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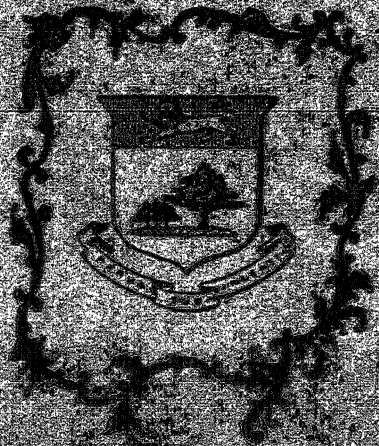
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# Prince Edward Island

By  
ADA MACLEOD



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*Queen's University at Kingston.*



## Prince Edward Island

By ADA MACLEOD



TO NONE of the other provinces of Canada, however wide their domain or rich their dower, had there fallen the gift of so poetic a name as that bestowed on the little Province-by-the-Sea by its original inhabitants, the Micmacs—*Abegweit* (cradled on the wave.) On the eastern marge of Canada, Prince Edward Island lies, crescent-shaped, nestling still in the protecting arms of the Gulf of St. Lawrence; and still is it known as a place of beauty and of rest, so that weary men and women come from far to sit by its fair waters and roam in its quiet woods, and delight their eyes in its strange harmonies of blue sea and vivid green turf and banks of terra cotta. It is about one hundred and forty miles in length with a width varying from three to forty miles, and is so deeply indented by water-ways that its coast-line measures about a thousand miles. Its red soil has been ground from the Permian or Triassic sandstone beneath, and this, mixed with the decayed vegetation of thousands of years, has produced a loam so fertile and easily cultivated that the province is now known as the "Garden of the



Gulf." Here and there, particularly in the western part, are large blocks of granite which were carried by the ice-cap from Gaspé or New Brunswick and prove by their presence the fact that where Northumberland Strait now stretches between the Island and the mainland was once dry land.

In comparison with some of the Canadian provinces, P. E. Island is very old. The first words ever written about it were penned four centuries ago when Jacques Cartier, on his first voyage, sailed along its northern coast. This is his description, in the flowing, Elizabethan English of Hakluyt's translation: "We went that day on shoare in four places to see the goodly and sweet-smelling trees that were there; we found them to be cedars, ewe-trees, pines, white elmes, ashes, willowes, with many sorts to us unknown, but without any fruit. The grounds where no wood is are very faire and all full of peason, red and white gooseberries, strawberries, blackberries, and wild corne like unto rie, which seemed to have been sowed and plowed. This countrie is of better temperature than any other that can be seen, and vere hote. There are many thrushes, stock-doves and other birds; to be short there wanteth nothing but good harboroughs. The firme land is compassed about by little islands of sand." As they sailed past the "outer most pointe," a shy native signalled them to land. "We, seeing such signs, began to turne toward him, but he, seeing us come, began to flee: so soon as



we were come on shoare, we set a knife before him, and a woollen girdle on a little staff, and then to our ships againe."

And so Cartier sailed away, and another century passed before any white man's sail again shadowed the blue Gulf waters. Then venturesome mariners from the coasts of Normandy and Picardy came in search of the much-prized fish, and in 1663 Captain Doublet obtained a grant of the Island and brought with him a number of fishermen from St. Malo, but they attempted no settlement and used their possession merely for drying their catch. In 1720 Comte de St. Pierre, equerry to the Duchess of Orleans, obtained the concession and sailed from the harbour of Rochefort with a party of three hundred emigrants and founded Port LaJoie on the site of what is now the capital city of Charlottetown.

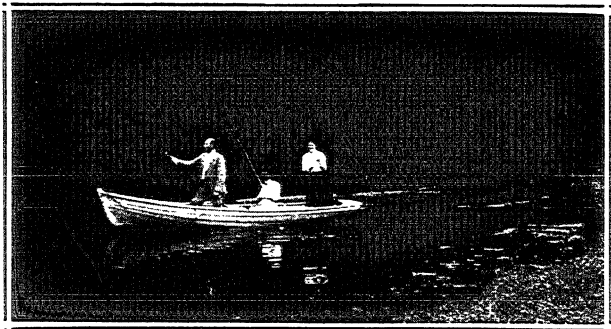
Picturesque were the place-names given by these pioneers from Old France—"The Port of Joy," "The Cape of Flame." The Island itself had been called by Champlain "Ile de St. Jean," which was a favourite name with early navigators, and was applied to so many places that confusion ensued, so that the English inhabitants at an early date found it advisable to change it to its present title.

Besides the settlers from France, many came from Acadie across the Straits, and the census of 1752 showed 2,014 inhabitants—"a poor but contented community." To them had come "three years of anguish" when their crops

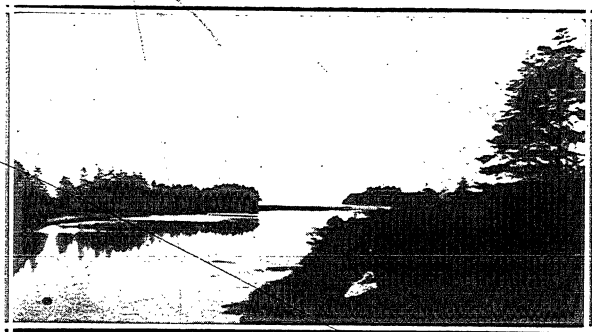


were successively destroyed by "field-mice, locusts, and scald." The Indians judged that these disasters had been brought about by witchcraft on the part of one St. Germaine *dit* Perigord; therefore they killed him, "and buried him on Ile de Comte St. Pierre which lies to the starboard as you enter Port la Joye." There is a record of a terrible fire which in 1738 swept the forest, destroying all the deer, and in places burning the very soil so that to this day no crop can be successfully grown there. The Acadian people preferred to dwell by the *marais* or marshlands, where was food for their cattle. They did not like the task of felling mighty trees ere they could find space for their little farms.

But the moving finger had written and the tale of the French Regime in Canada had come to an end. By the Treaty of Paris in 1763 St. John's Island, in common with the rest of New France, passed under the Dominion of George III; and, in the following year, this monarch ordered a survey of "All His Majesty's Dominions north of the Potomac." Captain Samuel Holland was chosen for this task and the survey was to begin with St. John's Island "on account of the importance of its fisheries." All its first English place-names were, therefore, chosen by him and form an almost complete list of the titles of the men prominent in the military history of the Canada of that day. He divided the Island into sixty-seven townships or "lots" which were divided among a number of English



Anglers find lots of Sport—and Fish



Pleasant Prospects on Every Hand





Golf Links



Fishing is one of the Chief Industries



proprietors subject to certain conditions as to placing settlers thereon.

As a result, therefore, the earliest settlement by English-speaking people was due to these proprietors who, in some cases, after the manner of some modern land agents, did not scruple to use false pretences in luring tenants to their property. Thus, for instance, in 1770, three years before the famous "Hector" immigration to Nova Scotia, Scottish settlers came from Argyllshire to Princetown, expecting to land in a thriving town, but all that met their gaze was a sombre wall of unbroken forest. On the very night of their arrival their vessel was wrecked by an October storm and all their supplies lost; so that they were forced to winter in the wigwams of the Indians with no food but dried corn and occasionally sea-cow "flippers," or shellfish dug from under the shore ice. Yet they endured and conquered adverse fate, and each year saw the arrival of new settlers from Scotland. Many of them came from the "vacant, wine-red moors" of Galloway and Ayr, and some of them had there met in the flesh the strange figure of "Old Mortality," as he travelled about with his bag of tools on the neck of his ancient white horse, on his self-appointed task of caring for the scattered grave-stones of the martyrs. To the end of their lives these people looked back with longing to the very spot referred to by Stevenson in that pathetic heart-cry of his from far Samoa:—



“Be it granted to me to behold you again in  
dying.  
Hills of home! And to hear once more the  
call—  
Hear about the graves of the martyrs the  
peewees crying,  
And hear no more at all.”

From the shires of Moray and Clackmannan came the early settlers of Cavendish—a name now familiar as the birthplace of L. M. Montgomery and the scene of many of her stories and poems. Here is one of the stories of early days in this settlement: A marriage was to take place and the whole community had gathered at the home of the bride. In the absence of any clergyman, the ceremony was to be performed by the local magistrate, who had first been helping himself liberally from the circulating jar and whose ideas were, therefore, not very clear. He was following the form in the prayer-book but in turning the leaf with his huge thumb he inadvertently turned over several pages and resumed, in the words of the funeral service. To the consternation of the bride he had just started to pronounce the solemn words, “Earth to earth, ashes to ashes,” when the “best man” shouted in his native Doric, “Tut, tut, mon! Can ye no’ see ye’re intil the beerial service?”

James McLaren of Balquhidder, leader of the Brudenell pioneers, remembered as a child having been carried by a serving maid from the



blazing ruins of his home, fired by Cumberland's troopers after the defeat at Culloden. The girl had secreted a cheese in her plaid as food for herself and the child in their flight, but it rolled out, and one of the soldiers, raising it on the point of his bayonet, jeered at her discomfiture. The young men of this Brudenell party established the first trade with the mainland by cutting down a giant pine-tree on the shore, fashioning it into a dugout and, by means of oars and linen sails made by the women, used to cross the forty miles of water to Pictou to bring supplies.

A notable immigration took place in the opening years of the century when the Earl of Selkirk, in order to relieve the destitution of the crofters in the Western Highlands, brought over 800 of them from Portree in Skye to Belfast on the southern coast of P. E. Island. As an example of the indomitable spirit of these pioneers, which brought them success in so short a time, Selkirk tells of a woman in the party, over eighty years of age, who had accompanied her two sons. One day, in their absence, she took the axe and proceeded to fell a large hardwood tree. All through the day she hacked at the forest giant, and at nightfall the sons returned just in time to save it from crashing through the roof of their little dwelling. Another Highlander of the party was a man who, in his native isle, had shown little energy or enterprise, but when in this new land he had chosen a picturesque site for his home, and named



it *Auchtertyre* after the ancestral abode of his clan, he put forth almost superhuman efforts to make it a place worthy of such a tradition.

These are a few of the threads that went into the weaving of the stout fabric of the Island's population. And there were many others. Several hundred Scottish Catholics were brought from Uist by Macdonald of Glenaladale and these set up their homes and built their log church at Scotchfort, close by the clear bubbling spring once called "Bel Air." There were Huguenots from Guernsey who settled in Murray Harbour, where many descendants still bear their names:—Brehaut, Clement, Lelacheur and others; Irish settlers who gathered in groups in places such as Fodhla, Emerald and Dromore; English people who patterned the country-side with orderly hedges, so that to this day the passer-by might almost fancy he were riding in Devon; French inhabitants that had escaped the expulsion by Lord Rollo, by reason of their distance from Port la Joie, or by taking refuge in the deep recesses of the woods; Loyalists who, by tortuous and dangerous ways, had made their escape from bitter tyranny to this new land of promise. Among these last may be mentioned the forebears of Jacob Gould Schurman (formerly of Cornell, now American Ambassador to Germany.) They settled in Bedeque and on the way thither they had the very same experience as once befell Robert the Bruce. The family were travelling on foot but, finding that they were being pursued by rebel soldiers,



they took refuge in a cave, where a spider conveniently wove his web over the entrance and the soldiers, noting this, judged the place to be empty and passed on. Never after would Mrs. Schurman allow one of her family to kill a spider.

It is related of one of the Scottish settlers, shipwrecked on the Island coast, that he landed with nothing save a Bible and a copy of "Horace" in his pocket. Certain it is that amid their early struggles the pioneers cared much also for the things of the mind, and the log schoolhouse early arose in every scattered settlement. Where they came in parties they usually brought a schoolmaster with them.

The pioneer ministers also, besides caring for the spiritual needs of their people, did much towards stimulating their mental growth by means of good reading. The writer of this article owns a set of Gibbon's "History of Rome" procured almost a century ago for his people by the Rev. Robert Patterson, minister of Bedeque for fifty-six years. On the fly-leaf of each volume is written in his own hand, "Bedeque Female Library." When one considers the mental pabulum of the average woman of to-day one wonders if we have advanced very much since the days of our grandmothers.

The legislature of P. E. Island is one of the oldest in North or South America, dating from 1773. Its first measure was an Act regulating the fishing of sea-cows—those strange monsters which were prized for their oil and their tough hides from which harness was made. There



was a directness about the methods of these early law-makers in somewhat refreshing contrast to the all-too-ready promises of modern politicians. A certain petition had been sent in by the people of Lot 28 which did not meet with their approval. A motion was, therefore, made that it be laid on the table followed by an amendment that it be thrown under the table—and this was done without more ado.

Among other big questions grappled with at various times by this government have been: Absentee and delinquent landlordism, Catholic emancipation, franchise reform, sanctioning the treaty of Reciprocity with the United States in 1854, the building of the Railway, and Confederation.

The outbreak of war in 1914 put a stop to an elaborate Jubilee ceremony that had been planned to take place in Charlottetown that year, and the only part of it that was carried out was the placing in the Parliament Building of a large bronze tablet with the following inscription:—"In the hearts and minds of the delegates who assembled in this room on Sept. 1st, 1864, there was born the *DOMINION OF CANADA*—Providence being their Guide, they builded better than they knew. This tablet is erected on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the event." To Charlottetown, therefore—older than any capital city of the Dominion except Halifax and Quebec—there falls the honour of being "The Cradle of Confederation."



But in this province, as in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, there was bitter opposition to the union and it was not until 1873 that it cast in its lot with the Canadian Federation. The lure that finally overcame all objections was the taking over of the Railway debt and also the promise of daily steam communication with the mainland; but this latter, owing to the ice-bound condition of the Island during five months of the year, proved almost impossible. An attempt was made to keep up daily communication between Georgetown and Pictou, N. S., with first one, and then two, ice-breakers; but the service was being constantly interrupted and passengers often had to make the crossing in primitive, amphibious ice-boats plying between Cape Tormentine and Cape Traverse—the narrowest part of the straits. All able-bodied passengers had to “work their passage,” paying two dollars for the privilege. They were fastened to the boat by straps and pulled it over the solid ice on runners, but when open water was encountered they launched the boat again and propelled it by oars or sails. Frequently the hapless strap passenger was plunged into the icy water, and on several occasions members of the crews lost their lives, driven and tossed all night in stormy winter gales. But in recent years the problem has been solved. A powerful car-ferry has been placed on the route, which makes one daily crossing in winter and two in the summer months. The time occupied in crossing is forty-five minutes. The principal route is



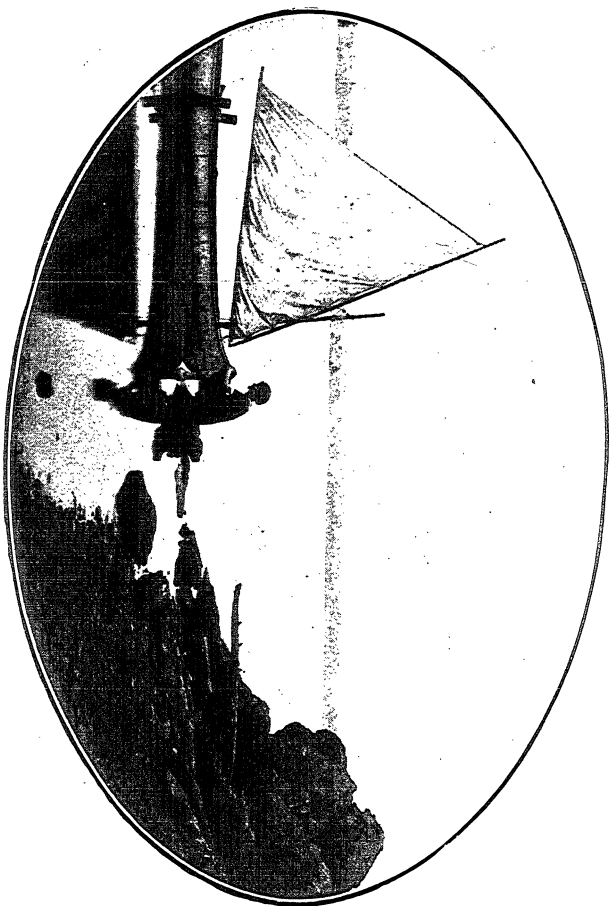


by way of new Brunswick, from Sackville to Cape Tormentine, and the steamer carries not only passenger trains but motor cars which land at Port Borden. Another route is by way of Picton, N. S., to Charlottetown, the distance being fifty miles and sailing time four hours in a modern and well-appointed steamer.

Prince Edward Island is the world's headquarters of "Silver Fox" ranching. It was here that the problems of domesticating and breeding the black fox were solved, and the development has attracted world-wide attention. Time was when Reynard was merely the execrated and hunted robber of hen-roosts; now he is the pampered aristocrat of domestic animals, fed on the best and housed in scientifically constructed ranches.

Science, too, has wrought many changes in methods of agriculture in this "million-acre farm." In early days potatoes were hoed in about the stumps with no further care until they were dug; now the specially treated seed is placed in "commercially" fertilized furrows, sprayed and cultivated and officially inspected at frequent intervals until the tubers are carefully placed in bags to find a select market as "certified seed potatoes." The small, hardy blue-black cattle, brought on the decks of immigrant ships by the Scottish pioneers, have been replaced by pedigreed herds of Shorthorn and Holstein, and in this connection it may be noted that this province is now a "disease-free area," no case of bovine tuberculosis existing within its

Unrivaled for Water Sports





Camping Sites Abound Everywhere in P. E. I.



borders. No longer does the farmer's wife carry her basket of nondescript eggs to the village store to exchange for groceries, for the hen is now regarded as one of the chief revenue producers of the farm—P. E. Island having twice as many fowl per square mile as any equal area in Canada—and eggs are carefully graded and marketed through "egg circles." There are numerous co-operative cheese and butter factories. But one cannot have everything; and while all these new methods make for efficiency, there is apt to be lacking something of the picturesque charm associated with old-time life on the farm. About the whirr of the separator, for instance, there can never gather the store of delightful memories that cling to the old-fashioned dairy under the orchard trees as, on a sultry summer day, one descended into its dim coolness and spied, swinging from its white-washed walls, the shelves with their treasures of brown-and yellow basins filled with still yellower cream all ready to be skimmed with the smooth, pearly quahaug shell.

In one sphere only has there been a deliberate attempt to return to the ways of the pioneers, and that is in the matter of women's handicraft—spinning, weaving and hooking. Hand-hooked rugs have always been a specialty in this province—those made of wool being of a wonderful velvety texture—and, in recent years, largely through the guidance of the Prince County Handicraft Guild whose head-quarters are in Summerside, improved designs have come



into use and also the old-time vegetable dyes with their soft, fadeless colouring. This Guild has published a booklet on the art of dyeing with native barks and leaves. Recently a Handicraft Exchange in connection with the Women's Institutes has been opened in Charlottetown and many orders are now received for braided, hooked and woven rugs, tufted counterpanes and other articles. There are on the Island 110 Institutes, with over 2,000 members, and they have done wonderful work in the improvement of schools and betterment of social life.

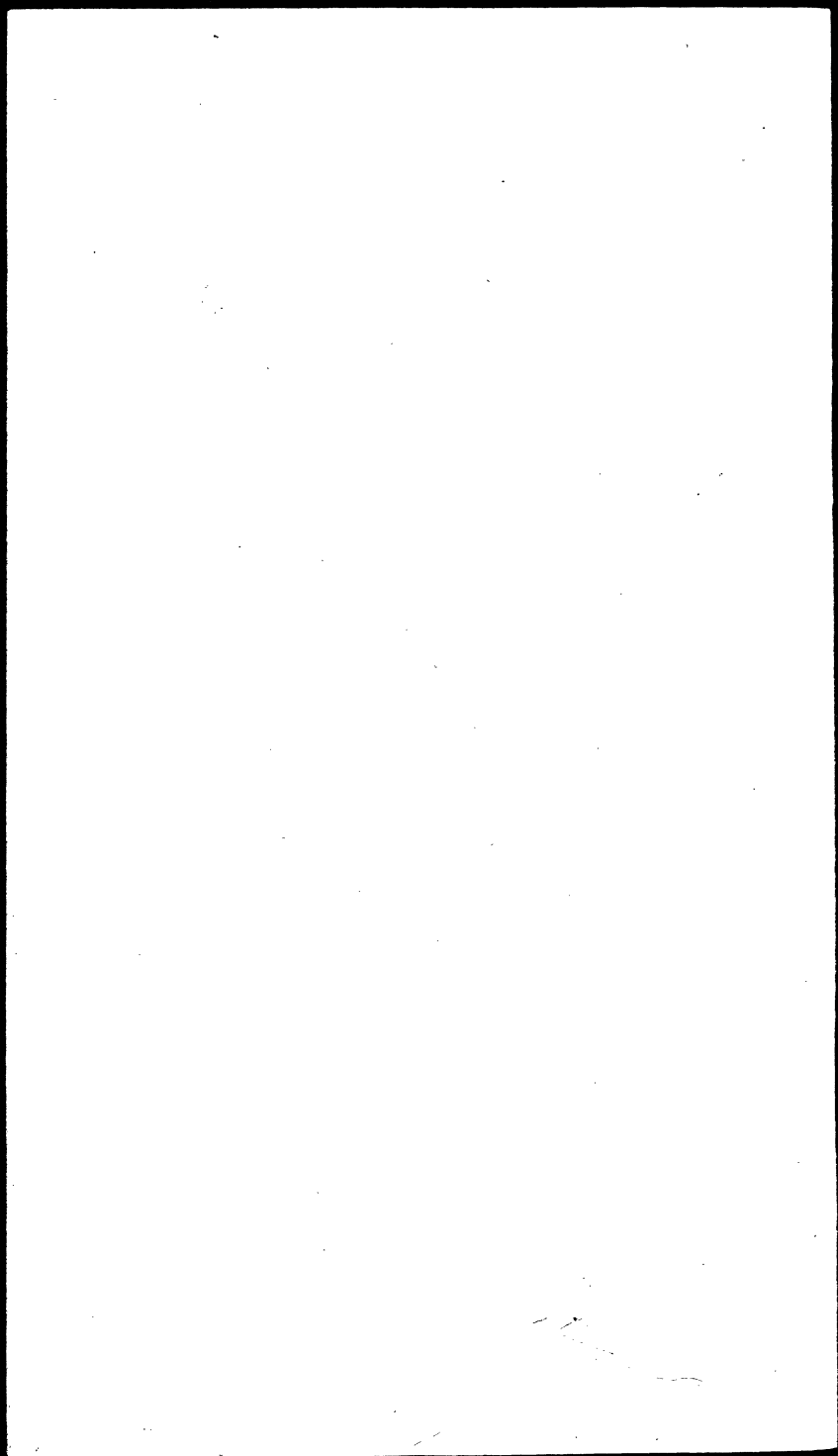
Some of the daughters of Prince Edward Isle are known to fame but of them all none excels in romantic interest Margaret Gordon, who was the first love of Carlyle, and the original of "Blumine in *Sartor Resartus*." She was born in Charlottetown in 1798, and on the Register of St. Paul's Church there is still to be seen the baptism entries of herself and others of the family. Her mother was a daughter of Walter Patterson, the Island's first Governor, and her father, Dr. Gordon, was surgeon to the forces stationed in the city. But he died, leaving the family in dire want, and the young Margaret and her sister were sent to Scotland to be brought up by an aunt in Kirkcaldy. Margaret was a pupil of the famous Edward Irving and grew to be a maiden not only very learned but very fair; so that when the young Thomas Carlyle came there also as teacher, he fell deeply in love with the "Rose-



Maiden," and ventured to pay her his addresses. But she was not for him. She married Sir Alexander Bannerman, a merchant of Aberdeen, and just fifty years from the time when she had left Charlottetown a penniless lass she returned to it again as wife of its Governor, with all the city illuminated in her honour. Carlyle in his "Reminiscences" tells of their dramatic meeting on horseback at the gate of Hyde Park after the lapse of many years.

For a quiet, restful holiday few places have the same appeal as Prince Edward Island. From the time when the visitor sights its shores with their red cliffs rising from the blue Gulf waters and motors over the winding roads with their everpleasing diversity of light and shade, of hill and valley, of woods and waters; when he bathes on its sandy shores, and fishes in its streams, joins in its picnics or clam bakes, or rests amid the far-famed hospitality of its homes, he will find a state of society in harmony with the serenity of external nature where poverty, strikes and misery are unknown.





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