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LITERATURE.

EIGHT YEARS IN CANADA, &c.

By the Author of "Ecarte," &c.

DE OMNIBUS REBUS ET QUIBUSDAM ALIIS.

[A difficulty of arrangement having occurred with the only two London publishers to whom the following pages have been submitted, the Author has decided on reverting to the usual practice, and publishing in Canada first; thus affording that means of direct communication with other metropolitan publishers, which his absence from London renders a matter of much inconvenience. It will be borne in mind, therefore, by the Canadian reader, that what is now offered to his perusal was, intended first, for an English public.]

CHAPTER I.

THE Canadian events of the years 1836-7,—taking by surprise, as they did, not only the British Government, who were but ill prepared to expect the misguided violence of the disaffected party, but of the people of England generally, who had ever looked upon Canada as most ultra in its loyalty and attachment to the Crown,—must be too familiar to the reader to require any thing beyond an incidental notice in a work which professes to treat chiefly, where political episodes are introduced, of the measures of amelioration subsequently adopted.

Aware of the vast importance of the Colony, even while startled by the tidings of a disaffection which was much exaggerated at the time, not only as to the numbers, but the intelligence and influence of those implicated in it, the British Government, with that promptitude of action which, in cases of emergency, is so peculiarly its own, made every disposition for the occupation of the Colony by a strong force, the moment that the opening of the communication, by water, with Canada would permit. Sir George Arthur was meanwhile sent out to relieve Sir Francis Bond Head, whose removal, it was assumed by the Whig ministry, would prove a means of softening down much of that asperity of feeling his stringent policy had created in the minds of those who made no effort to disguise their restlessness of Imperial domination, yet who, by the introduction of a more soothing and temporizing course, might be brought to view in its true light, the desperate extreme into which they had been betrayed, and to retrace their steps.

Nor this alone. With a forethought,—a pre-voynance, suited to the occasion, they applied themselves, not only to the removal of the immediate and pressing evil, but they wisely resolved to institute the most searching inquiry into the origin of a disease which had continued so long to prey upon the Canadian political system, and to apply an instant remedy. For this duty they selected one who, from his enlarged apprehension and profound and liberal views of Government, was in every sense, and at that particular epoch of Colonial history, the person most competent to the task he was called upon to undertake,—namely, that of regenerating Canada, and bestowing upon her a healthy, active, and enduring Constitution.

Canada being the land of my birth, which, while a mere youth, I had left with my regiment in 1815, I naturally felt some solicitude for its welfare, and as the news, which reached England by every packet, was of a nature to induce the belief that my services might be made available in her defence, I resolved to embark forthwith. I had recently been fighting in Spain, in aid of a liberty which, it will be remembered, it was shown, in the course of Sir Henry Hardinge's defence of my conduct, in the House of Commons, against the unfounded attacks of O'Connell, acting at the instance of his friend the would-be Spanish Duke,—Sir De Lacy Evans,—I had not much enjoyed myself; but, discouraging as had proved my experience of the recently past, I was supported by the conviction that should circumstances bring me again under the wand of authority, I should at least, in meeting Sir John Colborne, come in contact with a gentleman.

Furnished with a letter to Sir Francis Head, from the then Secretary of the Colonies,—Lord Glenelg,—who had previously, and notwithstanding the fierce manner in which I had been assailed by his party in the House of Commons, been good enough to express a desire that I should devote my time and what talent I possessed to the promotion of the cause of good government in Canada, and having been furthermore advised by Sir Henry Hardinge* that he had already sent to Sir John Colborne a letter of introduction in my

favor, I embarked at the London Docks on the 18th of February 1838, and as the ice, of which the river had been full that winter, was not yet melted, had the "novel pleasure" of being "tugged" through it for some miles down the Thames.

Notwithstanding a good deal of delay had occurred in the outset, my final departure from London proved a very abrupt one, and was moreover marked by a strong instance of that singular and unaccountable insight into the future which we usually term presentiment. The winter had been, as I have just remarked, exceedingly severe for an English season; so much so, that, instead of being enabled to leave on the 1st of January, which was the regular day of sailing of the packet, the latter had been detained in the docks for upwards of six weeks. The intermediate time had been passed by a beloved one, now no more, and myself under the hospitable roof of the beautiful, amiable, and talented Countess M——, in Montagu Square; our heavy baggage being deposited in a small lodging near the Docks, to be in readiness for embarkation at a moment's warning. On the night of the 17th, and while confident that many days must yet elapse before the ship could be got down the river, we attended a fancy ball at the Hanover-Square Rooms. It was a very brilliant and crowded affair, and the day had dawned before we all returned home, and separated for the night to meet again at breakfast. Alas! to one it was the last separation on this side of the grave.

It was not without difficulty that I could keep my eyes open, and sleep was to me then the sweetest boon upon earth; but I did not enjoy it long. I had not been half an hour in bed, when I felt myself gently shaken, and a well-known voice urging me to rise and leave for the East End of the town immediately, for nothing could induce the speaker to believe the vessel in which we were to embark would not leave the dock that morning. I endeavored to persuade my wife that the thing was impossible, and that if such were the intention some intimation would have been sent to us. Her reply was, that she had been awakened by the powerful impression forcing itself upon her mind, that she had risen in consequence, and that nothing could convince her she was wrong in attaching the faith she did to the correctness of her presentiment. There was no resisting her urgent manner. I was soon dressed; a coach was sent for, and without an opportunity of taking leave of our kind friends, we finally gained the lodging near the dock. I enquired, on alighting, if any message had been sent to announce the sailing of the vessel that day. The answer was in the negative, and I commenced rallying the disturber of her own and my rest on the fallacy of her forebodings. But, even while in the act of doing so, a loud rap at the street door announced a visitor, and one of the cabin boys entered stating that a sudden thaw having occurred during the night, the Ontario was getting out of dock, and we must, if we wished to avoid a journey to Portsmouth, embark immediately, as the "tugs" had their steam up, and were only waiting for the vessel to clear the dock to be lashed to her sides. Then came the triumph of the prophetess, for my pleasantries suddenly ceased, and the only object that now engaged my serious attention was the gathering together of our scattered luggage, and its introduction into a hackney coach as a medium of transport to the deck of the Ontario; and even so hurried was I in this, that I afterwards found I had left several articles behind. By eight o'clock we had cut our way through the rotting ice as far as Greenwich, and by the time our friends entered the breakfast room, where they of course fully expected to see those from whom they had so informally parted the evening before, we must have been half way down the river.

Although this anecdote may not be of much moment to the many, they for whom the narration is principally designed will fully understand the melancholy satisfaction with which the past is thus adverted to, and a lifeless given to a memory which must glide before every familiar eye as long as the record which summons it shall endure.

A voyage across the Atlantic is, not to all persons, the most desirable *passetemps* in the world. Fanny Kemble was in such rapture with every thing, during her first trip across the ocean, that she absolutely (so says her book) rolled about the floor of her cabin in all the wild delirium of a new-born joy. Sky, sea, sun, moon, stars, rainbows, Mother Carey's chickens—grampuses, dolphins, sharks, masts, rigging, hen-coops—all delighted—she saw poetry in them all—she *ecstasied* on them all. I confess I found no beauty whatever either in the heavens above or in the

* This gallant officer, whose name must ever be associated with India, as well as European military history, commenced his career in the same regiment with my father.