

A Visit to Lundy's Lane

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BY
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"How sleep the brave that sink to rest
By all their country's wishes blest!
When Spring with dewy fingers cold
Returns to deck their hallowed mould,
She then shall dress a sweeter sod
Than Fancy's feet have ever trod.

"There Honor comes, a pilgrim gray,
To bless the turf that wraps their clay,
And Freedom shall a while repair
To dwell a weeping hermit there."

WILLIAM COLLINS.

THE "Lane" was almost deserted on that morning in early spring when we visited it. The valley away to the north beyond Stamford and St. David's was piled full of shining haze. Beyond the valley the bluff at Queenston rose dark and indistinct, crowned with its sun-tipped obelisk. The sandy terraces in the north of Drummond Hill were already fringed in green, along the Lane the archway of maples were reddening in the first glow of returning life.

Climbing the ascent from the corner of the old portage road, now a pleasant street in Niagara Falls South, we entered the cemetery through a small turnstile and found ourselves on ground sacred to every Canadian.

Truly this is sacred ground! Every foot of it is consecrated by the blood of a hero. What an ideal spot to dream in. To dream of the days long gone into the past, with their strife and their labor, and their storms and their repose at last. How close it all seems here. More real than the present.

There is the old portage road along which one can almost see the lithe Indians bearing on their shoulders the dripping birch to launch it again in the level reaches beyond the rapids. With them at last come the "pale-face," awed, perhaps, by the immensity of the wilderness, or by the majesty of the eternal silence. Then came the "pale-face" of another race, hewing homes in the wilderness and laying the foundations of an empire. Then the Cooks and the Forsyths and the Durhams came from Delaware and settled along the old forest paths. The settlement was soon dignified by the name "Township No. 2," then it came to be called Stamford.

Lundy's Lane. Why called "Lundy's" no one seems to know. It is true a family of Lundys was settled near there, but others had a better right to the honor of having their name go down to history. Had the settlers foreseen that the Indian trail would be associated with a hundred incidents that would perpetuate any name, "apt alliteration" must have given way to justice, and the street would have been known by a less euphonious title.

But the cemetery is of surpassing interest. Over its myrtle covered mounds and around its ancient church took place the greatest struggle in the history of Upper Canada. What an immense addition its silent population received on that July morning when the victors buried friend and foe in long trenches on the sandy slope. For there were graves there before that July night, and graves of heroes, too. For were they not

heroes who came in the early days as well as those who died to defend them? One instinctively walks lighter and breathes quicker as he wanders among those mounds strewn thickly over the slope. Here and there among the tangled grass are brown stones howed by the mason's hammer into some semblance of a slab. There is a name and two dates in rude chiselling. In many places are weather-worn wooden slabs on which the carpenter engraved "some holy text" in letters long since defaced. Many of the stones and slabs are nameless, and instead of a mound there is a little hollow.

The land for the cemetery was set apart about the year 1796. It was given by Captain Buckner. He was not the original owner, but purchased it from William Forsyth, who held it from the Crown. Captain Buckner's grave is marked near the fence which divides the church enclosure from the cemetery. He died in 1824. The first interment in the lot took place in 1797. It was that of John Birch, who was a man of considerable importance in the community. He built the first mill in the neighborhood, and to it the



GRAVE OF LAURA SECORD IN DRUMMOND HILL CEMETERY.

people for miles around brought their grain, often carrying it on their backs through the forest.

Many more of the early settlers found rest there during the next fifteen years, a rest unbroken by the struggles of that night. But who shall say that their spirits did not hover over the defenders of the land they loved so well?

About the centre of the eastern slope of the cemetery is the simple stone sarcophagus which marks the resting place of Lieut.-Col. Cecil Bishop. In the first year of the war that gallant young officer, with part of the 41st and 49th, numbering fewer than six hundred men, defended a frontier of more than twenty miles. In November, 1812, he repulsed a powerful force which, under General Smythe, had taken possession of Fort Erie. In July of the next year, when embarking after a successful night attack on Black Rock he received wounds from which he died three days later. The following pathetic verse, engraved on the tomb, "implores the passing tribute of a sigh":

"Stranger whose steps e'en now perhaps have stood
Beneath Niagara's stupendous flood,
Pause o'er this shrine where sleeps the young and brave,
And shed one generous tear on Cecil's grave,
Whilst pitying angels point through deepest gloom,
To everlasting happiness beyond the tomb,
Through Christ who died to give eternal life."

But the shrine which most Canadians visit with the greatest interest is that of Laura Secord, which for over forty years has remained almost unmarked. A rough picket fence surrounds the plot. In the enclosure are two slabs, now rusty and covered with lichen. By holding back the branches of the shrubs growing close to the stone we are able to read this simple inscription—

HERE RESTS LAURA,
BELOVED WIFE OF JAMES SECORD,
DIED OCT. 17, 1868,
AGED 93 YEARS.

It is gratifying to know that before the summer is gone the spot will be marked by a monument befitting the fame of Canada's greatest heroine.

South of the church stands the monument erected to the memory of the soldiers who fell in the battle. In the vault under its base are the remains of many of the nameless heroes which have been uncovered from time to time in various parts of the field. The following is the inscription on the soldier's monument on the battlefield at Lundy's Lane:

ERECTED BY
THE CANADIAN PARLIAMENT
IN HONOR OF THE VICTORY GAINED BY THE
BRITISH AND CANADIAN FORCES
ON THIS FIELD ON THE 25th JULY, 1814,
AND IN
GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF THE BRAVE
MEN WHO DIED ON THAT DAY
FIGHTING FOR THE UNITY OF THE EMPIRE,
1895.

The little Presbyterian church on the hill has a history too. How closely it was associated with the joys and sorrows of those early days. And when the Sabbath seemed to sanctify with a deeper quiet the silence of the forest, they met there in their honest "homespun" to sing praises to Him who was the same to them in the new land as in the old.

Then came the struggle for their homes and their British birthright. A struggle which culminated on the very spot where we stand. Near the church, on the crest of the hill, were planted the British field pieces, for the possession of which the severest fighting took place. This was the key of the British position, which Brown and Scott strove in vain to carry, and which Drummond held with a tenacity that has given him a place among the heroes of the Empire. This was the ridge on which the gallant Royals and the 89th threw themselves down to rest among their fallen comrades when the last charge had been made and the enemy had retired beyond the Chippawa. Down beyond the Queenston road the British left was in the air. Had Drummond sufficient force to prolong his line to the river the result of the battle could not have been so long in doubt. There would have been no outflanking then, and the carnage on his left and rear would have been avoided. At our feet is the slope