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CHAPTER I.

THE FIRST SETTLERS.

THE women of Canada can justly claim that the first Loyalist refugees to seek shelter under the protecting flag at Fort Niagara were women. Dr. Caniff, in his "Settlement of Upper Canada," gives the fact that "in 1776 there arrived at Fort Niagara in a starving and otherwise destitute condition five women and thirty-one children, whom the circumstances of the rebellion had driven away." Tradition places their arrival in the month of November. They had come from the banks of the Hudson and the valley of the Mohawk, guided by friendly Indians, to this ark of refuge. Their names were Mrs. Nelles, Mrs. Secord, Mrs. Young, Mrs. Buck and Mrs. Bonar. Of these women but little is known, their names alone being rescued from the oblivion of the past. Of Mrs. Secord we know that her husband and two of her sons were in Butler's Rangers, fighting for that flag which had sheltered and protected their ancestors so many years before. Among the Rangers are found the names of Captain Nelles and Captain Young. Whether they were the husbands of Mrs. Secord's companions is not known. Of Mrs. Secord it is said