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***PICTURES
OF CANADIAN
LIFE: A RECORD
OF ACTUAL
EXPERIENCES***

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Pictures of Canadian Life: A Record of Actual Experiences

EAN 8596547331193

DigiCat, 2022

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CHAPTER I.

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INTRODUCTORY.—CANADIAN TERRITORY AND POPULATION.

Lunching one day in Toronto with one of the aldermen of that thriving city (I may as well frankly state that we had turtle-soup on the occasion), he remarked that he had been in London the previous summer, and that he was perfectly astonished at the idea Englishmen seemed to have about Canada. He was particularly indignant at the way in which it was coolly assumed that the Canadians were a barbarous people, planted in a wilderness, ignorant of civilization, deficient in manners and customs—a well-meaning people, of whom in the course of ages something might be made, but at present in a very nebulous and unsatisfactory state. It seems my worthy friend had gone to hear a popular Q.C.—a gentleman of Liberal proclivities, very anxious to write M.P. after his name—deliver a lecture to the young men of the Christian Association in Exeter Hall on Canada. Never was a man more mortified in all his life than was the alderman in question. All the time the lecture was being delivered, he said, he held down his head in shame. 'I felt,' said he, rising to a climax, 'as if I must squirm!' What 'squirming' implies the writer candidly admits that he has no idea. Of course, it means something very bad. All he can say is, that it is his hope and prayer that in the following pages he may set no Canadian squirming. He went out to see the nakedness, or the reverse, of the land, to ask the emigrants how they were getting on, to judge for himself whether it was worth any Englishman's while to leave home and friends to cross the Atlantic and plant himself on the vast extent of prairie stretching between

Winnipeg and the Rocky Mountains. What he heard and saw is contained in the following pages, originally published in the *Christian World*, and now reproduced as a small contribution to a question which rises in importance with the increase of population and the growing difficulty of getting a living at home.

As a rule, the English know little more of Canada than that it belongs to us—that it is very cold there in winter and very hot in summer. I happened to be on board the *Worcester* training-ship on the last occasion of the prizes being given away, and was not surprised to find that Canada was especially referred to as illustrating the defective geographical knowledge of the young cadets. In the *London Citizen* a few weeks later there was still grosser display of ignorance on the part of a writer who had gone to Montreal to attend the meetings of the British Association there, and who complained bitterly of the lack of garden-parties and champagne lunches. This victim of misplaced confidence owned that he had to put up with tea and coffee and non-intoxicating beverages when he did so far condescend as to accept Canadian hospitality. Yet the writer of that letter was a barrister, at this very time a candidate for Parliament. Had he an atom of common-sense, he might have known—this distinguished barrister and ornament of the British Association for the Advancement of Science—that Canada is a young country; that its wealth is still undeveloped; that the greater part of it is prairie; that the settler—in his heroic efforts to subdue Nature, to make the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose, to build up a grand nation in that quarter of the globe, to spread in a region larger than the United States the Anglo-Saxon laws and civilization and tongue—has to renounce luxury, to scorn

delights, to live laborious days. Canada is not the place for members of the British Association who long for the flesh-pots of Egypt or the champagne-cup. In Canada one has to live simply and to work hard. He who does so work, though in England he may die a pauper, there becomes a man. Canada offers to all independence, a fertile soil, a bracing air. At present there is little chance of the majority of its people being enervated by luxury or demoralized by wealth.

Canada is a country, however, with room and scope for millions who must starve and die in Europe. Its area is 3,470,392 square miles, and its most southern point reaches the 42nd parallel of latitude. It possesses thousands of square miles of the finest forests on the continent, widely spread coal fields, extensive and productive fisheries, and rivers and lakes of unequalled extent. The country is divided into eight provinces, as follows: Nova Scotia, containing 20,907 square miles; New Brunswick, 27,174; Prince Edward Island, 2,133; Quebec, 188,688; Ontario, 101,733; Manitoba, 123,200; the North West, 2,665,252; British Columbia, 341,305. Newfoundland lies outside the Dominion, for reasons best known to itself.

According to the census taken in 1881, the population at that time numbered 4,324,810, distributed as follows: Nova Scotia, 440,572; New Brunswick, 321,233; Prince Edward Island, 108,891; Quebec, 1,359,027; Ontario, 1,923,228; Manitoba, 65,954; the North West, 56,446; British Columbia, 49,459. These figures must be much added to if we would get an idea of the growth of population, especially in the North West, which has increased by leaps and bounds. Up to 1870 it was as it had been since the charter of Charles II.—the happy hunting-ground of the Hudson Bay Company. As late as 1870 it

had no railway communication, no towns or villages, few post-offices, and no telegraph. There must be a million of people settled there by this time, and yet it is a wilderness almost untrod by man. The origins of the populations are returned as follows: 891,248 English and Welsh; 957,408 Irish; 699,863 Scotch; 1,298,929 French; 254,319 Germans. The balance is made up of Dutch, Scandinavians, and Italians. A large number of persons who were born in the United States are to be found in Canada—and why not? They have in Canada a government quite as free as in the United States, though the Canadians prefer to have a holiday on the Queen's birthday rather than the 4th of July, and an English Viceroy—who at any rate is a gentleman—to an American President. Anywhere in Canada the Englishman is at home. The people have an English look. Directly you pass the border into the States you see the difference. There is an astonishing contrast between the healthy Canadian and the lean and yellow Yankee.

Canadian history is one record of toil and struggle—of the advance of the whites, of the retreat of the native races. Foremost in suffering were the French. In 1608 the first permanent settlement in Canada was made by Champlain, who founded Quebec, and afterwards discovered the lake which still bears his name. It was he who taught the Iroquois to stand in awe of gunpowder; but, alas! familiarity bred contempt, and the Red Indian was more than once on the point of exterminating the white man. It was only by the intercession of the Saints that the feeble colony was preserved. At Montreal, for instance, the advanced guard of the settlements, some two hundred Iroquois fell upon twenty-six Frenchmen. The Christians were out-matched eight to one, but, says the Chronicle, 'the Queen of Heaven was on their

side, and the Son of Mary refuses nothing to His holy Mother. Through her intercession the Iroquois shot so wildly, that at their first fire every bullet missed its mark, and they met with a bloody defeat.' No wonder the French were animated with renewed zeal. Father Le Mercier writes: 'On the day of Visitation of the Holy Virgin, the chief Aontarisati, so regretted by the Iroquois, was taken prisoner by our Indians, instructed by our fathers, and baptized; and on the same day, being put to death, I doubt not he thanked the Virgin for his misfortune and the blessing that followed, and he prayed to God for his countrymen.'

It was no common faith that led the French monks to seek to make Canada theirs. Their sufferings from cold, from starvation, from the savages, from want of all the comforts of life, seem to have been as much as mortal men could bear. But they made many converts. On one occasion, when the French Chaumont had delivered an address, his Indian auditors declared that if he had spoken all day they should not have had enough of it. 'The Dutch,' said they, 'have neither brains nor tongues; they never tell us about paradise or hell. On the contrary, they lead us into bad ways.' Nothing could daunt the Jesuits—not the loss of all they had, nor protracted suffering, nor cruel death. 'The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church,' said one of them; 'and if we die by the fires of the Iroquois, we shall have won eternal life by snatching souls from the fires of hell.'

Let us listen to Chaumont again, as he stands before his savage hearers—he and his companions having first, with clasped hands, sung the 'Veni Creator': 'It is not trade that brings us here. Do you think that your beaver-skins can pay us for all our toil and dangers? Keep them, if you like; or, if any

fall into our hands, we shall use them only for your service. We seek not the things that perish. It is for the faith that we have left our homes, to live in your hovels of bark and eat food which the beasts of our country would scarcely touch. We are the messengers whom God has sent to tell you that His Son became a man for the love of you; that this man, the Son of God, is the Prince and Master of men; that He has prepared in heaven eternal joys for those who obey Him, and kindled the fires of hell for those who will not receive His Word. If you reject it, whoever you are—Onondaga, Seneca, Mohawk, Cayuga, or Oneida—know that Jesus Christ, who inspires my heart and my voice, will one day plunge you into hell. Be not the authors of your own destruction. Accept the truth; listen to the voice of the Omnipotent!’

Wonderful miracles sustained and renewed this ardent faith. In the autumn of 1657, there was a truce with the Iroquois, under cover of which three or four of them came to the Montreal settlement. Nicholas Godé and Jean Pière were on the roof of their house, laying thatch, when one of his visitors aimed his arquebuse at Saint Pière, and brought him to the ground like a wild turkey from a tree. The assassins, having cut off his head and carried it home to their village, were amazed to hear it speak to them in good Iroquois, scold them for their perfidy, and threaten them with the vengeance of heaven; and we are told they continued to hear its voice of admonition even after scalping it and throwing away the skull.

During a great part of this period, the French population was less than three thousand. How was it they were not destroyed? Mr. Parkman tells us for two reasons. In the first place, the settlements were grouped around three fortified posts—Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal—which, in time of

danger, gave an asylum to the fugitive inhabitants; and secondly, their assailants were distracted by other wars. It was their aim to balance the rival settlements of the Hudson and the St. Lawrence. It was well for Canada when France lost hold of her. In 1666, Louis the Great handed her over, bound hand and foot, to a company of merchants—the Company of the West, as it was called. As, according to the edict, the chief object in view was the glory of God, the Company was required to supply its possessions with a sufficient number of priests, and diligently exclude all teachers of false doctrine. It was empowered to build forts and war-ships, cast cannon, wage war, make peace, establish courts, appoint judges, and otherwise to act as sovereign within its own dominions. A monopoly of trade was granted it for forty years, and Canada was the chief sufferer; but at any rate the peopling of Canada was due to the king. Colbert did the work and the king paid for it. Protestants were objected to. Girls, to be wives to the emigrants, were sent out from Dieppe and Rochelle. In time, girls of indifferent virtue, under the care of duennas, emigrated to meet the growing demand for wives. ‘I am told,’ writes La Houtan, ‘that the plumpest were taken first, because it was thought, being less active, they were more likely to keep at home, and that they could resist the winter cold still better.’ Further, such was the paternal care of the king for Canada, that he attempted to found a colonial noblesse, and offered bounties for children. The noblesse were a doubtful boon: industrious peasants were much more to be desired. Leading lazy lives, many of the gentilhommes soon drifted into the direst poverty. The Canadians had one advantage—their morals were well looked after by the priests, who kindly took charge of their education as well. Compared with the New

England man, the habitant had very much the advantage. He was a skilful woodsman, able to steer his canoe, a soldier and a hunter. Nevertheless, when Wolfe's army had scaled the heights of Abraham, and won Canada for the British, it was the beginning of a new life.

'England,' writes Mr. Parkman, 'imposed by the sword on reluctant Canada the boon of rational and ordered liberty. A happier calamity never befell a people than the conquest of Canada by the British arms.' But it was not till the American Revolution had broken out, and the royalists left the States to found in Canada a strong colony attached to the British Crown, that Canada may be really said to have been a part and parcel of the Empire, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. It was necessary to move many of the French Canadians elsewhere; and those who remained, still for long looked with an unfriendly eye on England and her rule.

CHAPTER II.

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OFF WITH THE EMIGRANTS—THE VOYAGE OUT—THE 'SARNIA' THE COD-FISHERY.

One Wednesday at the end of April, last year, St. Pancras Railway Station was the scene of a display not often matched even in these demonstrative days. Mr. J. J. Jones, of the Samaritan Mission, had arranged to take out a party of five hundred emigrants to Canada—the first party of the season. The event seemed to create no little excitement in philanthropic circles. The Lord Mayor had promised to be there, but he was detained in the City, possibly in defence of the ancient Corporation of which he has become the champion; but he sent a cordial letter, as did many other distinguished people, to express sympathy and goodwill.

In the absence of the Lord Mayor, the Earl of Shaftesbury, after the emigrants had been got together in a waiting-room, presided at a farewell meeting, which ought to have sent the emigrants in the best of spirits to the new homes they expect to find on the other side of the Atlantic. They would, said his lordship, still be under the reign of our Queen. They would confer a great blessing on the country whither they were going, and they would show what they could do as good citizens in subduing and replenishing the earth, and in spreading over the world the Anglo-Saxon race. He hoped that the young men present would come back to England for wives, and ended with his best wishes for all in the way of a safe voyage and temporal and spiritual good.

The Earl of Carnarvon, who next spoke, had this advantage over the noble chairman, in that he had made a trip to Canada

himself. The emigrants, he said, would encounter difficulties. They were not going to a paradise, but they would find that they had a better chance of getting a living in the New World; especially if they avoided bad company and the crowded towns, and got into the country, and underwent a certain preparatory training. As to Canada, it was a country in which a man would succeed who had health and strength and industry, and a good head and a good heart, and the fear of God to teach him that honesty was the best policy.

Sir Henry Tyler, M.P., the chairman of the Grand Trunk Railway, followed in a similar strain. The people were not crowded up in Canada as they were here. It was a grand country for honest, hard-working men and well-behaved women; but he recommended them at first to seek good honest people to work with, rather than high wages. Turning to the young women, he assured them they would find good husbands in Canada—a remark which seemed to give them much satisfaction; and he hoped that they would have large families when they married, as large families were a blessing out there.

Then came forward Mr. Clare Sewell Read, M.P., who, as a countryman, said he saw some country bumpkins in the party, and he could assure them, as he had been in Canada, its soil was unrivalled for fertility.

Lord Napier of Magdala followed, and then came the Hon. Donald A. Smith, one of the directors of the Canadian Pacific Railway, to tell how people prospered in Canada who behaved well and worked hard. The Rev. Oswald Dykes and the Rev. Burman Cassin also addressed the audience; and there were others, such as the Earl of Aberdeen, the Rev. W. Tyler, and the Rev. Styleman Herring, who were ready to say a few words

had time permitted; but the train had to be packed up with passengers and luggage, and there was no time to spare.

In a few minutes they were off, amidst tears and cheers, while Mr. Jones and I, with Mr. Alexander Begg, of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and the remainder of the emigrants, followed. A little after five we arrived at Liverpool, and then Mr. Jones had to work like a horse.

Meanwhile, I, with a couple of artistic friends, who are to sketch us, all took our ease in our inn, from which comfortable quarters I felt sadly indisposed to stir; but I had to see the emigrants off, and my heart sank into my shoes as, looking at the hundreds swarming the platform, and the pyramids of luggage, and then at the *Sarnia* moored in mid-stream, the thought suggested itself, How on earth can they all be stowed away?—a query which, however, was soon settled, as, at a later hour, I found myself on board the *Sarnia*, leaving smoky Liverpool behind, and with the ship's head turned to the sunset 'and the baths of all the Western stars.'

The *Sarnia*, it may be as well to inform my readers, is one of the screw-steamers running between Quebec and Liverpool, by the Dominion Line, which line commenced its gay career in 1870. I ought to be very happy on board, since I learn, from the attentive perusal of documents lying in the cabin, that, owing to the lines in the model, the rolling of the ship is to a great extent, not destroyed, but reduced, making a considerable decrease in sea-sickness, and that in the book of rules and regulations compiled for the guidance of the Dominion Line officers, they must run no risk which might by any possibility result in accident to the ship, and that they are further requested to bear in mind that the safety of the lives and property entrusted to their care is the ruling principle that

should govern them in the management of their ships. I almost fancy I must have thrown away my money in insuring my life against loss and my person against accidents. What have I to fear, if the rules and regulations of the company be observed? I am very glad, as it is, I did not insure for a larger sum, though the agent, who, of course, had his eye on the extra commission, was kind enough to suggest it were well to insure for the larger sum, *in case the ship went down!*—a thing not to be dreamed of.

I have consulted that oracle of our fathers—Francis Moore. In his ‘Vox Stellarum’ he tells me, to my comfort and satisfaction, that after the 25th of April the winds will be light. Francis Moore, you may tell me, is not weatherwise. Are the scientific meteorologists, with their forecasts, wiser? It is hard to say.

It is a comfort to think that the emigrants are well off for literature. The *Graphic* company—whose last dividend, I learn, was a good deal over a hundred per cent.—have sent a tremendous packet of *Graphics*. The Bible Society sent Testaments. The Religious Tract Society have placed at Mr. Jones’s disposal tracts and books. The Rev. Newman Hall has sent 250 books, while a goodly packet of the ‘Family Circle Edition’ of the *Christian World* will, I dare say, be in much request—quite as much as the five hundred sheets of hymns which the Earl of Aberdeen brought with him on Wednesday to St. Pancras as his contribution to the common stock. Yes, indeed, as my Welsh friends would say, the lines for us are cast in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage. It is to be hoped it may be so.

I never saw a more tidy lot of emigrants—some of them evidently the right class to get on. I had an amusing chat with