"ROUGHING IT IN THE BUSH"

or FOREST LIFE IN CANADA

BY MRS. SUSANNA MOODIE

Men, in Canada, may call one another rogues and miscreants, in the most approved Billingsgate, through the medium of the newspapers, which are a sort of safety-valve to let off all the bad feelings and malignant passions floating through the country, without any dread of the horsewhip. Hence it is the commonest thing in the world to hear one editor abusing, like a pickpocket, an opposition brother; calling him a reptile—a crawling thing—a calumniator—a hired vendor of lies; and his paper a smut-machine—a vile engine of corruption, as base and degraded as the proprietor, &c. Of this description was the paper I now held in my hand, which had the impudence to style itself the Reformer—not of morals or manners, certainly, if one might judge by the vulgar abuse that defiled every page of the precious document. I soon flung it from me, thinking it worthy of the fate of many a better production in the olden times, that of being burned by the common hangman; but, happily, the office of hangman has become obsolete in Canada, and the editors of these refined journals may go on abusing their betters with impunity.

Books I had none, and I wished that Tom would make his appearance, and amuse me with his oddities; but he had suffered so much from the ague the day before that when he did enter the room to lead me to dinner, he looked like a walking corpse—the dead among the living! so dark, so livid, so melancholy, it was really painful to look upon him.

"I hope the ladies who frequent the ordinary won't fall in love with me," said he, grinning at himself in the miserable looking-glass that formed the case of the Yankee clock, and was ostentatiously displayed on a side table; "I look quite killing today. What a comfort it is, Mrs. M——, to be above all rivalry."

In the middle of dinner, the company was disturbed by the entrance of a person who had the appearance of a gentleman, but who was evidently much flustered with drinking. He thrust his chair in between two gentlemen who sat near the head of the table, and in a loud voice demanded fish.

"Fish, sir?" said the obsequious waiter, a great favourite with all persons who frequented the hotel; "there is no fish, sir. There was a fine salmon, sir, had you come sooner; but 'tis all eaten, sir."

"Then fetch me something, smart!"

"I'll see what I can do, sir," said the obliging Tim, hurrying out.

Tom Wilson was at the head of the table, carving a roast pig, and was in the act of helping a lady, when the rude fellow thrust his fork into the pig, calling out as he did so—

"Hold, sir! give me some of that pig! You have eaten among you all the fish, and now you are going to appropriate the best parts of the pig."

Tom raised his eyebrows, and stared at the stranger in his peculiar manner, then very coolly placed the whole of the pig on his plate. "I have heard," he said, "of dog eating dog, but I never before saw pig eating pig."

"Sir! do you mean to insult me?" cried the stranger, his face crimsoning with anger.

"Only to tell you, sir, that you are no gentleman. Here, Tim," turning to the waiter, "go to the stable and bring in my bear; we will place him at the table to teach this man how to behave himself in the presence of ladies."

A general uproar ensued; the women left the table, while the entrance of the bear threw the gentlemen present into convulsions of laughter. It was too much for the human biped; he was forced to leave the room, and succumb to the bear.

My husband concluded his purchase of the farm, and invited Wilson to go with us into the country and try if change of air would be beneficial to him; for in his then weak state it was impossible for him to return to England. His funds were getting very low, and Tom thankfully accepted the offer. Leaving Bruin in the charge of Tim (who delighted in the oddities of the strange English gentleman), Tom made one of our party to ——.

CHAPTER V.

Our First Settlement, & The Borrowing System

To lend, or not to lend—is that the question?

"Those who go a-borrowing, go a-sorrowing," saith the old adage; and a wiser one never came out of the mouth of experience. I have tested the truth of this proverb since my settlement in Canada, many, many times, to my cost; and what emigrant has not? So averse have I ever been to this practice, that I would at all times rather quietly submit to a temporary inconvenience than obtain anything I wanted in this manner. I yerily believe that a demon of mischief presides over borrowed goods, and takes a wicked pleasure in playing off a thousand malicious pranks upon you the moment he enters your dwelling. Plates and dishes, that had been the pride and ornament of their own cupboard for years, no sooner enter upon foreign service than they are broken; wine-glasses and tumblers, that have been handled by a hundred careless wenches in safety, scarcely pass into the hands of your servants when they are sure to tumble upon the floor, and the accident turns out a compound fracture. If you borrow a garment of any kind, be sure that you will tear it; a watch, that you will break it; a jewel, that you will lose it; a book, that it will be stolen from you. There is no end to the trouble and vexation arising out of this evil habit. If you borrow a horse, and he has the reputation of being the best-behaved animal in the district, you no sooner become responsible for his conduct that he loses his character. The moment that you attempt to drive him, he shows that he has a will of his own, by taking the reins into his own management, and running away in a contrary direction to the road that you wished him to travel. He never gives over his eccentric capers until he has broken his own knees, and the borrowed carriage and harness. So anxious are you about his safety, that you have not a moment to bestow upon your own. And why?—the beast is borrowed, and you are expected to return him in as good condition as he came to you.

But of all evils, to borrow money is perhaps the worst. If of a friend, he ceases to be one the moment you feel that you are bound to him by the heavy clog of obligation. If of a usurer, the interest, in this country, soon doubles the original sum, and you owe an increasing debt, which in time swallows up all you possess.

When we first came to the colony, nothing surprised me more than the extent to which this pernicious custom was carried, both by the native Canadians, the European settlers, and the lower orders of Americans. Many of the latter had spied out the goodness of the land, and borrowed various portions of it, without so much as asking leave of the absentee owners. Unfortunately, our new home was surrounded by these odious squatters, whom we found as ignorant as savages, without their courtesy and kindness.

The place we first occupied was purchased of Mr. B——, a merchant, who took it in payment of sundry large debts which the owner, a New England loyalist, had been unable to settle. Old Joe R——, the present occupant, had promised to quit it with his family, at the commencement of sleighing; and as the bargain was concluded in the month of September, and we were anxious to plough for fall wheat, it was necessary to be upon the spot. No house was to be found in the immediate neighbourhood, save a small dilapidated log tenement, on an adjoining farm (which was scarcely reclaimed from the bush) that had been some months without an owner. The merchant assured us that this could be made very comfortable until such time as it suited R—— to remove, and the owner was willing to let us have it for the moderate sum of four dollars a month.

Trusting to Mr. B——'s word, and being strangers in the land, we never took the precaution to examine this delightful summer residence before entering upon it, but thought ourselves very fortunate in obtaining a temporary home so near our own property, the distance not exceeding half a mile. The agreement was drawn up, and we were told that we could take possession whenever it suited us.

The few weeks that I had sojourned in the country had by no means prepossessed me in its favour. The home-sickness was sore upon me, and all my solitary hours were spent in tears. My whole soul yielded itself up to a strong and overpowering grief. One simple word dwelt forever in my heart, and swelled it to bursting—"Home!" I repeated it waking a thousand times a day, and my last prayer before I sank to sleep was still "Home! Oh, that I could return, if only to die at home!" And nightly I did return; my feet again trod the daisied meadows of England; the song of her birds was in my ears; I wept with delight to find myself once more wandering beneath the fragrant shade of her green hedge-rows; and I awoke to weep in earnest when I found it but a dream. But this is all digression, and has nothing to do with our unseen dwelling. The reader must bear with me in my fits of melancholy, and take me as I am.

It was the 22nd September that we left the Steamboat Hotel, to take possession of our new abode. During the three weeks we had sojourned at ——, I had not seen a drop of rain, and I began to think that the fine weather would last for ever; but this eventful day arose in clouds. Moodie had hired a covered carriage to convey the baby, the servant-maid, and myself to the farm, as our driver prognosticated a wet day; while he followed with Tom Wilson and the teams that conveyed our luggage.

The scenery through which we were passing was so new to me, so unlike anything that I had ever be-held before, that, in spite of its monotonous character, it won me from my melancholy, and I began to look about me with considerable interest. Not so my English servant, who declared that the woods were frightful to look upon; that it was a country only fit for wild beasts; that she hated it with all her heart and soul, and would go back as soon as she was able.

About a mile from the place of our destination the rain began to fall in torrents, and the air, which had been balmy as a spring morning, turned as chilly as that of a November day. Hannah shivered; the baby cried, and I drew my summer shawl as closely round as possible, to protect her from the sudden change in our hitherto delightful temperature. Just then, the carriage turned into a narrow, steep path, overhung with woods, and after labouring up it with considerable difficulty, and at the risk of breaking our necks, it brought us at length to a rocky upland clearing, partially covered with a second-growth of timber, and surrounded on all sides by the dark forest.

"I guess," quoth our Yankee driver, "that at the bottom of this 'ere swell you'll find yourself to hum;" and plunging into a short path cut through the wood, he pointed to a miserable hut at the bottom of a steep descent, and cracking his whip, exclaimed, "'Tis a smart location that. I wish you Britishers may enjoy it."

I gazed upon the place in perfect dismay, for I had never seen such a shed called a house before. "You must be mistaken; that is not a house, but a cattle-shed, or pig-sty."

The man turned his knowing, keen eye upon me, and smiled, half-humorously, half-maliciously, as he said:

"You were raised in the old country I guess; you have much to learn, and more, perhaps, than you'll like to know, before the winter is over."

I was perfectly bewildered—I could only stare at the place, with my eyes swimming in tears; but, as the horses plunged down into the broken hollow, my attention was drawn from my new residence to the perils which endangered life and limb at every step. The driver, however, was well used to such roads, and, steering as dexterously between the black stumps, at length drove up, not to the door, for there was none to the house, but to the open space from which that absent, but very necessary, appendage had been removed. Three young steers and two heifers, which the driver proceeded to drive out, were quietly reposing upon the floor. A few strokes of his whip, and a loud burst of gratuitous curses, soon effected ejectment; and I dismounted, and took possession of this untenable tenement. Moodie was not yet in sight with the teams. I begged the man to stay until he arrived, as I felt terrified at being left alone in this wild, strange-looking place. He laughed, as well he might, at our fears, and said he had a long way to go, and must be off. then, cracking his whip, and nodding to the girl, who was crying aloud, he went his way, and Hannah and myself were left standing in the middle of the dirty floor.

The prospect was indeed dreary. Without, pouring rain; within, a fireless hearth; a room with but one window, and that containing only one whole pane of glass; not an article of furniture to be seen, save an old painted pine-wood cradle, which had been left there by some freak of fortune. This turned upon its side, served us for a seat, and there we impatiently awaited the arrival of Moodie, Wilson, and a man whom the former had hired that morning to assist on the farm. Where they were all to be stowed might have puzzled a more sagacious brain than mine. It is true there was a loft, but I could see no way of reaching it, for ladder there was none so we amused ourselves, while waiting for the coming of our party, by abusing the place, the country, and our own dear selves for our folly in coming to it.

Now, when not only reconciled to Canada, but loving it, and feeling a deep interest in its present welfare, and the fair prospect of its future greatness, I often look back and laugh at the feelings with which I then regarded this noble country.

When things come to the worst, they generally mend. The males of our party no sooner arrived than they set themselves about making things more comfortable. James, our servant, pulled up some of the decayed stumps, with which the small clearing that surrounded the shanty was thickly covered, and made a fire, and Hannah roused herself from the stupor of despair, seized the corn-broom from the top of the loaded waggon, and began to sweep the house, raising such an intolerable cloud of dust that I was glad to throw my cloak over my head, and run out of doors, to avoid suffocation. Then commenced the awful bustle of unloading the two heavily loaded waggons. The small space within the house was soon entirely blocked up with several trunks and packages of all descriptions. There was scarcely room to move, without stumbling over some article of household stuff.

The rain poured in at the open door, beat in at the shattered window, and dropped upon our heads from the holes in the roof. The wind blew keenly through a thousand apertures in the log walls; and nothing could exceed the uncomfortableness of our situation. For a long time the box which contained a hammer and nails was not to be found. At length Hannah discovered it, tied up with some bedding which she was opening out in order to dry. Fortunately spied the door lying among some old boards at the back of the house, and Moodie immediately commenced fitting it to its place. This, once accomplished, was a great addition to our comfort. We then nailed a piece of white cloth entirely over the broken window, which, without diminishing the light, kept out the rain. James constructed a ladder out of the old bits of boards, and Tom Wilson assisted in stowing the luggage away in the loft.

But what has this picture of misery and discomfort to do with borrowing? Patience, my dear, good friends; I will tell you all about it by-and-by.

While we were all busily employed—even the poor baby, who was lying upon a pillow in the old cradle, trying the strength of her lungs, and not a little irritated that no one was at leisure to regard her laudable endeavors to make herself heard—the door was suddenly pushed open, and the apparition of a woman squeezed itself into the crowded room. I left off arranging the furniture of a bed, that had been just put up in a corner, to meet my unexpected, and at that moment, not very welcome guest. Her whole appearance was so extraordinary that I felt quite at a loss how to address her.

Imagine a girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age, with sharp, knowing-looking features, a forward, impudent carriage, and a pert, flippant voice, standing upon one of the trunks, and surveying all our proceedings in the most impertinent manner. The creature was dressed in a ragged, dirty purple stuff gown, cut very low in the neck, with an old red cotton handkerchief tied over her head; her uncombed, tangled locks falling over her thin, inquisitive face, in a state of perfect nature. Her legs and feet were bare, and, in her coarse, dirty red hands, she swang to and fro an empty glass decanter.

"What can she want?" I asked myself. "What a strange creature!"

And there she stood, staring at me in the most unceremonious manner, her keen black eyes glancing obliquely to every corner of the room, which she examined with critical exactness.

Before I could speak to her, she commenced the conversation by drawling through her nose—

"Well, I guess you are fixing here."

I thought she had come to offer her services; and I told her that I did not want a girl, for I had brought one out with me.

"How!" responded the creature, "I hope you don't take me for a help. I'd have you to know that I'm as good a lady as yourself. No; I just stepped over to see what was going on. I see'd the teams pass our'n about noon, and I says to father, 'Them strangers are cum; I'll go and look arter them.' 'Yes,' says he, 'do—and take the decanter along. Maybe they'll want one to put their whiskey in.' 'I'm goin' to,' says I; so I cum across with it, an' here it is. But, mind—don't break it—'tis the only one we have to hum; and father says 'tis so mean to drink out of green glass."

My surprise increased every minute. It seemed such an act of disinterested generosity thus to anticipate wants we had never thought of. I was regularly taken in.

"My good girl," I began, "this is really very kind—but——"

"Now, don't go to call me 'gal'—and pass off your English airs on us. We are genuine Yankees, and think ourselves as good—yes, a great deal better than you. I am a young lady."

"Indeed!" said I, striving to repress my astonishment. "I am a stranger in the country, and my acquaintance with Canadian ladies and gentlemen is very small. I did not mean to offend you by using the term girl; I was going to assure you that we had no need of the decanter. We have bottles of our own—and we don't drink whiskey."

"How! Not drink whiskey? Why, you don't say! How ignorant you must be. May be they have no whiskey in the old country?"

"Yes, we have; but it is not like the Canadian whiskey. But, pray take the decanter home again—I am afraid that it will get broken in this confusion."

"No, no; father told me to leave it—and there it is;" and she planted it resolutely down on the trunk. "You will find a use for it till you have unpacked your own."

Seeing that she was determined to leave the bottle, I said no more about it, but asked her to tell me where the well was to be found.

"The well!" she repeated after me, with a sneer. "Who thinks of digging wells where they can get plenty of water from the creek? There is a fine water privilege not a stone throw from the door," and, jumping off the box, she disappeared as abruptly as she had entered. We all looked at each other; Tom Wilson was highly amused, and laughed until he held his sides.

"What tempted her to bring this empty bottle here?" said Moodie. "It is all an excuse; the visit, Tom, was meant for you."

"You'll know more about it in a few days," said James, looking up from his work. "That bottle is not brought here for nought."

I could not unravel the mystery, and thought no more about it, until it was again brought to my recollection by the damsel herself.

Our united efforts had effected complete transformation in our uncouth dwelling. Sleeping-berths had been partitioned off for the men; shelves had been put up for the accommodation of books and crockery, a carpet covered the floor, and the chairs and tables we had brought from —— gave an air of comfort to the place, which, on the first view of it, I deemed impossible. My husband, Mr. Wilson, and James, had walked over to inspect the farm, and I was sitting at the table at work, the baby creeping upon the floor, and Hannah preparing dinner. The sun shone warm and bright, and the open door admitted a current of fresh air, which tempered the heat of the fire.

"Well, I guess you look smart," said the Yankee damsel, presenting herself once more before me. "You old country folks are so stiff, you must have evrything nice or you fret. But, then, you can easily do it; you have stacks of money; and you can fix everything right off with money."

"Pray take a seat," and I offered her a chair, "and be kind enough to tell me your name. I suppose you must live in the neighborhood, although I cannot perceive any dwelling near us."

"My name! So you want to know my name. I arn't ashamed of my own; 'tis Emily S——. I am eldest daughter of the gentleman who owns this house."

"What must the father be," thought I, "if he resembles the young lady, his daughter?"

Imagine a young lady, dressed in ragged petticoats, through whose yawning rents peered forth, from time to time, her bare red knees, with uncombed elf-locks, and a face and hands that looked as if they had been unwashed for a month—who did not know A from B, and despised those who did. While these reflections, combined with a thousand ludicrous images, were flitting through my mind, my strange visitor suddenly exclaimed—

"Have you done with that 'ere decanter I brought across yesterday?"

"Oh, yes! I have no occasion for it." I rose, took it from the shelf, and placed it in her hand.

"I guess you won't return it empty; That would be mean, father says. He wants it filled with whiskey."

The mystery was solved, the riddle made clear. I could contain my gravity no longer, but burst into a hearty fit of laughter, in which I was joined by Hannah. Our young lady was mortally offended; she tossed the decanter from hand to hand, and glared at us with tiger-like eyes.

"You think yourselves smart! Why do you laugh in that way?"

"Excuse me—but you have such an odd way of borrowing that I cannot help it. This bottle, it seems, was brought over for your own convenience, not for mine. I am sorry to disappoint you, but I have no whiskey."

"I guess spirits will do as well; I know there is some in that keg, for I smells it."

"It contains rum for the work men."

"Better still. I calculate when you've been here a few months, you'll be too knowing to give rum to your helps. But old country folks are all fools, and that's the reason they get so easily sucked in, and be so soon wound-up. Cum, fill the bottle, and don't be stingy. In this country we all live by borrowing. If you want anything, why, just send and borrow from us."

Thinking that this might be the custom of the country, I hastened to fill the decanter, hoping that I might get a little new milk for the poor weanling child in return; but when I asked my liberal visitor if she kept cows, and would lend me a little new milk for the baby, she burst out into high disdain. "Milk! Lend milk? I guess milk in the fall is worth a York shilling a quart. I cannot sell you a drop under."

This was a wicked piece of extortion, as the same article in the towns, where, of course, it was in greater request, only brought three-pence a quart.

"If you'll pay me for it, I'll bring you some tomorrow. But mind—cash down."

"And when do you mean to return the rum," I said, with some asperity.

"When father goes to the creek." This was the name given by my neighbors to the village of P—— distant about four miles.

Day after day I was tormented by this importunate creature; she borrowed of me tea, sugar, candles, starch, blueing, irons, pots, bowls—in short, every article in common domestic use—while it was with the utmost difficulty we could get them returned. Articles of food such as tea, and sugar, or of convenience, like candles, starch and soap, she never dreamed of being required at her hands. This method of living upon their neighbors is a most convenient one to unprincipled people, as it does not involve the penalty of stealing; and they can keep the goods without the unpleasant necessity of returning them, or feeling the moral obligation of being grateful for their use. Living eight miles from ——, I found these constant encroachments a heavy burden on our poor purse; and being ignorant of the country, and residing in such a lonely, out-of-the-way place, surrounded by these savages, I was really afraid of denying their requests.

The very day our new plough came home, the father of this bright damsel, who went by the familiar and unenviable title of Old Satan, came over to borrow it (though we afterwards found out that he had a good one of his own). The land had never been broken up, and was full of rocks and stumps, and he was anxious to save his own from injury; the consequence was that the borrowed implement came home unfit for use, just at the very time that we wanted to plough for fall wheat. The same happened to a spade and trowel, bought in order to plaster the house. Satan asked the loan of them for one hour for the same purpose, and we never saw them again.

The daughter came one morning, as usual, on one of these swindling expeditions, and demanded of me the loan of some fine slack. Not knowing what she meant by fine slack, and weary of her importunities, I said I had none. She went away in a rage. Shortly after she came again for some pepper. I was at work, and my work-box was open upon the table, well stored with threads and spools of all descriptions. Miss Satan cast her hawk's eye into it, and burst out in her usual rude manner—

"I guess you told me a tarnation big lie the other day."

Unaccustomed to such language, I rose from my seat, and pointing to the door, told her to walk out, as I did not choose to be insulted in my own house.

"Your house! I'm sure it's father's," returned the incorrigible wretch. "You told me that you had no fine slack, and you have stacks of it."

"What is fine slack?" said I, very pettishly.

"The stuff that's wound upon these 'ere pieces of wood," pouncing as she spoke upon one of my most serviceable spools.

"I cannot give you that; I want that myself."

"I didn't ask you to give it. I only wants to borrow it till father goes to the creek."

"I wish he would, make haste, then, as I want a number of things you have borrowed of me, and which I cannot longer do without."

She gave me a knowing look, and carried off my spool in triumph.

I happened to mention the manner in which I was constantly annoyed by these people, to a worthy English farmer who resided near us; and he fell a-laughing, and told me that I did not know the Canadian Yankees as well as he did, or I should not be troubled with them long.

"The best way," says he, "to get rid of them, is to ask them sharply what they want; and if they give you no satisfactory answer, order them to leave the house; but I believe I can put you in a better way still. Buy some small article from them, and pay them a trifle over the price, and tell them to bring the change. I will lay my life upon it that it will be long before they trouble you again."

I was impatient to test the efficacy of his scheme. That very afternoon Miss Satan brought me a plate of butter for sale. The price was three and ninepence; twice the sum, by the by, that it was worth.

"I have no change," giving her a dollar, "but you can bring it to me tomorrow."

Oh, blessed experiment! for the value of one quarter dollar I got rid of this dishonest girl forever; rather than pay me, she never entered the house again.

About a month after this, I was busy making an apple-pie in the kitchen. A cadaverous-looking woman, very long-faced and witch-like, popped her ill-looking visage into the door and drawled through her nose:

"Do you want to buy a rooster?"

Now, the sucking pigs with which we had been regaled every day for three weeks at the tavern, were called roasters; and not understanding the familiar phrases of the country, I thought she had a sucking pig to sell.

"Is it a good one?"

"I guess 'tis."

"What do you ask for it?"

"Two Yorkers."

"That is very cheap, if it is any weight. I don't like them under ten or twelve pounds."

"Ten or twelve pounds! Why, woman, what do you mean? Would you expect a rooster to be bigger nor a turkey?"

We stared at each other. There was evidently some misconception on my part.

"Bring the roaster up; and if I like it, I will buy it, though I must confess that I am not very fond of roast pig."

"Do you call this a pig?" said my she-merchant, drawing a fine gamecock from under her cloak.

I laughed heartily at my mistake, as I paid her down the money for the bonny bird. This little matter settled, I thought she would take her departure; but that rooster proved the dearest fowl to me that ever was bought.

"Do you keep backy and snuff here?" says she, sidling up close to me.

"We make no use of those articles."

"How! Not use backy and snuff? That's uncommon."

She paused, then added in a mysterious, confidential tone—

"I want to ask you how your tea-caddy stands?"

"It stands in the cupboard," said I, wondering what all this might mean.

"I know that; but have you any tea to spare??"

I now began to suspect what sort of a customer the stranger was.

"Oh, you want to borrow some? I have none to spare."

"You don't say so. Well, now, that's stingy. I never asked anything of you before. I am poor, and you are rich; besides, I'm troubled so with the headache, and nothing does me any good but a cup of strong tea."

"The money I have just given you will buy a quarter of a pound of the best."

"I guess that isn't mine. The fowl belonged to my neignbor. She's sick; and I promised to sell it for her to buy some physic. Money!" she added, in a coaxing tone, "Where should I get money? Lord bless your people in this country have no money; and those who come out with piles of it, soon lose it. But Emily S—— told me that you are tarnation rich, and draw your money from the old country. So I guess you can well afford to lend a neighbor a spoonful of tea."

"Neighbor! Where do you live, and what is your name?"

"My name is Betty Fye—old Betty Fye; I live in the log shanty over the creek, at the back of your'n. The farm belongs to my eldest son, I'm a widow with twelve sons; and 'tis —— hard to scratch along."

"Do you swear?"

"Swear! What harm? It eases one's mind when one's vexed. Everybody swears in this country. My boys all swear like Sam Hill and I used to swear mighty big oaths till about a month ago, when the Methody parson told me that if I did not leave it off I should go to a tarnation bad place; so I dropped some of the worst of them."

"You would do wisely to drop the rest; women never swear in my country."

"Well, you dont say! I always heer'd they were very ignorant. Will you lend me the tea?"

The woman was such an original that I gave her what she wanted. As she was going off, she took up one of the apples I was peeling.

"I guess you have a fine orchard?"

"They say the best in the district."

"We have no orchard to hum, and I guess you'll want sarce."

"Sarce! What is sarce?"

"Not know what sarce is? You are clever! Sarce is apples cut up and dried, to make into pies in the winter. Now do you comprehend?"

I nodded.

"Well, I was going to say that I have no apples, and that you have a tarnation big few of them; and if you'll give me twenty bushels of your best apples, and find me with a pound of coarse thread to string them upon, I will make you a barrel of sarce on shares—that is, give you one, and keep one for myself."

I had plenty of apples, and I gladly accepted her offer, and Mrs. Betty Fye departed, elated with the success of her expedition.

I found to my cost, that, once admitted into the house, there was no keeping her away. She borrowed everything she could think of, without once dreaming of restitution. I tried all ways of affronting her, but without success. Winter came, and she was still at her old pranks. Whenever I saw her coming down the lane, I used involuntarily to exclaim "Betty Fye! Betty Fye! Fye upon Betty Fye! The Lord deliver me from Betty Fye!" The last time I was honored with a visit from this worthy, she meant to favor me with a very large order upon my goods and chattels.

"Well, Mrs. Fye, what do you want today?"

"So many things that I scarce know where to begin. Ah, what a thing 'tis to be poor! First, I want you to lend me ten pounds of flour to make some Johnnie cakes."

"I thought they were made of Indian meal?"

"Yes, yes, when you've got the meal. I am out of it, and this is a new fixing of my own invention. Lend me the flour, woman, and I'll bring you one of the cakes to taste."

This was said very coaxingly.

"Oh, pray don't trouble yourself. What next?" I was anxious to see how far her impudence would go, and determined to affront her if possible.

"I want you to lend me a gown, and a pair of stockings. I have to go to Oswego to see my husband's sister, and I'd like to look decent."

"Mrs. Fye, I never lend my clothes to anyone. If I lent them to you I should never wear them again."

"So much the better for me" (with a knowing grin). "I guess if you won't lend me the gown, you will let me have some black slack to quilt a stiff petticoat, a quarter of a pound of tea and some sugar; and I will bring them back as soon as I can."

"I wonder when that will be. You owe me so many things that it will cost you more than you imagine to repay me."

"Sure you're not going to mention what's past; I can't owe you much. But I will let you off the tea and the sugar, if you will lend me a five-dollar bill." This was too much for my patience longer to endure, and I answered sharply—

"Mrs. Fye, it surprises me that such proud people as you Americans would condescend to the meanness of borrowing from those whom you affect to despise. Besides as you never repay us for what you pretend to borrow, I look upon it as a system of robbery. If strangers unfortunately settle among you, their good-nature is taxed to supply your domestic wants, at a ruinous expense, besides the mortification of finding that they have been deceived and tricked out of their property. If you would come honestly to me and say, 'I want these things, I am too poor to buy them myself, and would be obliged to you to give them to me,' I should then acknowledge you as a common beggar, and treat you accordingly; give or not give, as it suited my convenience. But in the way in which you obtain these articles from me you are spared even a debt of gratitude; for you well know that the many things which you have borrowed from me will be a debt owing to the Day of Judgment."

"S'pose they are," quoth Betty, not in the least abashed at my lecture on honesty, "you know what the Scripture saith, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive'."

"Ay, there is an answer to that in the same book which doubtless you may have heard," said I, disgusted with her hypocrisy, "'The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again'."

Never shall I forget the furious passion into which this too apt quotation threw my unprincipled applicant. She lifted up her voice and cursed me, using some of the big oaths temporarily discarded for conscience sake. And so she left me, and I never looked upon her face again.

When I removed to our own house, the history of which, and its former owner, I will give by-and-by, we had a bony, red-headed, ruffianly American squatter, who had "left his country for his country's good," for an opposite neighbor. I had scarcely time to put my house in order before his family commenced borrowing or stealing from me. It is even worse than stealing, the things procured from you being obtained on false pretences—adding lying to theft. Not having either an oven or a cooking stove, which at that period were not so cheap or so common as they are now, I had provided myself with a large bake-kettle as a substitute. In this kettle we always cooked hot cakes for breakfast, preferring that to the trouble of thawing the frozen bread. This man's wife was in the habit of sending over for my kettle whenever she wanted to bake, which, as she had a large family, happened nearly every day, and I found her importunity a great nuisance.

I told the impudent lad so, who was generally sent for it, and asked him what they did to bake their bread before I came.

"I guess we had to eat cakes in the pan; but now we can borrow this kettle of your'n, mother can fix bread".

I told him that he could have the kettle this time; but I must decline letting his mother have it in future, for I wanted it for the same purpose.

The next day passed over. The night was intensely cold, and I did not rise so early as usual in the morning. My servant was away at a quilting bee, and we were still in bed, when I heard the latch of the kitchen door lifted up, and a step crossed the floor. I jumped out of bed, and began to dress as fast as I could, when Philander called out in his well-known nasal twang—

"Missus! I'm come for the kettle."

I (through the partition): "You can't have it this morning. We cannot get our breakfast without it."

Philander: "No more can the old woman to hum," and, snatching up the kettle, which had been left to warm on the hearth, he rushed out of the house, singing, at the top of his voice—

(To be continued.)