

THE OLD MAN'S IDYL.

BY RICHARD REALFF.

By the waters of life we sat together
Hand in hand in the golden days
Of the beautiful early summer weather
When hours were minutes, and speech was praise;
When the heart kept time to the songs that ran
And the birds kept time to the songs that ran
Through the summer of flowers on grassy swards
And trees with voices of life.

By the rivers of life we walked together,
I and my darling, untried;
And lighter than any linnet's feather
The burden of being on us weighed;
And love's sweet miracles over us threw
Mantles of joy enlarding time;
And up from the rosy morrows grew
A sound that seemed like a marriage chime.

In the garden of life we named together,
And the luscious apples were ripe and red,
And the legend of the long-agoed brother
Sweetened with the fragrance which they shed.
And under the trees the angels walked,
And up in the air a sense of wings
Awe'd us sacredly while we talked
Softly in tender communings.

In the meadows of life we strayed together,
Watching the waving harvest grow;
And under the benison of the Father,
Our hearts, like the lambs, skipped to and fro;
And the cowslips, bearing our low replies,
Brooded fairer the emerald banks;
And the glad tears shone in the daisies' eyes
And the timid violets glistered thanks.

Who was with us and what was round us,
Neither myself nor my darling guessed,
Only we knew that something crowned us
Out from the heavens with sunlight blessed,
Only we knew that something bright
Lingered lovingly where we stood,
Clothed with the meadow's light
Of something higher than humanhood.

O the riches love doth impart!
O the alchemy which doth change
Dross of body and dross of spirit
Into sanctities rare and strange!
My flesh is robe, and dry, and old,
My darling's beautiful hair is gray;
But our elixir and precious gold
Languish at the footsteps of decay.

Harms of the world have come upon us,
Cups of sorrow we yet shall drain;
But we have a secret which doth show us
Wonderful rainbows through the rain.
And we hear the tread of the years go by
And the sun is setting behind the hills,
But my darling does not fear to die,
And I am happy in what God wills.

So we sit by our household fires together
Dreaming the dream of long ago,
Then it was balmy summer weather,
And now the cold eyes are hid in snow,
Jewels hang from the slippery eaves,
The wind grows cold—it is growing late,
Well, well, we have garnered all our sheaves
And my darling—and we wait.

THE Cities and Towns of Canada

ILLUSTRATED.

XV.

BROCKVILLE, Ont.

A STRANGER'S EXPERIENCE—HISTORICAL NOTES
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PLOITS—THE CAPTURE OF BROCKVILLE—
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SPAFFORD, alias LORD CHESTERFIELD—A
RARE PRINT—SKETCH OF AN EVENTFUL
LIFE.

I doubt if there is a town in Canada where people enjoy life better or take things easier than they do in Brockville. But if life is easy and time glides swiftly by in winter, in summer, I am told, the facilities for elegant "loafing" are increased and enhanced a hundred-fold. "To enjoy Brockville," said more than one fair damsel, "you should be with us in summer. We almost live upon the water and among the islands, and in the evenings the river is like a fairy-scene, with its twinkling lights and soft music." And this after a scene of almost uninterrupted gaiety, during which sleighing parties, snow-shoe parties, skating parties, concerts and balls, succeeded each other as rapidly as the invitations could be issued. To those on business bent who meditate a visit to Brockville, I solemnly say: Stick to business; proceed from your hotel to the business places of those you desire to do business with; return without looking to the right or to the left, and take the first train to your next point of operations. If you but once dally with the sly nymph Pleasure, you are lost, as a brisk business man, and many days shall pass ere you cast off the seductive spell. "Come and take lunch with me," says one. The snug room; the sweet little wife; the pretty children; your cheery, generous host; the nicely-set, piquant little lunch—the comfort; the taste; the *tout ensemble* make your every day life appear dull and stupid. The afternoon glides pleasantly away. A saunter down street brings about introductions. The day after to-morrow the ——— give a ball. You shall have an introduction. You meant to be fifty miles away to-morrow, but you think it would be really very nice to attend the ball, and "what is a day more or less, anyway?" The day after the ball you do not feel particularly anxious to rush into business. "A little drive" is suggested and gladly caught at. So passes another day. Meantime you are getting to know a number of people able and willing to minister to your amusement; you

have engagements thick and three-fold, and finally to tear yourself away costs an effort almost Herculean, and you do not feel quite safe until a Grand Trunk engine has borne you miles away. Such is Brockville—as I know it. A most charmingly-situated town, at the foot of the Thousand Islands, one hundred and twenty-six miles from Montreal, two hundred and seven from Toronto, and sixty-six from Ottawa; in the township of Elizabethtown, South Leeds; boasting a population of between seven and eight thousand; an important point on the Grand Trunk Railway, and the terminus of the Canada Central road. Both Companies have here extensive workshops. The St. Lawrence at this point is somewhat over a mile and a half wide. The southern shore is the State of New York, and the little village of Morristown, immediately opposite Brockville, is a station on the Utica & Black River Railroad, whereby passengers can make connections with the general American railway system. Two trains leave daily for New York. The journey is made in about fourteen hours. During the season of navigation Brockville enjoys excellent means of communication. Being an easy distance from the famed Thousand Islands and Alexandria Bay, and the railway centre of a large section of country, it is invariably chosen as the point of embarkation for the numerous excursions which are directed to the above-mentioned favourite resorts. The facilities for boating and yachting are represented to be very fine, and, judging from the vast number of boat-houses which line the shore for a mile or more in front of the town, I could well understand the remark of the young miss who avowed that, in summer, the people almost live on the water. There are said to be at least five hundred skiffs and canoes owned in Brockville, besides a very considerable fleet of yachts, and a fair sprinkling of miniature steamers.

RETROSPECT.

As far as I can find out, the first settlers arrived in 1784, coming from the dissatisfied colonies to the south. Among the first families were the Sherwoods, Buells, and Jones. The latter is a name remarkably plentiful along this part of the St. Lawrence, putting the Smiths, Browns, and Robinsons quite in the shade. It seems there were two leading families of Jones among the early settlers. Though one in name, they were by no means one in purpose, except, indeed, to engage in keen rivalry. So it came about that two interests arose—East and West. Of course each leader had his followers, and so bitter did the rivalry become that the little settlement was christened by outsiders "Snarlingtown." The fact that to this day Brockville has two town halls—neither what a town hall should be—is pointed out as evidence of the ups and downs of the two parties. I trust that ere long the people will vote to sell one of the "elephants," and with the proceeds set to work to make the remaining one worthy of the town of the age. Prescott, thoughtlessly voted slow by some folks, is head and shoulders above Brockville in this respect. But, to return to early days. I have before me a paper written by the late Sheriff, Mr. Abdiel Sherwood, who died at the good old age of ninety-five—he used to go duck-shooting up to his ninetieth year. He was a crack shot, and adhered to his old flint-lock fowling-piece almost to the last. He used to say he had two things to learn early—his father taught him to shoot a bird flying, and his mother taught him to always speak the truth. While admitting that the early settlers had their hardships, he does not overlook the advantages they enjoyed. Says he: "We had deer for the shooting, partridge were very thick, pigeons in great plenty, no taxes, plenty of wood, fine fish, an abundance of natural fruit—strawberries, blackberries, cranberries, whortleberries, lots of red plums, and, I assure you, pumpkin and cranberries made an excellent substitute for apple-pie." Having no mills, the pioneers "pounded Indian corn in a large mortar made by cutting a log off a large tree."

Mr. Sherwood filled various public offices, and, in 1829, was appointed Sheriff of the District of Johnston. He served fifty years in the militia, in all grades up to a Colonelcy, and held the office of Sheriff for thirty-five years. His closing words in the narrative before me are touching and characteristic. At the age of ninety he wrote: "I have now retired from all public business, as I feel myself incapable of writing or doing anything to benefit others or to my own satisfaction, and, therefore, I beg you will excuse all errors, and allow me to say Amen."

REUBEN SHERWOOD'S EXPLITS.

Reuben Sherwood, a brother of the late Sheriff, was a remarkable character, and a distinguished figure in the war of 1812. He was a large, powerful man, a thorough woodsman, daring to a fault, and ever eager to engage in some secret service calling for tact, skill and courage. He it was who instigated the capture of Ogdensburg. Soon after that exploit he was commissioned to spy out Sackett's Harbour, preparatory to a general attack. He set out in a canoe, accompanied by two friends, one being an Algonquin Indian, known as Captain John, a firm ally, a great hunter and an inveterate imbibor of fire-water. Reuben called a halt a mile or two from the Harbour, and bid his comrades make themselves comfortable for a few days. Reaching his destination by a circuitous route, he at once asked for the Boss, to whom he represented himself as a shipwright from Vermont in search of a job. It happened that the Americans were building several gun-boats, but were greatly in need of competent hands, and Reuben was given

a trial. Proving not only skilful, but a great worker, the boss raised him to the position of foreman and doubled his wages. He lost no time in taking observations and sketching a plan of the place. On the fourth day he asked an interview with the boss, to whom he told a yarn to the effect that he was so well pleased with his job that he would like to run back to Vermont, marry his sweetheart, bring her back and take up his residence at the Harbour. After vain attempts to dissuade him, his wages were paid over, and he prepared to depart. As he was coming away from the office he was confronted by one James Estes, who at once recognized him. Estes at first declared he would denounce him there and then, but, for old acquaintance sake—they had been neighbours once—consented to give him one hour's start. Reuben purchased a pint of spirits and some biscuits, and was out of the settlement in less than five minutes. But he did not go far. A short distance along the road he hid beneath a pile of saw-logs. He had hardly settled down ere the sounds of a pursuing host was heard. One man actually mounted the pile to take a survey. At last Reuben heard the searchers pass on their return, and, giving them good time to get well away, he issued forth and made tracks for his comrades, who were camped in a marshy spot, accessible only from the water.

Reuben astounded his comrades by announcing that he meant to capture a block house situated a few miles down the shore. Pushing off, the distance was soon made and a landing effected near the fort. A chest which had greatly excited the curiosity of his subordinates was now opened and from it Reuben took a magnificent uniform which made the erstwhile shipwright look nothing less than a Field Marshal. In a whisper Reuben gave the Indian his instructions. The block house was situated in a small clearing backed by a dense bush. The Indian was to stealthily creep to the border and when he heard a pistol shot he was to run from one end of the bush to the other and give a war whoop as he ran. Serving out an extra strong glass of rum, Reuben emerged from the bush and made straight for the block house with his sword in one hand and a flag of truce in the other. He was aware that a feeling of dissatisfaction existed among the garrison and counted upon this to further his purpose. A few men were at work outside the house; asking for the commander, he was conducted to Major G— who upon being requested to surrender was about to show fight when Reuben quietly informed him that resistance would be useless, that besides a body of British troops, there were 200 Indians thirsting for blood who were with the greatest difficulty restrained from making an onslaught. Still the major fumed and called upon his men to support him. Reuben went to the door and fired a shot, remarking that a second signal would bring down the dusky horde. Instantly the woods resounded with terrific yells and it seemed to the affrighted militiamen as if the bush was alive with redskins. The men openly expressed their disapproval of encountering such odds. They declared they had not enlisted to fight savages, and finally at the command of Reuben laid down their arms. Under the circumstances Reuben said he would allow them to go on parole, and they were not long in putting a healthy distance between themselves and the block house. Reuben then set fire to the fort and, picking up the American flag, ordered the Major to "fall in" and march down to the canoe. When the Major discovered the true state of affairs he was naturally indignant and accused Reuben of ungentlemanly and unmilitary conduct. Reuben reminded him that strategy had always held an important place in military tactics. The party proceeded to Kingston and Reuben sought an interview with Gen. Sir G. Prevost who upon hearing the details of the expedition at first reprimanded Reuben for risking so much after accomplishing his purpose at Sackett's Harbour, but finally acknowledged that the exploit was a remarkable one. Reuben promised to be more cautious in future and withdrew—probably with his tongue in his cheek. No time was lost in fitting out an assaulting party and Sackett's Harbour was easily captured.

THE CAPTURE OF BROCKVILLE.

A few months previous the Americans, smarting under the loss of Ogdensburg, planned the capture of Brockville, which was accomplished by a party of Forsyth's riflemen under command of a Captain Lytle. With the exception of one shot fired by the irrepressible Reuben Sherwood, no opposition was offered. Major Carley and the Hon. Charles Jones (grandfather of the present Mayor of Brockville), with fifty militiamen who were en route for Prescott, were taken prisoners. Before getting the town—for the news had sped to Prescott and an overwhelming force would have quickly turned the tables on the invaders—the jail was thrown open and all prisoners released. It was here that the only bloodshed took place. The jailer, one Baxter, was challenged by an American rifleman "Who goes there?" "A friend," replied Baxter. "A friend to whom?" asked the rifleman. "To King George, G—d—you!" yelled Baxter, and as quick as lightning the rifleman shot him.

INCIDENTS OF THE TOWN'S GROWTH.

Brockville was laid out in 1802, the chief property holders being the Jones and the Buells. Mr. William Buell gave the land for the Court House and all the churches except the Anglican Church, the site for which was

donated by the Hon. Chas. Jones. Messrs. Jones and Buell were chiefly instrumental in getting Brockville made the County Town in place of Johnston, an out-of-the-way and senseless settlement, a few miles east of Prescott, which speedily died a natural death.

Kingston claims to have had the first newspaper in Upper Canada, the *Gazette*, established in 1816, but Brockville was not far behind, the weekly *Recorder*, now a daily, being started by a Mr. Beach in 1820. It is strong Grit. The *Monitor*, a Conservative weekly, was established about 20 years ago.

About this time a queer character by the name of H. Spafford alias "Lord Chesterfield," flourished in Brockville. Spafford was a general merchant in a moderate way, a bachelor and a bit of a dandy, very fond of strutting up and down in front of his shop. He lost no opportunity of "shewing off" before strangers. Beneath his store he had a small cellar wherein he kept a stock of wines and spirits. If he wished to be particularly gracious to a stranger and at the same time convey the idea that H. Spafford was no twopenny-halfpenny trader, he would command his shop boy somewhat after this style: "John! go to vault number nine, bin twenty, and bring up some of that rare old port wine from cask fifty-two!" John was well trained and would descend with all solemnity, candle and measure in hand, and take up the due amount of time requisite for a long exploration, while in reality he had drawn the vinous fluid from one of the few casks at the foot of the ladder. Poor Spafford came to a miserable end. He was always engaged in litigation and thus he frittered away his possessions until at last he retreated to an out-of-the-way shanty and lived the life of a hermit. The last writ was served upon him by enclosing it in a newspaper which a boy pretended to find outside his door. Spafford answered the knock by opening a window. He accepted the newspaper but swore fearfully when he had informed him that there was a "supplement." Soon after death made the claim that none can put off, and "Lord Chesterfield" was found dead on the floor. I have an account of Spafford's against Mr. Chas. Dunham which is rather a curiosity in its way. It is dated May, 1814, and from it I learn that at that time tea cost eight and ninepence a pound, and sugar two shillings.

BROCKVILLE IN 1828.

This interesting picture is from an engraving in possession of Mr. George Dana. It was drawn by a retired army officer, Capt. Gray, who also at that time sketched Kingston, Quebec, and other places for an English publishing firm. The prints were dedicated "To Sir Peregrine Maitland, Lieut. Governor, and the gentlemen of Upper Canada." The view is from "Umbrella Island," a name now extinct. The large tree shown in the picture fell down some years ago. The building in the centre of the view is the first Court House, a brick building subsequently destroyed by fire. The church with the spire is the first Presbyterian Church and that with the square tower the Anglican Church, St. Peter's, just then erected. The steamboat and barge are curiosities in their way. The steamer could probably go four miles an hour with the current, judging from the paddle wheels. The smokestack is simply immense. The two gentlemen on the barge appear to be having a good time. The one in the boat, it will be observed, is busy with a kettle, but whether his ultimate aim is "the cup that cheers" or a stiff "swifter" of hot grog must be left to conjecture. The individual in the stern is apparently busy with his own thought. The barge rider is a study.

THE COURT HOUSE.

Brockville is the County Town of the Counties of Leeds and Grenville. The Sheriff is Mr. Wm. Patrick, the Treasurer Mr. F. Schofield, and the Registrar Mr. Ormond Jones. The Court House is an imposing-looking stone building occupying a commanding position in a central locality and faced by a large square. The entrance is not much to boast of. The chief court room—also used by the Counties' Council—is disfigured by a useless gallery running round three sides which gives it the look of an old-time "meeting-house." The jail department comprises twenty-two cells and the necessary officers, yards, &c. It is kept scrupulously clean under the charge of Jailer White.

THE LATE COL. D. E. MACDONELL.

The late Col. MacDonell was born near Cornwall, Ont., July 31, 1794, and received his early training under the eye of the late Bishop Strachan. At the age of eighteen he left home as a volunteer attached to the 8th or King's Regiment, receiving a commission a few days after joining, and participated during the war of 1812-13 in the battles of Lundy's Lane, Stony Creek, Sackett's Harbour, York, &c. From the 8th he was commissioned to the 90th, and performed station service at Halifax, N.S., the Isle of Wight, and Tilbury, England. Selling out of the army he returned to his native Province and organized a militia corps which he commanded during the rebellion of 37-38. He contested successfully the Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry and was elected three times to represent that constituency. He afterwards filled the offices of Crown Lands Agent and Sheriff for the above mentioned counties, and in 1849 was appointed to the Wardenship of the Kingston Penitentiary, which office he held for upwards of 20 years, resigning therefrom in 1869, and retiring after