

# OUR OWN PEOPLE

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## THE COMET.

You ear of fire—we watch its way  
Resplendent down the glowing blue  
Soar through the twilight's folding gulf  
The world-wide wonder flew.

Daily in turn, each orb of light  
From out the deepening concave brot,  
First eyes' soft herald swam to sight,  
'Till every star awoke.

The Lyre resting its burning chords,  
High flung the cross as streaming ray—  
Lain rose. Alas, more sweet than words  
On music's soul could say.

They, from old time, in course the same,  
Familiar set familiar rise,  
But what art thou, wild, love flame,  
A'whart the startled skies?

Mysterious yet, as when it burst,  
'Trough the vast void of nature hurled,  
And shook their shrinking hearts at first,  
The titans of the world.

In vain the sage, heaven's scroll unseals,  
Vainly has baffled science strive—  
We only know that there it wheels,  
The miracle of heaven.

God's monster! We guess no more,  
Of thee, thy frame, thy missions still,  
Than he, who watched thy flight of yore,  
On the Chaldean hills.

Yet spirit tidings from thy blaze  
From radiant touch this earthly clad—  
Not e'en the fool on thee could gaze,  
And say—"There is no God!"

[For the Home Journal.]

## BLACK HAWK.

A TALE OF "THE PLAINS."

BY JAMES MCCARROLL.

### CHAPTER I.

TO many of the pioneers of the backwoods of Western Canada, it is, doubtless, well known that between thirty and forty years ago, the site on which now stands the flourishing and picturesque town of Peterborough, presented to the eye all the characteristics of a wilderness but newly invaded, and still sleeping in the shadow of the gigantic pines and cedars by which it was then surrounded. Reclining on the verge of the broad and beautiful Otonabee—whose waters, emerald in the sheen of the summer foliage that traced their course, rolled onwards, amid song and surge, to join those of Rice Lake—it tempted the weary foot of the adventurous emigrant; and so persuasive were its charms and the advantages connected with them, that log cabin after log cabin soon began to steal into existence, until, at last, more than a dozen blue lines of smoke rose towards the heavens, and commingled gracefully in the morning air: while the echoes that had slept among the neighboring ravines for ages—save when aroused by some savage yell from wolf or Indian—leaped into life at the sound of the axe, and paid back, with interest, the song of the woodman, and the occasional clack of the first unpretending little mill that ground his scanty "grist."

Previous to the year 1822, the few settlers scattered in the vicinity of "The Plains"—for the name, "Peterborough" was then unknown—were constrained to use a huge wooden pestle and mortar, with a view to

reducing their wheat to flour, or to boil their grain in milk and subsist, mainly, upon a dish known as "fermenty" to the Irish of the early part of the present century, if not to those of to-day. Indeed, at this trying period, it was nothing unusual for the sturdy settler, who would be luxurious, to shoulder his bag of grain, at the first peep of dawn, and set off for "The Front"—as Cobourg and Port Hope, were then called—for the purpose of getting it "floured," and in the hope of being able to bear it back, in a day or so, to make glad the hearts of those who were anxiously awaiting his return, by the rude fireside of his primitive dwelling.

In these long journeys, through almost trackless forests, with but little to guide him, save an uncertain "blaze," or the moss said to be found, invariably, on the north side of the trees, it is not surprising that he had often lost his way, or fallen among those ferocious animals, that were then the terror of the woods. Seldom had a winter's evening passed in the shanty of the shingle maker, or the stall of some more pretending artizan, without its having been beguiled by the narration of, hair-breadth escapes from the fangs of these inexorable scourges of our early civilization, or startled by the hurried announcement, that some distant settler had left his lonely dwelling at dusk, never to cross its homely threshold again. These were the days of excitement to those, who, anxious for the possession of broader acres, penetrated the wilderness, and bared their brawny, right arm, to let the first patch of sunlight that ever illumined its depths, fall unbroken upon the rugged soil. This hardihood, however, was exposed to the ravages of the wolf and the bear, in a frightful degree. Night after night, some wearied "squatter," was aroused from his tired slumbers, to witness the mangled remains of the last lamb of his flock, or the abstraction, by some huge, black bear, of his only swine, that he had, perhaps, on the day previous, purchased miles away; and upon the growth and success of which, his wife and children were almost solely depending for an occasional mouthful of meat during the approaching Fall or Winter. Yes, these were the days of trial; when a single yoke of oxen had to accomplish the logging, dragging and ploughing of a whole "Concession" or "Township;" and, when little communities had to band together, and form "Bees," with a view to assisting each other to perform gratuitously those heavy tasks, beyond the narrow means of the individual settler, and which set at nought the strength of a single arm.

To the newly arrived emigrant, who had never previously witnessed or heard of these gatherings, that of the "Logging Bee," at least, presented an aspect the most novel and ludicrous. The continuous ringing of the axe—the hoarse yelling at the oxen—the clank of the chains through which the logs were dragged into piles to be burned—the unwearied circulation of the cracked tea cup, and the coarse, earthen jar whose precious contents had been purchased at "The Front"—the creaking of handspikes, as some ponderous mass of timber was rolled up the "skids" into its place on the "heap"—the merry joke and boisterous laugh of men, women and children, as they looked into

each others faces, black as jet from the coal dust arising from the charred brands of some previous day's burning, and the continual crackling of the blazing piles of brush, fed by half a dozen urelins in costumes the most original, all conspired to astonish and amuse him: as well as to assure him, beyond a doubt, that he was on a foreign shore, and far removed from those appliances of civilization, which characterized, so broadly, the land of his birth.

Still, in all this curious turmoil, there was a strange, weird pleasure that won upon you insensibly. Everything like rigid conventionalities, were, necessarily, swept from its midst; and you found yourself on the threshold of a future indistinct and shadowy in the extreme. Walled in by almost interminable forests never penetrated by the hum of the great outer world, you soon made common cause with the adventurers among whom your lot was cast; and felt, no matter what your hopes or education, sentiments of friendliness taking possession of your bosom, and leading you, imperceptibly, to assume, with cheerfulness, the position assigned to you in the rude, social compact. In this relation, the adaptability of our natures to circumstances, is one of the mightiest master-strokes on the part of Him by whom the heavens and the earth were kindled out of darkness. Were our happiness subject to one fixed standard only, whose slightest disarrangement would result in pain, how lamentable should be our fate. The moment that any untoward alteration took place in the temperature of our aspirations or our fortunes, we should sink into apathetic despair, without being able to make a single effort to recover the position from which we had fallen, or turn to account those straggling beams of light by which even misery itself is invariably surrounded. The fabric of our being and our destiny is, at once, perfect, stupendous and sublime. And, although its foundations may be laid too deeply in the eternity of the Past for mortal recognition, while its towering height is lost completely in that of the future, yet here, amid the central stories which are within the reach of contemplation and analysis, we discover such exquisite symmetry and proportions, as to give most undoubted assurance of the existence of a superb and harmonious whole. Pain is but the dark and effective background which serves to throw out in more brilliant and exquisite relief the colorings and groupings of Pleasure; and "Evil and Good"—as Bailey has it in his "Festus"—"are God's left hand and right."

It was after the labors of the day had closed, however, and when night had set in, that the phases of these simple-hearted and kindly gatherings exhibited themselves in their most attractive and picturesque garb. Pea coffee, hemlock tea—not a *la* Socrates—"flat jacks," fried pork, and the inevitable jar and cracked tea-cup having been placed on the rough, pine table, once more, the "loggers" gathered around their simple fare, with brown, bare, brawny arms and smutty faces that refused anything like consolation from the hasty ablutions performed at the neighboring creek. It was now that the hopes and prospects of the new settlement were discussed with eager anxiety, and plans laid regarding its future management. Nor

did the gravity attendant upon a subject so serious, relax in the slightest degree, until repeated jovial witticisms, on the part of some light heart, broke in upon its solemnity, and turned the current of thought out of its more sober channels into those of song and glee, or directed attention to the success of the newly-fired log-heaps that were reddening the whole heavens, and driving into impenetrable fastnesses whatever wild animals might have been lurking all day in the vicinity of the lonely "clearing." At this point, and when supper was over, the scene was one well calculated to inspire the pencil of a Vandyke, or provoke the genius of a Dante. The rude, log shanty and adjoining little barn, glowing in the midst of a hundred roaring furnaces, and surrounded by numerous dusky figures, some lounging, like brigands, in the sullen glare, and eyeing, in silence, the movements of those who sought "to dance each other down" to the strains of some opportune violin, that never failed to accompany the owner on such occasions. Others performing feats of strength, or relating merry tales of their ludicrous mishaps; while the female portion of the happy throng were busily engaged in discussing their various household affairs, as well as the mysteries of a red delf pitcher, whose warm and aromatic contents were introduced, in part, to mark the undoubted effeminacy of the sex, in contradistinction to that of the more swarthy and robust natures, who handled, with such manly dexterity, the rough brown jar and ubiquitous, cracked tea-cup, until "the cock's shrill clarion" warned them of the approach of morn, and the rest they required before commencing the labors of another day.

Time strode on; and in the course of three or four years, the "Robinson Emigration" gave a fresh impetus to the little village of "The Plains." Here and there a one-story log edifice, or "cash store," began to peep out upon what was facetiously termed a street; and, henceforth the name, "Peterborough," became associated with the settlement. The staples of these stores were pork, flour, red flannel, bad whiskey, factory cotton, logging chains, maple sugar, nails, salt, fish and tea. Any thing approaching the luxuries of life was totally out of the question. Chip hats, blanket coats, red flannel shirts, muskrat caps, buckskin mitts, stogy boots, and any kind of stockings and trousers, composed the wardrobe of most of the settlers; while the eternal pork and flour, varied by an occasional bass or maskinonge, took sole and undisputed possession of their table. In addition to this, the trade between them was, owing to the almost total absence of money, carried on by barter, mainly. When winter set in, and the sleighing was good, the rising farmer from the adjacent townships paid his bills in pork or wheat; and, when the spring arrived, procured little necessaries in exchange for maple sugar, eggs, or butter. In the village itself, however, a species of currency obtained, at once original and ingenious. If a needy matron required "a quarter of tea," or a pound of sugar, she generally eked out her scanty stock of change by stripping her husband's coat or waistcoat of a few buttons, and converting them into a circulating medium, recognized, at once, to be genuine by the unsophisticated