

Among the Cape Bretoners

ARTICLE III.

By LAURA ROSE

Living in a valise and traveling over the country in a wagon for five months brings into one's life considerable variety and experience, and more especially so when the stay in each stopping place is of only two days' duration. The only way to make such a trip agreeable is to quickly adapt oneself to conditions and become, as it were, for the short time, one of the family. I have heard the people say: "Why she isn't a bit proud. She came right down to the kitchen and talked to us."

As I have said before, Cape Breton is largely settled by Highland Scotch, and Gaelic is quite universally spoken, in fact, many of the old people have little English. How often have I wished I could say something to them in their native tongue, just to please them. It would have indeed been music to their ears and have opened their hearts, as nothing else could, still wider to me.

They are a kind people and give you of their best. The welcome was always hearty, even if the fare was plain—and better the plain fare with the hearty welcome than a feast served grudgingly.

I never traveled over a country where people cook so much alike. Onions are invariably cooked in the gravy with lamb, and lamb is the staple meat to be had until cold weather comes, when each family kills a beef animal. Potatoes are cooked with their skins on, but are frequently peeled before brought to the dinner table. Mashed potatoes were a treat to me. Fried potatoes for breakfast or supper seemed almost an unknown thing in Cape Breton, and they seldom have meat at their meals. The women make quite a lot of skim-milk cheese, and find a ready sale for it in the mining districts. I fear I have been too long brought up on the whole milk cheese to ever acquire much of an appetite for the skim milk article, although it is no doubt highly nutritious, and people accustomed to it are very fond of it.

Vegetables, apart from potatoes and turnips, are very little grown by the farmers, although some in the vicinity of towns do quite a trade in garden stuff. Hardly any tame fruit is raised, but kind nature supplies quite a variety. The delicious wild strawberry comes first, and some years they are very plentiful; after the strawberry comes the raspberry, and they were a fine crop this season. Then there is a little white, waxy berry which has a decided wintergreen flavor, and grows on a tiny vine close to the ground. They are tedious to pick and not very abundant at any time, but when enough can be had, make a delicious jam. In many places gooseberries can be had for the picking. Picnics to the blueberry barrens are next in order, where buckets and buckets of that wholesome fruit are gathered. The red, crimson cranberry winds up the fruit season. Not much fruit is bottled for winter use, and what is put down is usually in the form of jam.

In nearly every home you will find a spinning wheel, not in the hall as an ornament, as has become the fashion in Ontario, but as a useful adjunct to the family comfort. Nearly every woman spins her own yarn and quite a few still weave. The home-woven, home-made, checked flannel dressed little girls are still to be seen all over the island, and they have a comfortable, natural look that is lacking in the shop-dressed girls of the town. The other day I was so much taken with a round-

faced, rosy-cheeked little child—half neglected looking, for her mother was dead—but she had such a frank, happy expression I felt like taking her home with me. I asked her name, and the answer came shyly, "Kitty Ann."

The women are great knitters, and I have seen them walking along the road knitting as they went. There was usually a piece of knitting handy in the kitchen, ready to pick up at any minute. They often knit whole suits of underwear for men. The bag or basket of mitts and socks ready for winter use, which the old ladies would show me, were so thick and warm and comfortable.

I have written before of the hooked mats of Nova Scotia and Cape Breton. Certainly this is an art that the ladies of this province excel in—I don't believe in the world you will find prettier home-made mats than down east. Some are immense in size—three yards square—and the design and coloring most of all new yarn. Toward spring everyone gets a mat-hooking fever on, and one woman told me she outdid all her neighbors by hooking thirteen large and small mats last spring.

The Cape Bretoners, as a rule, marry very young, and large families are still quite fashionable. I have often spoken to a young looking woman with a baby in her arms and asked: "Is this your only child?" "Oh, my! no. I have five more at home." They seem to grow up without very much care or trouble, and are noticeably agreeable to each other. The children used to like to come where I would be sitting; then an older one would come and say, "Come down, you are bothering the lady, come down, now." They would never say come out of the room, it was always "come down."

I fancy the women work harder than the men do, taking it the year around, but neither classes work as hard as the farmers of Ontario. The Cape Breton people have fewer luxuries, but I truly believe, more contentment. It may be a negative happiness, but it is certainly a life pretty free from worry. In my articles I have spoken of the general, not of the exceptional, and always of the rural classes.

Butchering Time—Curing the Hams

The butchering season on the Canadian farm is not the trying time it once was. The selling of the live hog has relieved the farmer of a lot of trouble in this connection. And yet, every farmer still has a hog or two to kill for his own use. Therefore a few timely hints on butchering will not come amiss.

Too much stress cannot be laid upon having everything in proper shape, and arranged as conveniently as possible. Hogs should not be fed for at least 12 hours before they are slaughtered. Have the water scalding hot, and enough water to easily souse the hog and give it a twist over. The platform where the scraping is done should have enough slant to carry the water off quickly.

The cutting up of the carcass requires some skill. It is a good plan to allow the carcass to hang over night. If it is frozen a little no harm will be done. Pork, however, should never be packed away when frozen as it would be apt to spoil before the salt was absorbed. After pork has thawed out the pieces should be carefully washed, using care to get all the blood out, and then rub salt thoroughly into them before placing

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