

## THE HEROINE OF VERCHÈRES.

Whoever glances over the early annals of Canada, will be struck with the romantic incidents which at every turn open on the view: feats of endurance—of cool bravery; Christian heroism, in its grandest phases; acts of savage treachery, of the darkest dye; deeds of blood and Indian revenge most appalling; adventurous escapes by forest, land and flood, which would furnish material for fifty most fascinating romances. No greater error ever was than that of believing that few reliable records exist of the primitive times of Canada. Had we not the diaries of Jacques Cartier; the *Routier* of Jean Alphonse de Saintonge; the *Voyages* of Champlain, Charlevoix, Du Creux, Bressant, Sagard, Hennepin, LaPotherie, &c., we still would have the *Relations*, and that admirable *Journal* of the Jesuits, written up, day by day, for so many years, containing such a minute record of every event which transpired in New France. The Jesuits' *Journal* and the *Relations* are likely to remain the fountain-head not only of early Canadian history but frequently of American History. One can readily enter into the meaning of one of our late Governors, the Earl of Elgin, who, in one of his despatches to the Home Government, in speaking of the early days of the colony, described them as "the heroic times of Canada;" the expression was as eloquent as it was beautiful. There is but little doubt that our descendants will be just as familiar with the beauties of Canadian history, as the great bulk of the present generation are ignorant of them. The gradual diffusion of knowledge; the spirit of research and improvement to which everything tends in the Dominion, mark that period as not very far distant. D'Iberville, Mlle. de Verchères, Latour, Dollard des Ormeaux, Lambert Closse, may yet, some day or other, under the magic wand of a Canadian Scott, be invested with a halo of glory as bright as that which surrounds, in the eye of Scotia's sons, a Flora McIvor, a Jeannie Deans, a Claverhouse, or a "Bonny Dundee."

However in order to fully understand the motives which prompted the acts of our respected French and English ancestors, the reader must constantly have before him the hostile doings and revolutions in the old world. But more on this theme hereafter.

Let us present to the reader's view, one of the graceful figures which marked one of the proudest epochs of Canadian history, the era of Frontenac.

It will be remembered that the Marquis of Tracy, in 1663, was escorted to Canada by one of the *crack* French corps of the day—the regiment of Carignan. Four companies (some 600 men) were shortly after disbanded in New France: the officers and privates were induced, by land grants and provisions, horses, and other marks of royal favour, to marry and settle in the new world. One of the officers, M. de Verchères, obtained in 1672, on the St. Lawrence, where now stands the parish of Verchères, a land grant of one league in depth, by one league in length. The following year, his domain received the accession of *Ile à la Pêche* and *Ile Longue*, which he had connected by another grant of one league in length. There did the French officer build his dwelling, a kind of fort, in accordance with the custom of the day, to protect him against the attacks of the Iroquois. "These forts," says Charlevoix, "were merely extensive enclosures, surrounded by palisades and redoubts. The church and the house of the *seigneur* were within the enclosure, which was sufficiently large to admit, on an emergency, the women, children, and the farm cattle. One or two sentries mounted guard day and night; and with small field pieces, kept in check the skulking enemy, warning the settlers to prepare, and hasten to the rescue. These precautions were sufficient to prevent attack,"—not in all cases, however, as we shall soon see.

Taking advantage of the absence of M. de Verchères, the Iroquois drew stealthily round the fort, and set to climbing over the palisades; on hearing which Marie Magdeleine de Verchères, the youthful daughter of the laird, seized a gun and fired it off. Alarmed, the marauders slunk away; but finding they were not pursued, they soon returned and spent two days hopelessly wandering round the fort without daring to enter, as, ever and anon, a bullet would strike some of them down, at each attempt they made to escalate the wall. What increased their surprise, they could detect inside no living creature, except a woman; but this female was so intrepid, so active, so ubiquitous, that she seemed to be everywhere at once. She never ceased to use her unerring fire-arms until the enemy had entirely disappeared. The dauntless defender of fort Verchères was Mlle. de Verchères: the brave deed was done in 1690.

Two years subsequently, the Iroquois, having returned in larger force, had chosen the moment when the settlers were engaged in the field with their duties of husbandry, to pounce on them, bind them with ropes, and secure them. Mlle. de Verchères, then aged nearly fourteen, was sauntering on the banks of the river. Noticing one of the savages aiming at her, she eluded his murderous intent by rushing towards the fort at the top of her speed; but, for swiftness of foot the savage was a match for her, notwithstanding that terror added wings to her flight, and with tomahawk upraised, he gradually closed on her as they were nearing the fort. Another bound, however, and she would be beyond his grip; he sprang and caught the kerchief which covered her throat, seizing it from behind. Is it then all up with our resolute child?—quick as thought, and while the exulting savage raises his hand to strike the fatal blow, the young heroine tears asunder the knot, which retained her garment, and bounding like a gazelle within the fort, closes it instantly on her relentless pursuer, who retains as an only trophy the French girl's kerchief.

To ARMS! To ARMS! instantly resounds within the fort; and without paying any attentions to the groans of the women, who see from the fort their husbands carried away prisoners, she rushed to the bastion where stood the sentry, seizes a musket and a soldier's hat, and causes a great clatter of guns to be made, so as to make believe that the place is well defended by soldiers. She next loads a small field piece, and not having at hand a wad, used a towel for that purpose, and fires off the piece on the enemy. This unexpected assault inspired terror to the Indians, who saw their warriors, one after the other, struck down. Armed and disguised, and having but one soldier with her, she never ceased firing. Presently the alarm reached the neighbourhood of Montreal, when an intrepid officer, the Chevalier de Crisai, brother of the Marquis de Crisai, then Governor of Three Rivers, rushed to Verchères, at the head of a chosen band of men; but the savages had made good their retreat with their prisoners. After a three days' pursuit, the Chevalier found them with their cap-

tives securely entrenched in a wood on the borders of Lake Champlain.

The French officer prepared for action, and after a most bloody encounter the redskins were utterly routed—cut to pieces, except those who escaped; but the prisoners were released. The whole of New France resounded with the fame of Mlle. de Verchères' courage; she was awarded the name of the "Heroine of Verchères," a title which posterity has ratified.

Another rare instance of courage on her part crowned her exploits, and was also the means of settling her in life. A French commander, M. de Lanaudière de la Perade, was pursuing the Iroquois in the neighbourhood, some historians say, of the river Richelieu, other say of the river St. Anne, when there sprang unexpectedly out of the underbrush myriads of these implacable enemies, who rushed on M. de la Perade unawares. He was just on the point of falling a victim in this ambushade, when Mlle. de Verchères, seizing a musket and heading some resolute men, rushed on the enemy, and succeeded in rescuing the brave officer. She had indeed made a conquest, or rather became the conquest of M. de la Perade, whose life she had thus saved. Henceforward, the heroine of Verchères shall be known by the name of Madame de Lanaudière de la Perade, her husband a wealthy *seigneur*. Some years later, the fame of her daring acts reached the French king, Louis XIV, who instructed the Marquis of Beauharnais, the Governor of Canada, to obtain from herself a written report of her brave deeds. Her statement closes with most noble sentiments, denoting not only a lofty soul, but expressed in such dignified and courteous language as effectually won the admiration of the great monarch.

Madame de la Perade, née de Verchères, died on the 7th of August, 1737, at St. Anne de la Perade, near Montreal.

She is one of the ancestors of the present *seigneur* de L'Industrie, near Montreal, the Hon. Gaspard de Lanaudière, whose forefathers for two centuries shone either in the senate or on the battle-field of Canada.

Mlle. de Verchères' career exhibits another instance of the sentiments which inspired the first settlers of Canadian soil, and by her birth, by her life and death gives the lie direct to the wholesale slanders, with which some travellers like Baron Lahontan have attempted to vilify the pioneers of New France.—*Maple Leaves.* By J. M. Lemoine.

## BOPEEP THE GREAT.

BY GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALLA.

This Bopeep was a house—large, white, square, sepulchral-looking—at the eastern or the western extremity of St. Celsus-on-Sea; the ultima Thule, the John o' Groats of the salubrious watering-place. Were I to state likewise that it was a public-house, the landlord or landlady, or the manager, or the board, or the committee who govern it, might be offended. It is the Bopeep Hotel, but beyond that it is, so far as I could discover, Bopeep itself. It stands solitary and austere in its grand isolation. The martello tower on the beach close by, the coastguard barracks a little inland, the station of the London-super-Mare, Haroldsend, and St. Celsus Railway adjacent, and the tall white cliff, with its patches of emerald herbage, spangled with wild flowers—none of these surely can have anything to do with Bopeep. No, no; the big white house must have been self-containing, self-sufficing, autonymous, and autocratic. It was Bopeep the Great, and naught but itself could be its parallel.

But why Bopeep? My dear sir, can you tell me why there is a street in Dublin called Stoneybatter, why there is a thoroughfare in Brighton called Bartholomew's, of what ingredients the cordial popular about sixty years ago, and called Cranbanbury, was composed, and what kind of a dance was a Rigadon? My dear madam, do you know why, the smaller bonnets become, the more expensive they grow? why your fishmonger charges you half-a-crown for a pair of soles which would be dear at ninepence? and why not one English cook out of a hundred can fry potatoes, make an omelette, or has ever heard of *sauce Robert*? When, on the spur of the moment, and without book, you can explain these mysteries, you may be able to enlighten my ignorance with respect to Bopeep. I sought information from the flyman, but his words were as those which darken counsel instead of illuminating it. "It's the Bopeep Hotel, sure enuff," he explained (ha, ha! "explained" I); "but that ain't it. It were Bopeep long afore the hotel were there and the railway come. It's called Bopeep because there ain't nothing else on that side afore you come to the Bull's Head; at least, so I heerd my uncle say, as lived man and boy in these parts for seventy year; but I was born at Tunbridge myself!" Had there ever been a person of the name of Bopeep living in the neighbourhood? No; the flyman had never 'heerd of such a party.' Don't think my question too absurd. Mr. Bopeep may have been a foreigner. Shallalah in Punch is obviously of alien extraction, and surely you believe in him.

They are very many exquisitely beautiful drives out of St. Celsus-on-Sea, although the roads, as a rule, are so steep, that as the gaunt white horse dragged the fly and myself (I am certain with infinite reluctance) up the acclivities, I was constantly reminded of General Wolfe and his brave Grenadiers in Canada, who—

"What was astonishing, nay, very particular—  
March'd up rocks which were quite perpendicular."

Not only are the Heights of Abraham verging on the 'quite perpendicular,' but the streets of Quebec itself are Avernine in their hilliness; so much so that the French drivers of the 'sulkies'—Quebec is the only place where a *déobligeante*, the real *déobligeante* that Sterne saw in the inn-yard at Calais, is yet to be found—tell strangers that Lower Canada possesses a peculiar breed of horses whose fore legs, being shorter (like kangaroos) than their hind legs, enable them to climb mountainous ascents with comparative facility. "But how about descending?" the traveller may inquire; whereupon the driver replies that the banks of the St. Lawrence produce another breed of horses whose legs are shorter behind than before, and are thus specially adapted to going down hill: a legend which, for coolly impudent mendacity, approaches the story of a certain Californian quadruped who is gifted with the curious faculty of shortening his legs *sideways*, in order to run along the sandhills which skirt the road.

I had need to talk of legends, since, despairing of obtaining any trustworthy facts with regard to Bopeep, I threw myself blindly into the mythical. I shot Niagara, and after—well, afterwards I found myself in the dominions of the wildly

conjectural and the not unpleasantly chimerical. I might have saved myself all this trouble—so, doubtless, you in your wisdom may opine—had I taken the bull, or rather Bopeep, by the horns, walked boldly into the hotel, and asked whence it derived its name. An unbridled imagination, an inexhaustible caprice are surely justifiable in the case both of owners of racehorses and proprietors of hotels. There is a miserable poverty of invention in the hackneyed iteration of Waterloo and Royals, Castles, Pavilions, and Alexandras; whereas, on the other hand, I have always admired the independent originality of the Monster at Pimlico, the Hen and Chickens at Birmingham, the Mount Ephraim at Tunbridge Wells, and especially of Jack Straw's Castle at Hampstead. Jack Straw never lived at Hampstead; he never had a castle; there never was such a person (philosophically speaking) as Jack Straw. Don't believe anything you may read about him in Shakespeare or the *History of England*. He was a myth, like Romulus and Remus, like Ajax and Achilles and John Bull. So, perhaps, I began to fancy, was Bopeep the Great. There flashed upon my brain an appalling apologue once told me by a friend, who went into a barber's shop to be shaved, in a back street of one of the decayed Cinque Ports—it was not Haroldsend, in Sussex. The barber was a grim gruff man, of somewhat seafaring mien, and with a huge pair of bushy black whiskers, and the temperament of my friend is somewhat nervous. The marine Figaro was conversational withal, especially with regard to the local history and antiquities. "This used to be a horrible place for piriits and smugglers," he observed, brandishing his razor. "Ah," quoth my friend, wincing a little as the shear went somewhat too close to his jugular. "Yes," pursued the barber, "a hawful place. Many's the dark deed, I'll go bail, as 'as bin done in this werry 'ouse, and"—as he spoke he leered frightfully in his customer's face—"for hanythink we know, their skellingtons may be hunderneath that werry trap-door." There was a trap in the floor close to the customer's chair, and as the bushy-whiskered barber concluded his remarks, he stamped on the closed valve ominously. I don't know whether my friend bolted then and there into the street, with the towel round his neck and the lather on his chin; but he was wont to say afterwards that he never thought of that decayed Cinque-Port barber and the possible "skellingtons" without a shudder. Now why, I mused, recalling this idle tale, should not Bopeep have been, in days gone by, a bold smuggler, or, better still, a famous pirate? Why should not Bopeep be one of the innumerable aliases of that Harpog, or Hastings, or Hastig, the Northman buccaneer, renowned all along this coast, and who seems to have alternately ravaged and resided at every one of the Cinque Ports? Hastig-Bopeep—I arbitrarily assume his sobriquet—was as mighty a rover of the stormy main as ever deserved trial before the High Court of Admiralty, and hanging, much higher than Haman, at Execution Dock. It is from dauntless adventurers of the Hastig-Bopeep type that our ineffable Norman aristocracy are so proud to trace their descent. They have a greater claim to the *sangre azul* than the grandes of Spain. Their blood should be blue enough, for their ancestors were never so much at home as when tossing about, in search of plunder, on the bosom of the dark blue sea.

Some antiquaries have tried to make out that Hastig-Bopeep was a good Catholic; but the Norman chroniclers more than hint that he relapsed into paganism, and was not only an eater of horse-flesh (a most heathenish practice, Mr. Bicknell), but was wont to sacrifice those noble animals to Odin and Thor. Did you ever hear of the audacious trick which the pirate played upon the right reverend Bishop of Luna? Landing at a petty town on the Italian coast, and in his savage ignorance thinking that he had reached Rome the capital of the world, he sent in a cartel to the bishop expressive of his desire to renounce the errors of paganism, and be reconciled to holy Mother Church. "Very well, *mi fili*," quoth my lord bishop; but he orders all the gates of the town to be double-locked, and pops all his treasure into a Chatwood's burglar-proof safe. Presently a terrible howling and yowling is heard from the Northmen's camp. *Madame se meurt, Madame est morte*; I mean that word is brought to the bishop that Hastig-Bopeep has fallen mortally sick; that he is in *extremis*; that he has given up the ghost; but that just prior to his dissolution he bequeathed all his vast riches to the Bishop and Chapter of Luna, on the sole condition that his body should be buried in consecrated ground. Who could refuse so pious a request? Not the Bishop of Luna certainly, who made haste to have the handsomest catafalque in the cathedral brushed and polished, and caused the largest wax-candles to be lit, and an additional staff of choristers to be laid on to chant a *missa pro defunctis*. Nor, I imagine, did his lordship forget to mention to the local Court of Probate that no legacy would be paid on the Hastig-Bopeep property, the bequest being in pure frankalmoin or manual deed of gift. In due time the funeral procession of the late distinguished naval commander reached the cathedral. The bishop and clergy were splendidly arrayed; the mourners were numerous; the ladies of the city were dressed in the deepest and most tasteful mourning that Messrs. Jay, at so short a notice, could furnish; but, ah, for the perfidy of mankind, and of pirates in particular! Just as the bishop was singing the *Pax vobiscum*, the lid of the coffin (mahogany, covered with crimson velvet, silver-gilt nails, and cherubs' heads, 'Admiral Viscount Bopeep, Admiral of the Black, G.C.B.,' a *chef-d'œuvre* of Banting) was bursten open with a terrific report, and out jumped Hastig-Bopeep, the pirate chief, in a frilled nightgown over a complete suit of chain-armour, and with a double-headed battle-axe in his wicked hand. With one blow did he cleave the right reverend occupant of the see of Luna from the beautiful diamond cross at the apex of his mitre even to a malachite button, the lowermost of his under-waistcoat. His unscrupulous companions made work quite as short of the canons and prebendaries, the proctors and prothonotaries of the Court of Probate; one chaplain (he was only a curate, poor devil) was spared, for the purpose of marrying Hastig-Bopeep (who had plenty of wives already in every port, you may be sure, the rascal!) to sixteen of the most beautiful dames in Luna, with whom, and with as much sacerdotal and secular plunder as he could collect, he sailed away, and three months afterwards bombarded, attacked, and sacked Great Grimsby in Yorkshire. The inhabitants of Luna, to this day, annually sing a hymn praying for immunity from piratical attack, and ending, *A peste, fame, bello, et Bopeepo, Domine, libera nos*, and the martyred Bishop of Luna was made a saint, under the style and title of San Lionardo; but why on earth should my head be running on St. Leonard, who is a Sussex saint, and not a lunar one?—*Belgravia*.