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OUR CENTENNIAL STORY.

THE BASTONNAIS:

A TALE OF THE AMERICAN INVASION OF CANADA IN 1775-76.

By JOHN LESPERANCE.

BOOK II.

THE THICKENING OF THE CLOUDS.

IV.

BIRCH AND MAPLE.

Arnold's men stood like a spectral army on the Heights of Levis, but unlike spectres they did not vanish in the full glare of the light. After gazing their fill upon the renowned city which they had come so far to see—its beetling citadel, its winding walls, its massive gates, the peaked roofs of its houses, the tall steeples of its churches, the graceful campaniles of its numerous convents—they set actively to the work of attack which remained as the culmination of their heroic march through the wilderness. The enchantment of distance had now vanished, and the reality of vision was before them. Arnold had the quick insight of the born commander. He understood that he could accomplish nothing from Levis. The broad St. Lawrence rushed by him with a sullen moan of warning, isolating him effectually from Quebec. He had no artillery. There were no boats. An ice-bridge was out of the question for at least two months to come. And yet he saw his way clear. He must cross to the north shore. He must attack Quebec. The prize was worth even a desperate attempt. If he took Quebec before Montgomery joined him, his name would be immortalized. He would rank with Wolfe; indeed, considering the exiguity of his means, his feat would surpass that of Wolfe. The capture of Montreal would be glory enough for Montgomery. That of Quebec belonged of right to Benedict Arnold. If there were risks, there were also chances. The regulars were away. The walls were manned only by raw militia. Lieutenant-Governor Crahané was no soldier. The French inhabitants of the city were at least apathetic. Many of the English residents were positively the friends of the Continental cause.

Yes, Arnold must cross the river and that speedily. On the very afternoon of his arrival, he ordered Morgan, the commander of the rifle corps, to prepare a number of canoes without delay. With the assistance of some Indians who were hanging around the camp in quest of fire-water and other booty, a squad of Morgan's men, under the command of Cary Singleton, repaired to the neighboring woods skirting the river and there proceeded to strip the oldest and girtheest birch trees. Autumn is not so favorable a time as spring for the stripping and preparation of birch bark, but the result is satisfactory enough provided the frost has not penetrated too deep into the heart of the tree.

The maple and the birch are the kings of the Canadian forest. Two strong, tall, unbending trees, they stand as fit pillars to the entrance of a boreal climate. For fuel they rank first on the market of hard woods, and each has its special advantage. The maple is rather more appreciated for its heating properties; the birch is decidedly more valuable for its ash. The ash of the birch is a fair thing to see, white as snow and soft under the touch as flour. The leaf of the maple and the bark of the birch are national emblems in Canada, and it is well that they should be, for they are both associated with the history of the country, and enter largely into its domestic comforts. The annals of New France may be compared to an album of maple leaves bound in a scroll of birchen bark, and a contemporary writer in Quebec has adopted the idea for the title of one of his works. The solid beams of the Canadian house are hewn out of columns of birch, as sound if not so fragrant as the cedar of Lebanon, and the furniture of the Canadian home is wrought of bird-eye maple, susceptible of the velvetest polish, and more beautiful, because more variegated, than walnut or mahogany.

Every season of the year has its peculiar amusement, and among a people of primitive habits, these amusements are gone through with a kind of religious observance. There is the hay-time in summer when, under the sultry sky and amid the strong scents of the hardier field-flowers, the huge wain is driven from the stubble field into the shadows of the impending woods, and around it the workers sing and make merry in token of joy for the abundant yield of sweet grass that shall fatten the kine in the drear barren months of snow. The young men rest on their scythes, that glisten like Turkish sabres, and, from under their broad-brimmed hats of straw, the brown girls smile, as they tress garlands of garish flowers to bind the last and the largest of the sheaves.

In autumn, there is the season of the harvest with its traditional ceremonies of a religious or convivial nature. The granary is decorated up to the roof in hangings of odoriferous verdure, and the barn floor is cleared for the dance of the weary feet that have long toiled in the five-acre. Under the crescent moon, in those long Septem-

ber evenings, the old superstitions of the Saxon Druids are repeated, while many a beautiful Norma, crowned with vervain and mistletoe, a gleaming sickle in her hand, and her eyes filled with the prophetic light of love, reigns a queen over the honest loving hearts of swains who lay at her feet the brightest wisps of the upland. And the humble Ruth is there, too, with her sweet patient face, and her timid look fixed on the generous Boaz who allowed her to pick the gleanings of his golden corn.

Winter also has its feasts and its holidays. No where better than in arctic climates are these celebrated by persons of every age and sex. There are innumerable games and pastimes around the fire, where the wildest merriment drives away the tedium of the long wintry night. Stories are told, songs are sung, tricks are played. There is dancing in the lighted hall; there is love making in the dark corners; and to crown the festival there is a sleigh-ride under the cold moon, when the music of the bells, the tramping of the hoofs, the shouts of the drivers, and the shrill whistle of the Northern blast, are to the buoyant spirits of the young promenaders like goblets of exhilarating wine.

In Canada, all these pleasant rural ceremonies of the old countries are well preserved. And it is the only portion of this continent where they are to be met with.

The American who has read of them, but has never witnessed them in Europe, can find them faithfully reproduced in Canada.

But in spring, Canadians have a pastime peculiar to themselves, furnished by their own climate. It is the season of sugar-making. At the period in which the events of our story occurred, the cultivation of the maple was much more extensive than now, but even at present it is sufficiently well maintained to enable a traveller to study all its picturesqueness and charm. In Vermont, New Hampshire, Michigan and Wisconsin, the maple is cultivated, but in such a matter-of-fact, mercantile fashion, that there is no rural poetry in the process.

The maples stand in an area of half an acre. Each one is notched at the height of about a foot or a foot and a half from the ground. A piece of shingle is fastened in the lips of the wound, at an angle of forty-five and down this trickle the sweet waters in a trough set at the foot of each tree. There stand the forest wives distilling their milk, while the white sunlight rests on their silver trunks and the soft winds of March dally with their leafless branches. The sugarman has his eye fixed on each of them, and as fast as the urns are filled, he empties them into a large vessel preparatory to boiling. In an open space, towards the centre of the area, is a huge cauldron dangling from a hob, and under it crackles a fire of pine and tamarac. At a little distance from this, stands the cabin of the proprietor, where are stowed away all the utensils necessary for sugar-making. There too his hammock swings, for during the whole period when the maple bleeds, he lives like an Indian in the forest.

Presently the sound of voices is heard coming up the slopes, and in a short time the whole party that has been invited to the sugar-festival finds itself collected under the maples. They bring with them baskets of provisions, hams and shoulders, eggs, and the indispensable allowance of strong waters.

"The first thing to be done, my friends," cries the host to his guests, "is to drink the health of the forest wives in a draught of maple wayer."

And immediately tin cups are applied to the notches. When they are filled, the toast is drunk with all the honors.

"Now," resumes the host, "come up to the cauldron and get your share of the syrup."

One by one, the guests approach the huge vessel where the maple water is boiling and bubbling. Each one holds in his hand a wooden basin filled with fresh clean snow, and into that the hospitable host ladles out the golden stream. With the accompaniment of new bread, this dish is delicious, for it is peculiar to the maple sugar and syrup that they do not satiate, much less less nauseate, as other saccharine compositions do.

After this preliminary repast, the guests indulge in various amusements. The older folks sit together in the cabin door, chatting of their youthful frolics in former sugar-making days, while the young people sing, flirt, promenade and enjoy themselves as only the young know how. Some of the more active go about gathering dry branches and wood to keep up the fire, and others saunter a little out of sight on a visit to the demijohns which they have hidden behind the rocks.

After a time, the host gives the signal for taffy making. This part of the fun is reserved for the girls. They throw aside their mantles, push back their hoods, tuck up their sleeves and plunge their white fingers into the rapidly cool-

ing masses of syrup. The mechanical process of drawing the arms backwards and forwards is in itself an uninteresting occupation, but somehow under these Canadian maples, in that bracing mountain atmosphere and amid all the accessories of this peculiar vernal picnic, taffy making is an exhilarating, picturesque amusement. The girls get ruddy with the exertion; they pant, they strain, the duck their heads when their lovers creep behind to steal a kiss, or they run after the shameless robber and slap his naughty cheeks with their sticky palms. Under the rapid kneading the dark syrup becomes glossier, then it reddens, next it grows a golden hue, till finally it gets whiter and whiter, thinner and thinner and the taffy is finished.

Towards the middle of the afternoon, the principal repast takes place. All the provisions which the guests have brought are produced and spread on a long table prepared for the purpose. Maple water and maple sugar are the accompaniments of every dish. When all the meats have been discussed, the feast winds up by the celebrated maple omelet. Whatever Soyer or Brillat Savarin might say, it is a delicious dish, though too rich to be partaken of copiously, and, according to every hygienic principle, very apt to be difficult of digestion. It consists of eggs pretty well boiled and broken into maple syrup, slightly diluted and piping hot. After a meal of this kind, exercise is indispensable and it is the custom to get up a series of dances until the hour of breaking up.

"Friends," exclaims the host, when they are about to retire from the table, "I am glad to find that you have done justice to my syrup and sugar. It is the best sign that they were good. It keeps up the reputation of my sugary. Try to retain the taste of them till next year, when I hope we shall all meet again, under these same trees."

A round of applause follows these words, and the whole company breaks out into hunting songs in honor of the host.

"Now," resumes he, "we must by all means have a dance. I never let my friends go without at least one, and I intend to join in the first myself. Come, hurry up, one and all. I see a suspicious cloud or two in the sky yonder, and we may possibly have a storm before the day is over."

A fiddler is soon found and the dance is organized. He leans his left cheek lovingly on his instrument and has just run his bow across the discordant strings, when suddenly a loud crash is heard in the gorges of the mountain. It is the roar of the storm. The maple tops writhe and twist in the sweep of the winds that come up in eddies from the river far beneath. The sky is suddenly darkened. The snow falls thick and fast. These portents are sufficiently significant to startle the whole party. The dance is broken up and every one prepares to depart as fast as he can.

(To be continued.)

CURRY.

Curry is an East Indian "dish;" first, last, and always an East Indian dish. It is essentially and substantially neither more or less than a culinary preparation of the root known as *Curcuma*, or *Terra-Merita*, which in English we call Turmeric and which, in some parts of the East Indies, is called Manjella Kus, and in other parts Kaha—whence we derive our modern English word "curry," through the Indian form *kahari*. The French preserve the original word more accurately in their equivalent for it—"kari." The root grows copious throughout the East Indies. It was first called *Crocus Indicus* in Europe, because it tinged other substances with a saffron color, which fact also induced the Arabs to call it *curcuna*. The Portuguese of Goa and the Dutch of Amboyna first made it known in Europe as a medicinal root. The Hindoos to this day levigate it on marble slabs with coco and other vegetable oils for external use, and the Chinese make a snuff of it, as they do of hellebore. These wily Mongols also preserve it with sugar and exhibit it in the jaundice, perhaps on some vague superficial theory of *similia similibus curantur*. It came upon Christian tables first in Holland, about two centuries ago, and the Dutch of that day, who had gleams and pronouncements of the as yet unborn science of gastronomy, served it, as Lieuwenhoeck tells us, with "Canary wine and with the wines of the Electorate of Treves." These latter wines are represented now by our Scharzhofbergers and other sparkling Moselle wines, wines full of sugar, like champagne, and containing certain tartareous nitrous qualities, then enormously prized. The only part of the world in which curry is to-day to be tasted in perfection is Hindostan. The powder is there freshly prepared every day, and the favorite custom of the English who use it is to drink Bass' pale ale with it. In our climate either sherry or champagne is preferable. In London, at the Oriental Club, or on the best steamers of the famous Peninsula and Oriental Line, the finest curried dishes out of India are to be enjoyed. In our hemisphere the best we can usually expect is a preparation made up on the prescriptions of cooks like Francatelli and Soyer, or on the curious recipe given in the American Cyclopaedia, in which coriander, cummin, Cayenne pepper, fenugreek, and cardamon seeds figure as prominently as the curry proper. But this need not distress us. For, though curry is a good thing in its place and time, and when properly administered and accompanied, it has hardly won its way, and it hardly deserves to win its

way, into the higher domain of the gastronomic art. It still rather deserves the epithet of "barbaric" than that of "marvellous," which has just been used by Dean Stanley in a striking discourse as a more proper and becoming adjective wherewith to decorate the name of England's fair and mysterious empire in the East.

CONVERSAZIONE AT THE UNIVERSITY, TORONTO.

These sketches represent a literary conversation, held at Toronto, a few nights ago. The staircase leading to the gallery of Convocation Hall, represented in sketch No. 1, besides being eminently suited for flirtation is also the last resource of the multitude who come late and are desirous of hearing the concert, or, at least, such weak, uncertain sounds as manage to escape suffocation by squeezing through the jam in the doorway. The cynic too is attracted to the spot as one well adapted for his favorite amusement of thinking all were mortal but himself. No. 2 is the Social Science party, quite as interested in back hair and handsome moustaches as microscopical examination of fly's legs. No. 3 is the Library, the resort of people who have "read everything."

DOMESTIC.

EGG AND MILK.—Beat separately the yolk and white of a fresh egg; add to the yolk a tumbler of good milk. Sweeten it with white sugar to the taste, then stir in the white.

POTATO PIECRUST.—Take six potatoes, wash them first; when washed, add to them a tablespoonful of shortening and a little salt, then add flour enough to make a sufficient pastry. It makes a delicious pie crust.

POTATO CAKES.—Take mashed potatoes, flour, and a little salt and melted butter (to make them sweet add a little powdered loaf sugar), mix with just enough milk to make the paste stiff enough to roll, make it the size and thickness of a muffin, and bake quickly.

CHOCOLATE FOR THE SICK.—When an invalid uses chocolate, it should be made in the ordinary way and then suffered to stand until cold. The oily parts collecting on the surface should be taken off. Then boil the liquid again, and add sugar and milk as usual.

COOKIES FOR CHILDREN.—As an enquiry was made for a receipt for cookies for children, I send you the following:—Nine cups of flour, five of sugar, three of shortening, a tablespoonful of soda dissolved in a little water. Mix flour, shortening and sugar fine; mix with water sufficient to knead. They will improve by keeping.

HOT SLAW.—Butter the size of an egg, half a cup of milk, yellow of two eggs, teaspoonful of salt, one-fourth of a teaspoonful of pepper, small level teaspoonful of dry mustard, and three tablespoonfuls of vinegar. Put the butter into the skillet with fine cut cabbage, add the other ingredients and stir all the time until the cabbage heats through.

HASH DRESSING.—A teacupful and a half of boiling water must be poured into a sauce-pan, mix a heaping teaspoonful of flour, with a tablespoonful of cold water, stir it in and boil three minutes. Then add two teaspoonfuls of salt, a small half teaspoonful of pepper, and butter the size of egg. After removing all tough gristly pieces from the cold cooked meat, chop it fine with some boiled potatoes. Put them in the dressing and let them heat through, then serve. It injures cooked meat to cook it again, making it hard and unpalatable. Should you have any cold gravy left use it, in that case you require less butter, salt and pepper. You can serve it with buttered toast underneath, or you may see it in the oven to brown on top, or drop eggs into a skillet of boiling salt water, and when cooked place on top of the hash.

Meat pie is made in the same manner, only leaving out the chopped potatoes; put the hash in a baking dish, and cover over with mashed potatoes, after they have been mixed with salt, butter and cream; bake for fifteen minutes.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

"SHE STOOPS TO CONQUER" is now being played at Wallack's, with Mr. Wallack, John Gilbert, and Harry Beckett in the cast.

"PIQUE" continues to enjoy an uninterrupted run of prosperity at the Fifth Avenue Theatre. It is now in its eleventh week, which, for a "play of to day," is remarkable.

"JULIUS CAESAR" is to be played every night at Booth's until it reaches its one hundredth performance. On the sixth of March, Mr. E. A. Sothern is announced to appear.

Mr. H. D. PALMER, of Booth's Theatre, New York, who is now in London, has completed arrangements with Mr. Charles Calvert for the production in America of the play, "Sardanapalus." It is probable that Mr. Calvert will come over, and himself superintend the mounting of the piece on a scale of great splendor.

Rossi's costume as Romeo is singularly unbecoming—both too grave and too gay—consisting of a shortish coat of black velvet, with cumbrous flowing sleeves, trimmed with fur, purple tights—very purple tights—very purple and very tight—and yellow boots, topped with red. Occasionally he wears in the first scene flesh-colored tights—very fleshy—which, with the fur-trimmed upper garment, produce a most incongruous effect.

MISS MORRIS afforded a notable instance of presence of mind at Baltimore lately. At the point where *Camille* rises and totters to the window and thence, striving to regain her couch, staggers to the toilet table, she introduces a most effective and telling piece of acting, and it is one of the strongest incidents of the whole play. It requires great delicacy, and as she renders it must be done with great nicety or it would prove a disaster. Just as *Camille* was turning to the glass a cat of extreme indiscretion trotted on to the stage and caused a titter in the audience. Miss Morris called the animal to her, preserving in the most admirable manner the spirit and color of the previous situation, fell upon the floor beside it, caressed it, and finally staggered with it to the wing and gave it into the prompter's too visible hand. It was an appalling incident, for on its success depended the whole of the last act, and yet the manner of its execution held the audience spellbound; and it was really hard to determine if it was not actually "down on the bills." The cat was in a position to ruin everything, for in another moment *Camille*'s scream, when she sees herself in the mirror, would have sent it scampering off the stage with tail erect, and then where would the audience have been?