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# NIAGARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NO. 2.

DUCT AMOR PATRIAE.

*Centennial Poem.*

By MRS. CURZON, PRESIDENT WOMAN'S HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY, TORONTO.

*Fort Niagara, N.Y., 1783-1796.*

By REV. CANON BULL, PRESIDENT LUNDY'S LANE  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

*Slave Rescue in Niagara, Sixty Years Ago.*

By MISS CARNOCHAN, PRESIDENT NIAGARA HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY.

NIAGARA, ONT.  
TIMES BOOK AND JOB PRINT.  
1897.

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# NIAGARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

## CONSTITUTION.

ARTICLE 1. That this organization shall be called the Niagara Historical Society.

2. Its objects are the encouragement of the study of Canadian history and literature, the collection and preservation of Canadian historical relics, the building up of Canadian loyalty and patriotism, and the preservation of all historical landmarks in this vicinity.

3. The officers shall consist of a President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer, Curator and an Executive Committee in addition of five, five members to form a quorum, the President to be ex-officio member of all committees.

4. The Society shall hold regular meetings of its members and occasional open meetings, when the public shall be invited.

5. Each member shall pay an annual fee of fifty cents; any member whose subscription is unpaid shall not be entitled to vote at the annual meeting.

6. This Society shall affiliate with the Ontario Provincial Historical Society, paying annually thereto the tax of ten cents per capita of membership of Society.

7. The annual celebration shall be held on the 17th of September in each year, or as near to that date as possible.

8. The Society shall hold eight regular meetings during the year. These meetings to be held on the second Thursday of each month.

9. The annual meeting to be held on October 13th.

## OFFICERS 1896-7.

PATRON  
PRESIDENT  
VICE-PRESIDENT  
SECRETARY  
TREASURER  
CURATOR

WM. KIRBY, F. R. C. S.  
MISS CARNOCHAN  
HENRY PAFFARD  
ALFRED BALL  
MRS. A. SERVOS  
RUSSELL WILKINSON

### COMMITTEES

REV. J. C. GARRETT  
JAMES B. SECORD  
JOHN D. SERVOS  
W. E. SEYMOUR, B. A.

HON. VICE-PRESIDENTS  
WARNER NELLES  
PETER WHITMORE  
MRS. ROE  
CHARLES F. BALL

MRS. ASHER

### HONORARY MEMBERS.

DR. SCADDING  
REV. CANON BULL  
WM. GIBSON, M. P.

CAPT. CRUIKSHANK  
CAPT. M. KONKLE  
R. O. KONKLE

MAJOR HISCOTT, M. P.

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NIAGARA, ONT.:  
TIMES BOOK AND JOB PRINT.  
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## PREFACE.

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In placing in the hands of the public, their second pamphlet, the Niagara Historical Society would express their gratification at the favor shown to their first, "The Taking of Fort George," and rejoice to know that the author, Major Cruikshank, will soon contribute another valuable paper describing the "Seven Months' Occupation of Niagara by the Americans." The present issue contains a poem by Mrs. Curzon, President of the Woman's Historical Society, Toronto, the author of "Laura Secord" and other poems; a paper by Canon Bull, the President of the Lundy's Lane Historical Society, both of whom have done so much to cause an interest in historical research.

To show the aims and objects of our Society and what we have done, are doing and hope to do, it may be well to make some extracts from the report of the Society and the address of the President, read 13th October, 1896:

"It is much to be regretted that an Historical Society had not been formed here a score of years ago, when pioneers and veterans were alive, who could have told us so much that we have now no means of obtaining.

"Our thoughts to-night must be both retrospective and prospective. We speak of what has been done and what we hope to do. In 1892, a small Society was formed, chiefly with the view of giving assistance in the Centenary proceedings on July 16th. It is believed only two meetings were held, and one open meeting, at which a paper was read. "Niagara One Hundred Years Ago," which was printed by the Lundy's Lane Historical Society. The officers were, President, William Kirby; Secretary, Daniel Servos; Treasurer, D. McDougall. In November, 1895, a meeting was called for all interested, as it was felt strongly by a few that in this historic spot such a Society should exist. It was with feelings of great diffidence that we engaged in the task, for we had been assured that it was useless to try to break down the cold, dead wall of apathy and indifference that we everywhere encountered and as to collecting relics, everything valuable had disappeared, was either destroyed or given away; or, that if any remained, they would not be given to us. But all these dark prognostications proved false. What have we done? Briefly, this: We have a list of over fifty members, have adopted a constitution and by-laws, a motto too, "The Love of Country Guides." We have had interesting meetings, three of them being open to the public at which papers were read. One by Capt. Cruikshank has been printed in pamphlet form with an old engraving. We have had a successful anniversary, on the platform representatives of five Historical Societies; indeed the Presidents of four. A poem was read, dedicated to our Society, by Mrs. Curzon. A paper was read by Canon Bull and addresses were made by Miss Fitzgibbon, Capt. Cruikshank, Rev. J. C. Garrett, Rev. P. Spencer, Col. Currie and Major Hiscott. You have heard the satisfactory reports of the Secretary and Treasurer, showing a balance in the treasury.

"A remarkable and valuable exhibit, for which we were indebted chiefly to the zeal of Mr. John D. Servos, of documents, weapons, old silver, flags,

Indian relics, was universally commended. We also followed the example of the L. L. Society, in decorating the graves of those who died to save their country, the four to whom a tablet is placed in St. Mark's church on May 27th, (the grand-daughter of one of them, Capt. McLelland is among us).

"Other encouragements, we have had. The Mayor kindly allowed the use of his office for our first meetings. The town council granted the use of the old library room. A large case was presented by Mr. Long, (since then four cases for our collection by the Archaeological Museum, Toronto), Contributions have come in rapidly; such valuable historic relics as General Brock's cocked hat, obtained from Mrs. Herbert Ball, through the kindness of Mr. Alfred Ball; and the sword surrendered at the Taking of Fort Niagara by our troops in 1813, from Mr. Alexander Servos; papers printed in Niagara, 1794, presented by Mr. C. A. F. Ball; the christening bowl used by Rev. R. Addison, kindly loaned by Mrs. Stevenson; and many other articles form the nucleus of what we hope may become an extensive and valuable collection. Our curator, Mr. Wilkinson, has nobly performed his task and deserves our hearty thanks. The work of correctly and neatly labelling and entering 250 articles is no slight one, (now over 400).

"And now for what we hope to do. The respected President of the L. L. H. S., Canon Bull, has assured us that the greatest cause of its vitality is its publications, and thus it has earned the right to receive grants from the county and the province, has thus disseminated useful and valuable historic information. Canon Bull, in his address a year ago, advocated the erection in Niagara of a memorial of the landing of the U. E. Loyalists, with the names of the refugees, at the spot on the beach where so many of them landed, and this would be a legitimate work for us. The preservation of our forts and historic spots is another worthy object of our ambition, and we rejoice that already a step has been taken in that direction. We hope to obtain from the County Council and the Provincial Government a small grant for printing purposes, as we already have other historical documents to print. It may thus be seen that we have much before us. We feel that as a Society we have much reason for thankfulness for what we have been able to accomplish in less than a year, and should the same zeal, the same hearty support be given in the ensuing year as in the last we shall have no reason to feel ashamed of our record."

Since the above was written a grant has been given by the County Council of Lincoln and the Legislative Assembly of the Province of Ontario for printing purposes. The Historical Pilgrimage to Niagara, May 24th, under the charge of Mr. Frank Yeigh, and the meeting here of the Pioneer and Historical Association of Ontario, June 2nd, have developed much interest in the history of our neighborhood and much interest was expressed with regard to the historical collection. There are now fifty picture frames hanging on the walls of the room, containing deeds, commissions, pictures of the town, valuable historical documents, and we would earnestly ask all who have any papers, pamphlets, books printed in Niagara in early days, or articles illustrative of the history of the country to contribute by loan or otherwise. A record is carefully kept by Mr. Wilkinson, the curator, and all articles contributed are acknowledged in the Niagara Times in the "Historical Column." In the year 1800, a library was formed in Niagara, the history of which is known for twenty years, and it is particularly wished to obtain some of the books belonging to it; several rare and curious volumes have lately been given. The donors may be sure that great care will be taken in the preservation. The room is open from three to five on Saturdays and many visitors from different cities and countries have shown great interest in the collection so that it is easily seen that all helping in forming an historical museum are giving pleasure and conferring a real benefit on their country, for such collections serve to develop patriotic feeling.

# CENTENNIAL POEM.

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Written by Mrs. Curzon, President of the Woman's Historical Society, Toronto ; dedicated to the Niagara Historical Society, and read by Rev. J. C. Garrett, Rector of St. Mark's, at the first anniversary of the Society, 17th Sept. 1896.

That dark September for New France was past ;  
Vandreuil had signed capitulation's bonds ;  
Montcalm and Wolfe lay in their quiet graves.  
St. George's Cross flew o'er Canadian soil  
From brave Quebec, to where the sea drives in  
Among the reefs and keys of Florida :  
Nothing remained to France but Britain's grace.  
Courage had done its best—a splendid best—  
Can grander name than Montcalm ever rise ?

Nothing remained to France but Britain's grace.  
But what more shall we ask, save grace of God ?  
Large-hearted, generous, noble, England gives  
No grudging freedom, no false liberty :  
With princely hand, and brow serene and kind  
She dowers her subject peoples with the dower  
Of children, bidding them forget old feuds  
And live and prosper in her mother-love.  
And so no hearts were wrung by servile tasks ;  
No passions raged 'neath black oppression's foot :  
The gallant French-Canadian found no foe,  
But a sound friend in every British face.  
And when hot words grew into hotter deeds  
Between Great Britain and some hasty sons  
In her colonial kingdom oversea,  
Canadians all, one heart our people held  
As lieges of the king, for Britain's rights,  
And British subjects' rights maligned, forsworn.

Then when 'twas o'er and "seven red years of blood"  
Brought thousands leal and true to monarchy



On to Canadian soil, the land grew strait—  
 Too narrow for so large a multitude :  
 A multitude of men, and women, too,  
 Whose hearts were warm with love and hot with wrongs ;  
 Whose principles of honour, duty, faith,  
 Of loyalty and truth, had been through fire  
 And come out sterling gold. Not theirs to fall  
 Lamenting of their losses, but to turn  
 Bbold hearts and willing hands to win afresh  
 Homes—British homes—beneath the Union Jack.

Ah ! What a joy it was when Pitt—who knew  
 And trusted British instincts, had his way  
 And settled British laws on British ground !  
 Ontario, it was thine to be so blest !  
 The imperial circlet on thy regal brow  
 Was proudly set, with every gem ablaze :  
 And England's glorious throne enthroned *thy* king  
 Thou province of the west whose limits reached  
 The far Pacific, this was thy golden dower—  
 A freedom large, and wide as righteousness.  
 Hail then thy splendid coronation !  
 Out of full hearts and grateful memories  
 We greet with shouts thy grand centenary ;  
 Gladly recalling that fond day and hour  
 When on the gracious soil beneath our feet  
 The noble Simcoe stepped, our Governor.

And oh ! how joyful the momentous day  
 That saw the lieges come from far and near  
 Obedient to the summons of the king.  
 To hold the Province's first Parliament.  
 O pregnant day and full of weal or woe  
 To millions yet unborn ! But there was that  
 Beneath it all would guarantee its worth—  
 The Word of God ! His law ! The inspired command  
 That Britain least of all can e'er gainsay  
 For that she owes it most. On this alone  
 Stands, and has ever stood her liberty.  
 O Britain ! Mother-land ! to thee we turn  
 With proud high hearts and eyes alight with love  
 Knowing thee ever true and ever great.  
 Our kindling souls to-day find in thy name  
 Our richest boast. Canadians ! Britons !  
 We ask no more ; the rest is in our hands.

# FORT NIAGARA, N. Y., 1783-1796 ;

OR

## The Long Hold-over Period of That Fort.

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(A paper read by the Rev. Canon Bull, President of Lundy's Lane H. S., before the Niagara Historical Society at Niagara, Ont., Sept. 17, 1896.)

The celebration across the river, of an event of one hundred years ago, August 17, 1796, namely : England's surrender of Fort Niagara to the new Republic of the United States of America, was observed a few days ago by a very large concourse of people at the old Fort. Although the occasion was memorable, and attracted considerable public attention; and jubilant addresses were invited, yet according to the newspaper accounts of the day's proceedings, it would seem that nothing was said or no explanation given as to the long delay intervening between the Treaty of Peace in 1783 and 1796, a period of thirteen years, before the Treaty was fulfilled so far as concerned the restoration of Fort Niagara and certain other forts into the hands of the United States authorities. The long delay or hold-over period caused considerable annoyance to the people of the Republic. It was held to be an unsufferable grievance—enough, again, to provoke hostilities between the two Powers.

The able author of "A Brief History of Old Fort Niagara," says, on pp. 61, 62 :—"At last, June 1, 1796, the day set by treaty for the evacuation, arrived, but none of the five forts were evacuated. Why? Because the United States were not ready to occupy them, not even Fort Niagara, the most important of the five."

"So badly, indeed, had the United States army been supplied with provisions that, when notice was sent to the Federal General by the British officers that they had received orders to deliver up their respective posts pursuant to the treaty, and that they were prepared to do so whenever he

"was ready to take possession of them, an answer was returned that unless the British officers could supply his army with a considerable quantity of provisions on arriving at the lakes, he could not attempt to march for many weeks."

(Quoted by Hon. Peter A. Porter, from Weld's Travels, page 302.)

"A British statement," adds Mr. Porter, "but in general, substantiated by fact.

"On August 11th, the order having been duly presented, the British evacuated Fort Niagara and transferred the garrison, consisting of fifty men, guns, ammunition, stores, etc., across the river. As the banner of St. George came down from the flag-pole at Fort Niagara on that day, the British emblem floated over but one spot on American soil, Michilimacnac, which was not surrendered up to the United States until the following October.

"So Niagara was the next to the last post evacuated in America."

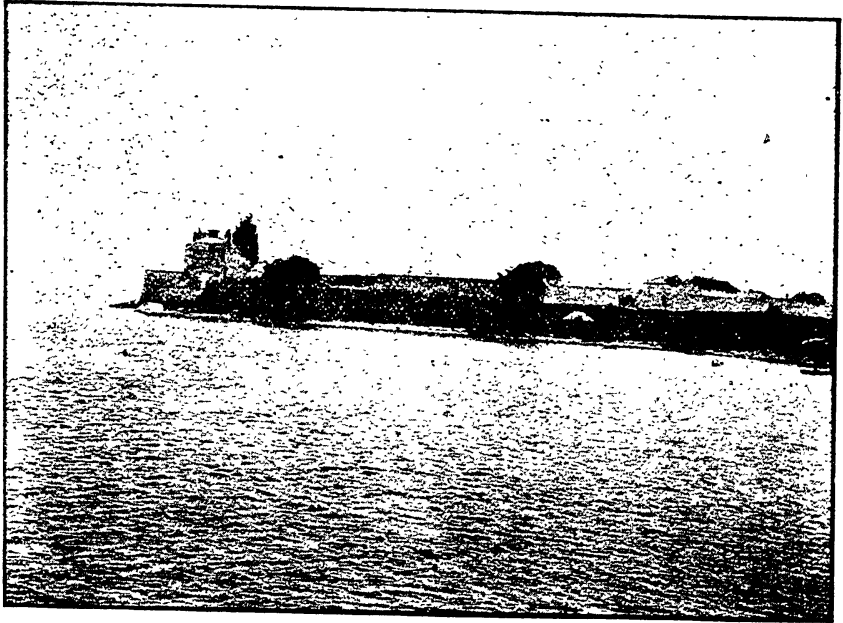
In the following paper it is proposed to show from official documents of the period, what were the real reasons for the long delay or hold-over period of 1783-'96.

It may seem extraordinary that we should at this time go back to events that occurred at a period so distant; but, in doing so, it will be, perhaps, interesting and useful to the student of history and of international politics, in order to understand and fairly to judge between the two administrations at that time,—the one as conciliating as possible, and the other as perverse and hostile.

It must be observed that the confederation of the United States, which was formed at the commencement, continued for some time after the peace. The nature of this compact must also be observed. It was a pure democracy. The government was not placed in the hands of even a few individuals, but remained in the possession of the representatives of the States.

Considerable difficulty existed in the objects prescribed by the treaty of peace. These difficulties arose from the impediments which were placed in the way of His Majesty's subjects, which operated so as to prevent their recovery of debts which had been owing previous to the revolution. These debts it was not possible to recover. This, and other circumstances, sanctioned the British government in the retention of certain forts, posts, etc., which, had the terms of the treaty been strictly complied with on the part of the United States, ought to and would have been surrendered at once.

In December, 1785, we find Mr. Adams at the British Court, "urging the complaints of America and pressing for a full compliance with the treaty." In reply the Marquis of Carmarthen (afterwards Duke of Leeds) said that "the engagements entered into by a treaty ought to be mutual and equally binding on the respective contracting parties. It would be, therefore, the height of folly as well as injustice to suppose one party alone—the British



FORT NIAGARA, N. Y.



“—obliged to a strict observance of the public faith while the other might remain free to deviate from its own engagements as often as convenience might seem to render such deviation necessary, though at the expense of its own credit and importance.” And he assured Mr. Adams that as soon as his government should evince on their part a disposition to fulfil the treaty, Great Britain would co-operate with him. For the justice of the Marquis' allegations we need only refer to a letter of Mr. Jay to General Washington, in which he confesses, “*it is too true, the treaty has been violated.*” In reply to Mr. Jay we find General Washington exclaiming:—“What a misfortune it is *that the British should have so well grounded a pretext* for their infraction; and what a disgraceful part out of the choice of difficulties are we to act!”

In no measure was the American system more evident than the predicament in which the creditor was placed. Session after session in the state legislatures were “acts,” called “instalment acts,” passed, defining the definite periods to which payment of instalments on debts were to be deferred. This was done in actual defiance of the treaty. The conduct of the popular party on this occasion is well described by the learned biographer of Washington—(Marshall):

“These contests were the more animated, because in the state governments, generally, no principle had been introduced which could resist the wild progress of the moment, or give the people an opportunity to reflect and allow the good sense of the nation time for reflection.”

Such was the want of principle at that time existing that “it was impossible to negotiate bonds even where the creditors were unquestionably competent, but at a discount of 30, 40, or 50 per cent.”

From their legislatures they expected other acts favorable to the prolongation of payments, and made their election of such men as would pledge themselves to vote for these measures. They even threatened “to suspend the administration of justice by private violence.”

As to private debts, however, we are bound not to express much surprise when we find, from the authority of Washington himself, that “requisitions” (from the government) “are actually little better than a jest and a by-word throughout the land.” Its authority, from Mr. Jay's description of it, seems in general cases to be as weak as in that of requisition for pecuniary advances. “Private rage for property,” says that gentleman, “suppresses public consideration, and personal rather than national interests have become the great objects of attention. Representative bodies will ever be faithful copies of their originals, and generally exhibit a chequered assemblage of virtue and vice, of ability and weakness.”

It was under these circumstances that they were compelled to form a stronger government. Such was the critical situation in which they were placed, that we find Washington expressing his wish that “anything, nay, everything, should be essayed to prevent the effusion of blood and to

"avert the *humiliating* and *contemptible* figure we are about to make in the "annals of mankind."

Here we see the great danger they were in, not from British stamp acts or Boston post-bills; not from British armies or British navies, but from American sedition, from American violence. We find that such was the height to which not only opposition to order, but open violation of law, reached as to compel a judge (who had been an officer) to declare at the head of 300 men "that he would die as a general or sit as a judge."

Such was "the licentious spirit," the "desire of change," the "wish to annihilate all debts," to exert the force of the poor and the numerous to bear away the property of the few and the more wealthy, that they combined an organized body of 12,000 or 15,000 men.

To such a height did this spirit of insubordination reach that open civil war was expected, and upon the best ground, for the insurrection was not quelled without a recourse to arms, in which several rioters were killed.

It was under such circumstances that had not the magnanimity, the honor and the fidelity of the British Government to engagements been so firm and so exalted, held out the fairest opportunity of regaining the footing it had lost—it was, we say, under such circumstances—that these people formed a government that could act and with effect.

From the British constitution it was avowedly modelled. One of its framers (Dr. Franklin) was accustomed to express his opinion of the old adage that it depended more on the administration than the mere letter of a constitution whether it should produce evil or good. This, the work of his and his compatriots' hands, will fully prove the truth of the sentiment.

Washington, as president, from this time, of the new republic, may well be called, "The Father of his Country," its most faithful and honorable adviser. One incident, from among many, to prove our high estimation of him, may be mentioned:

In June, 1793, an English ship was captured by the French and brought into Philadelphia, where she was refitted and armed to cruise against British commerce. The president was at his seat for a few days. Col. Hamilton communicated the fact to Gen. Knox and Mr. Jefferson. Directions were then given to the municipal authorities to detain her until the arrival of Gen. Washington. The French minister, Genet, insolently refused to allow it. Facts proved afterwards he had tampered with a minister who was supported by the people in permitting the vessel to leave a port of the United States, then at peace with England, to prey upon her commerce. This act was applauded at civic *fetes*, but condemned by Washington, and at last Genet was recalled to France for his act of injustice and violence in the matter. The fall of Robespierre also tended to remove Genet from the United States. Washington determined upon a course of truth and justice to all. His determination and firmness of character could not be overcome by any popular tumult or violent expression. This firmness seems, however, to have been a signal for attacks upon his character.

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He was characterized as a tool of Great Britain, and was proclaimed a speculator and thief of the treasury. Where is the gratitude of man to be met with? Posterity will, however, refuse to believe that such baseness ever entered his mind.

No doubt, through Washington, efforts were made in 1796, three years before his death, to transfer the forts of Niagara, Oswego and other places held over by Britain for 13 years, to the authority of the United States, still, in 1802, when the old claims of debts were renewed, it was agreed to give £600,000 as a compensation for £5,000,000!! (This claim had been reduced from £10,000,000!!) This was one of the first acts under Jefferson's administration.

This paper, thus far, has been limited to one subject of history immediately following the revolutionary period and secession of the thirteen states from Great Britain. The Niagara Historical Society, before whom it was read, is to be highly commended for the work and labour of love which it has undertaken—the study and cultivation of Canadian history. The Lundy's Lane Historical Society bids the President and members of the Niagara Society a hearty welcome, as diligent and patriotic students of their country's history.

Let all our efforts tend to promote truth, justice, unity, peace and concord. Then will God bless us—our country, our constitution and our gracious Sovereign. For the preservation of this portion of the British Empire, and for the uprightness of her counsellors and administrators of a century, we are thankful. Let our prayers be offered up to Him to whom alone belongs "The weak to strengthen and confound the strong."





# A SLAVE RESCUE IN NIAGARA SIXTY YEARS AGO.

---

By JANET CARNOCHAN.

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(Read before Canadian Institute, Lundy's Lane Historical Society, and Niagara Historical Society.)

Not all heroes are known to fame. Not all heroes are of the dominant races, nor are they always of the class trained by ages of culture to do knightly deeds. An article in a late number of the "Canadian Magazine," relating to the deed of John Brown in striking a blow even to the loss of his own life, to free the slave, recalls the story told me not long ago, a brave deed done by black men for one of their race, and which, I am sure, has never been fully chronicled. But you ask, what good is done by such reckless sacrifice of life? *Much every way.* The lesson in heroism to onlookers and listeners to the tale is one that could be taught so well in no other way. The moral heroism shown, lifts us up on invisible wings and fits our souls for lofty flights. And the object is often gained, although at the time nothing seems to have been accomplished, and the actor loses his life. As in the case of the Hermit Almachus, who denounced the gladiatorial conflicts and was torn to pieces by the mob, eager for the sickening sight of brutes and brutalized men tearing each other to pieces in sight of delighted thousands, who often refused even to turn up their thumbs to save a life. Apparently the only result was the sacrifice of the life of an almost unknown and nameless monk—but, mark,—that was the last time that men looked down from the Colosseum seats to gaze upon such brutalities. The gladiatorial contests were ended.

The event I shall endeavor to describe occurred about sixty years ago in Niagara, in the vicinity of the jail, now Miss Rye's Western Home. Those grounds, now beautiful with graceful trees and shrubs, as well as brilliant flowers and luscious fruit, witnessed many sad and tragic scenes. The imprisonment here, in 1818, of Robert Gourlay, described so graphically in Dent's History of the Rebellion in his opening chapter nearly twenty years before the date of our story, his cruel treatment, and the imprisonment with heavy fine, and standing in the pillory of a Niagara editor for publishing a letter, now seems to us such a perversion of justice that we can hardly imagine that such a thing actually took place here sixty years ago.

The opening words of Dent's History of the Rebellion are these ; " In the afternoon of a warm and sultry day, towards the end of one of the warmest and most sultry summers which Upper Canada has ever known, an extraordinary trial took place in the Court house in the old town of Niagara eighty years ago." A graphic description follows of the trial on Friday, Aug. 20th, 1819, of Robert Gourlay, something in the style of Macauley's trial of Warren Hastings, describing the presiding judge, the counsel on each side, the witnesses, the prisoner, the jurymen, the court room itself, so that those taking part stand out in striking relief, and we can almost hear the very tones of their voices, can see the play of their countenances. The room so portrayed can yet be seen, forming the dormitory used for those waifs and strays from the mother land, who find homes in our newer, freer, more far-extending country. Here may yet be seen, above the wide staircase, the gallery for spectators, the arches showing good workmanship, while the position occupied by the judges, prisoner's box, judge, can all be pointed out, though, of course, many changes have been made in the building. A picture is in existence of the building in its early days of which, nothing can surpass the unmitigated ugliness, a reference in the Niagara *Gleaner*, 1819, speaks of its being built in 1817 " in that swamp."

This building, with its surroundings, was the scene of the slave rescue. My hero was a black man, who gave his life to save a black man, or it may rather be said there were heroes, and, though their lives were the forfeit, they accomplished what they aimed at, and struck a blow for freedom, which went on resounding through the years. A quarter of a century before this, near this same spot, a blow had been struck for the slaves by our early legislators, making provision for the gradual freeing of all slaves in Canada, before Britain had freed her slaves, and still longer before our Southern neighbors, at such a costly outlay of money and a still more costly outlay of blood, did the same for their slaves. A noble deed this for this wilderness, where our fathers met in dangers and difficulties ; a beneficent deed and worthy of being chronicled.

The story, as heard first, I have made many efforts to make more complete, efforts at first signally ineffectual, but, finally, after following many *ignis fatua*, at length a connected narrative has been gained. Sixty years does not seem so long a period, but it is remarkable how few can give a

clear account, how many false clews one may follow. One aged person asked, could tell nothing at all ; one had come here the next year ; another had only a confused recollection ; but the story as told by four independent witnesses, and since confirmed by many others, seems so dramatic, so unreal in this utilitarian age, that at first I almost hesitated " to tell the tale as 'twas told to me," but I believe it to be true in every particular.

In 1837 Niagara was an important place—St. Catharines and Hamilton were comparatively insignificant. There were 4,000 inhabitants, of whom 400 were blacks who had nearly all escaped from slavery, following the north star through devious dangerous ways, but now having purchased little plots of land and built houses thereon, they formed an important part of the population. They had two churches, Baptist and Methodist, a school, generally taught by a black man, but at one time by a white woman. A company of black men was enlisted during the rebellion, so that they did their share to help the Government which had given them shelter, spreading over them its flag as an ægis. Niagara was then also a military station, nearly all the lake vessels were built here, it was the headquarters for the fugitive slaves and other colored Canadians.

My informant, a large woman, somewhat portly, with good features, not darker than many Caucasians, with a stately presence, and bearing well the snows of seventy winters, told the story well in her soft voice : " Yes, I could tell you about the old times. I was born in Niagara in 1824 and my father came here in 1802. He was a slave. No, he did not run away. He came with his master all the way from Fredericksburg, Virginia, driving the carriage with six horses, his master bringing his money in bags, enough to last him ; he came all that way to see the Falls, and stayed at Black Rock a while. My father was the coachman, and though his master was not cruel like some masters, my father was always afraid he might be sold off to work in the cotton fields, and a gentleman from Niagara, Mr. D., told him he could easily escape and come to Niagara where there were many colored people. So he hid in the corn fields. It was September, and oh, the misery my father was in when September came ; he had his dark days every year, for he remembered lying out at night, the cold, and the fright of being taken, and little to eat, and the rain, oh ! the children did not like when that time of the year came. for he never forgot it, and he was down, down then. But I must go back to my story. At last his master had to go back without his coachman, although he waited a long time, and then my father came to Niagara where he bought a little piece of land here in Colored Village. That is a picture of the log house. No, it is not standing now. Mrs. — took a picture of it for me before it was pulled down, and I have had it framed as you see. Far from here ? No, my father owned this piece of land, too, and I built this little house. War ? Yes, my father used to tell about driving some of the officers, and about the dances, and the old Blue House and the Block House, and he remembered General Brock and

many officials. My mother, with many others, went to Burlington Bay during the war; my father was a teamster; hard times they had then. Do you know what our people used for hairpins then; there were no stores—what, perhaps they had stores, but people had no money—well, we used the thorns from the hawthorn trees, and sometimes used them to pin our clothes together when they were torn, instead of buttons and hooks and pins.

My mother was a German woman and was brought up by a lady, and my grandmother came from the States in the Revolutionary war, and went and lived with the Indians at Chippawa, but my mother came away to Niagara and lived as servant with Parson Addison, and when she married my father in 1818 he gave her a grand wedding out at Lake Lodge. There were fifty people present, and Rev. John Burns helped to marry them. Where did I go to school? Oh, the first school I went to was to a yellow man called Herbert Holmes—Hubbard Holmes our people called him. I will tell you afterwards what became of him and how he died. Oh, he was severe, they were then, you know, but he was a fine man, had been educated by a gentleman in Nova Scotia, and then he went to England for a while, and I went to school upstairs in the schoolhouse of the Scotch church; you know the first church was burned down in the war and then they used the schoolhouse where the sexton lives now, and downstairs they had preaching and Sunday school, and upstairs was a schoolroom for the colored children. It was a black man taught it. How many? Oh, it was full—full of children. The benches were slabs with the flat side up and the bark down, with round sticks put in slanting for legs. The children all studied aloud, and the one that made the most noise was the best scholar in those days. Then I went to a Miss Brooks, from Oberlin, in 1838-9. I remember just how she looked, and how she dressed: She was delicate and died of consumption; oh, she had hard times with some of the boys—bad, rough ones. I remember how Hubbard Holmes used to drill the boys, and then when holiday time came, he would march us all in twos to a grocery kept by a black woman, and treat us all to bulls'-eyes and gingerbread. Holidays were not two months as they are now, but two weeks. Oh, he was a fine man—but I must tell you how he died.

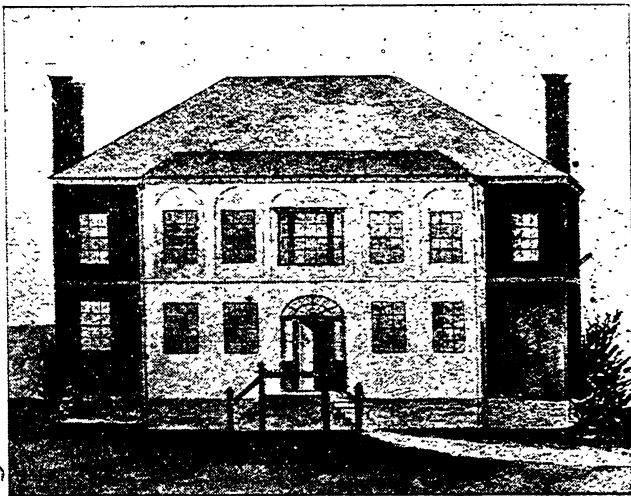
There was a slave who escaped from Louisville, Kentucky, Solomon Moseby by name. In those days they followed the north star and that brought them to Canada. Now, this slave had stolen his master's horse, or they said so, and so they tracked him and found him here at Niagara, and he was arrested and put in jail. Yes, *where Miss Rye's Western Home is*. It did not look like that then. So you know they could take him back, and hang him for taking the horse, and so they brought papers, and the lawyers and the judge said he must go back, and our people were worked up till they said they would "*live with him or die with him.*" Yes, *do or die*, that's what they said, and they went up on that day, crowds and crowds, and the sheriff, that was McLeod, and the constables and soldiers, and the people, and children and the white people, crowds and crowds. *Did I go?* No,

mother took us up on the top of our house, and we could hear the shouting and the screaming and the screeching and the firing. Ephraim Wheeler was the jailer, and the sheriff went up and down slashing with his sword and keeping the people back. Many of our people had sword cuts on their necks. They were armed with all kinds of weapons: pitchforks, flails, sticks, stones. One woman had a large stone in a stocking, and many had their aprons full of stones, and threw them, too. The constables had muskets, and when the waggon came out of the jail-yard with the prisoner. Solomon Moseby, sitting in it with handcuffs, to go back to slavery, or be beaten to death or hanged after he had come all these miles, our people were nearly frantic, and Hubbard Holmes sprang forward and caught one horse by the head, and a black man called Green caught the other. Some one must have sprung in the waggon and knocked off the prisoner's handcuffs, the constables fired, and Hubbard Holmes and Green fell dead, but Solomon Moseby jumped out and ran off in the direction of Mr. Hiscott's. Oh, I can remember the screaming and the shouting—but *Hubbard Holmes was dead! Tragedy!* Yes, he was a martyr, he gave his life to free his brother; they said they would live or die with the prisoner, and they did. Oh, what a funeral that was. Nearly all the people in town coming up to see the dead bodies when they were laid out, and to the funeral afterwards. Where is he buried? In the graveyard of the colored church. Monument? No, but he was a hero. Some of those who helped Hubbard Holmes were taken up and kept in jail for a month and then they let them out. After some years Solomon Moseby came back, and meanwhile his wife had come here. They met in Mr. — house, but at first they hardly knew one another, but it was a sight to see the tears streaming down their faces with joy, but our people did not give him any encouragement, so he did not stay long, for they thought when they had suffered so much for him and lives had been lost, he ought not to have come back. Sunday School? Yes, some Methodists used to have Sunday School round in the houses of our people, Mr. Vary and Mrs. Judge Powell and Mrs. Whitten went round teaching and praying. They dressed different from the Methodists now, and Hubbard Holmes was what they called an *exhorter*. And I remember when the white Baptists' and the black Baptists' had the fight about the meeting house, *but the blacks got it*. That was in 1839. There are some white people buried there: a child of Mr. Oakley, who was a teacher and used to exhort, and I went to another teacher who taught in the Methodist schoolhouse. They used to baptize in the river; sometimes there would be fifty immersed in the water at one time down near where the Queen's hotel is now. And sometimes they went to the creek near Mr. Burns' orchard, instead of going to the river, to be baptized."

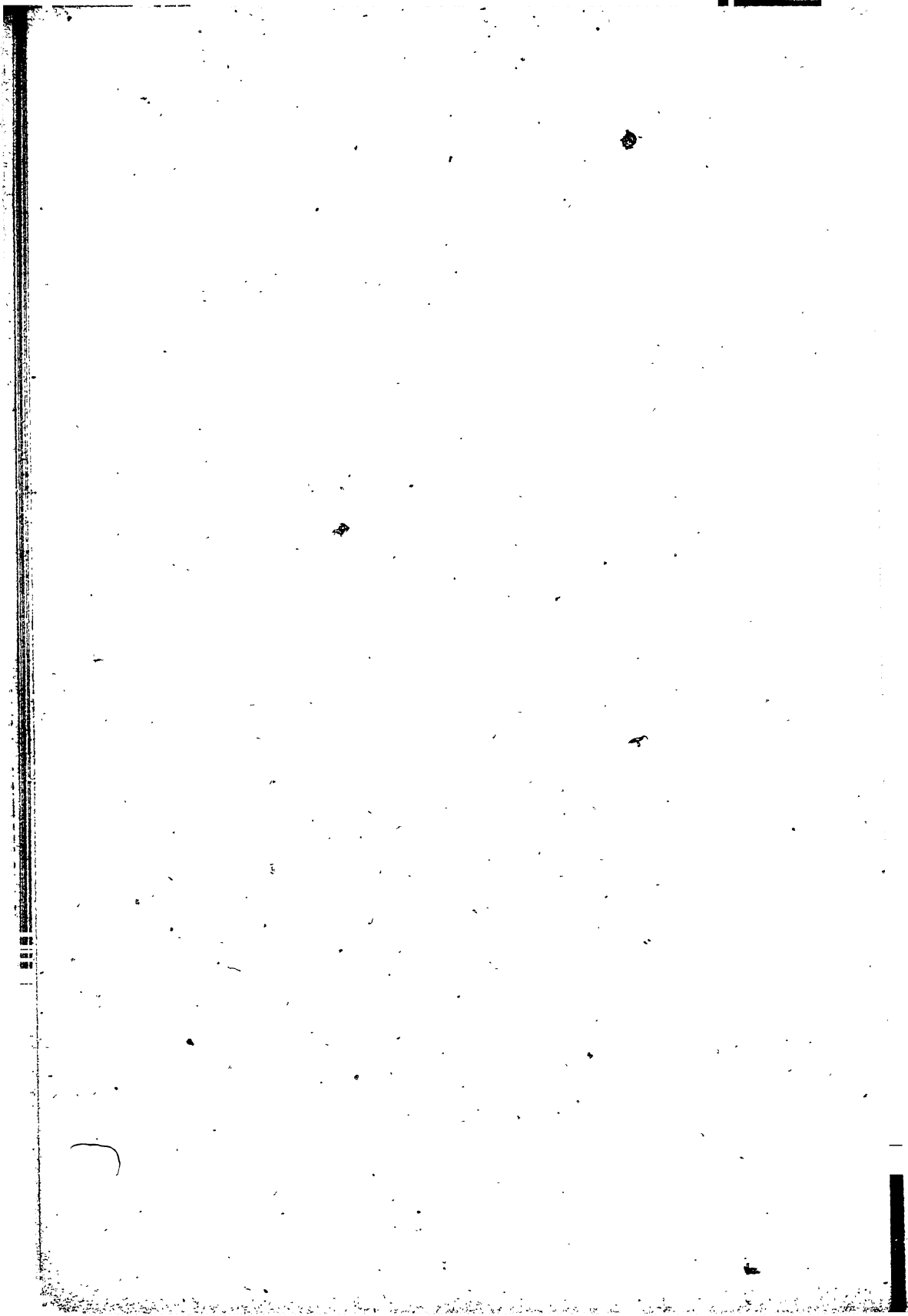
And now, from a friend, comes the same story; the same, and yet different, parts of it explaining what seemed strange in the other, one point especially, how the handcuffs were so easily got rid of. This narration gives dignity to the deed of the blacks. It was a well-organized plan, the



MISS RYE'S HOME—AS IT IS TO-DAY.



THE OLD GAOL—AS IT WAS SIXTY YEARS AGO.  
(Now Miss Rye's Home)



steady determination of hundreds to save a companion from the awful fate which they knew only too well awaited him, a persistent effort on their part involving self-denial, suffering and risk, which was as truly heroic as many deeds of which we read in Greek, Scottish or Dutch history, or our own U. E. Loyalists; deeds immortalized in song or story.

The story, this time told to my friend by an old man, a full black, is that the slave Moseby took his master's horse to help him escape, and after using it some time, abandoned it, and made his way on foot the remaining distance to Canada. Shortly after he was arrested, and after considerable legal wrangling, the Canadian authorities consented to deliver him up to the Americans as a criminal for horse-stealing. Of course, the colored people on the Niagara frontier thought it was a shameful surrender. The blacks then formed a numerous, if not wealthy, element of the Niagara population. One of their preachers, Herbert Holmes, who was also a teacher not like some temporisers, was also *a man*, although his skin was neither, white nor black, but yellow. When it was decided that Moseby was to be returned to slavery, Herbert Holmes, the teacher and preacher, said, "Never while I live," and he at once, with other leading colored citizens, gave the alarm to all their comrades on the Niagara frontier, and called on them to come to the rescue at once, and nobly they responded. Few of the blacks then were better than hewers of wood and drawers of water to their white brethren, but many instances can be given of self-sacrifice by those to whom word was sent. Teamsters gave up their situations and lost their wages, journeys were made to take word to friends, by boys and girls, journeys difficult and dangerous, for besides those in authority who wanted to surrender Moseby, there were a number of black ruffians, as well as whites, who made their living at times by kidnapping escaped slaves and other colored people, getting them back over the Niagara river. To the physical hardships endured, which were light, comparatively, add the mental sufferings, for instance, while the superstitious darkies were passing the numerous burial places of the early settlers on their own farms, the runners who were sent off to give the alarm, journeys often in the night, over nearly impassable roads to St. Davids, Drummondville, Chippawa, Fort Erie, Port Colborne, then called Granelly Bay, or the Twenty and Forty-Mile Creeks.

The Deputy Sheriff of the Niagara district at this time was McLeod, who was anxious to have Moseby extradited, but, fortunately, there were some formalities to be complied with, and before this was done Holmes recruits had arrived and assembled around the Niagara jail, determined to die before Moseby was given up. The town was in a ferment, the majority of the whites were opposed to the surrender but did not want to interfere, and fortunately for Moseby he had friends even among his guards, and although attempts were made to get him out secretly from the jail and down to the ferry, the watchers always were alert, and time after time frustrated the attempted night delivery of the prisoner. Capt. Eccles and Col. Adams, of St. Catharines, interested themselves for Moseby, and got up a largely signed



petition, but without avail. McLeod wished Capt. Richardson of the Canada to take Moseby to Lewiston in his vessel, and received for an answer a reply, forcible and somewhat profane, but this certainly might be a case where the recording angel might drop a tear to erase the word. It was the answer of a humane man : that no vessel commanded by him would be used to convey a man back to slavery. Moseby's owner and the Americans were clamoring for him and at last, after a three weeks' siege of the jail by from 200 to 300 negroes, some say over 400, it was determined to deliver the prisoner on a certain day. Many of the white inhabitants of the town had given help in the way of food and shelter to the blockading army, who had erected temporary huts for shelter for some, as the weather was cold, while others obtained shelter with their colored brethren. Although there were four taverns in the vicinity of the jail there was not accommodation for all. Special constables were engaged, a couple of bombardiers from Fort Mississagua in their gorgeous uniforms, to inspire fear, were detailed to ride on the waggon, one on each side of the prisoner as he was being conveyed to the wharf. As there had been numerous false alarms, there were not so many white spectators as might have been expected, but there were some hundreds who were nearly all sympathizers. It was thought during the first week that Moseby's friends would soon tire, and it was given out at different times that the prisoner was to be given up, but Holmes was not thus deceived. He and his were always on hand. Sentinels had been posted on guard, night and day for those three weary weeks. What a time of excitement this must have been for all concerned ; it sounds to us, in these prosaic days, almost beyond belief. The prisoner did not lack friends inside the prison walls, and Holmes was always warned when danger threatened.

At last the day came ; the Deputy Sheriff on horseback with a drawn sword, the waggon with two spirited horses, constables in front on the waggon, constables on the rear seat of waggon, prisoner handcuffed in the centre with bombardiers on each side of him, constables with fixed bayonets on foot, on each side of the waggon and the rear, white spectators on the roofs of the neighboring houses. The prisoner was handcuffed in the jail yard and bidden good-bye by Wheeler and helped into the waggon. Outside the jail the Riot Act was read, and then the gates are thrown open and the spirited team came out with a rush. Two hundred determined black men on each side of the road and across in front of the bounding team were there as well. Most of them, personally, had felt the lash of slavery ; and there also was Holmes, who, however, had never been in bondage, but had made their wrongs his own, and deserves all the more credit. All this recalls the words of the old rhyme while we survey this striking picture.

“ And shall Trelawny die, and shall Trelawny die ?  
Then forty thousand Cornishmen will know the reason why.”

Holmes, although a heavy, corpulent man, was the first to reach the

horses' heads and bring them to a standstill : another man took hold of the other horse, and a third black man by the name of Green, with a fence-rail, now that the waggon was stopped, ran the rail between the spokes of the hind wheels and locked the waggon. The prisoner, whose handcuffs had either not been locked or had been so weakened that they easily broke, jumped from the waggon into the thickest of the crowd and disappeared. All this did not take over two minutes. McLeod on his charger, who, with his drawn sword was making way for the team, had got into an altercation with a large fat woman who would not make way for him, her ponderosity happily offering an effectual bar, but on whom he hesitated to use his sword, on looking back and seeing the horses stopped, shouted "Fire!" and "Charge," the bombardiers fired, one of them into the air, the other at Holmes, killing him instantly, and one of the special constables with his bayonet charged at poor Green, who had just locked the waggon wheels and had not had time to get away. The prisoner, who was an athletic man, jumped a rail fence, and ran into a corn field where a man by the name of Gibson was at work, who is credited with giving him assistance. At a farm house near Virgil it is told that he stopped to obtain a drink of water (and in the same house is still shown an earthenware jar, called "the Holmes jar," having belonged to our dusky hero at one time). Moseby finally reached Montreal, and afterwards England, for he was safe neither in Canada nor the United States. The authorities were enraged at his escape, and thirty or forty of the blacks were immediately arrested and imprisoned in the jail, the leader next to Holmes being a man named Sims. They were kept prisoners for some time, and at the breaking out of the rebellion were released, and joined a colored company, marched to the Falls and afterwards to Chippawa. Capt. Johnson Clench was their first captain. My informant could give no account of the funeral, there being a warrant out against him, but he escaped and afterwards enlisted with the others, being then a lad of sixteen.

It is strange how many stories are told of how the handcuffs were removed, showing what a hold this had taken on the popular fancy, and also how differently people see and narrate the same circumstance, but all showing the sympathy felt for the prisoner. One tells that the blacksmith who made the fetters, so constructed them as to be easily opened ; another that a file was conveyed to Moseby in food sent in to him; another, that a friendly turnkey helped him, and still another, that when he left the waggon, the handcuffs were still on, and then he ran to a large stone in a field and struck them off. One of the constables lost a finger in the contest as was well known to many in town.

Another vivid word picture of the same scene was given by a gentleman from Toronto, the story being told him by Father Henson, of Chatham, who was either a witness or was told of it by a participator in the scene. A touch of local color is given which will be appreciated by those who have wandered over the common at Niagara, or as it is called in Kirby's Canadian

Idylls, "Niagara Plain," of late years given over to herds of cows wandering at their sweet will, marching sometimes in procession once a day to the river to drink; at one time of the year dotted with the white tents of the Canadian volunteers, the scarlet coats contrasting with the pleasing dark blue of the cavalry, while a hundred years ago thousands of Indians assembled to make a treaty with the whites, while again the booming of cannons at the taking of Fort George, and still again the blaze from the burning town, casting a glare on the inhabitants fleeing over the snow for shelter, while now the summer visitor, all unconscious of these sad memories, gathers bunches of ox-eyed daisies or fragrant sweet briar. This historic plain forms part of the military reserve; near by is Butler's barracks, then surrounded by a high palisade, not far off the historic "thorn trees": midway between the jail and the wharf a creek now dry in summer. Near by, the Hospital formerly the Indian Council Chamber, the site now shown by some fine old trees. A wooden bridge crossed some low ground near the jail and the idea of the blacks was to use no violence, but the women were instructed to stand on the bridge forming a solid mass, so that there would be some time taken up in dispersing them, which would cause a diversion and give time and opportunity to the prisoner to escape in the confusion. The women sang hymns. Let us fancy we hear the sound, on that broad plain, of the sweet African voices, singing, perhaps, some of those wondrously sweet and plaintive melodies made familiar to us by the Jubilee singers, all around the forest, over all the blue sky, and between the bridge and the jail, a line of black men watching for their brother, whom they had determined to rescue. The crowd sang till all were excited, then when the constables got out of the waggon to clear the way, rails were taken down from the fence, which proved to be effective weapons; some were stuck in the waggon wheels, and thus an opportunity for escape was given. A stone in a stocking formed a formidable weapon for the women. Another informant tells that the black women, worked up to a high pitch of fury, did "grievous bodily harm" to some of the officials who never liked to have this episode referred to afterwards. A lady from St. Catharines, prominent in good works, told me she remembered as one of her earliest recollections, seeing a waggon full of black men standing up driving wildly through St. David's to the rescue, and that one of these men returned with a pike wound through his cheek.

Singularly enough, after writing the above, comes another version of the story which disputes my title of hero. Through the kindness of J. P. Merritt, Esq. of St. Catharines, access was obtained to a newspaper file of 1837, bound volumes of the *St. Catharines Journal*. The thought had often intruded itself that another side of the story might call this band of men, trying to save a brother, a mob, or even by a harsher name, and what all who had told the story had called heroism, might be called rebellion or treason. How far it is right to resist constituted authority is a question yet unsettled. The difference between a patriot and a rebel, perhaps, depends on his

measure of success. If successful a patriot and here, if unsuccessful a rebel and traitor. In the issue of the *Journal* for Sept. 21, 1837, is an article headed "Mobocracy in Canada." The articles give us another link in the history of our country, for here is a reference to the *Christian Guardian*, published sixty years ago, and another to William Lyon Mackenzie, certainly using very vigorous language in regard to both. The article headed "Mobocracy in Canada" begins thus: "A most lamentable and exciting occurrence took place a few days ago, in the town of Niagara, by which two colored men lost their lives, and several others were seriously injured. A runaway slave from Kentucky (here follows the story). Application was made to the Lieutenant-Governor to remove said felon, which was granted. An armed mob, principally of colored people of all sexes and conditions, having collected about the jail, several magistrates, soldiers and constables were called in, the Riot Act was read, the mob rushed on the officers with clubs and knives, the military were ordered to fire; but the grand object of the mob was gained, as the prisoner escaped; \$100 is offered by the sheriff as a reward for his capture. A coroner's inquest was held. The pretext of the blacks for their violent conduct was the suspicion that the slave was not to be punished as a horse thief, but to be returned to slavery, losing sight of the enormity of the crime of resisting the law."

It seems by the issue of Sept. 28th, that the *Christian Guardian* had given in its columns a statement that a verdict of "wilful murder" against the Deputy Sheriff had been given, and a very abusive article follows against the *Christian Guardian*, which, the *Journal* says, waited a week to get the facts of the case, and then accuses the Deputy Sheriff of wilful murder: "We may search the records of human depravity in vain for a parallel of crime for its appropriate title." The words quoted from the *Christian Guardian* seem hardly to deserve this tirade: "That the Deputy Sheriff in ordering the military to fire on an unarmed assemblage, who offered no violence, several minutes after the escape of the prisoner, exceeded his authority." An extract from the *Niagara Chronicle* gives the account of the inquest; "At 10 o'clock on Sunday morning, Sept. 24th, the jury having been confined seventeen hours, returned their verdict unanimously in the case of Herbert Holmes, 'justifiable homicide,' by twelve of the jurors; in the case of Jacob Green, "That the deceased was killed by a wound inflicted by a sharp cutting instrument, but whether justifiably or unjustifiably there is not sufficient evidence before the jury to decide." Between the verdict of the jury on the 24th, and the article on the 27th, there were two mails and six steamboat arrivals from Niagara. Some very strong language is used against those "who under the sacred garb of Christianity aim insidious and well-directed blows against the foundations of social order. We are no more fond of slavery than of mob law. We would rather prostitute our columns to the service of the master who deals in flesh and blood, than to him who was a murderer from the beginning." In the *Journal* of Oct. 4th, the editor returns to the charge thus: "In his paper of Oct. 4th, the editor of the

*Guardian* apologizes for the falsehood respecting the verdict of the jury, the regret is only for that one untruth, and none for the encouragement of mobocracy. Is it not enough that that vilest of all vile creatures, Mackenzie, openly applauded those 'fine fellows who watched ten days and nights at the jail door,' but that the *Christian Guardian* should throw in a sly wink of approbation at their infatuated conduct." In the issue of Oct. 19th we find that the *Guardian* declines to exchange with the *Journal*, and speaks slightly of Mackenzie, comparing the editor of the *Journal* with him. In the *Niagara Reporter*, Nov. 9th, Thomas Sewell shows that the *Guardian* could not have had the news in time for correction, but in the next issue of the *Journal* is another long article abusing the *Guardian*, and it is to be hoped this newspaper war, continued for three months, was soon brought to a close. All this, however, shows the interest taken in the slave.

Since writing the above, it has been discovered that there are several persons living in Niagara who were present at the jail, when these thrilling scenes took place, and whose account agrees almost word for word with that related. In the *Niagara Reporter*, Sept. 14, 1837, lately found, is a long description blaming Sir Francis Bond Head for his action, and describing the excitement; and in Mrs. Jameson's "Sketches of Canada" is mentioned her meeting with Mrs. Carter, commonly called "Sally" Carter, a strong fine-looking black woman, who harangued the mob in the most eloquent manner.

Many stories might be gathered up, if not so exciting as this, still very interesting, and could this be collected and made public much light might be thrown on the past, and many missing links of Canadian history supplied.



