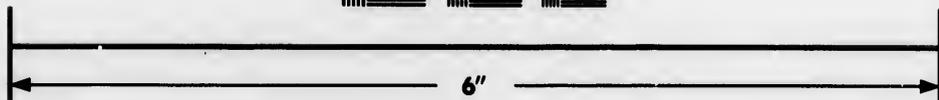
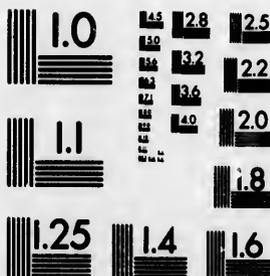


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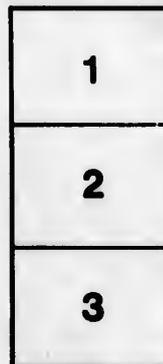
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VOL. 4.]

AUGUST, 1873.

[No. 2.

TORONTO OF OLD.

BY DANIEL WILSON, LL.D.

THE olden times of our Ontario capital must be measured by the scale of the New World to which it belongs, and the Young Dominion in which it occupies so prominent a place; but youthful as it is, its beginnings already pertain to elder generations; and it has a history of its own not without some interest to others besides its modern denizens. With a well-determined civic centre, moreover: the seat of legislature, and the legal, educational, and commercial capital of an industrious community; the records of their rude forefathers, and the struggles of its birth-time, grow in value with the passing years, and in a generation or two become matters of widespread interest.

Antiquarian research seems peculiarly out of place in a new colony, and is lucky if it escape the sneer of the busy trader, in his zeal for wealth and material progress. Nevertheless, to one gifted with the slightest powers of fancy, there is something fasci-

nating in the attempt to recall the infancy even of comparatively modern cities. Horace Smith, in his quaint invocation to Belzoni's mummy, delights to fancy the old Egyptian treading the thoroughfares of the hundred-gated Thebes, and dropping a penny into Homer's hat. The historian of Rome still strives to illuminate that cradle-time of the City of the Seven Hills which its first shepherds and husbandmen celebrated in their Lupercalia, or Wolf-festival, on the Palatine Hill, some two thousand five hundred years ago. The City of King Lud, the Londinum of Tacitus, when the Roman legions were fleeing before Boadicea and her Icenian Britons, is modern compared with that of Romulus. The recovered traces of its Roman occupants in the first century belong to its infant story. Antiquity, in truth, is a very relative thing. The Christian era is modern for Egypt, and recent even for Rome. The Norman Conquest of a thousand years later is ancient for London; while with our-

selves the Northmen of Vinland, with their reputed explorations of the Canadian and New England shores in the tenth century, are little less mythical than Jason and his Argonauts. All, indeed, of America's antiquities which precede A.D. 1492, belong to prehistoric times; and a relic of the Tudors, which for England would be wholly modern, seems for Canada as pertaining to some antediluvian era. Pleasant therefore is it for all who now care to retrace the footsteps of our Young Dominion—pleasanter still will it be for coming generations,—to read the promising title of Dr. Scadding's handsome volume, "Toronto of Old: Collections and Recollections illustrative of the Early Settlement and Social life of the Capital of Ontario."

In 1686, or later years, when the valley of the St. Lawrence and the region to the north of the great lakes were undisputed French territory, a fort was constructed at the mouth of the river Humber to guard the terminus of the trail, or portage, by which voyageurs were wont to trade with the great Huron country around Lake Simcoe and the Georgian Bay. This appears to have been recognised in some general sense as the Toronto region. The fort itself was originally styled "Fort Rouillé," but in course of time it came to be popularly known as Fort Toronto; and so the same name at length attached itself to the fort and village on the neighbouring bay, which have grown to be the City of Toronto and the Capital of Ontario. The French stockade at the mouth of the Humber became for a time a royal trading-post, maintained in keenest antagonism to the English traders of Oswego, Albany and New York; but the Toronto of the River Don and the great bay is strictly of English origin; and had for its Romulus Lieutenant-General Simcoe, first Governor of Upper Canada.

The portrait of the sagacious old soldier and civic founder forms the appropriate frontispiece to Dr. Scadding's "Toronto of

Old." It is a well-engraved fac-simile of a miniature in the possession of his grandson, Captain J. K. Simcoe, R.N., of Walford—the old family seat in Devonshire; and for this we cannot be too thankful. Nothing can form a more fitting adjunct to local or general history than the portraits of the chief actors in the recorded events. Nevertheless, one cannot look on the smooth, round face and regulation hair, so suggestive of the formal military queue, without a craving that it were possible to exchange the niceties of the miniature painter's art for the more homely, truth-telling literalness of a modern photograph.

There is little mystery or romance about the beginnings of Toronto. Upper Canada was erected into a distinct province in 1791, only eight years after the Treaty of Fontainebleau; and a few months thereafter General Simcoe arrived at the old French fort, at the mouth of the River Niagara, and made choice of the sheltered bay of Toronto as the site of his future capital. The land was in occupation by a wandering tribe of Mississagas. What negotiations were made by the first Governor for permission to effect a settlement, and lay the foundations of a city in their midst, does not appear; but a report of the Indian Department, dated August 1st, 1805, bears the curious record of the "Toronto Purchase," comprising 250,880 acres, including the site of the city, and stretching eastward to the Scarborough Heights: for all which its Mississaga lords received and accepted the sum of ten shillings! It would be difficult now to obtain a lease of the needful six feet of ground within its area at the price for which the site of Toronto and its suburbs thus passed from Indian to White ownership.

The first Government House of Toronto had a historical significance of its own, which would have had a rare interest for us now had it been of a less ephemeral character. Captain Cook, the famous navigator, had constructed for himself a canvas house,

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which sufficed for his dwelling and observatory in the strange new-found islands of Australasian seas. This moveable dwelling chanced to be offered for sale in London just as General Simcoe was about to proceed to his new Government; and recognizing its adaptability to his necessities, the far-travelled mansion was secured, and became the scene of viceregal hospitalities in the infant Province of Upper Canada.

It was in the month of May, 1793, that General Simcoe first entered Toronto Bay, visited the village of Mississaga Indians at the mouth of the Don, and rowed up the river to the heights on which ere long he erected a rustic chateau overlooking the river valley and the lake beyond, to which he gave the name of Castle Frank. Thus established as the representative of Imperial authority, on the site of the future capital, the new Governor explored the swamps and uncleared pine-forest, amid which his sagacious eye saw in anticipation the city rise which now numbers its sixty thousand inhabitants; and so gave to the capital of Ontario a local habitation and a name. To his practical mind the Indians and their names had equally little charm. Reverting rather to old associations as an Englishman and a soldier under Frederick, Duke of York, he named the streams which bounded the civic area on the east and west, the Humber and the Don; and called his new capital YORK.

It is curious to recall the scene as it then presented itself, strange to us now as the old shepherd's hut and the wolf's lair on the Palatine Hill by the Tiber. Fortunately it has been preserved in minutest prefiguration in the narrative of Colonel Bouchette, to whom the Governor entrusted the survey of the harbour in 1793. "Here," says the Colonel, "General Simcoe had resolved on laying the foundations of a provincial capital. I still distinctly recollect the untamed aspect which the country exhibited when first I entered the beautiful basin. Dense and trackless forests lined the margin of the

lake, and reflected their inverted images in its glassy surface. The wandering savage had constructed his ephemeral habitation beneath their luxuriant foliage—the group then consisting of two families of Mississagas—and the bay and neighbouring marshes were the hitherto uninvaded haunts of immense coveys of wild-fowl; indeed they were so abundant as in some measure to annoy us during the night." The change from this to the new settlement, military and civilian, was rendered all the more striking in its contrast by the amenities of the Government House, which, under His Excellency's care, "was rendered exceedingly comfortable, and soon became as distinguished for the social and urbane hospitality of its venerated and gracious host as for the peculiarity of its structure."

But the first Governor's stay was abruptly cut short. Tradition tells that the old soldier had such an antipathy to the revolted colonists beyond Lake Ontario, that he could not be induced to preserve the most ordinary terms with his republican neighbours, and was hastily recalled, in 1796, lest he should precipitate the war, which at length broke out sixteen years later. The visit of the poet Moore, in 1803, gives us some lively glimpse of a country which, in its raw novelty, seems to have impressed him with very prosaic repulsiveness. It is curious now to read his reference to "Buffalo, a little village on Lake Erie;" and to turn from that to his satirical portraiture of the society of the new States:

"Take Christians, Mohawks, Democrats, and all,
From the rude wigwam to the Congress-hall,
From man the savage, whether slav'd or free,
To man the civilized, less tame than he,—
'Tis one dull chaos, one unfertile strife
Betwixt half-polished and half-barbarous life;
Where every ill the ancient world could brew
Is mixed with every grossness of the new;
Where all corrupts, though little can entice,
And nought is known of luxury but its vice!"

Yet it was impossible that the poet's eye could gaze on the grand river, the broad

lakes, and the myriad islands amid which his route lay, without deriving some inspiration from the scene. From Niagara he sailed, in one of the little lake craft of those primitive times, down Lake Ontario to the St. Lawrence with its Thousand Isles, and has left us his impressions of a tranquil evening scene, in which he seems to have gazed from the deck of his schooner on Toronto and the heights beyond. Perhaps it is as well that the daguerreotype he was to perpetuate for us received no greater details than could be caught in the distant glow of one of Ontario's lovely sunsets. Writing to Lady Charlotte Rawdon, he says :

"I dreamt not then that, ere the rolling year
Had filled its circle, I should wander here
In musing awe ; should tread this wondrous world,
See all its store of inland waters hurl'd
In one vast volume down Niagara's steep ;
Or calm behold them, in transparent sleep,
Where the blue hills of old Toronto shed
Their evening shadows o'er Ontario's bed ;
Should trace the grand Cataract, and glide
Down the white rapids of his lordly tide,
Through massy woods, 'mid islets flowering fair,
And blooming glades, where the first sinful pair
For consolation might have weeping trod,
When banished from the garden of their God."

The "Canadian Boat Song," which was a product of the same voyage, has become, alike in words and air, a national anthem for the Dominion. It could scarcely be heard by any Canadian wanderer, when far away among strangers, without a thrill as tender and acute as ever the "Ranz des Vaches" awoke on the ear of the exiled Switzer, or "Lochaber No More," on that of the Highlander languishing for his native glen.

The History of Toronto is necessarily to a large extent that of the early settlement, the social life, and the political organization of Canada in its youthful provincial days. Dr. Scadding recalls times to which the late Bishop of Toronto used to revert with characteristic humour, when, on his first settlement in the country, its settlers were scarcely month behind the New York news ; and

only one English mail was made up in the course of the year, to which—as in purposed irony—was given the name of the Annual Express ! It is curious to think that it is scarcely beyond the memory of the oldest inhabitant of Toronto since a state of things, thus existed in our midst such as may now be found at one or two of the remotest trading posts of the Hudson Bay, within the Arctic Circle. We were told lately of a factor in one of those remote forts lying towards the North Pole, who carefully lays aside his annual supply of newspapers brought by the one ship of the season, and starting with the *Times* of that date, as to day of month, if not of year, he enjoys his daily paper as regularly as if he were within sound of Bow Bells, with the scarcely appreciable difference of being only a year behind the outer world.

By that inexplicable law which seems to regulate the growth of cities, Toronto has its plebeian east-end, with the lingering flavour and halo of old historical associations ; "the expected Westminster of the new capital," as its historian, with gentle irony, designates it. "At St. Petersburg," says Dr. Scadding, "the original log-hut of Peter the Great is preserved to the present day, in a casing of stone, with a kind of religious reverence ;" and so, if the material relics of our founders and forefathers scarcely admit of being invested with a like literal permanence, he claims that at least their associations shall be perpetuated. Overlooking the harbour of the modern Toronto, far down in the east there stands at the present day a large structure of grey cut stone. It is the deserted prison of a later date ; but it occupies the historic site of the first House of Parliament of Upper Canada—a humble but commodious structure of wood, built before the close of the eighteenth century, and destroyed by the incendiary hand of the invader in 1813. "They consisted," says a contemporary record, "of two elegant halls, with convenient offices for the accommoda-

tion of the Legislature and the Courts of Justice. The Library, and all the papers and records belonging to both, were consumed; at the same time the Church was robbed, and the Town Library totally pillaged." The historian evidently recognises in the destruction of the Public Buildings at Washington by a British force, a few months later, no unfair set-off to that and other outrages committed by the American invaders. It is the same miserable tale of barbarity which is everywhere the inevitable accompaniment of war.

But there is a more primitive scene of Canadian legislature even than that eastern site, where "first loomed up before the minds of our early law-makers the ecclesiastical question, the educational question, the constitutional question," and all else that has gone to the making of modern Canada. The scene is Newark, at the mouth of the Niagara river. The reader, with the help of our historian, may picture to himself "the group of seven Crown-appointed Councillors and five representatives of the Commons, assembled there, with the first Speaker, McDonell, of Glengarry; all plain, unassuming, prosaic men, listening at their first session to the opening speech of their frank and honoured Governor. We see them adjourning to the open air from their straightened chamber at Navy Hall, and conducting the business of the young Province under the shade of a spreading tree: introducing the English Code and Trial by Jury, decreeing roads, and prohibiting the spread of slavery; while a boulder of the drift, lifting itself up through the natural turf, serves as a desk for the recording clerk." A noble French traveller, the Duke de Liancourt, witnessed the scene, and tells how, amid such primitive surroundings, a becoming ceremonial was observed. Two members of the Legislative Council gave notice to the Commoners, through their Speaker, that His Excellency desired their presence; and five members, —the remaining eleven being detained by

harvest duties on their farms,—appeared at the bar, and listened to a speech modelled by the Governor after that of his Royal master. The day may yet come when this primitive scene shall be fitly produced, in some grand fresco of native Canadian art, as the most suitable decoration of its Legislative Halls.

The domestic life of the first Governor of Upper Canada, his amenities and hospitalities, his cares and troubles, are all parts of the early history of the Province. To the west of Brock street, named after the victorious general who fell on Queenston Heights in 1812, an open site still marks the first cemetery of Toronto, the old military burying ground, where, as our historian says, "hearts finally at rest in its mould, fluttered in their last beats, far away, at times, to old scenes beloved in vain; to villages, hedgerows, lanes, fields, in green England and Ireland, in rugged Scotland and Wales;" and here, in 1794, General Simcoe laid to rest, in the same sacred clearing, his little daughter Katharine. No mound or memorial stone survives to mark the spot; but far away, in the Governor's own native Devonshire, a tablet perpetuates the memory of the frail floweret who "died and was buried at York Town, in the Province of Upper Canada, A.D. 1794."

It is with strange feelings that those of a younger generation thus recall the long forgotten griefs of that olden time. Besides little Kate, there was an elder daughter, and also a son, Francis, then about five years old, after whom the Governor's chateau overlooking the Don received the name which suggests to the historical student reminiscences of an older "Castel-franc" near Rochelle, famous in the struggle of the Huguenots. When, in 1812, the cry of war rang along the Canadian frontier, and the torch of the invader made havoc of the little Town of York, Frank Simcoe was playing a soldier's part far away on a "blood-red field of Spain." Seventeen years had

elapsed since the boy sported on the heights of Castle Frank, and got his Indian pet-name of Tioga from the Iroquois of Niagara; and it had come to this. He was found a mangled corpse among the pile of England's dead which closed the breach at Badajoz.

Close by the forgotten cemetery, where the first governor of Upper Canada left his little daughter to her final rest, were the well-kept pleasure grounds of Vice-Chancellor Jameson, who in his younger days had been the familiar associate of Southey, Wordsworth and Coleridge; and to whom Hartley Coleridge, the son of the latter, addressed the three sonnets "To a Friend," which first appeared in his collected poems in 1833. The poet reminds his friend of the time—

"When we were idlers with the loitering rills,"

and it seemed to him, as to the elder poets of the lakes, that Nature herself could make sufficient response for all their love. But when he returned alone to the scenes of their mutual sympathy with Nature, he exclaims:

"But now I find how dear thou wert to me;
That man is more than half of Nature's treasure,
Of that fair beauty which no eye can see,
Of that sweet music which no ear can measure."

Before his removal to Canada, Mr. Jameson had filled a judicial position in the West Indies. In Canada he was successively Attorney-General and Vice-Chancellor—virtually Chancellor—at a time when the chancellorship was vested in the Crown. His conversational powers were great, and are still recalled with admiration by Canadian friends who remember him in his best days. Nor is the interest slight which attaches to such reminiscences of one who in his youth had been admitted to familiar intercourse with Wordsworth and his brother poets of the lakes. Hartley Coleridge refers to him as "the favourite companion of my boyhood, the active friend and sincere counsellor of my youth;" and trusts that the sight of

his volume will recall his old friend back to youth, "though seas between us broad have rolled" since that pleasant time. But the young colony in which his latter years were spent did not prove a congenial soil for the poet's friend; and if his name is recalled by the outer world, it will be as the husband of Anna Jameson, the authoress of the "Characteristics of Women,"—one of the most delicately appreciative volumes of Shakespearean criticism; of the "Diary of an Ennuyé," "Christian Art," and other justly esteemed works, among which her "Winter Studies and Summer Rambles" claim special notice here for their graphic picturings of Canadian life and scenery of that early date. The Vice-Chancellor and Mrs. Jameson both executed studies in water colours from nature with great skill; and the latter also transferred her drawings no less successfully to copper with the etching needle. In this way some pleasant glimpses of Canada in the olden time have been perpetuated.

It is sometimes startling to the stranger to find himself brought face to face with such literary associations, where he looks only for the matter-of-fact realities of a new clearing. It is surprising how many such relationships mingle with the other links which bind us to the mother land. The visitor from the Old World may see on the bench of our Supreme Court a son of the author of "Lawrie Tod,"—himself for a time a Canadian settler; may listen in the Normal School lecture-rooms to a nephew of the Philosopher of Chelsea; see amid the traders of our busiest thoroughfare a relative and namesake of the geologist of "The Old Red Sandstone;" and without travelling very far he might, in recent years, have held converse with a sister of the Ettrick Shepherd. Nor would it be difficult in other ways to multiply such literary associations. Dr. Scadding, among other reminiscences of the primitive wooden church which originally occupied the site of St. James' Cathedral, recalls among old military occupants of the

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long pew beside the Governor's seat, "a Major Browne, a brother of the formerly popular poetess, Mrs. Hemans." We suspect that the popularity of the authoress of "The Homes of England," "The Pilgrim Fathers," and other favourite lyrics, is not yet wholly a thing of the past on either side of the Atlantic. Of her brother, whose military figure thus rises on the memory of the historian of Toronto, among the old worshippers of St. James', the poetical record is peculiarly Canadian. He died while with his regiment at Kingston, Upper Canada, and lies interred in the old military cemetery there,—one of "The Graves of a Household," over whom in youthful years "the same fond mother bent at night," and who is thus recalled in the tender memorial of the poetess:

"One, 'midst the forests of the West,
By a dark stream is laid—
The Indian knows his place of rest,
Far in the cedar shade."

Each generation has its own marked characters rising out of the indistinguishable herd, and only requiring the eye and pen of an observant limner to perpetuate their individualities, and to reanimate the scenes in which they played their part. Of such local celebrities there are many glimpses in "Toronto of Old." It seems somehow with the city as with the individual: the bold, characteristic salient points belong to childhood and youth. With the advance of years they are apt, with both, to fade into the light of common day. Here is one little bit of portraiture sufficiently indicative of the changes that years have wrought on ecclesiastical as well as civic and legislative procedure. The subject is Mr. John Fenton, parish clerk of old St. James'. "He was a rather small, shrewd-featured person, not deficient in self-esteem; a proficient in modern popular science, a ready talker and lecturer." Though gifted with little melody of voice, the occasional failure of his choir of volunteers in no way disconcerted him. Not unfrequently,

after giving out the portion of Brady and Tait selected by him for the occasion, he would execute the whole as a solo, to some accustomed air, with variations of his own; and all done with the utmost coolness and self-complacency. His own share in the service being over, he would lean himself resignedly back in the corner of his desk and throw a white cambric handkerchief over his head while the rector was proceeding with the sermon. Very probably the clerk was of opinion that his own transference to the pulpit would have materially improved that part of the service also; for his official duties in the English Church did not, in those primitive days, at all stand in the way of his being a popular class-leader among the Wesleyan Methodists. His manner of giving forth the Psalms was apt to be so peculiarly emphatic that the churchy editor of the *Colonial Advocate* indignantly denounced Mr. Parish-Clerk Fenton for having, on the previous Sunday, pointedly aimed at him in his delivery of the Psalm:

"Help, Lord, for good and godly men
Do perish and decay;
And faith and truth from worldly men
Are parted clean away;
Whoso doth with his neighbour talk,
His talk is all but vain;
For every man bethinketh now
To flatter, lie, and feign!"

It must have been a rarely gifted clerk whose mere look and enunciation could convert Brady and Tait to such effective ends. Nor was Mr. Fenton left to hide his light under a bushel. He removed to the United States; was admitted to Holy Orders in the Episcopal Church there; and, it is to be hoped, proved no less effective in the pulpit than in the reading desk.

The music of those primitive times seems to have been managed altogether after the old country village choirs. Mr. Hetherington, another of the clerks of St. James', was wont, after giving out the Psalm, to play the air on a bassoon; and then to accompany

with fantasias on the same instrument, when any vocalist could be found to take the singing in hand. By-and-by the first symptoms of progress are apparent in the addition of a bass-viol and clarinet to help Mr. Hetherington's bassoon—"the harbinger and foreshadow," as Dr. Scadding says, "of the magnificent organ presented in after-times to the congregation of the 'Second Temple of St. James' by Mr. Dunn; but destroyed by fire, together with the whole church, in 1839, after only two years of existence."

Incidents of a different character no less strongly mark the changes that little more than half a century have witnessed. In 1811 we find William Jarvis, Esq., His Excellency's secretary, lodging a complaint in open court against a negro boy and girl, his slaves. The Parliament at Newark had, indeed, enacted, in 1793—in those patriarchal days already described, when they could settle the affairs of the young province under the shade of an umbrageous tree,—that no more slaves should be introduced into Upper Canada, and that all slave children born after the 9th of July in that year should be free on attaining the age of twenty-five. But even by this creditable enactment slavery had a lease of life of fully a quarter of a century longer; and the *Gazette*, *Public Advertiser*, and other journals, continue for years thereafter to exhibit such announcements as this of the Hon. Peter Russell, President of the Legislative Council, of date Feb. 19th, 1806. "To be sold: a black woman, named Peggy, aged forty years, and a black boy, her son, named Jupiter, aged about fifteen years." The advertisement goes on to describe the virtues of Peggy and Jupiter. Peggy is a tolerable cook and

washerwoman, perfectly understands making soap and candles, and may be had for one hundred and fifty dollars, payable in three years, with interest, from the day of sale. Jupiter having various acquirements, besides his specialty as a good house servant, is offered for two hundred dollars; but a fourth less will be taken for ready money. So recently as 1871, John Baker, who had been brought to Canada as the slave of Solicitor-General Gray, died at Cornwall, Ontario, in extreme old age. But before that the very memory of slavery had died out in Canada; and it long formed the refuge which the fugitive slave made for, with no other guide than the pole-star of our northern sky.

The history of Toronto, as already noted, is necessarily to a great extent that of the Province, and of the whole region of Western Canada. "Upper Canada," says Dr. Scadding, "in miniature, and in the space of half-a-century, curiously passed through conditions and processes, physical and social, which old countries on a large scale, and in the course of long ages, passed through. Upper Canada had in little its primeval and barbaric, but heroic age; its mediæval and high prerogative era; and then, after a revolutionary period of a few weeks, its modern, defeudalized, democratic era." It is a microcosm, an epitome of the Great Britain, mother of nations, from which it has sprung; and when, in coming centuries, the Dominion of Canada shall stretch from the Atlantic to the Pacific, the historian of that coming time will turn with interest to "Toronto of Old," and acknowledge with gratitude the loving enthusiasm with which its author has chronicled the minutest incidents of its infancy and youth.

