

“Those who had not been able to join this exodus, met together three years later in the spring of 1766, at Boston, with the intention of wending their way back to their lost and lamented Acadia. There remained then in foreign lands only a small minority, riveted to the spot by infirmity or extreme want. We must, however, except those who had been deported to Maryland, where the presence of English Catholics and of a few priests had made their lot less intolerable, and where some of their descendants may still be found.

“‘The heroic caravan’ which formed in Boston and determined to cross the forest wilderness of Maine on its return to Acadia, was made up of about 800 persons. On foot, and almost without provisions, these pilgrims braved the perils and fatigues of a return by land, marching up the coast of the Bay of Fundy as far as the isthmus of Shediac, across 600 miles of forests and uninhabited mountains; some pregnant women of this pitiful band were confined on the way; I have known some of the sons of these children of sorrow, who told me this story as they had it from their fathers born in the course of this painful journey.

“No one will ever know all that these unfortunate people, forsaken and forgotten by everybody, suffered as they hewed their way through the wilderness; the many years gone by have long since stifled the echoes of their sighs in the forest, which itself has disappeared; all the woes of these hapless beings are now lost in the shadows of the past; others are joyously reaping harvests on their obliterated camping-grounds, and there hardly remains aught but a few dim traditions of this sublime and sorrowful exodus scattered among the fireside tales of aged Acadians in the Bay of Fundy.

“In the wild paths that wound in and out through the interminable forests of Maine, this long line of emigrants walked painfully on; there were small groups of women and children, dragging the slender baggage of misery, while the men, scattering hither and thither, sought in the chase, in fishing and even among wild roots something wherewith to feed them. There were very small children, who were hardly able to walk and were led by the hand, the larger children carrying them from time to time; many of these unfortunate mothers held an infant in their arms, and the cries of these poor babes were the only sound that broke the gloomy and dismal silence of the woods.