

HIGHLAND PIONEERS OF

When at last over the banks of Newfoundland they sighted the welcome shores of Nova Scotia, and passed in through the St. Lawrence river and gulf to Montreal, they were not long in discovering that the inland journey was beset with even greater hardships. The usual route in those days was along the Ottawa river to Bytown, now Ottawa, and thence by the Rideau canal to Kingston, and the method of transportation was by boats or batteaux propelled by Frenchmen. There were steamers on the lakes, which conveyed them to Hamilton. There, with a large proportion of them, the wilderness journey began, over execrable roads, with many delays, to their future home in Middlesex. Some found their way to Port Erie, and thence went by steamer to Port Stanley or some other point further west in Elgin county, where Col. Talbot had at a very early date located many of the Highlanders. In all this journey there were many privations, the fatigue and discomfort of very primitive boats and conveyances, the scarcity of provisions, and even money, the lack of suitable sleeping places, the unavoidable delays and disappointments, and alas! sometimes the gloom of sickness and death. But through it all, like Israel of old, they toiled on with the eye of faith fixed steadfastly on the goal, and with better prospects than they could then know or realize of their coming triumphs and prosperity.

SETTLEMENT.

Like the sheep on their Scottish hills, as far as possible, they settled together in flocks, and it was uncommon to find one of them located alone among people of other origins. The land was for the most part owned by the government, but the Canada Co. also owned a part, mostly in Williams, and a certain proportion set apart as Clergy Reserves, did not come into the market until some time afterwards. The price was from \$1 to \$4 per acre, and the deeds were printed and written on real parchment, and signed by the Governor of the province. I have seen one that

was issued to my grandfather, John McColl, for the homestead on which I was born. As soon as land was selected, they began to build their log houses. They helped each other at raising bees to place the logs in position, while corner men, with no tools but the axe and the eye, dovetailed them into each other at the corners. Even down to recent times these buildings still standing attested their remarkable mechanical skill. Openings were left for doors and windows, and quite often for many weeks these were only closed with sacking or something similar. The openings between the logs were closed with chinks, usually of basswood, and plastered with clay. The first floors were made of logs split into slabs, smoothed on the upper side with the axe, and laid together. Clapboards made of oak split thin, were shaved to fit, and though not equal to shingles, made a pretty fair roof. At first nails could not be obtained, and instead there was an ingenious arrangement of poles parallel with the ridge to hold them in position. In some cases bark peeled from trees was used for roofing. As necessity is the mother of invention, articles of needed furniture were improvised from the abundant timber with wonderful skill, considering their disadvantages. Wide, open fire places were made at one end of the houses, and chimneys were mostly of sticks laid crosswise and well plastered with clay, so as to make a large square funnel. In some cases when the houses were built late in the season so that the plastering could not be done on account of frost, the openings between the logs were closed with moss gathered from the trees. In a manner similar to the building of houses large barns, sheds and stables were erected, but the barns were not usually chinked or plastered. Cows, horses, sheep, pigs and poultry were gradually acquired and found useful and profitable. In warm houses sheltered by the great woods, in homes they could for the first time call their own, with no pompous aristocrat to collect rent, or threaten eviction or compel obedience, they