

SOME ACCOUNT OF BYTOWN.

(Read before the W.C.H.S. of Ottawa.)

IT will be evident that the writer has attempted, in the preparation of this paper, rather to suggest certain lines of investigation than to present an exhaustive study of the settlement of one particular corner of Canada. Parkman has made the voyages of the early explorers up the river of the *Outaouais* delightfully familiar to us all; other historians have been attracted by the romance and excitement of those brave, adventurous days; but no one has reproduced in a more vivid and inimitable fashion than Mr. Benjamin Sulte the inhospitable shores and warring Indian tribes of Champlain's day, the voyageurs and traders who followed him, the first sparse settlements in the Lower Ottawa, down to those times of happy augury when Philemon Wright and his associates founded Hull on the opposite shore. Nor does he end there. As he tells it, the story of the building of the Rideau Canal, which gave a reason for the coming together of the village whose evolution still goes on before our eyes, is full of romance and incitement to patriotic pride.

I fancy the much-talked-of trip into the Yukon is little more hazardous than the hard journey up the Ottawa was in the days of the first French explorers. The island Allumette, the headquarters of the Algonquin Indians, was then within the confines of nowhere-land, and Champlain, as we all know, made men marvel at his hardihood in daring to push his way thus far. He was probably only the third European who passed the "Place des Rideaux," and saw the Chaudiere in the beauty we can only imagine. To the Algonquins, whose hunting-grounds at that period were the valley of the Ottawa, the Chaudiere and its neighbourhood were places of importance. There are many interesting, shadowy

bits of history gathered around the meeting place of three rivers. It is always mentioned in the annals of explorers, and we discover that we cannot flatter ourselves that we were first to perceive the commercial advantages of our city. Long ere a white man dreamed that there were such rushing waters and vast stretches of hill and valley waiting to be preyed upon, these very places, we are told, were the goal of yearly trading expeditions of Indian tribes who lived thousands of miles apart. All kinds of produce changed owners here—the tobacco of distant Virginia, the pumpkins and squashes and melons of the agricultural Hurons, and the bark canoes of the more southerly tribes for the warm, beautiful furs of the Algonquins and the tribes still further north. These annual fairs continued for many years after the French had established trading-posts along the St. Lawrence. But not only were these places of note as centres of Indian trade; we find, too, that whenever the Chaudiere is spoken of by early French writers there are hints of the veneration with which the Algonquins regarded it. It was a religious shrine, where, no matter what danger of lurking foe, a propitiating sacrifice must be offered. That oftentimes there was a real danger, many tales of bloodshed happening with such a beginning testify.

We have all heard of the proposed Georgian Bay Canal, but, I wonder, are we all aware that such a trade channel would be but a return to the route which was the customary one for two hundred years that we know of to the Georgian Bay and the country beyond. How many trains of Indian canoes and Indian braves have passed along this thorny way of many portages! What a procession of heroic missionaries have paddled these waters