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## BROCKVILLE IN 1849.

### Light on the Early Methods of Navigating the St. Lawrence.

("Evening Recorder," Brockville, Nov. 17, 1902.)

Editor Recorder :

Dear Sir,—Your well known hospitality towards items of historical value prompts me to offer a verbatim copy of an article which is to be found in a volume of literary selections emanating from King's College, Toronto, towards the end of the year 1849. The book is the third of a series of annual publications of like form and object, entitled "Canadian Maple Leaves," and being composed entirely of prose, poetry and pen and pencil pictures that had never before appeared in print, and the work of Canadians only, either by birth or adoption.

The undersigned is confident you, sir, and your readers, will find the selection appended of more than merely a passing interest, because of the fact that some one, with something more than ordinary literary ability, has set down the impressions he received from a visit to Brockville as early as the summer of 1848, with his adventures in ascending the river from Montreal on a former occasion. Trusting you will be able to give

space in your valuable paper for the reproduction of interesting recollection of some one who "knew a good thing when he saw it."

Yours historically,

H. I. O.

The writer expresses himself thus :

"About fifty miles from the head of the St. Lawrence stands Brockville. To every Canadian, and indeed to every Englishman, this town, though far from being the most important in size and population in our province, cannot fail to be an object of interest. The association with the memory of him who died in the arms of victory on the Heights of Queenston, whilst it adds a feature to its attractions, renders it an enduring monument of his fame—a monument which will last whilst its stone-built streets endure, and may in some measure make amends for the apathy with which a nation looks on the once graceful but now ruined column that marks the spot where her hero's blood was spilt.

But, apart from the memories of mingled pride and regret which its name may call up, Brockville possesses many charms.

In a downward journey on the bosom of the magnificent St. Lawrence—

which may now be made with safety in a commodious steamer and surrounded with comfort and even luxury—before arriving at the subject of our present notice, the traveller passes amidst the far-famed Thousand Islands, which bear the appearance of having sprung from the depths of the mighty stream expressly to be the abode of the spirits of its waters. Amid their picturesque mazes, man feels himself an intruder, and as the moving mass he treads bears him safely among the labyrinth of rocks, he may fancy himself transported by genii through some region of fairyland; or, without yielding to the powers of imagination, he cannot forbear contemplating alike the extraordinary results of human skill, and the wonders of nature's own creation, thus brought together for his use and admiration, in the self-impelled ark which he inhabits, and in the beautiful scenery which surrounds him.

Our illustration—though we trust our readers will not deny to the artist his due meed of praise—gives but a very imperfect view of the town. After passing through scenes whose claims to admiration, though great, are altogether their natural beauties, the eye rests pleasantly on the stone walls of Brockville. The court house and the church on the eminence above the town, are the chief objects which attract attention. The latter is seen in our artist's sketch, but the court house, though visible from the deck of the steamer, cannot be distinguished. The well executed wood cut, (to be found on the last page of the book), however, which we subjoin, gives a faithful representation of this commodious and handsome structure, the commanding site on which it stands, and the broad avenue through which it is approached.

The view which forms our vignette is taken from the level of the site of the lower part of the town, and comprises only that part of it adjacent to the wharves, consisting chiefly of warehouses. From other points, however, the town presents a much more favorable aspect. Opposite to the wharves is what forms a pretty object in our picture—a small fort or block-house, in which a few troops are usually stationed. If we land and proceed through the principal streets, we are agreeably surprised at the features presented, so different from

those that mark the generality of towns in this newly peopled part of the world. Instead of the glaring and perishable attractions of framework, and those characteristics which indicate the rapidity, wherewith the cities of this continent, as if evoked by magic from the vast wilderness, leap into existence, and the primeval forest is replaced by busy haunts of men, Brockville affords an appearance of solidity grateful to the eye of the "Old Country man," and of substantial and unostentatious comfort. Its handsome houses of stone, with cut-stone fronts, and its public buildings of the same massive material, give to the streets an air of wealth and importance which other Canadian towns of the same size and population cannot boast of, and which form the distinguishing feature we have remarked. This it owes to the abundance of limestone and granite which is found in its neighborhood. The heaviness and gloom which the general use of stone in the buildings would otherwise create, are agreeably relieved by the number of residences, even in the heart of the town, which are surrounded by neat gardens and ornamental trees.

The commercial prosperity of Brockville in some degree declined after the construction of the Rideau canal, a stupendous work of art, connecting the St. Lawrence and Ottawa rivers, and cut by the government chiefly for military purposes, but which enabled passengers and the forwarders of merchandise to avoid the then dangerous navigation of the St. Lawrence, though by a circuitous and expensive route. Of late years, however, the "carrying trade," as the business of forwarding merchandise and produce is called, has been finding its old and what would seem to us to be its natural channel. Canals, wide and deep, and furnished with handsomely and substantially built stone locks, render the formidable rapids of the St. Lawrence no longer an obstruction to navigation. Steamers of the first class now descend the whole course of the mighty stream, the torrents of the Galops and the Plat rapids, so long considered insurmountable, but escaping, by the use of the canals, the more impetuous and impracticable rapids of Lachine, the Cascades, the Cedars and the Sault.

Far different was the mode of trans-

portation on our first acquaintance with the giant river. Among the younger of a band of emigrant brothers, it fell to our lot to accompany in its course, towards our western destination, the usual vast pile of huge bales, sea chests, and other indescribable appendages of the self-made exile, which in those days was considered indispensable, but a great part of which was too often found on its arrival to be unsuitable and unnecessary, only to afford a cause of regret to the disappointed owner, that it had not been left on the other side of the broad ocean, and a proportionate increase made in his letters of credit. The adventures of that voyage from Montreal to Kingston, which can now be performed in little more than twenty-four hours, would fill a chapter. No ark-like steamer with its towering decks and lofty wooden walks, received us and our fortunes. The open and fragile batteau, manned by "voyageurs" of the then sister province, was the only bark to bear us o'er the rushing waters. Horses, and sometimes oxen, slowly dragged our diminutive vessel up the foaming rapids. A surly "habitant" whose whole vocabulary seemed to consist of the everlasting "marche done" to his weary cattle, urged his lagging train along the margin, sometimes at the water's edge or again on the high bank of the stream. Armed with a hatchet, his companion followed him, ready at a moment's notice to sever the tow-line should the failing strength of the cattle or the increasing force of the current threaten, what occasionally happened, their being dragged back into the water. His duty was also to clear the line—which was necessarily very long—from the numerous stumps and other obstacles by which it might be caught and impeded. Slow and not without danger was our course. Nor was its speed accelerated by the long and tiresome halts that, deaf to all remonstrance in English or French, our boatmen made to drink and smoke. It was during one of these weary halts at the Long Sault rapids that, by accident or design, our moorings broke, and not without consternation we found ourselves afloat on the rushing river, accompanied by but one boatman. The danger, however, was not so great as might be imagined. Swiftly but safely (for our tiny craft drew but

little water) we shot over the surface of the stream, which it had cost us so much toil to ascend, and without injury, landed (through, we have no doubt, the design of our French friend, who formed captain, pilot and crew) at a small village, the name of which I forget, on the American side of the river, and then our boatman very deliberately left us. No arguments, no remonstrance could procure his stay. Could we have addressed to him Caesar's pithy words to his storm-overtaken pilot, we should still have failed; had Caesar's self entreated, Caesar must have entreated in vain; "away he went—we never saw him more." We escaped—though not without some investigation on the part of Brother Jonathan, as to our smuggling or piratical designs; and by our own exertions, being now beyond the force of the rapid, reached the opposite shore in safety, but our adventure delayed us several days in arriving at our destination, and obliged us to bring our batteau up to Prescott without the aid of boatmen, and which we never would have achieved but for the assistance of some stout English carpenters who had crossed the Atlantic, and now ascended the St. Lawrence with us.

We sojourned in the land of our adoption, and years, if not marked by "moving accidents by flood and field," yet not unvaried by many an adventure and even "hair-breadth 'scape" on the wide surface of the sea-like lakes, or in the shady depths of its leafy forests, passed, ere again o'er the waves of its noble river. After an interval of time, short in itself, but long in the changes it had wrought in ourselves, and in the scenes around, we once more contemplated its rapid and sparkling waters. The boy had grown a man, had known the joys, the cares, the stripes of manhood. Was the scene around less changed? The river rolled its mass of waters in its unaltered and unalterable channels; but the villages that had dotted its margin had become towns, the tiny and straggling craft that had toiled with their handful of freight up its mighty current, had disappeared; steamers and schooners boldly traversed its waters, and bore towards the ocean rich cargoes of the

produce of our fields, or carried from the seaboard the fruits of the industry of distant thousands.

The attempts of steam vessels to stem the rapids of the St. Lawrence, were not at first attended with the success they have now attained. The "Iroquois" (called after the Indian tribe of the same name) was, we believe, the first that undertook to pass up. Her mode of progression, however, was not of the present day. As she neared the rapids, a strong tow-line was thrown on shore, and the slow but sure labors of toiling oxen enabled her to overcome the current, which she otherwise could not have confronted. Even within the last few years, steamers with all the modern improvements, have been glad to rest in their upward course, retained in their position by ropes made fast to trees or stout posts on shore, and thus recover their breath, and renew their drooping energies, before they ventured to face "the pitch." But the rapids have carried us past Brockville; and we too must stem the tide or brave a similar mishap to that which before befel us.

Of a more than ordinarily pleasant journey, that gave us an opportunity of admiring the richness and fertility of the country that borders on the Bay of Quinte and other splendid locks and occasional romantic views on the Rideau—and, on our return by the Ottawa and St. Lawrence, of comparing the beauties of those rivers, we have retained no recollection of more interest than that attached to Brockville. The sweet picture of the gay little town, with its comfortable houses stretching to the water's edge, down the ascent, whose crest is surmounted by picturesquely-situated public buildings, is still fresh in our memory. Well do we remember, too, the companion of our upward voyage, from whom we parted at that wharf where you see the steamer moored. He was one of the oldest and most

honored inhabitants, and during his long residence there, had materially promoted its progress and improvement. That little church to the left of our vignette attests the active interest he took as well in the spiritual, as in the temporal welfare of his fellow citizens. Although Brockville has sent forth many who have attained to eminence in their native land, in various walks of life, yet of none has she more reason to be proud—none has she more cause to regret—than our eminent and lamented fellow-traveller. The bar, the Senate, and the bench, each in its turn shared his labors, and was the sphere of his distinction; and his removal from among us has left a void in a large circle of grief-stricken relatives, and connections in Brockville and elsewhere, which it will indeed be difficult to fill. Honest and manly in his public career, amiable and kind in all the relationships of private life, the public have to lament a tried and faithful servant, and his family to mourn for a fond and affectionate relative. Little did we think, as our kind companion, in all the buoyancy of health and spirits, described the familiar scenes of his early youth whilst we ascended the stream between Prescott and Brockville, told us of the olden days at Maitland and Augusta, and fondly pointed out, beside the old poplars, the ruins of the parental dwelling, in which he had first drawn breath—little did we think that that voice was so soon to be hushed; that warm heart so suddenly chilled; that active mind and vigorous frame so instantaneously prostrated by death. We parted from him at Brockville, in hope and confidence of many years of life and honor being allotted to him. But one short year, and we formed one of a numerous train of mourners that followed his remains to their last resting place.