THE DOWER RIGHT

(By Fanny Kemble Johnson.)

The meadow and gently sloping hillside beyond ran with the highway for a mile. Midway on the hillside you could see the red dower-house. But you could not see within, to where the old lady sat beside the window of her humiliation, and looked down the long meadow where the invaders rode every day to watch their relentless scarlet machines sowing wheat as if each grain were a dragon's tooth or mowing it as if they were guillotines at work upon ranks of golden aristocrats.

In the pride of youth she had chosen this window for her own, because from it she could command so wide a view of her realm. Especially she had never glanced down that great meadow without a thrill of pride—as now, in the evil days, she never beheld it without a pang.

Of all this the invaders had no idea. That she was an enemy, and the dower-house was a grim fortress, and themselves the wicked besiegers of that fortress—why, they were too young and joyous to imagine such preposterous things. So they went on sowing and reaping in her one-time fields, and riding by her white-pillared portico, innocently parading their youth and comradeship and affluence before the face of her age and her loneliness and her poverty—her bitter poverty that might not even keep the house of her fathers for her own people to inherit.

The girl invader was the worst. She was twenty-five, and she had been married to the other invader for six years, and two little boys were singing out "mother" after her the whole day long; but for all that, she looked a mere girl to the enemy at her loophole in the honeysuckle on the portico. And so she was—just a big, rosy, delighted girl, as she cantered by on her own brown mare, Chips.

Her name, by the way, was Rose. The old lady heard him calling her by it one day—his was Terrence. And always when she caught sight of the old lady she would nod gaily, and call, "Good morning!" or "Good evening!" as the case might be, in country fashion.

To the old lady these children, wild with their first freedom and their first own home, were as red flags flaunted. After such an encounter as we have indicated, she would leave the pleasant porch, and go to sit in the dusky parlor, surrounded by family portraits and memorials of past days, and open the family Bible on a marble-topped table cold as a tombstone, seeking consolation in certain verses once possessed of power to heal an unhappy and lonely heart.

But that girl's fresh face and voice would remain in her memory, would distract her, would taunt her with an invulnerable joyousness. She would not help but look up at one particular portrait set over the tall white mantel-shelf—such a boy's face it was, and smiling, and whenever she looked, memory cried, "We were like them once!" Then she would sit, forgetting the book, with her tears of old age on her withered cheeks and the dull despair of old age in her heart.

Now it would simply have broken Rose's own heart to have had the faintest conception of all this, for she was just as sweet as she looked.

One day, indeed, Terrence did say, "Girl, I don't half-believe that old lady likes us," and another day; "Rosie, sure as sunrise she hates us"; but Rose only flouted him.

"Terry," she said, on this last occasion, "you're too imaginative for a farmer. Stop maligning human nature. Your beans won't be worth photographing if you don't get them planted soon."

Terrence grinned. "But, Rose, she's just sent me word not to use her lane any more. That means I must cut across the meadow with another road."

"Well, we must be a nuisance, Terry. I don't blame her at all. We should have had our own road long ago. You can't set me against an old lady with curls, and a lace cap, and a Chinese silk shawl and a gold-headed cane, and I'm going to see her to-morrow."

"She hasn't been to see you," mentioned Terrence.

"She doesn't call on anyone," retorted Rose, "since she's been so crippled with rheumatism. Sally says so." Sally looked across from their temporary cottage to the red dower-house. Its white pillars gleamed in the dusk.

"We'll make a great old place of it some day, girl," said Terry.

"Don't, Terry!" cried Rose. Then she explained. "It sounds as if we were just waiting."

"They are," said the old lady the next evening to the young minister's wife, "just waiting. They ought to think me an unaccommodating old woman."

"Now, Aunt Hale," remonstrated Sally Patton, "if you would only consent to know Rose."

"No," interposed the old lady. "She can ride by my doors—though I think I've put a stop to that—but she sha'n't come inside it. I've a few rights left."

She shook her beautiful thick, white curls as she said this, and struck her cane sharply on the polished floor.

Like an echo the big brass knocker fell.

Sally started and leaned forward looking through the front window.

"It's Rose Carter, Aunt Hale," she said, with a sort of timid firmness. "Hortense is out, I think. Shall I go to the door?"

"If you will be so kind, Sally," assented the old lady, with great composure.

"In here?" asked Sally, brightly.

"No," replied the old lady, who was enjoying herself.

She lifted her fine, deliberate voice a trifle, and the fire in her eye sprang high. "You will please say that Mrs. Hale regrets that infirm health compels her to deny herself to strangers."

Rose heard. She blushed scarlet—that was the girl in her—but her head went up, and the fire in her hazel eyes leaped, too. Between these two fires little Sally Patton halted.

To her relief, Rose's humor came to rescue the situation. She smiled, held out her hand, broke into lively words of greeting, and allowed herself to be sent away with a perfect good nature that assumed the old lady's message to be as polite as it sounded.

Within, the old lady harkened irately to the invader's fresh young voice. Twenty years back the house had rung with such voices. She grew suddenly homesick with the worst homesickness there is, for one can not ever turn and journey back into any past, however dear and passionately longed for.

Therefore, Sally, re-entering, did not find the old lady looking as triumphant as she expected. She was rather cross to Sally, who was her relative by marriage, and who came in for the privileges of relationship.

"You ought not to be alone here, aunt," said the little woman, as she rose to go. "St. John frets over you all the time."

The old lady frowned. "I lived here by myself during a civil war," she said.

"But—began Sally. She stopped, distressed. It hardly seemed tactful to suggest a burglar or a stroke of paralysis to an old lady just as you were leaving her by her lone self. "It does make us uneasy," she concluded, lamely.

On her way down the path she saw Rose cantering through the long meadow and watched her wistfully. She was the only married woman in Sally's experience who kept the light-hearted freshness of girlhood. Sally herself could not manage it all, with a trio of little girls to bring up on five hundred dollars a year, and rent free. She was learning to do white embroidery for an exchange, however, and hoped to manage some day.

In the meadow Rose met Terry tragically.

"You'll take my advice next time, madam," he said.

Rose winked back the tears. "It does look as if we had it all, Terry boy," she murmured.

"Let's chuck the whole thing, then" suggested Terry, cheerfully. "There are plenty of other good places—without dower rights."

Rose turned, looked back yearningly. "I couldn't give it up, Terry," she admitted. "I just couldn't."

"Then," said Terry, "you're as bad as I am, and I've no more sympathy to waste on you."

"I'm not," retorted Rose, indignantly, "for I'd love her if she'd let me." She gathered up her reins.

"Where are you off to?"

"Up the meadow and home by the road. Won't you come, too?"

But affairs of importance, it appeared, detained Terrence, and Rose started on her round alone.

Half-way up the meadow the hill rose somewhat steeply and was crowned with a scattering wood of pines. Rose found herself following a narrow path to the hilltop, and, once there, a pale gleaming among the dark branches allured her downward. Here where the pines grew thickest, and even in March harbored tiny drifts of snow, she came on one of the old family burial grounds once to be found on every plantation in the state. Time has let in the wild vines and creeping grasses to many. Many more have been obliterated by the plowshares of new owners. But this enclosure, secreted among the pines, and hedged with long unpruned boxtrees, seemed still a place that waited to welcome and enfold the life-weary.

Its wooden gate had crumbled; but its single tall shaft stood upright, as if protecting certain little graves nestled under periwinkle vines a foot deep. One of these was such a mite of a mound in its cradle of worn graystone. Rose had dismounted now and was standing over it.

"It's almost as little as—mine," she thought. She stooped to remove the dead leaves and twigs with a gentle hand. Her eyes were musing and deep. Just such a tiny, tiny mound she had left behind her in a northern state when she came to Virginia. No one ever understood why she cared so much for that unnamed morsel of a daughter who had only lived long enough to die; but even her two big, beautiful boys could not make her forget, and she always bore in her heart the memory of that wee, unmothered grave. And she had kept it so sweet with baby flowers, violets, little white roses, white daisy stars small as the far-away stars of heaven seem to our gazing eyes. But no one had understood—even Terry had never understood.

The old lady's roses were in full bloom, tall branches of crimson roses, branchy bushes of white roses, brambly bushes of yellow roses, and vines in wild, unfettered tangles of roses. Sally exclaimed over them on her way up the walk. "I see by that basket that you robbed me!" she called.

"I wish you'd come to-morrow, aunt," said Sally. "St. John is to have everything real appropriate and pretty. The children will sing, and we are to have a special little ceremony at the soldiers' graves. We want your roses for those—they are finer than anyone else has—they are the loveliest roses I ever saw! St. John says we'd all get too careless if it wasn't for these special days of remembering. He likes to have people make the most of them."

She picked up her basket from the step and moved away as she spoke.

The old lady leaned back, letting her eyes follow the alert figure flitting about the lawn. Once she had cut her own roses, and wreathed them with her own memories for the graves of her dead; but in recent years all anniversaries had fallen from their old-time importance in her mind. She had stopped observing them as she had stopped going to church every Sunday morning, or planting her early bulbs every autumn—as she had stopped pretty much everything except mere living in its barest simplicity.

"Do come, aunty!" urged Sally once more across her overflowing basket of beauty. "Uncle Nelse can drive you."

The old lady shook her head firmly; but for all that the words put her in the temper to do something she had not done for several years.

"Hortense," she said that night to the colored woman who attended her, "ask your father to put the horses in the carriage for me to-morrow afternoon if the weather is fair. I think it will be," she added, anxiously, her heart beginning to be bent on that something. . . .

"Baby," said Rose the next day to her youngest, "where's brother?"

"Papa took him."

"Then I'll take you. Tumble in."

He rolled over the back of the seat into the cart beside her. His heavy brown hair rippled back from an angelic brow, and his heavenly brown eyes questioned her intentions. To the possessor of a serious artistic eye he suggested the cherub out of an Italian altar-piece; but his mother was more frivolous.

"Ludwell Harrison Carter," she said, suddenly, "you look exactly like a delicious bonbon. I think I'll eat you up."

She proceeded to devour him with kisses, while he gave chuckling screams of delight. "Let me drive Chippy," he gurgled, taking brazen advantage of the situation.

"Oh, you're on my box, baby boy!" She lifted him back to his seat and removed her box to her lap, while he held the reins along a level stretch of road.

It was a big white box from her old florist and now we know where the invader was going, and what an inexcusable thing she was going to do. Yet it was nothing in the world but a bit of the sweetest selfishness for the comforting of her own heart, very homesick on this day of all the year for a tiny flower-heaped mound, flower-heaped—yet what meaning had flowers placed by a caretaker?

She left the cart at the meadow bars, and with the white box swinging from one hand and the cherub swinging from the other, gained the silent little enclosure among the pines. The sunny peace of the day descended dovelike on her spirit as she knelt deep in the netted vines and uncovered her white baby roses, her violets, her fairy daisies.

The boy pressed closer, his lovely little face aglow and alight. He caught her suddenly under her round chin with his soft, eager, baby hands.

"Is they for my little sister, mommie"—the words stumbled out, soft and eager, too—"my sweet, sweet little bit of a sister?"

That set her lips quivering. "Yes, my precious," she said, holding up her face to be kissed.

And this was the picture the old lady beheld with an amazement, an indignation not to be put on paper. The pine-needles carpeting the wood road had blotted out the sound of her carriage wheels.

She might have descended from the skies or risen up out of the earth as she confronted the invader, who sprang to her feet confounded and put to shame, and clinging desperately to the one masculine protector in reach. All at once, as if by special revelation, she comprehended the enormity of their impertinence!" It was written on the old lady's face as she waited—quite openly awaited.

"Forgive me!" stammered Rose. It was a double distilled inadequacy, but it was all she could think of. She had been startled pale; but now she blushed deeply and moved forward.

"Think you are forgetting your pretty flowers," reminded the old lady who conspicuously bore flowers of her own.

As the discomfited invader stooped to recover her flowers a dreadful thing happened. Bitter tears brimmed over and rolled down her cheeks. It was all to have been so sweet, and now—The boy gazed in her face with perplexed eyes.

"Come, sweetheart," she said, and passed by the old lady, the defrauded mother heart by the insulted mother heart, and the invader's tears were plain to be read upon her cheeks.

Inexplicably and unexpectedly her aspect touched the old lady to a belated comprehension. In a flash it came to her that she was very old and that the invader was very young, and that her long, long years between had indeed been lived to little purpose if she could let this girl go past her and out of her life with those tears on her sweet, hurt face. And the boy, how beautiful he was!

"Child!" she called. The invader looked back, pale once more, and dully wondering, and behold! the old lady offered a shaking hand.

"Forgive me!" she said, for when she capitulated she did it nobly and without reserve. She kept the young hand in hers. "Come sit by me here on this bench. May I see the flowers? They are very beautiful. You were going to put them on my little daughter's grave, were you not?" She considered Rose with kindly keenness. "Why, my dear?"

"Because—" said Rose. She stopped, began again, "Because I could not put them on my own baby's."

"Tell me," said the old lady. Who would have known her!

"She was only three weeks old," said Rose, apologetically; but, oh, miracle of a like loss, someone understood at last!"

"I know," said the old lady. She looked at the little mound. "Mine lived a month."

"I've all her little things," confided Rose; and you saw where the boy got that soft, eager way of his.

"I know," said the old lady, again. She touched the flowers. "Put yours there to-day."

Rose knelt again, her loving fingers lifting the daisies. "And she had little brown curls all over her head." She looked up. The old lady nodded.

"Dear little heads!" she said, yearningly. She smiled to the boy, who pressed closer to his mother. "Tell granny your name," she wheedled.

"Ludwell." He looked at his mother. She nodded. "Harrison," another nod. "Carter," he triumphed. It was an achievement to get that name intact to the ears of inconsiderate inquisitors.

"And what," asked the old lady, "are you doing with two of my family names, Ludwell Harrison Carter?"

"His father named him after his father," Rose answered for him.

"Then," said the old lady, "we are cousins!" which in Virginia is a magic formula wherewith you open doors and hearts

Rose looked at her, mutely inquiring.

"It must be true," continued the old lady. "You are a Northern branch." She smiled again to the boy, who sidled towards her, allured by the cane set slantiwise against her knee. When Rose came back to the bench, he grew bolder, and, with a hand in his mother's, even dared to lean on the old lady's knee himself.

The bells of memory rang from the gray church across the hills. They could almost hear the children singing. The fragrance of the flowers stole up to them and mingled with the perfume of other flowers long vanished with the vanished years. The old lady drew a sighing breath. Rose looked up quickly, and their eyes met across the boy's brown head.

It was a long look, and during it they said many things to each other.

The old lady said, "I am lonely, and my thoughts are like withered leaves blown about the empty rooms. Do not wait until I die to come home to your house. Come now—to-day, if you will. Bring me a daughter and a son, and living, laughing children in place of the little ghosts that cannot rest because of my selfish, summoning heart."

"I have been ready to love you ever since I saw you," said the hazel eyes. "We will come, we shall love to come. How beautiful life is going to be!"—The Companion.

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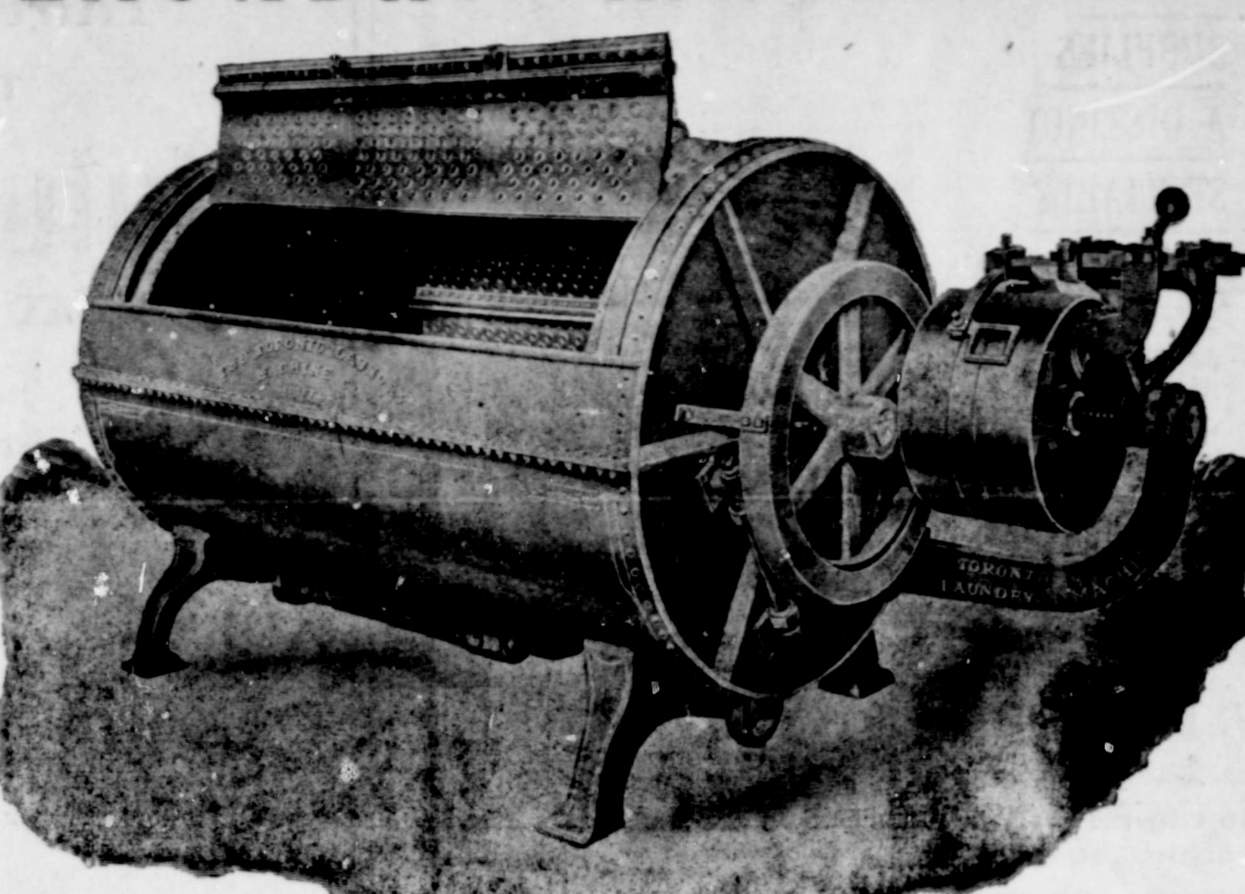

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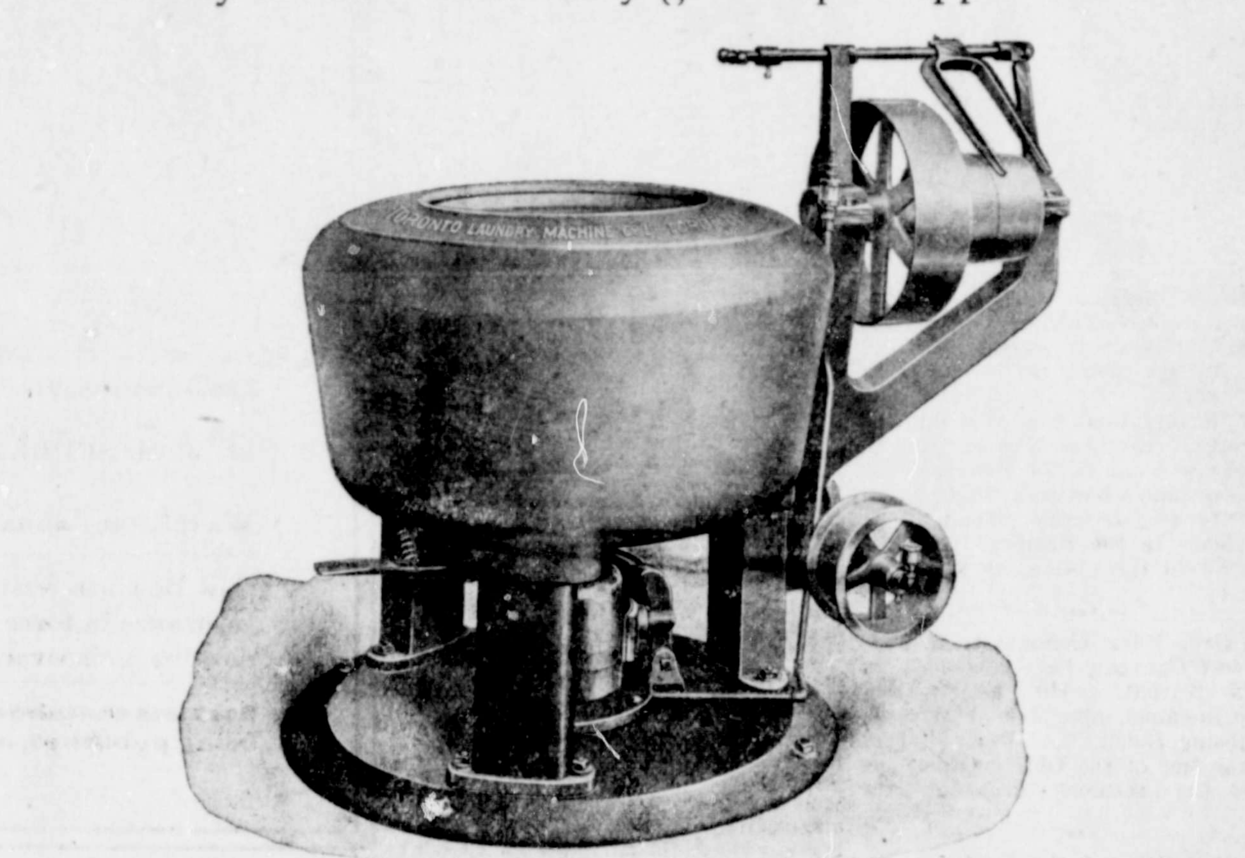

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MARTYRS' SHRINE

Correspondence in Orillia Times, Between A. F. Hunter, Barrie, and Rev. A. E. Jones, S.J., Archivist of St. Mary's College, Montreal.

(Continued from last Week.)

But John had another difficulty. One farm house looks so much like any other, all through the new country, how could he know his uncle's house without having to inquire of strangers, who perhaps could not speak his language. The cripple told him that his uncle's house had a green veranda all around it. And to show how much he knew he told Jack that all the farmers there grew red hollyhocks.

So John started out on horseback and he rode, and rode, always guided by his compass, until he came to Midtown, ten miles or so off. This was easy, for he had been there before, then after giving his horse a drink, he started again, still going south-east by his compass. And he rode and rode over the flat prairie, where there was no road, but only grass, until he saw in the distance, but it was a little to the right, some scattered houses; and knowing that he had ridden about ten miles from Midtown, he was pretty sure it was Farville. A boy on a horse, whom he met ten minutes after, told him it was Farville. So he rode, and rode until he came to the first house. It had red hollyhocks in the front yard but no green veranda. And it was just the same with all the other houses. Poor John, and Jerry the horse were very tired, and John had nearly lost all hope of finding his uncle's house, when he saw a clump of small trees, the first John had seen for a long time on the prairie. And there was a chimney that showed above the trees, so he was sure there was a house there. It was the last house of Farville, the only one he had missed. But what made John very glad —it had a green veranda, which none of the other houses had. He tied his horse to a post and ran up the steps, but just as he had his hand on the knocker, for out West on the prairie they had no electric push-bells yet, he noticed there were no red hollyhocks in the front yard. This puzzled him, but he scratched his ear, and with a knowing nod he said half aloud to himself: "The green veranda is all right, as for the red hollyhocks we will talk about that later." (He found out after that the hollyhocks were all planted behind the barn). So he knocked, and, children, who do you think came to the door? . . . . . .

This is the "Parable of the Green Veranda and the Red Hollyhocks," not written by our modern Aesop, Ade.

APPLICATION OF THE PARABLE.

The problem of finding St. Ignace II., the Indian village where Brebeuf and Lalement were tortured to death by the Iroquois, is similar to the above, that is, as similar as circumstances will allow, since "every comparison goes on three legs."

We have the term of departure known to a certainty, the ruins of the old fort of Ste. Marie I.; then a village, St. Louis, lying midway, whose direction is ascertained by consulting Ducreux's Map (Incidentally, it may be remarked here that there is no record existing of more than one site of St. Louis). The distance from Ste. Marie I. to this midway village of St. Louis is given in Bressani and in the Relations.

As for the total distance of St. Ignace II. from the Old Fort, it is set down in Brother Francois Malherbe's obituary, while its distance from the midway village of St. Louis is recorded in Bressani, in two letters of Father Charles Garnier and in the Relations.

As for its direction from the Old Fort, it is inferred from the fact that the sum of the two distances, that is, from the Old Fort to St. Louis, and from St. Louis to St. Ignace II. is about equal to the total distance of St. Ignace II. from the Old Fort. So that drawing a line from the Old Fort through the village of St. Louis and prolonging it till it equals the total distance, the village of St. Ignace II. must lie very little to one side or the other of that straight line. If it were certain that the sum of the first two distances was absolutely equal to the total distance given, then as a geometrical necessity, the third village, St. Ignace II., should be found exactly on the straight line.

But, it will be asked, should it be ascertained, after inspection, that several sites really exist at the correct total distance from the Old Fort, and very little outside the above mentioned straight line, what is there to show us which of the sites was that of St. Ignace II.? The answer is simple enough. The unerring indicator is the description of the configuration of the ground, the features of the position, given in the

(Continued on page 7.)

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