

God's Half-Acre

by R. H. Hougham

SEVERAL years ago the author bought some land north of the North Saskatchewan river, which includes the site of old Fort Pitt*. While ploughing the ground last summer, he unearthed a skeleton and the discovery brought on this flowing tribute to the pioneers of the West:

For a century or more the unmarked grave had lain, under summer's canopy of silver willow, buffalo grass and wild flowers, undisturbed on its little knoll overlooking the North Saskatchewan river at old Fort Pitt. Undisturbed until the tractor's ruthless shear cut through the mouldering remains of its pole covering.

Investigation disclosed the outline of a pole picket fence, surrounding, perhaps, one-half an acre. This must have been the cemetery at old Fort Pitt, the end of the trail for those first hardy pioneers who came and helped make possible the coming of the early settlers.

As I gazed at the finger bones of the folded hands and looked into the eyeless sockets of the hollow skull, all thoughts of future fields of grain and fattening cattle were swept away; and in their wake a feeling of guilt and insignificance possessed me.

What right or title did I hold to this small portion of hallowed land, that gave me leave to dispoil at will the resting place of this noble band of pioneers? Those who came before to blaze the way for the early settlers of a later day to reap the harvest of their dreams, while they slept beneath the sod they conquered?

The right and title from His Majesty The King gave me the right to bring the implements of progress to this land, that it might yield a full harvest from the field, and yet I pondered whence came title so freely given, unless by special dispensation direct from Heaven one had the right to give? I wonder:

So as the shadows lengthened into a purple wave, I gently closed that lonely grave at old Fort Pitt, and there resolved that these first-comers shall have title to that scarce half-acre of sod, for I will deed it back to God.

*Mr. R. H. Hougham of Hanford, Cal., U.S.A., as was announced in 12 R.C.M.P.Q. 64, intends to restore Fort Pitt buildings and barricades to their original form—as they were during the North-west Rebellion, 1885. Toward that end he already has done considerable research and would appreciate any data bearing on the original fort that others may care to send along to augment his already large file on the subject; the *Quarterly* is pleased to endorse such a worthy cause.