

WILLIAMSTOWN, AN HISTORIC VILLAGE.

BY MISS JANET CARNOCHAN.

Although I had spent some weeks in this little village many years ago, I had no idea till lately that it was such a wonderful village, with such a remarkable history, with no larger a population than two hundred, a little river running through the midst, the people of different races,—Scottish and French speaking different languages,—English, Gaelic, French; of two different religions,—Presbyterian and Roman Catholic; with traces of Sir John Johnson, of his father Sir William Johnson, of Lord Selkirk, of Sir Alexander Mackenzie, of David Thompson, of Simon Fraser, these great geographers and explorers; of Bishop Macdonell, of Bishop Bethune and his venerable father, Rev. John Bethune, of U. E. Loyalists, of Hudson Bay factors, of the Northwest Company, of soldiers who had fought in the Revolutionary war and in distant countries, a village with an endowed church, an endowed High School, a church built in 1812, the manse in 1823, the first manse built about 1787, or shortly after 1787, when Rev. John Bethune came. A centenary of the settlement of the County of Glengarry was held in 1884, when many interesting reminiscences were printed in the *Montreal Witness*, and many relics of the early days were shewn. A centenary of the building of the present church was held in 1912, and my friends, who know that I always uphold the name of Niagara, wondered much to hear me say that the centenary celebration held in Williamstown was far ahead of either St. Mark's or St. Andrew's in Niagara in 1892 and 1894 respectively. And it is true, for the celebration lasted a week instead of three days, and besides being the centenary of the church was also that of the U. E. Loyalists. Many distinguished sons of Williamstown came from distant homes to speak; many valuable gifts were donated to the church by loving and loyal members.

And first, of how Williamstown received the name. When the United Empire Loyalists, or those who remained loyal to the king and British Institutions, left their possessions and came to what was then a wilderness, the British government, to partly compensate them for their losses, gave them grants of land. Sir John Johnson, who was the largest land owner in the American colonies, fled to save his life, with some faithful followers, through frightful dangers. He was given large grants of land, and perhaps the selection of the site was from its position on the River Raisin, being suitable for mills from the water power, and the place was at first called Milltown. The inhabitants wished to call it Johnstown from Sir John Johnson, but he declined the honour, and wished it called Williamstown from his father, Sir William Johnson. The Manor House, still standing, was the property of Sir John Johnson; the centre part was built in his time, but additions were made later. He parted with his Williamstown property in 1821.