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INTRODUCTION

AMONG the numerous works on Canada that have been published within the last ten years, with emigration for their leading theme, there are few, if any, that give information regarding the domestic economy of a settler's life, sufficiently minute to prove a faithful guide to the person on whose responsibility the whole comfort of a family depends— the mistress, whose department it is "to haud the house in order."

Dr. Dunlop, it is true, has published a witty and spirited pamphlet, "The Backwoodsman," but it does not enter into the routine of feminine duties and employment, in a state of emigration. Indeed, a woman's pen alone can describe half that is requisite to be told of the internal management of a domicile in the backwoods, in order to enable the outcoming female emigrant to form a proper judgment of the trials and arduous duties she has to encounter.

"Forewarned, forearmed," is a maxim of our forefathers, containing much matter in its pithy brevity; and, following its spirit, the writer of the following pages has endeavoured to afford every possible information to the wives and daughters of emigrants of the higher class who contemplate seeking a home amid our Canadian wilds. [Illustration: Peter, the Chief] Truth has been conscientiously her object in the work, for it were cruel to write in flattering terms calculated to deceive emigrants into the belief that the land to which they are transferring their families, their capital, and their hopes, a land flowing with milk and honey, where comforts and affluence may be obtained with little exertion. She prefers honestly representing facts in their real and true light, that the female part of the emigrant's family may be enabled to look them firmly in the face; to find a remedy in female ingenuity and expediency for some difficulties; and, by being properly prepared, encounter the rest with that high-spirited cheerfulness of which well- educated females often give extraordinary proofs. She likewise wishes to teach them to discard every thing exclusively pertaining to the artificial refinement of fashionable life in England; and to point out that, by devot-

ing the money consumed in these incumbrances to articles of real use, which cannot be readily obtained in Canada, they may enjoy the pleasure of superintending a pleasant, well-ordered home. She is desirous of giving them the advantage of her three years' experience, that they may properly apply every part of their time, and learn to consider that every pound or pound's worth belonging to any member of an out-coming emigrant's family, ought to be sacredly considered as *capital*, which must make proper returns either as the means of bringing increase in the shape of income, or, what is still better, in healthful domestic comfort.

These exhalations in behalf of utility in preference to artificial personal refinement, are not so needless as the English public may consider. The emigrants to British America are no longer of the rank of life that formerly left the shores of the British Isles. It is not only the poor husbandmen and artisans, that move in vast bodies to the west, but it is the enterprising English capitalist, and the once affluent landholder, alarmed at the difficulties of establishing numerous families in independence, in a country where every profession is overstocked, that join the bands that Great Britain is pouring forth into these colonies! Of what vital importance is it that the female members of these most valuable colonists should obtain proper information regarding the important duties they are undertaking; that they should learn beforehand to brace their minds to the task, and thus avoid the repinings and discontent that is apt to follow unfounded expectations and fallacious hopes!

It is a fact not universally known to the public, that British officers and their families are usually denizens of the backwoods; and as great numbers of unattached officers of every rank have accepted grants of land in Canada, they are the pioneers of civilization in the wilderness, and their families, often of delicate nurture and honourable descent, are at once plunged into all the hardships attendant on the rough life of a bush-settler. The laws that regulate the grants of lands, which enforce a certain time of residence, and certain settlement duties to be performed, allow no claims to absentees when once the land is drawn. These laws wisely force a superiorly-educated man with resources of both property and intellect, to devote all his energies to a certain spot of uncleared land. It may easily be supposed that no persons would encounter these hardships who

have not a young family to establish in the healthful ways of independence. This family renders the residence of such a head still more valuable to the colony; and the half-pay officer, by thus leading the advanced guard of civilization, and bringing into these rough districts gentle and well-educated females, who soften and improve all around them by *mental* refinements, is serving his country as much by founding peaceful villages and pleasant homesteads in the trackless wilds, as ever he did by personal courage, or military stratagem, in times of war.

It will be seen, in the course of this work, that the writer is as earnest in recommending ladies who belong to the higher class of settlers to cultivate all the mental resources of a superior education, as she is to induce them to discard all irrational and artificial wants and mere useless pursuits. She would willingly direct their attention to the natural history and botany of this new country, in which they will find a never-failing source of amusement and instruction, at once enlightening and elevating the mind, and serving to fill up the void left by the absence of those lighter feminine accomplishments, the practice of which are necessarily superseded by imperative domestic duties. To the person who is capable of looking abroad into the beauties of nature, and adoring the Creator through his glorious works, are opened stores of unmixed pleasure, which will not permit her to be dull or unhappy in the loneliest part of our Western Wilderness. The writer of these pages speaks from experience, and would be pleased to find that the simple sources from which she has herself drawn pleasure, have cheered the solitude of future female sojourners in the backwoods of Canada.

As a general remark to all sorts and conditions of settlers, she would observe, that the struggle up the hill of Independence is often a severe one, and it ought not to be made alone. It must be aided and encouraged by the example and assistance of an active and cheerful partner. Children should be taught to appreciate the devoted love that has induced their parents to overcome the natural reluctance felt by all persons to quit for ever the land of their forefathers, the scenes of their earliest and happiest days, and to become aliens and wanderers in a distant country, — to form new ties and new friends, and begin, as it were, life's toilsome march anew, that their children may be placed in a situation in which, by industry

and activity, the substantial comforts of life may be permanently obtained, and a landed property handed down to them, and their children after them.

Young men soon become reconciled to this country, which offers to them that chief attraction to youth,—great personal liberty. Their employments are of a cheerful and healthy nature; and their amusements, such as hunting, shooting, fishing, and boating, are peculiarly fascinating. But in none of these can their sisters share. The hardships and difficulties of the settler's life, therefore, are felt peculiarly by the female part of the family. It is with a view of ameliorating these privations that the following pages have been written, to show how some difficulties may be best borne and others avoided. The simple truth, founded entirely on personal knowledge of the facts related, is the basis of the work; to have had recourse to fiction might have rendered it more acceptable to many readers, but would have made it less useful to that class for whom it is especially intended. For those who, without intending to share in the privations and dangers of an emigrant's life, have a rational curiosity to become acquainted with scenes and manners so different from those of a long-civilized county, it is hoped that this little work will afford some amusement, and inculcate some lessons not devoid of moral instruction.

LETTER I.

Departure from Greenock in the Brig. *Laurel*. — Fitting-up of the Vessel. — Boy Passenger. — Sea Prospect. — Want of Occupation and Amusement. — Captain's Goldfinch.

Brig. *Laurel*, July 18, 1832

I RECEIVED your last kind letter, my dearest mother, only a few hours before we set sail from Greenock. As you express a wish that I should give you a minute detail of our voyage, I shall take up my subject from the time of our embarkation, and write as inclination prompts me. Instead of having reason to complain of short letters, you will, I fear, find mine only too prolix.

After many delays and disappointments, we succeeded at last in obtaining a passage in a fast-sailing brig, the *Laurel*, of Greenock; and favourable winds are now rapidly carrying us across the Atlantic.

The *Laurel* is not a regular passenger-ship, which I consider an advantage, for what we lose in amusement and variety we assuredly gain in comfort. The cabin is neatly fitted up, and I enjoy the luxury (for such it is, compared with the narrow berths of the state cabin) of a handsome sofa, with crimson draperies, in the great cabin. The state cabin is also ours. We paid fifteen pounds each for our passage to Montreal. This was high, but it includes every expense; and, in fact, we had no choice. The only vessel in the river bound for Canada, was a passenger-ship, literally swarming with emigrants, chiefly of the lower class of Highlanders.

The only passengers besides ourselves in the *Laurel* are the captain's nephew, a pretty yellow-haired lad, about fifteen years of age, who works his passage out, and a young gentleman who is going out as clerk in a merchant's house in Quebec. He seems too much wrapped up in his own affairs to be very communicative to others; he walks much, talks little, and reads less, but often amuses himself

by singing as he paces the deck, "Home, sweet home," and that delightful song by Camoens, "Isle of beauty." It is a sweet song, and I can easily imagine the charm it has for a home-sick heart.

I was much pleased with the scenery of the Clyde; the day we set sail was a lovely one, and I remained on deck till nightfall. The morning light found our vessel dashing gallantly along, with a favourable breeze, through the north channel; that day we saw the last of the Hebrides, and before night lost sight of the north coast of Ireland. A wide expanse of water and sky is now our only prospect, unvaried by any object save the distant and scarcely to be traced outline of some vessel just seen at the verge of the horizon, a speck in the immensity of space, or sometimes a few sea-fowl. I love to watch these wanderers of the ocean, as they rise and fall with the rocking billows, or flit about our vessel; and often I wonder whence they came, to what distant shore they are bound, and if they make the rude wave their home and resting-place during the long day and dark night; and then I recall to mind the words of the American poet, Bryant,—

"He who from zone to zone
Guides through the boundless air their certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Wilt guide my steps aright."

Though we have been little more than a week on board, I am getting weary of the voyage. I can only compare the monotony of it to being weather-bound in some country inn. I have already made myself acquainted with all the books worth reading in the ship's library; unfortunately, it is chiefly made up with old novels and musty romances.

When the weather is fine I sit on a bench on the deck, wrapped in my cloak, and sew, or pace the deck with my husband, and talk over plans for the future, which in all probability will never be realized. I really do pity men who are not actively employed: women have always their needle as a resource against the overwhelming weariness of an idle life; but where a man is confined to a small space, such as the deck and cabin of a trading vessel, with nothing

to see, nothing to hear, nothing to do, and nothing to read, he is really a very pitiable creature.

There is one passenger on board that seems perfectly happy, if one may judge from the liveliness of the songs with which he greets us whenever we approach his cage. It is "Harry," the captain's goldfinch— "the *captain's mate*," as the sailors term him. This pretty creature has made no fewer than twelve voyages in the *Laurel*. "It is all one to him whether his cage is at sea or on land, he is still at home," said the captain, regarding his little favourite with an air of great affection, and evidently gratified by the attention I bestowed on his bird.

I have already formed a friendship with the little captive. He never fails to greet my approach with one of his sweetest songs, and will take from my fingers a bit of biscuit, which he holds in his claws till he has thanked me with a few of his clearest notes. This mark of acknowledgment is termed by the steward, "saying-grace."

If the wind still continues to favour us, the captain tells us we shall be on the banks of Newfoundland in another week. Farewell for the present.

LETTER II

Arrival off Newfoundland.—Singing of the Captain's Goldfinch previous to the discovery of Land.—Gulf of St. Laurence.—Scenery of the River St. Laurence.—Difficult navigation of the River.—French Fisherman engaged as a Pilot.—Isle of Bic.—Green Island.—Gros Isle.—Quarantine Regulations.—Emigrants on Gros Isle.—Arrival off Quebec.—Prospect of the City and Environs.

Brig *Laurel*, River St. Laurence.
August 6, 1832.

I LEFT off writing, my dear mother, from this simple cause;—I had nothing to say. One day was but the echo, as it were, of the one that preceded it; so that a page copied from the mate's log would have proved as amusing, and to the full as instructive, as my journal provided I had kept one during the last fortnight.

So barren of events has that time been that the sight of a party of bottle-nosed whales, two or three seals, and a porpoise, possibly on their way to a dinner or tea party at the North Pole, was considered an occurrence of great importance. Every glass was in requisition as soon as they made their appearance, and the marine monsters were well nigh stared out of countenance.

We came within sight of the shores of Newfoundland on the 5th of August, just one month from the day we took our last look of the British isles. Yet though the coast was brown, and rugged, and desolate, I hailed its appearance with rapture. Never did any thing seem so refreshing and delicious to me as the land breeze that came to us, as I thought, bearing health and gladness on its wings.

I had noticed with some curiosity the restless activity of the captain's bird some hours previous to "land" being proclaimed from the look-out station. He sang continually, and his note was longer, clearer, and more thrilling than heretofore; the little creature, the captain assured me, was conscious of the difference in the air as we

approached the land. "I trust almost as much to my bird as to my glass," he said, "and have never yet been deceived."

Our progress was somewhat tedious after we entered the gulf. Ninety miles across is the entrance of this majestic river; it seems an ocean in itself. Half our time is spent poring over the great chart in the cabin, which is constantly being rolled and unrolled by my husband to gratify my desire of learning the names of the distant shores and islands which we pass.

We are without a pilot as yet, and the captain being a cautious seaman is unwilling to risk the vessel on this dangerous navigation; so that we proceed but slowly on our voyage.

August 7.—We were visited this morning by a beautiful little bird, not much larger than our gold-crested wren. I hailed it as a bird of good omen—a little messenger sent to bid us welcome to the New World, and I felt almost a childish joy at the sight of our little visitor. There are happy moments in our lives when we draw the greatest pleasure from the most trifling sources, as children are pleased with the most simple toy.

From the hour we entered the gulf a perceptible change had taken place in all on board. The captain, a man of grave, quiet manners, grew quite talkative. My husband was more than usually animated, and even the thoughtful young Scotchman became positively an entertaining person. The crew displayed the most lively zeal in the performance of their duty, and the goldfinch sung cheerily from dawn till sunset. As for me Hope was busy in my heart, chasing from it all feelings of doubt or regret that might sadden the present or cloud the future.

I am now able to trace distinctly the outline of the coast on the southern side of the river. Sometimes the high lands are suddenly enveloped in dense clouds of mist, which are in constant motion, rolling along in shadowy billows, now tinted with rosy light, now white and fleecy, or bright as silver, as they catch the sunbeams. So rapid are the changes that take place in the fog-bank, that perhaps the next time I raise my eyes I behold the scene changed as if by magic. The misty curtain is slowly drawn up, as if by invisible hands, and the wild, wooded mountains partially revealed, with their bold rocky shores and sweeping bays. At other times the va-