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REMINISCENCES
OF
NORLAND, ONTARIO

by

Mrs. EDWARD ADAIR.

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November 1st, 1909.



On visiting the home of my childhood, after an absence of twenty-one years (which we spent in the Rocky mountains of British Columbia, and Vancouver), and on approaching the picturesque hamlet of Norland, situated on the placid waters of the Gull River, at the hour of midnight, I was captivated by the recurring picture before us as we rode along in our carriage in the beautiful clear night, the full, round, silvery moon casting

brightness and shadow on lake and shore, and bringing to memory every turn of the way, even the clusters of sumac seemed unbroken by careless hands, or the wintry winds and snows had left unharmed ; and as we passed by the spots hallowed by childish memories, it seemed but yesterday that we had been here. The lateness of the hour forbade us entering the village at night, so, under the pines, maples and oaks, Will and Annie met us, and with a kiss of welcome led us through the orchard to their pretty little cottage in the trees, where love and contentment reigns, to be greeted by the loved ones in their home.

After our tedious railway journey—although we spent two very busy days in Toronto, where we saw dear Alec, Celia and their little son, all well—but the years had been heavy and grievous through sorrow and suffering in my dear brother's life, and I would hardly have recognised him but for the kindly eye and the test "blood draws," and the loving voice that said "Flora, is it really you, dear?"

We had two or three meals in their home and enjoyed a treat at one of their large churches, where Alec and Celia both sing in the "Alexander Choir." We were loth to leave them, but duty demanded it.

Right here I will go back to the Friday evening we left Vancouver on the 24th October, said *au revoir* to our precious ones there, and as we held the hand of our first-born in a loving grasp, we were both proud of our beautiful mother-daughter, and left them all in His keeping until our return ; then in the early morning we were met at Revel-

stoke by a host of loved ones, each with their measure of love, good wishes, and comforts for our journey. Again we had to look in the eyes for a good-bye for a while; and as they one and all wished us a "bon voyage" our good old engine snorted and we were on our way again.

On arriving at Fort William, we were met by dear brother Edgar, Lillian, George, Stella and Cora. All looked well, but were grieved because we could not stay all night. They also brought us a fine basket of fruit, which we thoroughly enjoyed.

Too soon again the "all aboard" rang out, and in the quiet of the midnight hour, we were soon on our way.

I am sorry to have left my thread so long, but I must speak of another stop by the wayside, and while memory on wings went backward I was dazed as recollections crowded fast on my brain of what this great part of the County of Victoria had played in my dear father's and mother's lives; nor did I forget to look towards the place made beautiful and sacred by holding all that remained of a kind and loving father and mother, now gone to be "forever with the Lord."

We called to see and have dinner with Johnny and Tilly Pearson, and found them cheerful, happy and contented—dear Johnny so full to have seen us once more that he had to hide away to keep us from seeing the teardrops and the quiver of lip and chin while we talked. They, too, have had their joys and sorrows, some being married and gone far from home, boys to be proud of (one of them has claimed the honor of being of great service to the

Y.M.C.A. in Canada). They, too, have said good-bye until the Resurrection Morn to loved ones. We reluctantly parted all too soon, and took the G.T. Railway for Coboconk. Yes, Coboconk, where we were met by Arthur Pearson Adair, at 11 o'clock p.m., with pony and carriage, Coboconk, too, had its charms. Late as it was, we walked over the bridge across the pond—the pond looking to me as though not a log or stick had ever been removed since I had last walked along its banks so many years ago. I longed to go down the bank to where the dear ones had lived, but was glad mine eyes could e'en look that way.

We crossed over the river bridge and along the river bank, and into the home of Billy Simpson, where sorrow reigned on account of death entering a few hours before and claiming their only daughter, the last of three. Poor Mr. Simpson, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Wicks, and Mrs. James Wakelin were there alone, sorrow-stricken, glad to see us as we gave them the hand of fellowship, and with a word of prayer and sympathy, left them in the care of Him who knoweth our sorrows and careth for us.

As I said, after our tedious railway journey and ride by carriage, as soon as Arthur had stabled his pony, we were glad to partake of the smoking cocoa and viands Lulu had prepared for us. We referred briefly to immediate friends and were glad to retire for a much-needed rest, after our three thousand miles travelling by rail, and the anticipation of a further three thousand seven hundred to be travelled by water and land in the next few days.

The next morning my husband and myself

walked up to the old place we once called home, and as we came nearer and nearer the place we both had loved, I seemed to be walking on hallowed ground. The barn that stalled the gentle-eyed kine, and where Prince and Charley stood pawing to get out for a race, was torn down, but the beautiful oak tree that sheltered them from the storm and heat still stands in its quiet beauty. The fences and house are dilapidated and nearly forsaken ; and as we wandered on down the hill to where the saw and grist mill stood, all that could be seen of them was the old water-sunken flumes and piers and part of the rock foundation. We went on down to the spring, and drank of its bright, sparkling, never-to-be-forgotten water ; and as I drank, I could not speak for the memories of the bubbling spring gushing out from the rock beneath the hill, where the dear father and mother had so many times quenched their thirst and bathed their brows in its cooling, soothing, and refreshing waters.

We crossed the bridge, and then over the bank to the river's brink below the slide, and as "Ed." in his progressiveness showed me with pride the new bridge and dam his brother Will had superintended, and pointed out the many new things, my heart ached to be alone and quiet, so we retraced our steps, and after dinner Annie, Ed. and I went up to the village again to visit dear old Aunt Catherine, who, in spite of her eighty-two years, went with us along the river road to the natural dam, where we gazed on its ever-flowing waters, and the picturesque beauty of its surround-

ings, where we had stood many times in the long ago, watching—spellbound—the sawn logs and huge sticks of square timber, as they floated lazily down the winding river to the dam; where they were whirled violently over the rocks and were lost to sight in the boiling foam, where the currents toyed with them as with a chip, then, like a hero in battle, coming out with many scars; then, on down the chain of waters to the great St. Lawrence and to the Mercantile World. Here, too, we so often paddled our birch-bark canoes, or handled the oars in a row boat, the girls being as dexterous as the boys.

Memory also brought to my mind the two loving brothers who were caught in the current above, their canoe becoming unmanageable by the force and weight of waters, and were ruthlessly swept over the dam; but a kind Providence steered them clear of the whirlpool, and while one dear boy hung to the canoe with a death-like grasp, the other was carried by the rapids nearer and nearer the shore, until with great presence of mind and alacrity, he caught the shrubbery and with terrible difficulty, dragged his benumbed body, weighted with his clothes, on to the banks; then, scrambling, running, falling and shouting for a quarter of a mile to the mill for help, to rescue the dear young lad whom he could just see in the foaming water, still clinging to the up-turned canoe. With what thankfulness we rescued and laboured with the dear one to revive him, and how the dear father and mother rejoiced that their boys were spared after enduring such a terrible experience.

We now returned to the village, and renewed old acquaintances until supper time. Our time being very limited, we made the best of every precious moment. Again in the evening we went to have a hand-shake with many more of our old friends and neighbours. There was many a laugh at my expense, one being in regard to a gentleman driving by Will Adair's, daddy walking alongside of his carriage. He called out to me, "Mother, shake hands with this gentleman and see if you know him. Look sharp, now, and tell us who he is!" Of course I felt like saying, "you silly!" as he still held my hand. I said, "If the gentleman will use his tongue, I might be able to say who he is—he might, perhaps, be one of my old beaux for all I know!"—but his hair being white, and his face being covered with an abundant harvest of the same, with the exception of his eyes, nose and forehead, I could not recall him, so he said, "Flora, your eyes are not as brown as they once were, nor your hair so brown either!" Then I said to him, "No, Billy, nor *your* eyes are not so blue as they once were, nor your hair so black, and you, too, have grown stout!" Such a laugh! Daddy, thinking the joke re the beaux quite good as Billy replied, "No, I am afraid I cannot claim that honour!" It was Billy Armstrong, just as glad to see us as anyone else was, and we were equally glad to meet him, if only for a few minutes, on the road.

How I loved to look at and peer into the eyes of the children on the street, to see if, mayhap, I could trace the likeness of any of my girl or boy friends. I sometimes "hit the mark" well, as I

would see a George Allely, a Hoskin, a Wakelin, etc., and how delightful to hear "Nelly Allely," (typical of my dearest girl friend Nelly Allely of thirty years ago) at the organ in church.

I longed to spend more time with dear Aunt Catherine—the last of my dear father's home folk. How beautiful she was to me as she crept so closely to me while we talked of the dear old days and the new! I said to her, when the snowy cloth was laid for Annie and us, and dear Will Pearson took his place at the head of the table with his dear little motherless son Harvey at his left. "Well, Auntie dear! It seems strange, but how beautiful for you in your young days to have had a (Harvey) to lean on; and now, after all those years, you have another Harvey, a dear, beautiful little boy, to help and to love you!" "Yes, Flora! he is great company for grandma," and as we bowed in submission to a wise Father's will, we also gave thanks for His wonderful love to us; and although our throats "had lumps in them," we were glad to partake once more of our dear one's hospitality. We could not help giving her praise for the good things her own dear hands had made, her juicy cold roast and Chili sauce, home-made pickles, her own loaf of fine-moulded nut-tasting bread and toothsome butter, green apple pie, the crust a pile of flakey layers, and her big, black "thimble" berries (specially for Flora), were just as luscious and nicely flavoured as those we picked forty years ago, when Empey, Joey, Susan, Katherine, Alma, Annie, Martha, and sometimes the dear mother, would go with us, when we took the horses and wagon, and,

laden with the young folk of the village, with their baskets and buckets, we drove to Old Moore's Lake, and with the bushes high over our heads, heavily laden with the shining black berries, we soon had filled our baskets and buckets; and after having done ample justice to our baskets of sandwiches and other goodies—the horses, too, having satisfied their hunger with the rich grasses, and their thirst with the water which abounded in all parts—the boys would harness them to the wagon, and with gay and happy hearts we would "load up," and with a shout and a song we were soon home again, well repaid for our day's labour. But we must not linger too long over our sumptuous meal, we must "hie away."

We ran in for a minute to see Mrs. Robert Ely Woodcock (Jessie Bell), the same old Jessie, only now a woman and a mother, bright, glad and cheerful, with an "Oh, do tell me about Effie and Mabel! It was, you know, right here that poor little Mabel broke her arm when your twins were babies!"

I said, "Do you remember it, Jessie?"

She said, "Sure! Wasn't I with her! Oh, the screams! Weren't we frightened when we tried to straighten her poor little arm and couldn't! And they tell me, Mrs. Adair, that Marion is a deaconess. My, ain't it lovely!" etc. No lost time there.

I have neglected to say how I found Annie, how the years have dealt with her. I found her a matronly, well-proportioned woman, with quiet, dignified mien, her eyes more blue, and the "silver threads" beginning to manifest themselves in her

glossy black hair. As of old, she is fond of quoting Bobbie Burns' "Highland Mary," and "O' a' the airts the wind can blaw, I dearly loo the west," "Blaw, blaw ye western win's blaw saft," and many others.

We retired at midnight for the little rest we so much needed, my very being all the while crying out to be alone to gaze on the scenes of my childhood. Directly the day dawned—although it was Sabbath, it being my only day here—as the rays of the sun began to brighten the eastern horizon, I arose from my slumbers, and after donning my crimson gown and bonnet of blue, I crept silently down the stairs and out of the house under the shading pine and maple, on up the slope to the brow of the hill, where in the early morning hour I stood captivated, not even a tiny bird disturbing the hallowed reminiscences of my early childhood.

The picture to me was one of marvellous beauty, as I gazed on what a quarter of century ago was a growth of young pines, but now the stateliest trees of the forest; as I peered into their depths of rich, dark, green beauty, I was loth to go on; but in front of me loomed up the home of my childhood, and never-to-be-forgotten recollections crowded fast on my memory as I beheld the river in its beauty, quiet, and overshadowed, and mirrored in its dark waters, the tall trees and shrubbery, in their dark green foliage, the clear blue sky above, made a picture not to be defaced from my memory. To the right lay the bend in the river as it flowed unceasingly to the dam and slide. Here, fifty years ago, in the pine forest, dear father

came by row-boat up the lakes and rivers, felling the first trees on the banks of the beautiful Gull River, gave to the secluded spot the name of Norland.

Would time allow, I could recount many of the changes, wrought in the last half century, for it was fifty years ago that dear father felled the timber and reared the Saw and Grist Mills. Then, when the winter roads were made, he brought the dear mother with her little ones, to live among the pines. How weird—at first—the sound of the roaring water-falls, the sighing of the winds in the tall pine trees, and occasionally the yelp of the fierce timber wolf.

'Twas here the four youngest babes were born, and well I remember the occasion on which the Stork brought the twin girlies, there being a cold, blustering snow storm on, the middle of March. How the pine knots blazed and crackled on the hearth and kept all within warm, while we were all taxed to the utmost to give the dear mother all the comforts possible, and to tuck the wee mortals snug and warm. Many a laugh we had at dear father's confused state of mind about which was which, as he often took one in his arms, asking, "is *this*, this one, or *the other one*?" until they had soon found names for them.

In the spring-time dear father was always the first to bring in the earliest "Pussy-Willows," and the pretty red winter-green berries. With what joy and mirth we would scamper off to the little island beyond the Mill, or down the bank to the River's edge, soon returning with our arms and

pinafores laden with Pussy-Willows, Winter-Green and Spring flowers; how our cheeks and eyes glowed with health-happy childhood!

But now, I must return to where, with bowed head and quiet step, I wandered along the banks of the river (dearer far to me than the road), to the dear old house that sheltered us so many years, and where we grew into manhood and womanhood. It was here, too, that we met our dear ones, and later were made "one" under dear parents' sheltering roof. As I carefully opened the same old garden gate, on which, in turn, we each had swung, I almost wished I could move along without touching the ground, for fear of dispelling the charm, so hallowed seemed the spot; as I came through the little plot to the front door, I thought, "Can it be possible if, after all those years, I can behold and walk in the same path, and touch the same things we used to touch?" And as I knocked at the door, and asked Mr. Bryant, the young bachelor who was living there, if I might come in and look around the home my father had built for us so many years ago, he gave me kindly welcome and told me to go where I would. The first place I entered was dear mother's room where many scenes were transmitted before my eyes, then to my own room, which had formed the Bridal Chamber of we older ones; then to the parlour—that too, had its charms, and where we became man and wife, where the Stork had come, and where the Death Angel too had come and reared its head and carried off many of the loved ones. Now to the kitchen where in fancy I could see the huge cooking stove, and the long

table laden with its load of goodies, that dear hands had skilfully prepared from larder and cellar, to appease the appetites of hungry folk both large and small. Even yet, methinks, no cream sweeter or richer than that skimmed from the earthen pans and lavishly poured over our great dishes of wild strawberries, or the early pink rhubarb that the dear mother so well knew how to fashion into pies, with their golden flakey crusts. And with what delight we hailed the Christmas-time and the sweet-smelling savour of the good old kitchen, with its aroma of herbs and spices! How the children laughed and danced at the fat turkeys and geese, and clapped their hands at the decorated hams, sausages, head cheeses, mince pies and dough nuts, all home made, to say nothing of the rich plum puddings, the jellies, cranberry and apple sauces! There were no idlers in the old home, each taking a share in the home life, from boating up the lakes and rivers for the low-bushed cranberries, to the bringing down of a huge buck (the antlers decorating the hall) or gentle doe in the forest, or to the string of black-bass or maskinonge that often were caught before breakfast.

With what delight we hailed those days—halcyon days! No stocking or sock was either too large or too small to be “hung up by the chimney” at night for Santa Claus or “Old Pesnickle,” as dear father used to call him—happy days! happy childhood! never to be lived again except in fancy.

Then I cautiously opened the old pine stair door, and as I peered up the narrow, straight, old stairway, it seemed but yesterday I had climbed the

steps, and so vividly came to me the words of the poet, "The same old bricks are in the wall!"

I crept on stealthily as on air, I gazed out of the windows to the North overlooking the river and the mills, and then to the little dormer windows at the front and west, then to the south that overlooked the garden, orchard and trees which the dear hands (now folded at rest) had planted, I stood in each room. Oh, the charm and beauty they held for me! I could not help from falling on my knees, in the silent chamber, and quiet of the Sabbath morning hour, and under the roof where we were wont to hear the glad refrain "Hozanna to the Lamb," and where one of the most unselfish of men gathered his home-folk into the family circle, and lovingly taught us the Way to Holiness and Truth, and thanking God for His wondrous love and power to us, and in those old, hallowed rooms, I still implored His divine guidance.

When I came down, my bachelor friend had breakfast ready, and I gladly and thankfully accepted his friendly invitation to partake of his kind hospitality, telling him frankly that if spared to reach the "Old Land" to which I was sojourning, no meal I should partake of there could give me the joy I felt in breakfasting with him in our dear old home. Even the hot buttered toast tasted the same as it did forty years ago! After going through the grounds and plucking leaves from the orchard, the maples and boughs from the tamarack that were nearly as tall as the house and planted by my dear mother, dear brother Joey and myself, on our Empire Day, I made for the old mill site, and

gazed and peered into the deep water at the sunken gangway, and the piers and masonry the mill had stood on. I tried to step out on to the boom which crossed the stream, and which Daddy had cut down the morning our second wee girlie (Mabel) was born, then on to the little Island where the first Pussy-Willows were found in the Spring-time, but alas, the little Island is helping to make up a great roadway, and bridge across the river, and over the dam; although I think when the bridge and dam were under construction, that the workman were ordered not to despoil or deface a single tree nor a bit of shrubbery, or even to remove a piece of rock that could possibly be helped, so natural are the outskirts of the narrow, pretty little Island, reminding me that the Constructor must have had in his mind the words of the poet:—

“Woodman, spare that tree,
“Touch not a single bough,
“In youth it sheltered me,
“And I’ll protect it now.”

Opposite the little island, where the waters are deep and dark, and where the jagged rocks and huge boulders, make up a steep, rocky wall of shore, and where the beautiful pine trees towered their heads, and were mirrored in the waters beneath, the great roots were twined and intertwined in the water beneath and among the rocks, forming huge elbows, defying the north winds or storms to loosen them from their solid grasp, typical of the Christ, our Rock on which to build. I went again to the Spring, the Spring that held so many fascinations for us, and stooping down I dipped my hand in the water, and drank of its

crystal purity, my thoughts rivetted on each of the dear ones who had drunk of its gurgling waters. Then I wandered around the old floodwood and gathered souvenirs, colored stones and small pieces of boards bound into the rock and roots of trees, that for many years had been washed and polished by the rushing waters, and, I venture to say, cut by my father's and brothers' hands. I gathered branches of pine needles, oak and acorns, birch, bark and many other relics. Then on bended knee I bade farewell to the most beautiful, picturesque spot I have ever known.

I now climbed the hills, and wandered through those never-to-be-forgotten pines to the highway, and back to Annie's, after a three hours' absence, causing her much surprise, as she had not dreamed I was out or even awake. Daddy has been up some time reading, but he came downstairs as I returned. (He was thinking of calling the police or getting up a search party!)

In the afternoon we went once again to the old "home church" and joined in worship with the dear ones who still filled their places.

It was here in Norland where my babies were born, and here in this place where the first Sunday-lessons were learned, and where they first said at mother's knee the little prayers, "Gentle Jesus," and "Now I lay me down to sleep," and how we would laugh at the little chatter-boxes when they each in turn with their little voices piped out "Pa!-Pa!-Pa!" or "Ma!-Ma!-Ma!" To me it is but as yesterday. I can see them in their golden ringlets, and bright, happy, winsome faces, with their

sunbonnets hanging down their backs—they would play in the sunshine or gather the wild flowers, always coming in with some in their little hands—precious hands!—how often my prayer has been, “God give them *clean* hands always!” The yellow dandelion was always the first, and their chins would shine with the yellow blossoms, testing each other as to whether they liked butter or not!

How natural the little Church seemed, with its windows bordered with various colors of stained glass, casting a soft hue and subduing the rays of the summer sun. Oh, the gladness of it all! The Church was filled with worshippers, and as I peered for faces and listened for voices that mingled with ours in the by-gone years, few, alas! did I recognise. The worshippers were mostly those who, when I last dwelt in dear old Norland, were the “wee ones,” and their families; few indeed, who made then the dear little Church so hallowed to us all. We also visited Pine Grove Cemetery. Here many of our loved ones are at rest, awaiting the “Resurrection Morn.”

Next we visited the old Beech Lake, where so many of our earlier school days were spent. Here in the noon-day hour, after emptying our dinner pails of the tasty luncheon put up by dear hands, we spent the remaining half hour under the spreading boughs of the beech and butternut trees, or “teetered” in their branches (more often intent on this joy, I am afraid, than on our books).

In the evening we attended the Salvation Army Service, and, after Service, walked down to the “Old Dutchman’s Spring,” another very old and never-

to-be-forgotten landmark, where, could the spring, the river, or the pine, maple, oak or birch trees speak, they would tell many a tale of "trysting places" of many of the young folks of that time, and of the great beauties of fish caught by the light from the blazing pine-knots in the light-jacks. I doubt if there is even a frog left to tell of his ancestors' fates, as their great white hams were browned to a nicety in the golden butter that only those who are proud of their culinary art can cook to perfection. In fancy I yet can see dear Empy and Doctor Martin and others smacking their lips over the juicy, delicious flavor; nor do I think they will ever forget the *go-round* that struck the ear as soon as they swung into the "Old Dutchman's Bay," bent on filling their larders with the many good things that abounded in that region. Here we paid a visit to our friends, Mr. and Mrs. James Wakelin (*nee* Fanny Bowen). Arthur came for us with the carriage, and, late as it was, we partook of the "cup that cheers but not inebriates!" and a most substantial supper, leaving for Annie's at midnight (she being with us, of course). After a very happy time, though so short, we bade our friends good-bye, and after a short drive in the beautiful moonlight (Daddy saying, "Well, mother! you have surely made the best of every minute; and did you ever see such a glorious night? enchantment is no name for it!") we were soon home and fast asleep.

Next morning we were awakened by the gong for breakfast at 4.30, and before the day dawned, had said "adieu" to our loved ones, and were on

our way to Coboconk to catch the train for Toronto—then to Quebec, where we were to take the s.s. "Empress of Britain" for the Motherland, England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales, to be gone six months, all well.

Here, before closing, I would like to say that my father was born in the year 1818, on the banks of the beautiful St. Lawrence, both of his parents being children of U.E. (United Empire) Loyalists. My mother was born in the township of Uxbridge, near by the city of Toronto (then called "muddy York"), her parents removing there from Pennsylvania, she being of the good old Quaker blood, and proud of their quaint ways. Little wonder we in our home should be so attached to each other, born of two such distinct opposite natures, one coming from the Glengarian Scotsman's home, where the Highland Fling, the Sword Dance, the Scottish Songs and Histories of Scotland (you know they were Highlanders) were delighted in as they gathered round their blazing pine logs in the long winter evenings, and were often terrorised by the Indians in those early days on the St. Lawrence—my father's mother was taken once by the Indians in their hideous war paint, she having a little baby in her arms, and strapped to an Indian pony, while her husband was at the front—the other, my mother of modest demeanour, the fair young girl from the quiet fireside of devoted and affectionate parents. Our lives were bound by cords of love, and when in after years we were separated by many miles, some on the broad prairies, some in foreign lands beyond the sea, others making their homes on the

beautiful Pacific slope, while many were gone from us for ever, reminding me that :

Some day the silver cord shall break,
And I no more as now shall sing,
But oh ! the joy when I awake
Within the presence of the King ;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story saved by Grace,

FLORA J. McLAUHLIN ADAIR.

VANCOUVER,
BRITISH COLUMBIA.

Written expressly for myself (on Canadian Pacific Railway train) or anyone who chooses to take time to read it—November 4th, 1909.