

Grace Thornton :

A TALE OF BRITISH AMERICA.

CHAPTER I.

There are few places on the Atlantic coast of America—from the Labrador to the Gulf of Mexico—where a better understanding existed between the aboriginal inhabitants and the first pioneers of civilization; or where the chronicler has less opportunity to collect the materials for a web of wild adventure, than that portion of Her Majesty's possessions, which at the period in which occurred the events recorded in this narrative, formed a part of Acadia or Nova Scotia, but which now constitutes the Province of New Brunswick.

Whether it was on account of a better spirit prevailing among the white men who first ventured into the country, or the natives being less vindictive or treacherous than many other tribes inhabiting the continent, that conflicts were of rare occurrence, it were difficult at this distance of time to determine with certainty; although as the object of the hardy adventurers appears to have been barter rather than permanent residence and cultivation of the soil, we can readily suppose that occasions of strife would happen much less frequently than where territorial aggression was the natural and inevitable consequence of preconceived plans of occupation and settlement.

Still, New Brunswick is not altogether devoid of interest in respect to daring adventure, as the sequel of this story may serve in some measure to verify.

It was about the year 17—, many years before the colonization of the country by the American Loyalists, that a young man might have been seen towards the close of a lovely day, in June, toiling up the stream of a rapidly running river, under a back-load of trout, of so rare a size and quality, as to have satisfied the most fastidious disciple of the *gentle art*, and which had rewarded the skill of the sportsman, who, forgetful of the perils that beset his path in pursuit of his favorite pastime, had wandered

miles beyond the farthest point to which avarice, or the legitimate spirit of trade, had as yet tempted its most ardent votaries.

It was yet early in the evening, although from the sombre hue of the woods, and the darkening shadows thrown over the landscape by the higher mountains which rose almost abruptly from the narrow river, the sportsman had taken timely warning to prepare himself for the night, which it was evident he was to spend alone in the solitude of the forest. So intent had he been upon the capture of the speckled *habitans* of the river, that the changing features of the country through which he had wandered, had almost escaped his observation. Passing from the low alluvial lands, covered with the pride of the American forest—the magnificent elms, which threw their long pendant branches from either bank, far over the glassy surface of the river in which they were mirrored, and so nearly uniting as almost to impede the passage of his birchen vessel; our hero had only been made sensible of his entrance upon a more elevated region by a precipitous wall of rushing waters, over which he saw that it was in vain to hope to force a passage. Leaving here his canoe, he had pursued his pastime with renewed zest, and such utter abandonment of every other object and idea, as to take no heed of the wild grandeur of the surrounding country, until he began to look about him for a suitable resting place for the night.

There is a dash of romance in the composition of every sportsman. It is the love of the beautiful in nature, and a yearning after opportunities for the display of courage and hardihood—of triumphing over difficulties, as much as the pleasure derived from the capture of the tribes of earth and air, that entices him away from the haunts of men; and our hero, who was not the least susceptible of the follies of Walton, stood for many