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THE STORY
OF
CASTLE FRANK, TORONTO

BY
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THE STORY OF CASTLE FRANK, TORONTO.

BY H. SCADDING, D.D.

THE widely-extended limits of Toronto now enclose several localities which once bore independent appellations of their own, significant and interesting as having been derived from the properties or residences of early inhabitants.

Thus, Caer-Howell, a well-known place of resort, situated on the west side of Queen-street Avenue, was the name given by Chief Justice Powell to his park lot extending from Queen to Bloor-streets. The name signifies the stronghold or headquarters of the Hoels, and has reference to the noble Welsh family name borne by the Chief Justice Powell, that is Ap-Hoel.

On this lot, but somewhat nearer Queen-street, was the mausoleum or family vault of the Chief Justice, since transferred to St. James' Cemetery.

Along Queen-street, a little to the west on the north side, where the expansion occurs between Beverley-street and Spadina Avenue, was formerly a property entitled "Petersfield," denoting the park lot or farm of the celebrated Peter Russell, whose name remains attached to Peter-street, leading up from the south into the expansion aforesaid, which marks exactly the frontage of the property formerly known as "Petersfield."

The name Spadina, now so extensively applied, in the first instance properly appertained only to the site of Spadina House, situated on the rising land immediately to the north of the avenue. In fact, the word Spadina is a modification of a native Indian term, sounding somewhat like Espadinong, and denoting a hill or rise of land, an expression selected by Dr. William Baldwin, the former owner of the spot, who also affixed the In-

dian term Mashquoteh,* signifying a meadow or plain, to the adjoining property.

At a later time, "Deer Park," just to the eastward, extending to Yonge-street, had its name likewise suggested by the level character of the land around. Captain Elmslie surrounded a number of acres here with a picket fence eight feet high, for the purpose of keeping deer.

Mr. Heath, who at a later period became the owner, changed the name to Lawton Park, but the old title is still often to be heard.

Russell Hill was another portion of the rise of land hereabout, as is also Summer Hill, across Yonge-street to the eastward.

Westward from Spadina, on the same rise, was Davenport, a name given by Colonel Wells to his property there; and further westward still, but to the south, were Oak Hill and Pine Grove, the former the home anciently of General Eneas Shaw, and the latter that of his neighbor and old friend, Colonel Givins.

Bellevue Place and Bellevue Avenue, a little to the east of these properties, preserve the name of Bellevue, a primitive and central home of the Denisons.

A pretty expression, long attached to a considerable strip of the Elmslie estate west of Yonge-street and somewhat south of Bloor—Clover Hill—is now I fear banished from Toronto nomenclature.

The extensive area known by the pleasant name of "Rosedale," contains a reminiscence of the picturesque residence and grounds of Stephen Jar-

* Longfellow adopts the orthography, "Muskoday." See *Hiawatha*, 5th section.

"By the river's brink he wandered,
Through the Muskoday, the meadow."

vis, Registrar of the County and father of the first Sheriff, William Botsford Jarvis.

The fine approach to the Rosedale region from the south, known as Jarvis-street, derives its name from the distinguished Secretary Jarvis of the early Simcoe period, through the centre of whose park lot, all the way from Queen to Bloor-street, it was made to pass in after times by his son, Samuel Peters Jarvis. Jarvis-street is now applied to the whole thoroughfare leading southward to the bay.

Street names, as we have seen in various other instances, perpetuate the designation by which certain distinct localities in Toronto were formerly known. Two or three of such localities still remain, not as yet wholly absorbed into the sum total, so to speak, of the city, although that absorption is steadily going on, and must ultimately be complete. The domain around Beverley House is perceptibly diminishing, and the same must be said of that surrounding Berkeley House in the eastern portion of the city, the old seat of the Smalls; as also of the spacious surroundings of Moss Park, which extended until quite recent times northerly to Bloor-street.

The Grange, at the head of John-street, associated so intimately with memories of the Boulton family, seems likely to be the last to succumb before the aggressions of city extension.

There remains to be mentioned a notable locality now enclosed within the limits of Toronto, towards the north-east, and bounded by the River Don. I refer to the Castle Frank portion of the city, where a Castle Frank avenue and a Castle Frank Crescent, have been authoritatively established.

The name of Castle Frank is invested with a number of associations now become quite historic in Canadian annals, and of these I proceed to make some record.

The Castle Frank region may be roughly defined as the piece of land bounded on the east by the River Don,

on the west by Parliament-street, on the north by Bloor, and on the south by Wellesley-street. It consisted of the northern halves of lots 16 and 17, in the first survey made of this part of the county of York, and contained about 225 acres. The southern halves of these lots, stretching to the water's edge on the south, formed the reserve set apart for the Government buildings of the province and grounds attached thereto.

The 225 acres just referred to were patented by Lieut.-Gov. Simcoe to his son Francis Gwillim Simcoe, a child born prior to his father's mission to Canada, from whom the property was styled "Castle Frank Farm," as may be seen in a plan drawn from the survey of Augustus Jones, attested by the acting Surveyor-General, D.W. Smith.

This plan, drawn on a scale of four chains to an inch, shows the exact situation of a building erected on the property, with the track leading thereto from the westward cut out through the woods; it also shows the windings of the Don, by means of which Castle Frank could be approached in boats coming up from the mouth of the river.

The attractions of the spot where the building was placed must have been its picturesque wildness and its elevation above the level of the river. The heights here were covered with tall pines; below, in the Don valley, were fine elms, (clothed, some of them, with the Virginia creeper), basswood (the linden), and buttonwood trees (*platinus* or *plane*). On the opposite side of the valley were clusters of the wild apple, or crab, noticeable for its beautiful and fragrant blossoms, the prickly ash, shad-bush, or service berry, dogwood, sassafras bushes, and white birch; the hemlock, spruce and white cedar, the high bush cranberries, alder, dark willow, nine bark spirea, etc., in moist situations.

Several "Hog's Backs," as they are termed, or long, narrow ridges, ran down to the valley, on both sides of

the River Don, at this point. In far back pre-historic times, Lake Ontario spread its waters a good way to the north of this, and as the land slowly ascended, the waters correspondingly descended, and scooped out for themselves various channels in the Drift along the shore, thereby forming these so-called "Hog's Backs," two or three of which come out into the valley of the Don just here in a curiously converging way, probably from some peculiar conformation of rock below.

Immediately under the site of Castle Frank, to the west, was a deep ravine

mound always spoken of as the "Sugar Loaf," the apex of which must long have appeared, above the retiring waters, as a minute island.

Castle Frank itself, situate on a narrow plateau between two steep declivities, was a structure of carefully hewn logs, covered with a wideish clapboard.

It was an oblong about 80 feet in length and 40 feet in width, and some 20 feet to the eaves. The entrance door was in the middle of the southern end, where the stout boles of four pine trees, with the bark carefully

preserved, supported a projecting gable somewhat after the manner of pillars, at the end of a Grecian temple. The windows were on the sides.

Out of the middle point of the roof arose a massive chimney containing several flues. It may a once be said that the building was never thoroughly completed or occupied, and was never intended to be in any sense an official residence or anything more than



SIMCOE CHAPEL, ENGLAND.

containing a perennial stream known and marked on plans as "Castle Frank" Brook, which entered the Don at the southern point of one of the "Hog's Backs" referred to, where also was a small island formed in the river, covered with vines of the wild black grape, close to which island, and in some way connected with it, was a large patch of genuine wild rice, duly visited every fall by discerning wild fowl.

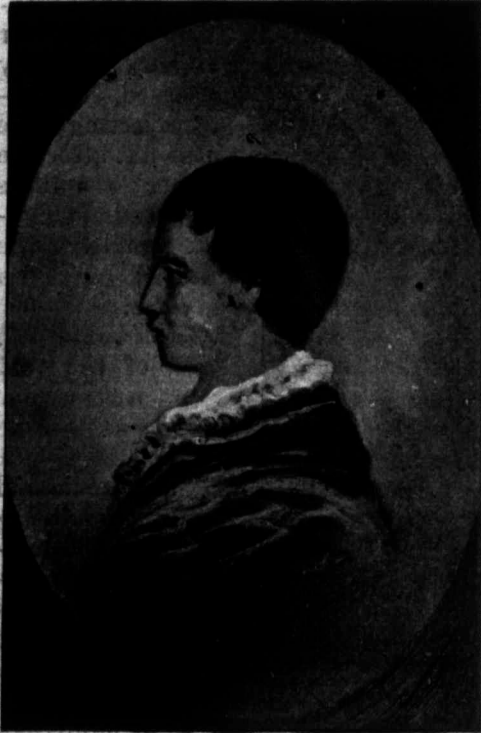
On the east side of the site of the building the bank of the Don was steep and precipitous, and a little way to the north was a singular conical

a kind of occasional summer picnic resort. The term *Castle*, which was intended to be simply synonymous with the French *Chateau*, has been somewhat misleading.

It is amusing to observe how conspicuously the name figures on the American Plan of the capture of York in 1812, to be seen in Lossing, page 590. D. W. Smith also, in a plan of his Maryville estate, marks the road to Castle Frank in large letters.

On the plan drawn by Augustus Jones the whole plot of ground is described as "Castle Frank Farm," and is stated to be the property of

Francis Simcoe, Esq. This, as we have already seen, meant the very youthful son of the Governor; the "Esquire" is possibly appended in a somewhat playful strain. The plan also shows the exact situation of the house of Mr. Playter, whose name is given. This was Mr. George Playter, the first patentee of the surrounding land. His house stood exactly where the modern "Drumsnab" is now seen.



FRANK G. SIMCOE.

The full name of the young patentee was Francis Gwillim Simcoe, the middle name being that of his mother's family. During the progress of the building he was often seen, I have been told, clambering with boyish glee, in company with a young sister, up and down the steep and thickly wooded bank on the river side, passing to and from the boats, in the stream below, which had found their way to the spot, though the innumerable sinuosities of the Don, all the way from its mouth in Toronto Bay. The

after life and premature end of the youth from whom this region has taken its name imparts to the story of Castle Frank a certain degree of romance.

Governor Simcoe was a well-read and scholarly man. His journal of the operations of the "Queen's Rangers," printed in quarto, for private circulation, in 1787, and reprinted in octavo at New York in 1844, by Bartlett and Walford, for general circulation, has become a classic in the literature connected with the American Revolution.

In that work, to avoid the appearance of egotism, the writer uses the third person and not the first—in this respect, as also in purity and conciseness of style, reminding us of Xenophon in his "Retreat of the Ten Thousand," and Cæsar in the commentaries.

In the course of his military studies Governor Simcoe may have had his attention arrested by operations under the walls of the old town of Castelle Franco, in the north of Italy, in the Venetian territory; or, under the walls of another old town of the same name, Castel Franco, in the territory of Benevento, in the south of Italy; or it may be his attention had been directed to campaigns near the town of Castle Franc in the south-west of France, not far from Bordeaux.

Accordingly, where a name was to be given to the quaint chateau of pine-logs overlooking the valley of the Don, erected on the property lately patented to his little son and heir, Francis Gwillim Simcoe, "Castle Frank" may have suggested itself, at first probably not in serious earnest, but at last good-humoredly adopted as a sufficiently descriptive appellation.

The young son of the Governor thus commemorated figures again in the accounts which we have of the Governor's life at Navy Hall, on the opposite side of Lake Ontario. Navy Hall, as will be remembered, was the

title given, probably also in a mood somewhat jocose, to a long and capacious frame building adapted for the reception of marine stores and material for the general equipment of Government vessels on the lake. This edifice, situated on the west bank of the Niagara, a little way up from its mouth, had been partially cleared out and hurriedly fitted up as a temporary residence for the Governor and his family on their arrival at Newark, as Niagara on the Lake was styled in 1792.

Navy Hall, of which I have an original water color drawing of the period, from the hand of Mrs. Simcoe herself, was the only fixed abode of the Governor while in Canada.

During his sojourn at York, on the north side of the lake, he found shelter in a movable canvas house which had once been the property of the celebrated navigator, Capt. Cook, and was regarded as a curiosity throughout the whole country. At Navy Hall he dispensed a liberal hospitality, gave balls, and entertained passing visitors of eminence. As to the life in the curious canvas house at York we have the following testimony of Commodore Bouchette:

"Frail as was its substance, it was rendered exceedingly comfortable, and soon became as distinguished for the social and urbane hospitality of its venerated and gracious host, as for the peculiarity of its structure."

It was probably in one apartment, the ball-room say, of the rude structure of Navy Hall that the first parliament of Upper Canada was held. The Duc de Liancourt in his "Travels in the United States, &c." vol. 1, p. 256, describes the scene as witnessed by him, it may have been in this very chamber, at the second session of the Parliament. "The Governor," the Duke says, "entered the Hall dressed in silk, with his hat on his head, attended by his adjutant and two secretaries, and the speech was then read."

In this same book of travels by the

Duc de Liancourt, the son of the Governor, from whom Castle Frank takes its name, again appears.

"The Governor," the Duke says, "was very anxious to oblige and please the Indians: his only son, a child some four years of age, was dressed as an Indian and called Tioga, which name was given him by the Mohawks." "This little comedy," the Duke adds, "may be of use in the intercourse with the Indians: the child, we are told, was adopted as a chief."

The term, Tioga, I was once assured by an intelligent Indian missionary (Mr. Elliot), designates something that stands between two objects tending to unite them: and so the child of the governor thus distinguished and titled might be hoped, in after time, to prove a link of union between the Government and the Indian community; but it was destined to be otherwise. The after history of the boy, however, as we have already stated, served to form a link of association between the name of Castle Frank and certain events happening in the outer world on a broad scale. In after years, the child became, like his father, a soldier.

Gen. Simcoe, on the occurrence of his fiftieth birthday, in 1801, uses the following language to the clergyman of his parish, while suggesting to him subjects for a jubilee sermon:—

"There is a text in Leviticus, I believe, that particularly enforces purity of heart to those who aspire to military command. As mine, in all views, is a military family, it may not be amiss in a more especial manner to inculcate the remembrance of the Creator to those who shall engage in the solemn duties of protecting their country at these times from foreign usurpation."

For Leviticus here we should probably read "the book of Joshua," whence the text selected by the clergyman for the Jubilee Sermon was derived—chap. 24, verse 15.

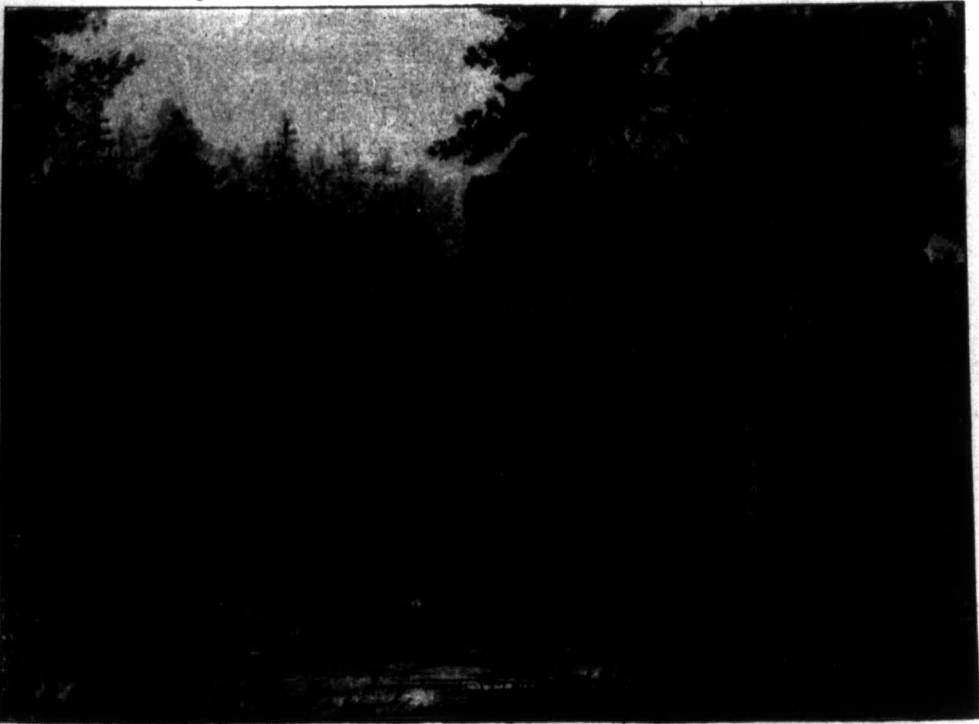
The young soldier was carefully educated in accordance with the principles indicated in the General's letter.

He was trained classically and mathematically at Eton, and in due time obtained a commission in the army.

That he was mathematically trained I have evidence in a volume which I am so fortunate as to possess; it is a Simson's Euclid, bearing date 1804, and containing an original autograph, "F. G. Simcoe, Eton Coll." The father died before the son's anticipated career had yet commenced: he survived

sequently speaks of himself as a kind of Romulus on a small scale.

This phraseology was in harmony with the fashion of the times prevailing among gentlemen, in and out of Parliament, who had, most of them, been classically trained. Had Sir Joseph Banks or any other gentleman of this character chanced to have seen the Governor at Navy Hall, standing up in the presence of an Indian Council, or it may be even of a Parliament,



DON VALLEY—CASTLE FRANK IN THE DISTANCE.

his jubilee for a brief period of four years.

Before his departure from England to undertake the government of the new Province of Upper Canada, Governor Simcoe addressed a letter to Sir Joseph Banks, President of the Royal Society of England, in which, in an informal and familiar way, he gave a sketch of his plans. He evidently saw that he was about to lay the foundations of a very important community, of a state in fact, and he con-

with his youthful son conspicuously by his side, they would possibly have thought not so much of a Romulus, as of an ancestor of this Romulus—Æneas, accompanied by the little Ascanius or Iulus, so graphically described by Virgil.

"The little Iulus clings around my right hand and follows his father with unequal steps." For myself, knowing now the brief career and crowning fate of the youth, I should be rather reminded of the young Marcellus, im-

mortalized by Virgil in his 6th *Æneid*, of whose shade, seen for a moment in Hades, advancing by the side of that of his sire, it was so pathetically said

“ Ah ! couldst thou break through Fate's severe decree,—
A new Marcellus shall arise in thee.”

Even so, had it been ordained that the young soldier should have longer survived, it is likely he would have proved a true Marcellus, a true son of his father, and an enthusiastic soldier. Even in 1812, the dangers to Great Britain from foreign usurpation which had troubled Gen. Simcoe's mind in 1801 had not fully subsided. Napoleon Bonaparte still survived, and was strongly entrenched in Spain. In 1812 occurred the famous Siege of Badajoz by the Duke of Wellington, followed by the storming of the fortress and the destruction of so many gallant English soldiers. It was the lot of the young Francis Gwillim Simcoe to be amongst these.

I have a copy of the letter written by a military chaplain immediately after the event, and addressed by him to the young officer's widowed mother, conveying to her the sad intelligence. This letter will tell its own sad tale. It reads as follows :—

“ Though perfectly unknown, yet my feelings dictate that I should in the present melancholy season address you, as I am aware your anxiety must be great respecting the fate of my most esteemed friend, your son. Sincerely lamented by all who knew him, he fell, on the night of the 6th, in the midst of several others, his brother officers, and hundreds of his fellow-countrymen, while storming the town of Badajoz : to state the details of this circumstance would be needless. In him I have lost a promising young friend, an agreeable companion, and a good Christian ; and allow me most sincerely to sympathize and condole with you in the great loss you have sustained by the death of an affectionate and dutiful son.

“ On the morning of the 7th, I went in search of my esteemed and valued young friend, and was so fortunate as to find him lying in the breach where (as I am sure it will be satisfactory for a friend and parent to be informed) I performed the last offices over

him, and got him as decently interred as the great confusion of our most melancholy situation would admit. He has left no memorandum behind him, though frequently entreated by me to do, so in case of accident ; neither did he make any requests when I parted with him, but committed his fate entirely to Him who is the Disposer of all events.”

“ Proffering to you and your afflicted family my future services in any way I can be useful, allow me to subscribe, etc.,

“ GEORGE JENKINS,

“ Chaplain to the forces, 4th Division ;
“ Badajoz Camp, April 9th, 1812.”

From childhood to maturity had been passed in an atmosphere intensely military. In addition, as the Chaplain's letter gives us to understand, the religious faculty had been developed and duly trained ; as a Christian soldier, his warfare was speedily accomplished. Whatever in the order of Providence had been appointed for him to do was done, and the young life sacrificed in the doing of it was one more witness to the truth of the motto appended to the Simcoe Family Arms, *Non sibi sed Patriae*—“ Not for himself, but for his Country.”

Enough has been said to show that our familiar expression “ Castle Frank ” has associations of historical interest connected with it, and that its story involves the story of one, who, if not a distinctly individualized hero, died heroically in the direct discharge of duty as a soldier in the midst of circumstances most appalling. We are told by Napier, in his description of the storming of Badajoz, that “ When Wellington saw the havoc of the night, the firmness of his nature gave away for a moment, and the pride of conquest yielded to a passionate burst of grief for the loss of his gallant soldiers.”

The young officer's remains were never removed from the spot where the good Chaplain saw them deposited. The interior wall of the private Chapel at Wolford, the seat of the Simcoe Family, shows the following inscription :—

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
FRANCIS GWILLIM SIMCOE,

Lieutenant in the 27th Regiment of Foot,

ELDEST SON OF

LIEUT.-GENERAL JOHN GRAVES SIMCOE AND

ELIZABETH HIS WIFE,

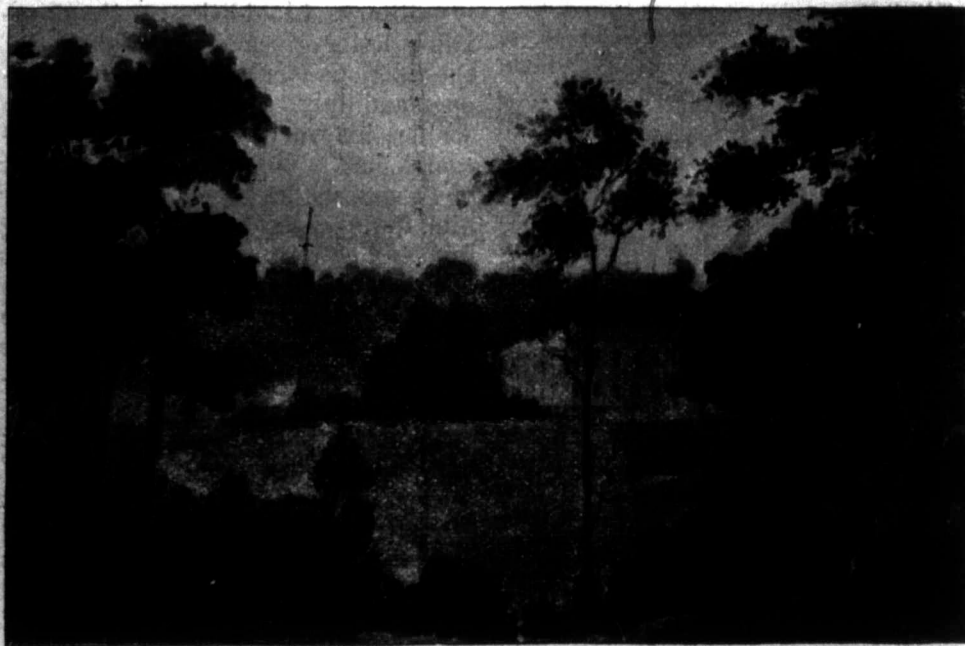
BORN AT WOLFORD LODGE,

Fell in the breach at the Siege of Badajoz,
April 6th, 1812, in the 21st year of his age.

"Be of good courage; let us behave ourselves valiantly
for our people, and let the Lord do that which is good in
His sight."—CHRON. 19. 13.

difficult expressions in the Iroquois
and Algonquin languages.

It is to be added that one night in
the year 1829 the wooded structure
so widely known as Castle Frank, left
solitary and uninhabited on the steep
height over-hanging the Don, was
totally consumed by fire through the
carelessness, I will not say the male-
volence, of some fishermen who had
ascended to the spot for shelter or
some other purpose. A slight depres-
sion in the sandy soil, a few yards to
the north of St. James' Cemetery fence,



WALFORD LODGE.

"Badajoz" takes us back, first to the Moorish days in Spain, and second, to the Roman Period in the same country, Badajoz being, we are told, a phonetic effort on the part of the Arabs to write down the words Pax Augusta (the name of a Roman military station), as Saragossa also was to be reproduced on paper from Cæsarea Augusta, the Latin name of another station. Some of our Indian local names in Canada are similar phonetic efforts on the part of Europeans to reduce to writing long and

still shows the spot where the central chimney stack of Castle Frank was situated, on the hill overlooking the Don. In "Goad's Atlas of Toronto," 2nd edition, 1890, plate 27, showing the lately laid out Castle Frank Avenue and Castle Frank Crescent, there is a range of narrow building lots abutting southwards on the St. James' Cemetery fence, and northwards looking towards the Crescent. It is possibly on the lot No. 8 or Lot No. 9 on this range, that the depression referred to is situated. The modern residence,

built by Mr. Walter McKenzie, known popularly of late years as Castle Frank, is situated some distance to the north-east of the site of the original Castle Frank. The depression on Lot No. 8 or 9 was visited by the writer on the 4th of May, 1895, in company with some friends, and was fully identified. On the same occasion a photograph was taken by Mr. Humphrey Wood. The boundary lines of the lots not having been marked out on the soil, it was impossible to ascertain accurately on which of these lots the depression was situated. It had been feared that

building operations, etc., might have obliterated the depression, but this, happily, was not the case, and the writer, who was perfectly familiar with the spot years ago, was able to recognize it easily. He hopes this brief sketch will prove of interest to those who may peruse it.

The foregoing paper was read in the first instance, before a meeting of the York Pioneers in Toronto. At the unanimous request of the members of that society, it is now published in its present shape. Some few additions have been made to the text.

Of the engravings given, the author regrets that he is able to have only those contained in this article reproduced, though there are several others which were exhibited when the paper was first read.—H. S.