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James H. Coyne*

**David Ramsay and Long Point in  
Legend and History**

by

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*David Ramsay and Long Point in Legend and History*

By JAMES H. COYNE, LL.D., F.R.S.C.

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## INTRODUCTION.

In August, 1893, the writer with a party of friends visited the Long Point Settlement. Carriages were taken at Simcoe, and the tour included such historic sites as Vittoria, Normandale, Turkey Point, Fisher's Glen and Ryerse Creek. The interest and enjoyment of the trip were greatly enhanced by the companionship for a time of the late Mr. Simpson McCall, then eighty-five years of age, who proved a very mine of information regarding the Settlement. Mr. McCall had for many years been prominent in the County of Norfolk, filling various positions of honour and responsibility, including that of representative in the Provincial Legislature for two full terms. Mr. McCall died in 1898 at the great age of ninety-one. Tasker in his history of the Settlement refers to him in these terms: "In the respect and veneration of the whole community, Mr. McCall in his old age received his reward for the sterling honesty which was the predominant feature of his whole life, and the unflinching justice and impartiality which were his most notable traits of character."

Possessed of a retentive memory, Mr. McCall delighted in recounting to eager listeners many incidents of national, local and family history. From Mr. McCall's own lips the writer of this paper wrote down at the time pages of narrative, condensing as he proceeded, but using the narrator's words as far as possible. The narrative included among various matters of interest the following story of buried treasure:—

## RAMSAY'S BURIED TREASURE.

"One Ramsay, before and after the Revolution, traded with the Indians of this region up to Detroit, &c. Dr. Troyer believed in magic, and had a mineral rod, by which he divined where gold was buried. About 1790, when Ramsay was coming from Detroit with two men and his boat loaded with furs and gold, he had a dispute with Indians living at Port Stanley where they had large corn fields, over his refusal to furnish them with liquor. They followed him from the land down to Port Burwell and the carrying place, and Long Point to the end of the peninsula, and prevented him doing any further trade. At the portage he buried his money in an iron chest,

and killed a black dog and buried it over the chest as a protection. This was Ramsay's last trip. About 1817 Dr. Troyer and his son, Michael, having found out by his divining rod where the treasure was, went out towards evening to dig it up. I saw them going out in the boat. My father was the only one I know about that they had consulted, but he was an unbeliever, and would not go. The Doctor afterwards told me that they dug down to the box. The Doctor was a Tunkard. He held a Bible open and a lighted candle to keep away the Evil One. Michael dug and tried to pry the chest out of the ground, when a big black dog rose up beside the chest—grew right up bigger and bigger, until the light went out, and then they took to their boat and went home.

"Doctor Troyer had a stone, which he covered with a hat, and when one of the Fick girls put her head under the hat, she could see everything that was hidden—stolen money, and goods, &c. Many things were recovered in this way, amongst others some things stolen from my Uncle, Ephraim C. Mitchell."

In a later conversation, which I did not record at the time but give from memory, Mr. McCall added some details, furnished by Michael Troyer to himself. The Doctor and Michael arrived at the portage a little before dusk. This was to give them time to fix the exact location of the treasure. Having found the spot, they withdrew to the boat and waited until midnight, when they proceeded to the place, the Doctor leading the way with a lighted candle in one hand and an open Bible in the other, Michael following with pick and spade. Precisely at midnight they heard the clink of the spade on the iron chest, and Michael endeavoured to pry up the lid, when the frightful apparition rose up, expanding to an enormous size, and the daring intruders, brave as they had thought themselves, dropping book, candle and digging implements, fled to the boat, leaped in, and rowed with all their might for home.

#### HISTORICAL BASIS.

So much for the story of the buried treasure. The legendary factors are old enough, to be sure. The witch doctor, the divining rod, the buried gold, the black dog, the exorcism with book and candle, the ghostly guardian of the treasure, the magic stone, the "thinking cap"—these are among the commonplaces of folklore. That Mr. McCall was firmly convinced of the truth of his story was manifest.

The supernatural elements in the narrative are for the psychologist. The writer's interest in it was chiefly concerned with its

historical aspect. Who was Doctor Troyer? What was the relation of Ramsay to the first settlers? How did the two names come to be associated with the Evil One? How did it happen that the blended folk-lore of European countries, transplanted to the shores of Lake Erie, found congenial soil, took root, and thrived as if in its native environment?

Making all necessary and proper allowance for Mr. McCall's advanced age, and the time elapsed since the occurrences recalled by him, the writer endeavoured to ascertain the historical basis for the legend and discovered interesting particulars relating to both Ramsay and Troyer, much light being thrown upon the former especially by official correspondence between Sir William Johnson, Superintendent of Indian Affairs in North America, and his superior officer, the Colonial Secretary in England, as well as by autobiographical material furnished by Ramsay himself.

A brief summary of available information may not be unacceptable.

In the early days of settlement on Lake Erie no names were more widely known than those of David Ramsay and "Doctor" Troyer. Troyer's name is prominent in other tales of witchcraft and magic art, current among pioneer settlers, not only at Long Point, but westward as far as the River Detroit and Lake St. Clair. Owen, in his "Pioneer Sketches of the Long Point Settlement," has something to say about him. A pamphlet entitled, "The Belledoon Mysteries, an O'er True Story, by Neil T. McDonald," first published more than a generation ago, shows him as the active agent in solving and ending certain mysterious manifestations on the Chenail Ecarté, near Wallaceburg, which had caused wide-spread interest throughout the lake-shore region, and even far beyond. Tasker's volume on "The United Empire Loyalist Settlement at Long Point, Lake Erie," published as Volume II of the Ontario Historical Society's Papers and Records, refers to Ramsay. Official records printed in Volume VIII of "Documents Relating to the Colonial History of the State of New York," show some of the grounds upon which his evil notoriety was acquired. That very rare volume, "Captain Patrick Campbell's Travels in the Interior Inhabited Parts of North America," published in 1793, contains the case for the defence as presented to Campbell by Ramsay himself.

#### RAMSAY, THE INDIAN KILLER.

David Ramsay, a Fifeshire lad, came to Quebec as ship's boy on board a transport, and after the war, in 1763, settled on the Mohawk River. After serving the Northwest Fur Company of Montreal for

some time on the Upper Lakes, he returned to the Mohawk, where he was soon joined by his brother George from Scotland. "Having the assistance of this lad," Ramsay states, "I thought of trading with the Indians on my own account, and for that purpose purchased a large battoe at Skennectity, and procured credit to the amount of 150 pounds York currency's worth of goods." With these he proceeded *via* Wood Creek, Oswego and Lake Ontario to Niagara. He adds: "Carried my battoe and goods across the portage to Lake Erie; from thence to the river Sold Year" (which is Ramsay or Campbell's phonetic transformation of Chaudière) "or Kettle Creek, and proceeded up that river for sixty miles, where we met tribes of different nations of Indians encamped for the purpose of hunting, and informed them of my intention of residing among them during the winter, and erected a sufficient house of logs." Here he bartered goods for furs until towards January, 1772, when trouble began with some Ojibwas, Mississagas and Ottawas. He was compelled to furnish them rum, his life was threatened, his goods plundered, and at last his hut was attacked by night. He killed and scalped three Ottawas, according to his own story, the other Indians having departed previous to the attack. One of those scalped was a woman. When the ice broke up, he and his brother, a boy of seventeen, put his furs and other goods, chiefly deerskins, into the bateau, and set out for Niagara by way of Lake Erie. At Long Point he was forced by the ice to go ashore and camp. Some days afterwards Indians came to the same place and at once began to quarrel with him, chiefly over rum, which he was compelled to furnish them. They threatened his life, and actually seized and pinioned him, tying his arms behind his back and his hands up to his neck, and making him sit by the fire. To make a long story short, Ramsay, in the end, got the better of his assailants. His brother had been able to help him in the struggle, owing to the fact that he had been less carefully watched. It is easy to imagine the effect of the rum as a factor in the battle. Ramsay killed his guard and four other Indians, including a boy, scalped them, and got away with his brother. At Fort Erie he told the commanding officer about the Indians he had killed. The officer put him under arrest and sent him to Niagara where he was imprisoned. The Indians gathered at Niagara in great numbers, demanded his surrender, and threatened to burn the fort. "They became at last so clamorous," says Campbell, "that the Governor sent a party, unknown to the Indians, to Montreal with David, where he was fifteen months in prison; and as no proof could be brought against him in a regular trial, and everybody knew he acted in self defence only, he was liberated. And what is

strange, and what the like never was known before is, that he now lives in intimacy and friendship with that very tribe, and the sons and daughters of the very people he had killed. They gave him a grant, regularly extended upon stamped paper, of four miles square of as good land as any in Upper Canada."

Campbell says the Indians used violent language about Ramsay only when intoxicated. They charged that he had been "drunk and mad all winter." If this was true it would account for their failing to make good their charges, as it was customary to consider drunkenness on the part of an offender as a mitigation, if not a complete defence, to any accusation, even murder. It will be seen in the sequel that they availed themselves of this defence, when charged with the murder of a trading party.

In his story to Campbell, Ramsay speaks of the Indians in a violent and contemptuous fashion. One of his assertions is worth quoting: "After killing the first Indian, I cut lead and chewed above thirty balls, and above three pounds of Goose Shot, for I thought it a pity to shoot an Indian with a smooth ball."

#### THE CASE FOR THE CROWN.

So much for Ramsay's own story. The Indian version is given by Sir William Johnson, Superintendent General of Indians, in a report to the Colonial Secretary, the Earl of Hillsborough.

In a letter dated Johnson Hall, June 29th, 1772, addressed to the Earl of Hillsborough, Sir William Johnson refers with some anxiety to "a late unlucky transaction, the particulars of which," he says, "(as it may be productive of very ill consequences) it is my duty to lay before your Lordship." The details that follow are in Johnson's words:

"A certain man of the name of Ramsay who formerly lived among the Indians, and was by Capt. Brown, late commanding officer at Niagara sent away to Quebec to prevent his doing further mischief amongst them, has since found means to get a small cargo of goods upon credit, with which he went to Lake Erie, where he traded some time with the Chippawaes and Mississages at a considerable distance from any Fort or place of inspection, or control, but being of a disagreeable temper, and probably endeavouring to over-reach them, they warned him to remove otherwise they would maltreat him, of which however he took no notice, but seemed to set them at defiance, which shortly after occasioned a quarrel between him and some of them which were in liquor, of whom he killed three, upon this he withdrew to another place on Lake Erie, apprehensive of their Re-

sentment, and last April a Party of the Mississagae called at his trading hut where they drank very plentifully, and as is usual with them on all such occasions, quarrelled and threatened him, as he said, with death, to which he adds that they laid hands upon him and bound him. However he freed himself and killed three men, one woman and one infant, and as an aggravation of the same took off their scalps, which he brought into Niagara where he was immediately confined by order of the Commanding Officer. This Acct. is part taken from his own Confession to the Officer, and from the account given of it by his brother before the story was new modelled as it has been since to favour him. To excuse his having scalped them (which with Indians is considered a National Act and Declaration of War) he says he was told that War had been actually commenced between the English and Indians and that in his hurry and confusion the woman and child were killed, but it appears clearly to me, and it is likewise the opinion of General Gage that he has been guilty of these murders thro' wantonness and cruelty. For in the first place, the Indians whenever they meditate mischief carefully avoid liquor, whereas it appears that they were very much disguised, and tho' apt to use threats and quarrel at such times, yet incapable of putting them in execution, as is evident from the number he killed of them, and in the next place he could have had but little temptation to kill the woman, and not the least inducement to murder the child but what has arose from sentiments of barbarity superior to the most cruel savage who seldom puts an infant to death. The General has directed him to be sent to Canada to be tryed, but (as is usual on such occasions) the Interest which his creditors will make with those who are his jurors, and the prejudices of the Commonalty against Indians, will probably prove the means of his being acquitted, altho he makes use of threats that he will do much more mischief when enlarged.

#### INDIANS DEMAND JUSTICE.

"The Nation immediately sent down fifteen Deputys to lay the matter before me, and to assure me that they had given strict orders to prevent any sudden act of Resentment, and that they relied on our Justice in affording them such satisfaction as the case required, as well as in preventing the like for the future, to which end they (after complaining much of the want of any regulation for Trade) requested that Traders might not be suffered to go where they pleased, but confined to the Posts, and there duely inspected. I enlarged much on the circumstances alleged by Ramsay that the Indians threatened his life, in which case I observed that not only the English Laws,

but the laws of nature justified his defending himself, and after adding everything I thought prudent and necessary, I covered (according to custom) the Graves of the Eight persons whom he killed and dismissed them with a very handsome and large present, and with proper Belts and Messages to their Nation. The Indians at parting expressed themselves very favourably, and I am willing to hope that the affair may be accomodated, nevertheless I am so sensible of their Resentment that I have judged it necessary to be thus particular, because the Chippewas and Mississagaes are by far the most numerous and powerfull Nation with whom we have any connection in North America, being second only to Sioux in numbers, and from their situation capable of affording great encouragement to Trade, or putting an entire end to it, nor could it be expected that others would enter warmly into Our Alliance when they considered the cause of their Defection. The Traders are all come into Niagara and to avoid the Resentment they apprehend from the Indians. I have already described what may reasonably be apprehended whilst I use every endeavour in my power to prevent its being realised, but I leave Your Lordship to judge how difficult a task it is to calm the passions of incensed Savages and to keep them faithfull to engagements whilst they find themselves exposed to the licentious outrages of our own people against which no remedy is as yet provided."

The Earl of Dartmouth, who had succeeded Lord Hillsborough as Colonial Secretary, replied to Sir Wm. Johnson's statement by commenting on the "atrocious and inhuman nature" of the "murders committed by Mr. Ramsay" and a strong recommendation "to bring that person to condign punishment." He added that he would "not fail to write Lieutenant Governor Cramahie on the subject and to exhort him to use his utmost endeavours that he do not escape with impunity; and if a Bill of Indictment be found against him, that the Judges be directed in their charge to the Jury, to guard them as much as possible against the influence of those prejudices which you think would probably be the means of his acquittal."

#### DANGER OF INDIAN WAR.

Johnson's description of the temper and disposition of the Indians impressed the Colonial Secretary with the fear of an Indian war, as the result of "the numberless frauds and abuses which are at present committed by those who carry on trade and have intercourse with them."

On the 4th November, 1772, Johnson reminds the Earl of Dartmouth of his former letter of 29th June, "and of the murder of the



eight Mississagues and Chippewas by one Ramsay, a small Trader on Lake Erie, in which he appears to have been actuated by wanton cruelty more than by any other consideration." The chiefs and principal warriors of the Six Nations had been at Johnson Hall and made representations with reference to the "great irregularities in the present state of the Indian Trade, the promises made to them that the same should be on a good footing, the want of Regulations therein, the Abuses committed by Traders rambling where they pleased with strong liquors, and the General discontentment amongst all the Nations on that account, to which I made them the best answer I could, considering the little prospect there is of any such Regulations being made in the Colonies."

Referring to the general lawless behaviour of "the back inhabitants, particularly those who daily go over the mountains of Virginia," their hatred of the Indians, their frequent murders and robberies, he dwells upon the complaint of the natives "that whatever these people do their Jurys will acquit them, the Landed men protect them or a Rabble rescue them from the hands of Justice. The truth of all which I am equally sensible of."

He adds: "The Common Traders or Factors who are generally rapacious, ignorant and without principle pretending to their merchants that they cannot make good returns unless they are at liberty to go where and do as they please, and present extravagant gain being too much the Object and the only object of all, they are tempted in pursuit of it to venture amongst the most distant Stations where they are daily guilty of the most glaring impositions—of the fatal effects of Rum (so often requested by the Indians not to be brought amongst them) I have just received a fresh instance in the murder of a Trader and his two servants on Lake Huron by some of the Nation whose people were killed by Ramsay. The Trader sold them Rum and neglecting to leave them, tho' advised by themselves to do so, on being refused more liquor they seized it, got intoxicated, a squabble ensued, which ended in the death of the Trader and his Servants. The Nation have promised to deliver the murderer but I doubt it much, as the murders committed by Ramsay cannot be easily forgotten by them, especially when disguised by Liquor which they always consider as a mitigation of the offence."

#### RAMSAY ESCAPES PUNISHMENT.

On the 26th December, 1772, Johnson again referring to Ramsay, reports: "I have lately heard that thro the want of a material evidence which by some means was permitted to escape from one of the out-

posts nothing was done in this affair, but I understand he is still in confinement, tho I have little expectation of its final issue in any manner satisfactory to the Indians, who whenever ill disposed, are well pleased with our delaying or denying justice as it serves for a pretext to commit hostilities, a pretext we should never afford them."

#### THE RAMSAY TRADITION.

The story of Ramsay's adventure with the Indians is told with some variations in Tasker's book "The United Empire Loyalist Settlement at Long Point, Lake Erie," from the traditions of the Maby family.

In his narrative, Ramsay appears as an English trapper one "accustomed to make yearly visits up the lakes for the purpose of trading with the Indians." His brother of 17 is transformed into a little nephew about ten years of age. In the adventure which brought him so much notoriety, his canoe was laden with goods, "and also with a considerable quantity of liquor." There were nine Indians in the party which seized his canoe and stock in trade. Having consumed the liquor, they resolved to burn him at the stake and hold a war dance round his flaming body. He was tied with his back to a tree, his arms being tied around the tree by buckskin thongs. The Indian left on guard for the night followed the example of his comrades by drinking copious draughts of liquor. All his captors being thus disabled, the burning of the prisoner was necessarily postponed until next day. The boy, left untied, handed Ramsay a knife, with which he soon released himself and stabbed to the heart the one Indian who was on guard, but who by this time was tottering with the drink. The Indian's comrades in their drunken sleep were easily brained with a musket. Ramsay then reloaded his canoe, and proceeded with his nephew on their journey.

Nothing is said about scalping in this story, nor about his arrest and trial. This is perhaps not to be wondered at, when we learn that Ramsay himself was the original narrator in occasional visits to New Brunswick, where the Mabys and Peter Secord, a cousin who had settled there in 1785, first heard through him of the Long Point district. Tasker takes little stock in the story, which, however, appears to have been handed down in the Maby family with reasonable accuracy.

Secord accompanied Ramsay on one of his trips up the great lakes. As a result he and the Mabys settled in Charlotteville in 1793.

It will be seen that the Maby tradition does not differ materially from the official documents or Captain Campbell's account of the killing.

## A CERTIFICATE OF CHARACTER.

Captain Campbell took a great fancy to Ramsay. He found Ramsay to be "a man of strict veracity, honesty and integrity" and gave full credit to his narrative.

He adds:—"David was a staunch friend to the British during the last war; and was well known to those who were in high command, and had ample recommendations and certificates of his services from them. Scarce a corner of the British colonies or United States but he is acquainted in."

When Campbell wrote, Ramsay had never married, and Campbell thought he never would. Engaged in smuggling skins into the States he had suffered a loss of £150 by a seizure of goods, and was reduced in circumstances. His sole employment at this time was "carrying dispatches and money for gentlemen of the fort and district of Niagara to and from any place they may have occasion." He had a conspicuous reputation for honesty and fidelity. No receipt was required from him for moneys entrusted to him. Congress made use of his influence with the Indians in negotiations with chiefs assembled at Philadelphia.

The Captain also informs us that Ramsay's strange adventures were well known. A New York printer had offered him £100 for an account of them. The offer had been refused, as Ramsay was unwilling to incur the trouble. He was more complaisant to Captain Campbell, for he sat up a whole night to give the latter his story.

Let us now turn to the historical basis for the other character in the drama.

## TROYER, THE WITCH DOCTOR.

The late E. A. Owen's book was published in 1898. He had been assiduous in gathering traditions of the pioneers and a whole chapter is devoted to "Doctor Troyer and his big 'witch-trap.'" From this it appears that Troyer was the first white settler to erect a habitation in Norfolk. The date was not long after 1790. His log house was erected on a bar or flat of about fifteen acres running into Long Point Bay, about a mile and a half east of Port Rowan. The earliest apple trees in the settlement were planted by Troyer. Some of these are still productive. He was "Norfolk's first medical practitioner," uncertificated, it is true. Owen describes him as "insanely superstitious, being a hopeless and confirmed believer in witchcraft. This peculiar mental malady caused him a world of trouble and made him ridiculously notorious. To prompt the recital of some witch story, all that is necessary is to mention the name of Dr. Troyer in the presence of

any old settler in the county. The name 'Dr. Troyer' and the term 'witches' are so interwoven in the minds of the old people that they cannot think of one without being reminded of the other.

"The old doctor was terribly persecuted by these witches. All his troubles of mind and body were attributed to the witches who existed in human form and possessed miraculous powers for producing evil. He looked upon certain of his neighbors as witches, one of the most dreaded being the widow of Captain Edward McMichael. Mrs. McMichael was a very clever woman, and to be considered a witch by the superstitious old doctor was highly amusing to her. She was a woman of strong mind and great courage, and it is said she frequently visited the lovely ravine and made grimaces at the poor old doctor from some recess or clump of bushes, just for the pleasure it gave her to tease and torment him. He was a great stutterer, and her appearance in the ravine would throw him into a fit of wild excitement, during which he would stutter and gesticulate in a threatening manner. He was a great deer hunter, but if he chanced to meet Mrs. McMichael when starting out on a hunting expedition he would consider it an omen of ill-luck, and would turn about and go home. He kept a number of horse-shoes over the door of his house, and at the foot of his bed a huge trap was bolted to the floor where it was set every night to catch witches. The jaws were about three feet long, and when shut were about two and a half feet high. There are people in Port Rowan to-day who have a distinct remembrance of having seen this witch trap in Dr. Troyer's bed-room. But in spite of this defensive means the witches would occasionally take him out in the night and transform him into various kinds of animals and compel him to perform all sorts of antics. Whenever he met with an experience of this kind he would suffer from its effects for some time afterwards. One night the witches took him out of a peaceful slumber, transformed him into a horse and rode him across the lake to Dunkirk where they attended a witch dance. They tied him to a post where he could witness the dance through the windows, and fed him rye-straw. The change of diet and the hard treatment to which he was subjected laid him up for some time. It required several doses of powerful medicine to counteract the injurious effects of the rye-straw and restore his digestive organs to a normal condition. Strange as it may appear, Dr. Troyer believed all this, yet, aside from witchcraft, he was considered a sane man. He is described as wearing a long white flowing beard; and it is said he lived to be ninety-nine years old and that just before his death he shot a hawk, off-hand, from the peak of the barn roof."

Dr. Troyer's only son, Michael, commonly called Deacon Troyer, was highly respected, a pillar of his church, and at his death mourned by the whole community.

It is perhaps not irrelevant to Dr. Troyer's case to mention the fact that his son the Deacon is said to have fallen into a trance in the earlier part of his life, and to have been "dead to all appearances for three days and nights." Preparations were made for burial, from which he was saved by resuscitation. During the trance he was conscious and believed he was in the realm of eternal happiness. He would fain have remained, but was informed that he must first return to earth to do the task assigned him. His restoration to life and health was followed by his conversion.

According to Owen, although Dr. Troyer had no less than four sons and five daughters, the family name has disappeared from Norfolk. Descendants in the male line are however still to be found in Illinois, and a considerable number of persons both in the Long Point region and in the United States claim the famous witch-doctor as ancestor through female links in the chain of descent.

Dr. Egerton Ryerson's book on "The Loyalists of America and their Times" contains a valuable memorandum by his cousin, Mrs. Amelia Harris, on the early days of the Long Point Settlement. Her father, Captain Samuel Ryerse, settled at Long Point in 1794. She describes the arrival of the family at Ryerse Creek, where after a day's rest they re-embarked, "and went fourteen miles further up the bay, to the house of a German settler who had been there two years, and had a garden well stocked with vegetables. The appearance of the boat was hailed with delight by those solitary beings and my mother and child were soon made welcome and the best that a miserable log house, or rather hut, could afford was at her service. This kind, good family, consisted of father, mother, one son and one daughter. Mr. Troyer, the father, was a fine-looking old man with a flowing beard, and was known for many years throughout the Long Point settlement as "Dr. Troyer."

"He possessed a thorough knowledge of witches, their ways and doings, and the art of expelling them, and also the use of the divining rod, with which he could not only find water, but could also tell how far below the surface of the earth precious metals were concealed, but was never fortunate enough to discover any in the neighbourhood of Long Point." The Troyer family were of use to the new settlers in many ways. From Dr. Troyer, Ryerse procured apple, peach and cherry trees for his orchard. A daughter was employed as "help" in the Ryerse house, and Troyer's son was of assistance at important moments.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE RAMSAY-TROYER LEGEND.

Troyer's settlement at Long Point seems to have been as early at least as 1792. At that time Ramsay had been familiar with the north shore of Lake Erie for nearly thirty years. His fame or notoriety as trapper, trader, Indian-killer, smuggler and guide, was firmly established and wide-spread. He still acted as guide to travellers in Upper Canada along Lake Erie and was no doubt personally known to the McCalls and others among the first settlers. Immigrants reporting at Fort Niagara before proceeding westward would carry away with them stories of his adventures, recited by himself or repeated by soldiers at Fort Niagara, settlers on the River banks, or Indians of the various tribes.

The combination of two such romantic characters as Ramsay and Troyer was sure to have an important psychological effect upon the Long Point pioneers. Among the latter were people of Dutch descent as the Ryersons and Ryerses, of German as the Troyers and Dedricks, of Highland Scotch origin, as the McCalls, Munroes and MacQueens. Their ancestral folk-lore would be gradually interwoven into their own personal experiences and reminiscences. It was at Kettle Creek, and Long Point in the near neighbourhood, that Ramsay had crowned his career by the killing and scalping of the Indians. The development of the legend is then not difficult to understand.

## STRANGE HAPPENINGS IN BALDOON.

Troyer's fame also extended to the remotest parts of Lake Erie and northward to Lake St. Clair. It reached Lord Selkirk's ill-fated Baldoon Settlement, where strange things were happening in 1829 and following years. Witchcraft was at work among the Highland Settlers, to their great discomfort and peril. John McDonald's house stood on the banks of the Chenail Ecarté. In or about November, 1829, his troubles began. Stones and bullets crashed through the windows and on to the floor. Mysterious fires started up in different places in the house; when one was extinguished, another would appear in a different room. No one was hurt, but many were badly frightened. At last his buildings were burned in January, 1830. He then removed the family to his father's house. The breaking of windows began afresh, until all were destroyed. From a corner cupboard with glass doors bullets pierced their way through to the floor. The bullets were gathered up, marked, and put in a leather shot bag. A string was tied around the mouth of the bag, and the bag itself hung up on the chimney. Immediately the same bullets came back through the window.

The balls were then thrown into the deep water of the Chenail Écarté. In a short time the same balls came back through the windows as before. The "Black Dog" figures prominently in some of the narratives. Certain ludicrous features, in others, are vaguely reminiscent of "Mother Goose" stories. Many other incidents, as mysterious and startling as those mentioned, are recorded in the pamphlet on "Belledoon Mysteries."

The fame of Baldoon's witchcraft spread throughout the Province. People came from far and near, some even from New York, to see for themselves, and went away convinced by the evidence of their own eyes.

#### DR. TROYER CALLED IN.

Every effort was made to conjure away the evil spirit. Ministers of every known denomination were called to assist. The regular formulas for exorcism were used by the authorized ministers of religion. Even the priest, with bell, book and candle, failed to check the manifestations. Happily, the Methodist minister, Rev. Mr. McDorman, thought of Dr. Troyer of Long Point, more than a hundred miles away, and John and the minister went together to consult him.

Witchcraft accompanied them through the Longwoods, a stretch of about thirty miles of forest, north of the Thames, without a single dwelling on the road, and in which they had to pass the night. McDonald was terrified by the melancholy wind stirring the tree-tops, owls hooting, wolves yelping, then the heavy tramp, tramp of a vast multitude, inarticulate voices of men, crashing of boughs and snapping of twigs, and then the rush of some great unseen host. Soon there was the sound of combat in the air with an opposing multitude, followed by groans of the wounded and shrieks of the dying.

In three days they arrived at Dr. Troyer's. The various narratives differ greatly in important details. According to one version, it was Troyer's daughter, a sallow fragile girl of fifteen, with wild eyes gleaming when excited, who possessed the gift of divination. She used a stone, which, she said, was "by some called the moonstone," but as its employment was "always attended by great physical prostration and much mental agony," she used it only "under very extraordinary circumstances." Before doing so on this occasion, she had already divined that John had had trouble with neighbours over his refusal to sell them a portion of his land. "I see," she continued, "a long, low, log House." McDonald listened in wrapt wonder to the alliterative description of his evil-minded neighbour's dwelling, and minute details of the personal appearance and peculiarities of its inmates.

Promising to look into the stone, she "retired to her chamber, and after three hours returned with a worn look as if suffering from some acute nervous irritability." Then she informed McDonald that his outbuildings had been "burnt to the ground just two hours ago." This turned out exactly true.

"Have you ever seen a gray goose in your flock?" she asked. He had, he had shot at it with a leaden ball, and the fowl had escaped. She assured him, "no bullet of lead would ever harm a feather of that bird." The bird was merely a shape assumed by his enemy. He must use a silver bullet, and if he hit the mark, his enemy would be wounded in a corresponding part of the body. He and McDorman returned to Belledoon. Next morning, the goose reappeared with the flock in the river. He fired, and the bird, "giving a wierd cry like a human being in distress," fluttered into the reeds with a broken wing. Rushing to the long low log house, he found "the woman who had injured him, with her broken arm resting on a chair, and her withered lips uttering half-ejaculated curses." From that moment the witchcraft ceased. The witch lived for some time, but suffered always from racking pains throughout her whole body.

#### CONFLICTING NARRATIVES.

More than a score of people residing in or near Wallaceburg signed statements respecting the startling manifestations. Apparently 50 years had elapsed, the witnesses were of course well advanced in years, and there had been time for amplification of whatever were the actual facts. Most of them assert positively that they were actual witnesses, others spoke from information received from near relatives who had been witnesses. There are, of course, many and very serious discrepancies in parts of the story.

Dr. Troyer is in some statements called Rev. Father Troyer, a Roman Catholic priest. Some of the witnesses state that McDonald and McDorman went to Troyer's place at Long Point, and received the explanation and recommendation there. In one narrative, McDonald would seem to have gone alone. It is left in doubt whether Troyer or his daughter was the clairvoyant.

According to one circumstantial statement, Troyer came to Baldoon, remained some days, and his presence alone conjured away the evil one. Some witnesses make no reference to the shooting of the gray goose. One asserts that McDonald shot and killed the witch. There are almost innumerable other inconsistencies in the stories, which show evident signs of very extensive development during the half century. The significant fact remains, that there were



some extraordinary happenings at Baldoon between the years 1829 and 1831, causing wide-spread commotion in the neighbourhood, the flame of which was carried to other parts of Canada and to the United States, and brought many curious visitors to Baldoon.

#### LEGENDS UNITE IN TROYER.

The interest of the story, as far as this paper is concerned, is in its connection with Doctor Troyer, the famous witch-doctor of Long Point. The various incidents of the Baldoon narratives, coupled with the story of Ramsay's buried treasure, bring to our notice an extraordinary combination of the folk-lore of various parts of western Europe, a combination quite natural, when we consider the heterogeneous origin of the various settlements along Lake Erie—German, Dutch, French and British. Teuton and Celt have contributed each his share to the stories. The celestial hosts and battles in the air are known to many countries. Pliny refers to them. Milton celebrates them. The legends of the Chasse Galerie, the Hunting of Arthur, the "Wilde Jäger," all deal with them. The black dog, the divining rod, the mysterious fires, the divining hat, the witch-stone, the mysterious movements of stones and bullets, the gray goose with broken wing, the conjuring with book and candle at midnight, there is perhaps not an original feature in the narratives. The important fact is that they are all brought practically into one story through the connection with Dr. Troyer.