picturesque rafts, over those smooth moonlighted waters.

The spring-floods bring with them a great quantity of waste timber and fallen trees from the interior; and it is amusing to watch the poor Irishwomen and children wading to the waist in the water, and drawing out these waifs and strays with hooked sticks, to supply their shanties with fuel. It is astonishing how much an industrious lad can secure in a day of this refuse timber. No gleaner ever enters a harvest-field in Canada to secure a small portion of the scattered grain; but the floating treasures which the waters yield are regarded as a providential supply of firing, which is always gathered in. These spring-floods are often productive of great mischief, as they not infrequently carry away all the dams and bridges along their course. This generally happens after an unusually severe winter, accompanied with very heavy falls of snow.

The melting of the snows in the back country, by filling all the tributary creeks and streams, converts the larger rivers into headlong and destructive torrents, that rush and foam along with "curbless force," carrying huge blocks of ice and large timbers, like feathers upon their surface.

It is a grand and beautiful sight, the coming down of the waters during one of these spring freshets. The river roars and rages like a chafed lion; and frets and foams against its rocky barrier, as if determined to overcome every obstacle that dares to impede its furious course. Great blocks of ice are seen popping up and down in the boiling surges; and unwieldy saw-logs perform the most extravagant capers, often starting bolt upright; while their crystal neighbours, enraged at the uncourteous collision, turn up their glittering sea-green edges with an air of defiance, and tumble about in the current like mad monsters of the deep.

The blocks of ice are sometimes lifted entirely out of the water by the force of the current, and deposited upon the top of the bank, where they form an irregular wall of glass, glittering and melting leisurely in the heat of the sun.

A stranger who had not witnessed their upheaval, might well wonder by what gigantic power they had been placed there.

In March, 1844, a severe winter was terminated by a very sudden thaw, accompanied by high winds and deluges of rain. In a few days the snow was all gone, and every slope and hill was converted into a drain, down which the long-imprisoned waters rushed continuously to the river. The roads were almost impassable, and, on the 12th of the month, the river rose to an unusual height, and completely filled its rocky banks. The floods brought down from the interior a great jam of ice, which, accumulating in size and altitude at every bridge and dam it had carried away in its course towards the bay, was at length arrested in its progress at the lower bridge, where the ice, though sunk several feet below the rushing waters, still adhered firmly to the shore. Vast pieces of ice were piled up against the abutments of the bridge, which the mountain of ice threatened to annihilate, as well as to inundate the lower end of the town.

It presented to the eager and excited crowd, who, in spite of the impending danger rushed to the devoted bridge, a curious and formidable spectacle. Imagine, dear reader, a huge mass, composed of blocks of ice, large stones, and drift timber, occupying the centre of the river, and extending back for a great distance; the top on a level with the roofs of the houses. The inhabitants of the town had everything to dread from such a gigantic battering-ram applied to their feeble wooden bridge.

A consultation was held by the men assembled on the bridge, and it was thought that the danger might be averted by sawing asunder the ice, which still held firm, and allowing a free passage for the blocks that impeded the bridge.

The river was soon covered with active men, armed with axes and poles, some freeing the ice at the arch of the bridge, others attempting to push the iceberg nearer to the shore, where, if once stranded, it would melt at leisure. If the huge pile of mischief could have found a voice, it would have laughed at their fruitless endeavours.

While watching the men at their dangerous, and, as it proved afterwards, hopeless work, we witnessed an act of extraordinary courage and presence of mind in two brothers, blacksmiths in the town. One of these young men was busy cutting away the ice just above the bridge, when quite unexpectedly the piece on which he was standing gave way, and he was carried with the speed of thought under the bridge. His death appeared inevitable. But quick as his exit was from the exciting scene, the love in the brother's heart was as quick in taking measures for his safety. As the ice on which the younger lad stood parted, the elder sprang into the hollow box of wood which helped to support the arch of the bridge, and which was filled with great stones. As the torrent swept his brother past him and under the bridge, the drowning youth gave a spring from the ice on which he still stood, and the other bending at the instant from his perch above, caught him by the collar, and lifted him bodily from his perilous situation. All was the work of a moment; yet the spectators held their breath, and wondered as they saw. It was an act of bold daring on the one hand, of cool determined courage on the other. It was a joyful sight to see the rescued lad in his brave brother's arms.

All day we watched from the bridge the hill of ice, wondering when it would take a fresh start, and if it would carry away the bridge when it left its present position. Night came down, and the unwelcome visitant remained stationary. The air was cold and frosty. There was no moon, and the spectators were reluctantly forced to retire to their respective homes. Between the watches of the night we listened to the roaring of the river, and speculated upon the threatened destruction. By daybreak my eager boys were upon the spot, to ascertain the fate of the bridge. All was grim and silent. The ice remained like a giant slumbering upon his post.

So passed the greater part of the day. Curiosity was worn out. The crowd began to disperse, disappointed that the ruin they anticipated had not taken place; just as some persons are sorry when a fire, which has caused much alarm by its central position in a town or city, is extinguished, without burning down a single house. The love of excitement drowns for a time the better feelings of humanity. They don't wish any person to suffer injury; but they give up the grand spectacle they had expected to witness with regret.

At four o'clock in the afternoon most of the wonder-watchers had retired, disgusted with the tardy movements of the ice monster, when a cry arose from the banks of the river, to warn the few persons who still loitered on the bridge, to look out. The ice was in motion. Every one within hearing rushed to the river. We happened to be passing at the time, and, like the rest, hurried to the spot. The vast pile, slowly, almost imperceptibly, began to advance, giving an irresistible impulse to the shore ice, that still held good, and which was instantly communicated to the large pieces that blocked the arch of the bridge, over which the waves now poured in a torrent, pushing before them the great lumps which up to the present moment had been immoveably wedged. There was a hollow, gurgling sound, a sullen roar of waters, a cracking and rending of the shore-bound ice, and the ponderous mass smote the bridge; it parted asunder, and swift as an arrow the crystal mountain glided downwards to the bay, spurning from its base the waves that leaped and foamed around its path, and pouring them in a flood of waters over the west bank of the river.

Beyond the loss of a few old sheds along the shore, very little damage was sustained by the town. The streets near the wharfs were inundated for a few hours, and the cellars filled with water; but after the exit of the iceberg, the river soon subsided into its usual channel.

The winter of 1852 was one of great length and severity. The snow in many of the roads was level with the top rail of the fences, and the spring thaw caused heavy freshets through the colony. In the upper part of the province, particularly on the grand river, the rising of the waters destroyed a large amount of valuable mill property. One mill-owner lost 12,000 saw logs. Our wild, bright Moira was swollen to the brim, and tumbled along with the impetuosity of a mountain torrent. Its course to the bay was unimpeded by ice, which had been all carried out a few days before by a high wind; but vast quantities of saw logs that had broken away from their bosoms in the interior were plunging in the current, sometimes starting bolt upright, or turning over and over, as if endued with the spirit of life, as well as with that of motion.

Several of these heavy timbers had struck the upper bridge, and carried away the centre arch. A poor cow, who was leisurely pacing over to her shed and supper, was suddenly precipitated into the din of waters. Had it been the mayor of the town, the accident could scarcely have produced a greater excitement. The cow belonged to a poor Irishman, and the sympathy of every one was enlisted in her fate. Was it possible that she could escape drowning amid such a mad roar of waves? No human arm could stem for a moment such a current; but fortunately for our heroine, she was not human, but only a stupid quadruped.

The cow for a few seconds seemed bewildered at the strange situation in which she found herself so unexpectedly placed. But she was wise enough and skilful enough to keep her head above water, and she cleared two mill-dams before she became aware of the fact; and she accommodated herself to her critical situation with a stoical indifference which would have done credit to an ancient philosopher. After passing unhurt over the dams, the spectators who crowded the lower bridges to watch the result, began to entertain hopes for her life.

The bridges are in a direct line, and about half a mile apart. On came the cow, making directly for the centre arch of the bridge on which we stood. She certainly neither swam, nor felt her feet, but was borne along by the force of the stream.

"My eyes! I wish I could swim as well as that ere cow," cried an excited boy, leaping upon the top of the bridge.

"I guess you do," said another. "But that's a game cow. There's no boy in the town could beat her."

"She will never pass the arch of the bridge," said a man, sullenly; "she will be killed against the abutment."

"Jolly! she's through the arch!" shouted the first speaker. "Pat has saved his cow!"

"She's not ashore yet," returned the man. "And she begins to flag."

"Not a bit of it," cried the excited boy. "The old daisy-cropper looks as fresh as a rose. Hurrah, boys! let us run down to the wharf, and see what becomes of her."

Off scampered the juveniles; and on floated the cow, calm and self-possessed in the midst of danger. After passing safely through the arch of the bridge, she continued to steer herself out of the current, and nearer to the shore, and finally effected a landing in Front-street, where she quietly walked on shore, to the great admiration of the youngsters, who received her with rapturous shouts of applause. One lad seized her by the tail, another grasped her horns, while a third patted her dripping neck, and wished her joy of her safe landing. Not Venus herself, when she rose from the sea, attracted more enthusiastic admirers than did the poor Irishman's cow. A party, composed of all the boys in the place, led her in triumph through the streets, and restored her to her rightful owner, not forgetting to bestow upon her three hearty cheers at parting.

A little black boy, the only son of a worthy negro, who had been a settler for many years in Belleville, was not so fortunate as the Irishman's cow. He was pushed, it is said accidentally, from the broken bridge, by a white boy of his own age, into that hell of waters, and it was many weeks before his body was found; it had been carried some miles down the bay by the force of the current. Day after day you might see his unhappy father, armed with a long pole, with a hook attached to it, mournfully pacing the banks of the swollen river, in the hope of recovering the remains of his lost child. Once or twice we stopped to speak to him, but his heart was too full to answer. He would turn away, with the tears rolling down his sable cheeks, and resume his melancholy task.

What a dreadful thing is this prejudice against race and colour! How it hardens the heart, and locks up all the avenues of pity! The premature death of this little negro excited less interest in the breasts of his white companions than the fate of the cow, and was spoken of with as little concern as the drowning of a pup or a kitten.

Alas! this river Moira has caused more tears to flow from the eyes of heart-broken parents than any stream of the like size in the province. Heedless of danger, the children will resort to its shores, and play upon the timbers that during the summer months cover its surface. Often have I seen a fine child of five or six years old, astride of a saw-log, riding down the current, with as much glee as if it were a real steed he bestrode. If the log turns, which is often the case, the child stands a great chance of being drowned.

Oh, agony unspeakable! The writer of this lost a fine talented boy of six years—one to whom her soul clave—in those cruel waters. But I will not dwell upon that dark hour, the saddest and darkest in my sad eventful life. Many years ago, when I was a girl myself, my sympathies were deeply excited by reading an account of the grief of a mother who had lost her only child, under similar circumstances. How prophetic were those lines of all that I suffered during that heavy bereavement!—

The Mother's Lament.

"Oh, cold at my feet thou wert sleeping, my boy, And I press on thy pale lips in vain the fond kiss! Earth opens her arms to receive thee, my joy, And all my past sorrows were nothing to this The day-star of hope 'neath thine eye-lid is sleeping, No more to arise at the voice of my weeping.

"Oh, how art thou changed, since the light breath of morning Dispersed the soft dewdrops in showers from the tree! Like a beautiful bud my lone dwelling adorning, Thy smiles call'd up feelings of rapture in me: I thought not the sunbeams all gaily that shone On thy waking, at night would behold me alone.

"The joy that flash'd out from thy death-shrouded eyes, That laugh'd in thy dimples, and brighten'd thy cheek, Is quench'd—but the smile on thy pale lip that lies, Now tells of a joy that no language can speak. The

fountain is seal'd, the young spirit at rest,— Oh, why should I mourn thee, my lov'd one—my blest!"

The anniversary of that fatal day gave birth to the following lines, with which I will close this long chapter:—

The Early Lost.

"The shade of death upon my threshold lay, The sun from thy life's dial had departed; A cloud came down upon thy early day, And left thy hapless mother broken-hearted— My boy—my boy!

"Long weary months have pass'd since that sad day, But naught beguiles my bosom of its sorrow; Since the cold waters took thee for their prey, No smiling hope looks forward to the morrow— My boy—my boy!

"The voice of mirth is silenced in my heart, Thou wert so dearly loved—so fondly cherish'd; I cannot yet believe that we must part,— That all, save thine immortal soul, has perish'd— My boy—my boy!

"My lovely, laughing, rosy, dimpled, child, I call upon thee, when the sun shines clearest; In the dark lonely night, in accents wild, I breathe thy treasured name, my best and dearest— My boy—my boy!

"The hand of God has press'd me very sore— Oh, could I clasp thee once more as of yore, And kiss thy glowing cheeks' soft velvet bloom, I would resign thee to the Almighty Giver Without one tear,—would yield thee up for ever, And people with bright forms thy silent tomb. But hope has faded from my heart—and joy Lies buried in thy grave, my darling boy!"

CHAPTER II

Local Improvements—Sketches of Society

"Prophet spirit! rise and say, What in Fancy's glass you see— A city crown this lonely bay? No dream—a bright reality. Ere half a century has roll'd Its waves of light away, The beauteous vision I behold Shall greet the rosy day; And Belleville view with civic pride Her greatness mirror'd in the tide." S.M.

The town of Belleville, in 1840, contained a population of 1,500 souls, or thereabouts. The few streets it then possessed were chiefly composed of frame houses, put up in the most unartistic and irregular fashion, their gable ends or fronts turned to the street, as it suited the whim or convenience of the owner, without the least regard to taste or neatness. At that period there were only two stone houses and two of brick in the place. One of these wonders of the village was the court-house and gaol; the other three were stores. The dwellings of the wealthier portion of the community were distinguished by a coat of white or yellow paint, with green or brown doors and window blinds; while the houses of the poorer class retained the dull grey, which the plain boards always assume after a short exposure to the weather.

In spite of the great beauty of the locality, it was but an insignificant, dirty-looking place. The main street of the town (Front-street, as it is called) was only partially paved with rough slabs of limestone, and these were put so carelessly down that their uneven edges, and the difference in their height and size, was painful to the pedestrian, and destruction to his shoes, leading you to suppose that the paving committee had been composed of shoemakers. In spring and fall the mud was so deep in the centre of the thoroughfare that it required you to look twice before you commenced the difficult task of crossing, lest you might chance to leave your shoes sticking fast in the mud. This I actually saw a lady do one Sunday while crossing the church hill. Belleville had just been incorporated as the metropolitan town of the Victoria District, and my husband presided as Sheriff in the first court ever held in the place.

Twelve brief years have made a wonderful, an almost miraculous, change in the aspect and circumstances of the town. A stranger, who had not visited it during that period, could scarcely recognize it as the same. It has