

# The Pioneer Highland Settlements of the County of Middlesex.

PREPARED FOR THE GAELIC SOCIETY OF TORONTO.

## I.—GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

### EXPATRIATION.

In order to trace, in any adequate manner, the career of the early pioneers, we must begin in Scotland. It was there the movement began, and the struggle was initiated, which had such far reaching results, both in their own land, and on the western continent. It required strenuous souls to make the change from the land of bens and lochs and glens, to the vast, almost unbroken forests of the new world, and it is difficult, if not impossible for men of the present generation to estimate aright the courage and heroism of their Highland progenitors. Inspired by a noble patriotism, knit to their home by sacred associations, and the traditions of many centuries, qualified by their mental equipment to admire and enjoy its beautiful scenery, bound to race and clan and kindred with the strong ties of friendship and affection so characteristic of the Gael, it is hard to appreciate the intensity of the strain or the severity of the trial. As they gathered in ships and cast a sad farewell look upon Scotia's shore they had before them a voyage and an inland journey more tedious and dangerous than the circumnavigation of the globe at the present day. But to counterbalance all this there was a prevailing dissatisfaction with their condition under the heel of more or less oppressive landlords, and a noble ambition to better their condition, and attain perfect freedom and independence. Besides, there were occasional echoes of the prospects before them, which

strengthened their resolution and buoyed up their hope. Letters sometimes crossed the ocean from the earlier explorers. A monthly magazine, called the "Gaelic Messenger," edited by Rev. Norman McLeod, had been circulated and read extensively in the Highlands, and contained much valuable information. Many of the more daring spirits had served in the army or on warships, and others had visited various countries on whaling or merchant vessels. All these on their return had much to tell to eager listeners, and on the whole, the knowledge possessed, though comparatively meagre, was yet considerable. Not recklessly, but intelligently, with sorrowing hearts, yet invincible energy and stern determination, with firm reliance on Providence, they calmly met what was to them the great crisis of their lives. Besides, in many cases, they were ruthlessly driven from their homes by autocratic landlords to convert their holdings into sheep pastures and hunting preserves.

### THE EXODUS.

There were then no Atlantic steamers. The ocean voyage took from six to eleven weeks. The sailing vessels were not always staunch, and some were condemned war ships. Storms and head winds often added to both the duration and the danger of the voyage. Sometimes the death angel crossed their track, and in his shadow there was a new and distressing experience, as the remains of the loved one were consigned to the deep.