

For myself, though I can easily enter into the feelings of the poet and the enthusiastic lover of the wild and the wonderful of historic lore, I can yet make myself very happy and contented in this country. If its volume of history is yet a blank, that of Nature is open, and eloquently marked by the finger of God; and from its pages I can extract a thousand sources of amusement and interest whenever I take my walks in the forest or by the borders of the lakes.

1836

Susanna Moodie

1803–1885

Susanna Moodie, like her older sister Catharine Parr Traill, began her literary career early, publishing her first novel by the time she was nineteen. She continued writing and published a collection of her poetry in 1831, the year she married John Dunbar Moodie, a retired army officer from the Orkneys. The couple immigrated to Canada in 1832, settling near Cobourg. After two difficult years they relocated to Douro Township to be closer to Susanna's brother Samuel Strickland and her sister Catharine. Farming was still so difficult, however, that only when Dunbar Moodie was recalled to active service because of the Rebellion of 1837 did the family gain some measure of financial security. When, in 1839, Mr Moodie was appointed sheriff of Victoria District (later Hastings County), it was with relief that the couple moved to Belleville, abandoning forever their attempts at managing a bush farm.

Once Mrs Moodie left rural life behind, she was able to return to her faltering literary career. Between 1829 and 1851 she contributed seventy-five poems and twenty pieces of prose to various magazines, including *The Canadian Literary Magazine*, *The North American Review*, and *The Literary Garland*. She integrated several of her published sketches into a larger narrative recounting her years of struggle as a farm wife, entitling it *Roughing It in the Bush; or, Forest Life*

in Canada; it appeared in 1852. In Moodie's lifetime, this book was republished in several editions, the contents of which varied somewhat; in some later versions whole chapters were deleted. (In 1988, the Centre for Editing Early Canadian Texts brought out a scholarly edition of *Roughing It in the Bush*.) A sequel, *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*, appeared in 1853. There Moodie explained that while *Roughing It* was intended 'to point out the error of gentlemen bringing delicate women and helpless children to toil in woods', she nevertheless affirmed 'the REAL benefits to be derived from a judicious choice of settlement in this great and rising country'. Moodie wrote very rapidly in the years that followed, turning out several novels and helping to fill the pages of *The Literary Garland* and other magazines. Most of what she wrote is little read today except *Roughing It*, to which is sometimes added *Life in the Clearings* and the introduction of her novel *Mark Hurdlestone* for its account of literary activity in Canada in 1853. Her letters and those of her husband have been preserved and published: Susanna's correspondence to friends and literary acquaintances was gathered as *Letters of a Lifetime* (1985), and the letters that she and her husband exchanged during their periods of separation (their existence was not known until 1987) were collected as *Letters of Love and Duty* (1993). These two

volumes add considerable depth to our knowledge of Moodie and her social milieu.

Roughing It in the Bush, originally published in London, was not immediately popular in Canada, where it was not published until 1871. In a preface to that edition the author expressed her hard-won affection for her adopted country. Perhaps because of those comments, or because the events were now sufficiently distant, the book gained its Canadian readership at last. It has maintained one since, even though Moodie's real purpose in writing was to warn unwary immigrants about the deceptive appearances they would find in Canada. In fact, Moodie has become an archetype of the modern settler for modern Canadians—so much so that Margaret Atwood responded to her Canadian chronicles with a collection of poems, *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* (1970), which in its own way has become as much of a classic as *Roughing It*.

Moodie's book is made up of a series of anecdotes that reveal its author as a practised storyteller with a remarkable ability to convey the variety of characters she met in the bush by using their colourful, idiomatic speech in lively

dialogue. As a whole, *Roughing It* takes the form of a complaint: a speech in Chapter 19 by an acquaintance seems almost to capture its essence: 'Bah!—The only consolation one feels for such annoyances is to complain. Oh, the woods!—the cursed woods!—how I wish I were out of them.' In her afterword to the *Journals* Atwood sees Moodie as 'divided down the middle'—an emblem of the 'violent duality' of Canada itself. Indeed, what most engages the modern reader is that, although Moodie reveals herself as melancholy, inflexible, and proud to the point of condescension, she still continues to struggle against the perpetual defeat of her hopes, all the while giving vent to a confused mixture of feelings. Combining in her narrative the perspective of the time of the events described with the 'reconciled' viewpoint of the older woman recalling those events, she shows us her exhilaration in small victories, a degree of pleasure in enduring painful experiences, and even the tearful sadness she felt at leaving the scene of her hardships. It is in watching Moodie make her choice and achieve—if almost despite herself—her reconciliation with the land that the greatest attraction of her story lies.

From *Roughing It in the Bush*

INTRODUCTION TO THE THIRD EDITION

In most instances, emigration is a matter of necessity, not of choice; and this is more especially true of the emigration of persons of respectable connections, or of any station or position in the world. Few educated persons, accustomed to the refinements and luxuries of European society, ever willingly relinquish those advantages, and place themselves beyond the protective influence of the wise and revered institutions of their native land, without the pressure of some urgent cause. Emigration may, indeed, generally be regarded as an act of severe duty, performed at the expense of personal enjoyment, and accompanied by the sacrifice of those local attachments which stamp the scenes amid which our childhood grew, in imperishable characters, upon the heart. Nor is it until adversity has pressed sorely upon the proud and wounded spirit of the well-educated sons and daughters of old but impoverished families, that they gird up the loins of the mind, and arm themselves with fortitude to meet and are the heart-breaking conflict.

The ordinary motive for the emigration of such persons may be summed up in a few brief words;—the emigrant's hope of bettering his condition, and of escaping from the vulgar sarcasms too often hurled at the less wealthy by the purse-proud, common-

place people of the world. But there is a higher motive still, which has its origin in that love of independence which springs up spontaneously in the breasts of the high-souled children of a glorious land. They cannot labour in a menial capacity in the country where they were born and educated to command. They can trace no difference between themselves and the more fortunate individuals of a race whose blood warms their veins, and whose name they bear. The want of wealth alone places an impassable barrier between them and the more favoured offspring of the same parent stock; and they go forth to make for themselves a new name and to find another country, to forget the past and to live in the future, to exult in the prospect of their children being free and the land of their adoption great.

The choice of the country to which they devote their talents and energies depends less upon their pecuniary means than upon the fancy of the emigrant or the popularity of a name. From the year 1826 to 1829, Australia and the Swan River were all the rage. No other portions of the habitable globe were deemed worthy of notice. These were the *El Dorados*¹ and land of Goshen to which all respectable emigrants eagerly flocked. Disappointment, as a matter of course, followed their high-raised expectations. Many of the most sanguine of these adventurers returned to their native shores in a worse condition than when they left them. In 1830, the great tide of emigration flowed westward. Canada became the great land-mark for the rich in hope and poor in purse. Public newspapers and private letters teemed with the unheard-of advantages to be derived from a settlement in this highly-favoured region.

Its salubrious climate, its fertile soil, commercial advantages, great water privileges, its proximity to the mother country, and last, not least, its almost total exemption from taxation—that bugbear which keeps honest John Bull in a state of constant ferment—were the theme of every tongue, and lauded beyond all praise. The general interest, once excited, was industriously kept alive by pamphlets, published by interested parties, which prominently set forth all the *good* to be derived from a settlement in the Backwoods of Canada; while they carefully concealed the toil and hardship to be endured in order to secure these advantages. They told of lands yielding forty bushels to the acre, but they said nothing of the years when these lands, with the most careful cultivation, would barely return fifteen; when rust and smut, engendered by the vicinity of damp over-hanging woods, would blast the fruits of the poor emigrant's labour, and almost deprive him of bread. They talked of log houses to be raised in a single day, by the generous exertions of friends and neighbours, but they never ventured upon a picture of the disgusting scenes of riot and low debauchery exhibited during the raising, or upon a description of the dwellings when raised—dens of dirt and misery, which would, in many instances, be shamed by an English pig-sty. The necessaries of life were described as inestimably cheap; but they forgot to add that in remote bush settlements, often twenty miles from a market town, and some of them even that distance from the nearest dwelling, the necessaries of life which would be deemed indispensable to the European, could not be procured at all, or, if obtained, could only

1 A fabled city of gold sought by early Spanish explorers of the New World. In the Book of Exodus, Goshen was the fertile land allotted the Israelites in Egypt, in which there was light during the plague of darkness; hence, a land of light and plenty.

be so by sending a man and team through a blazed forest road,—a process far too expensive for frequent repetition.

Oh, ye dealers in wild lands—ye speculators in the folly and credulity of your fellow-men—what a mass of misery, and of misrepresentation productive of that misery, have ye not to answer for! You had your acres to sell, and what to you were the worn-down frames and broken hearts of the infatuated purchasers? The public believed the plausible statements you made with such earnestness, and men of all grades rushed to hear your hired orators declaim upon the blessings to be obtained by the clearers of the wilderness.

Men who had been hopeless of supporting their families in comfort and independence at home, thought that they had only to come out to Canada to make their fortunes; almost even to realize the story told in the nursery, of the sheep and oxen that ran about the streets, ready roasted, and with knives and forks upon their backs. They were made to believe that if it did not actually rain gold, that precious metal could be obtained, as is now stated of California and Australia, by stooping to pick it up.

The infection became general. A Canada mania pervaded the middle ranks of British society; thousands and tens of thousands, for the space of three or four years, landed upon these shores. A large majority of the higher class were officers of the army and navy, with their families—a class perfectly unfitted by their previous habits and education for contending with the stern realities of emigrant life. The hand that has long held the sword, and been accustomed to receive implicit obedience from those under its control, is seldom adapted to wield the spade and guide the plough, or try its strength against the stubborn trees of the forest. Nor will such persons submit cheerfully to the saucy familiarity of servants, who, republicans in spirit, think themselves as good as their employers. Too many of these brave and honourable men were easy dupes to the designing land-speculators. Not having counted the cost, but only looked upon the bright side of the picture held up to their admiring gaze, they fell easily into the snares of their artful seducers.

To prove their zeal as colonists, they were induced to purchase large tracts of wild land in remote and unfavourable situations. This, while it impoverished and often proved the ruin of the unfortunate immigrant, possessed a double advantage to the seller. He obtained an exorbitant price for the land which he actually sold, while the residence of a respectable settler upon the spot greatly enhanced the value and price of all other lands in the neighbourhood.

It is not by such instruments as those I have just mentioned, that Providence works when it would reclaim the waste places of the earth, and make them subservient to the wants and happiness of its creatures. The Great Father of the souls and bodies of men knows the arm which wholesome labour from infancy has made strong, the nerves which have become iron by patient endurance, by exposure to weather, coarse fare, and rude shelter; and he chooses such, to send forth into the forest to hew out the rough paths for the advance of civilisation. These men become wealthy and prosperous, and form the bones and sinews of a great and rising country. Their labour is wealth, not exhaustion; its produce independence and content, not home-sickness and despair. What the Backwoods of Canada are to the industrious and ever-to-be-honoured sons

of honest poverty, and what they are to the refined and accomplished gentleman, these simple sketches will endeavour to portray. They are drawn principally from my own experience, during a sojourn of nineteen years in the colony.

In order to diversify my subject, and make it as amusing as possible, I have between the sketches introduced a few small poems, all written during my residence in Canada, and descriptive of the country.

In this pleasing task I have been assisted by my husband, J.W. Dunbar Moodie, author of 'Ten Years in South Africa'.²

BELLEVILLE, UPPER CANADA

1854

2 Published in 1835, the story of Dunbar Moodie's years (1819–29) with his brother at his farm near Sellendam, South Africa.

I. A VISIT TO GROSSE ISLE

* * *

As the sun rose above the horizon, all these matter-of-fact circumstances were gradually forgotten and merged in the surpassing grandeur of the scene that rose majestically before me. The previous day had been dark and stormy; and a heavy fog had concealed the mountain chain, which forms the stupendous background to this sublime view, entirely from our sight. As the clouds rolled away from their grey, bald brows, and cast into denser shadow the vast forest belt that girdled them round, they loomed out like mighty giants—Titans of the earth, in all their rugged and awful beauty—a thrill of wonder and delight pervaded my mind. The spectacle floated dimly on my sight—my eyes were blinded with tears—blinded with the excess of beauty. I turned to the right and to the left, I looked up and down the glorious river; never had I beheld so many striking objects blended into one mighty whole! Nature had lavished all her noblest features in producing that enchanting scene.

The rocky isle in front, with its neat farm-houses at the eastern point, and its high bluff at the western extremity, crowned with the telegraph—the middle space occupied by tents and sheds for the cholera patients, and its wooded shores dotted over with motley groups—added greatly to the picturesque effect of the land scene. Then the broad glittering river, covered with boats darting to and fro, conveying passengers from twenty-five vessels, of various size and tonnage, which rode at anchor, with their flags flying from the mast-head, gave an air of life and interest to the whole. Turning to the south side of the St Lawrence, I was not less struck with its low fertile shores, white houses, and neat churches, whose slender spires and bright tin roofs shone like silver as they caught the first rays of the sun. As far as the eye could reach, a line of white buildings extended along the bank; their background formed by the purple hue of the dense, interminable forest. It was a scene unlike any I had ever beheld, and to which Britain contains no parallel. Mackenzie, an old Scotch dragoon, who was one of our passengers, when he rose in the morning and saw the parish of St Thomas for the first

time, exclaimed: 'Weel, it beats a'! Can thae white clouts¹ be a' houses? They look like claes hung out to drie!' There was some truth in this odd comparison, and for some minutes I could scarcely convince myself that the white patches scattered so thickly over the opposite shore could be the dwellings of a busy, lively population.

'What sublime views of the north side of the river those *habitans* of St Thomas must enjoy,' thought I. Perhaps familiarity with the scene has rendered them indifferent to its astonishing beauty.

Eastward, the view down the St Lawrence towards the Gulf is the finest of all, scarcely surpassed by anything in the world. Your eye follows the long range of lofty mountains until their blue summits are blended and lost in the blue of the sky. Some of these, partially cleared round the base, are sprinkled over with neat cottages, and the green slopes that spread around them are covered with flocks and herds. The surface of the splendid river is diversified with islands of every size and shape, some in wood, others partially cleared, and adorned with orchards and white farm-houses. As the early sun streamed upon the most prominent of these, leaving the others in deep shade, the effect was strangely novel and imposing. In more remote regions, where the forest has never yet echoed to the woodman's axe, or received the impress of civilisation, the first approach to the shore inspires a melancholy awe which becomes painful in its intensity.

Land of vast hills, and mighty streams,
 The lofty sun that o'er thee beams
 On fairer clime sheds not his ray,
 When basking in the noon of day
 Thy waters dance in silver light,
 And o'er them frowning, dark as night,
 Thy shadowy forests, soaring high,
 Stretch forth beyond the aching eye,
 And blend in distance with the sky.

And silence—awful silence broods
 Profoundly o'er these solitudes;
 Not but the lapsing of the floods
 Breaks the deep stillness of the woods;
 A sense of desolation reigns
 O'er these unpeopled forest plains
 Where sounds of life ne'er wake a tone
 Of cheerful praise round Nature's throne,
 Man finds himself with God—alone.

My daydreams were dispelled by the return of the boat, which brought my husband and the captain from the island.

1 Cloths; 'claes', clothes.

'No bread,' said the latter, shaking his head; 'you must be content to starve a little longer. Provision-ship not in till four o'clock.' My husband smiled at the look of blank disappointment with which I received these unwelcome tidings. 'Never mind, I have news which will comfort you. The officer who commands the station sent a note to me by an orderly, inviting us to spend the afternoon with him. He promises to show us everything worthy of notice on the island. Captain —— claims acquaintance with me; but I have not the least recollection of him. Would you like to go?'

'Oh, by all means. I long to see the lovely island. It looks a perfect paradise at this distance.'

The rough sailor-captain screwed his mouth on one side, and gave me one of his comical looks; but he said nothing until he assisted in placing me and the baby in the boat.

'Don't be too sanguine, Mrs Moodie; many things look well at a distance which are bad enough when near.'

I scarcely regarded the old sailor's warning, so eager was I to go on shore—to put my foot upon the soil of the new world for the first time. I was in no humour to listen to any depreciation of what seemed so beautiful.

It was four o'clock when we landed on the rocks, which the rays of an intensely scorching sun had rendered so hot that I could scarcely place my foot upon them. How the people without shoes bore it I cannot imagine. Never shall I forget the extraordinary spectacle that met our sight the moment we passed the low range of bushes which formed a screen in front of the river. A crowd of many hundred Irish emigrants had been landed during the present and former day and all this motley crew—men, women, and children, who were not confined by sickness to the sheds (which greatly resembled cattle-pens)—were employed in washing clothes or spreading them out on the rocks and bushes to dry.

The men and boys were *in* the water, while the women, with their scanty garments tucked above their knees, were tramping their bedding in tubs or in holes in the rocks, which the retiring tide had left half full of water. Those who did not possess washing tubs, pails, or iron pots, or could not obtain access to a hole in the rocks, were running to and fro, screaming and scolding in no measured terms. The confusion of Babel was among them. All talkers and no hearers—each shouting and yelling in his or her uncouth dialect, and all accompanying their vociferations with violent and extraordinary gestures, quite incomprehensible to the uninitiated. We were literally stunned by the strife of tongues. I shrank, with feelings almost akin to fear, from the hard-featured, sun-burnt harpies as they elbowed rudely past me.

I had heard and read much of savages, and have since seen, during my long residence in the bush, somewhat uncivilised life; but the Indian is one of Nature's gentlemen—he never says or does a rude or vulgar thing. The vicious, uneducated barbarians, who form the surplus of overpopulous European countries, are far behind the wild man in delicacy of feeling or natural courtesy. The people who covered the island appeared perfectly destitute of shame, or even a sense of common decency. Many were almost naked, still more but partially clothed. We turned in disgust from the revolting

scene, but were unable to leave the spot until the captain had satisfied a noisy group of his own people, who were demanding a supply of stores.

And here I must observe that our passengers, who were chiefly honest Scotch labourers and mechanics from the vicinity of Edinburgh, and who while on board ship had conducted themselves with the greatest propriety, and appeared the most quiet, orderly set of people in the world, no sooner set foot upon the island than they became infected by the same spirit of insubordination and misrule, and were just as insolent and noisy as the rest.

While our captain was vainly endeavouring to satisfy the unreasonable demands of his rebellious people, Moodie had discovered a woodland path that led to the back of the island. Sheltered by some hazel-bushes from the intense heat of the sun, we sat down by the cool, gushing river, out of sight, but, alas! not out of hearing of the noisy, riotous crowd. Could we have shut out the profane sounds which came to us on every breeze, how deeply should we have enjoyed an hour amid the tranquil beauties of that retired and lovely spot!

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[Leaving Montreal, the Moodies travelled by steamboat to Cobourg, Upper Canada (Ontario), near Peterborough. There they purchased a farm that had been lost by a bankrupt Loyalist identified as 'Old Joe R——' (called Uncle Joe in the next chapter). Though the purchase was concluded in the September following the Moodies' arrival, they were prevented from occupying their new home immediately by an agreement allowing Joe and his family to remain in the house (while his mother lived in a nearby shanty) until 'the commencement of sleighing'. Until then the Moodies were to live in an adjoining farm in 'a small dilapidated log tenement', which they rented from an especially untrustworthy Loyalist known as Old Satan.]

VIII. UNCLE JOE AND HIS FAMILY

Ay, your rogue is a laughing rogue, and not a whit the less dangerous for the smile on his lip, which comes not from an honest heart, which reflects the light of the soul through the eye. All is hollow and dark within; and the contortion of the lip, like the prehistoric glow upon decayed timber, only serves to point out the rottenness within.

Uncle Joe! I see him now before me, with his jolly red face, twinkling black eyes, and rubicund nose. No thin, weasel-faced Yankee was he, looking as if he had lived upon 'cute'¹ ideas and speculations all his life; yet Yankee he was by birth, ay, and in mind, too; for a more knowing fellow at a bargain never crossed the lakes to abuse British institutions and locate himself comfortably among the despised Britishers. But, then,

1 Acute, cunning.

he had such a good-natured, fat face, such a mischievous, mirth-loving smile, and such a merry, roguish expression in those small, jet-black, glittering eyes, that you suffered yourself to be taken in by him, without offering the least resistance to his impositions.

Uncle Joe's father had been a New England loyalist, and his doubtful attachment to the British government had been repaid by a grant of land in the township of H——. He was the first settler in that township, and chose his location in a remote spot, for the sake of a beautiful natural spring, which bubbled up in a small stone basin in the green bank at the back of the house.

'Father might have had the pick of the township,' quoth Uncle Joe; 'but the old coon preferred that sup of good water to the site of a town. Well, I guess it's seldom I trouble the spring; and whenever I step that way to water the horses, I think what a tarnation fool the old one was, to throw away such a chance of making his fortune for such cold lap.'²

'Your father was a temperance man?'³

'Temperance!—He had been fond enough of the whiskey bottle in his day. He drank up a good farm in the United States, and then he thought he could not do better than turn loyal, and get one here for nothing. He did not care a cent, not he, for the King of England. He thought himself as good, anyhow. But he found that he would have to work hard here to scratch along, and he was mightily plagued with the rheumatics, and some old woman told him that good spring water was the best cure for that; so he chose this poor, light, stony land on account of the spring, and took to hard work and drinking cold water in his old age.'

'How did the change agree with him?'

'I guess better than could have been expected. He planted that fine orchard, and cleared his hundred acres, and we got along slick enough as long as the old fellow lived.'

'And what happened after his death, that obliged you to part with your land?'

'Bad times—bad crops,' said Uncle Joe, lifting his shoulders. 'I had not my father's way of scraping money together. I made some deuced clever speculations, but they all failed. I married young, and got a large family; and the women critters ran up heavy bills at the stores, and the crops did not yield enough to pay them; and from bad we got to worse, and Mr C—— put in an execution,⁴ and seized upon the whole concern. He sold it to your man for double what it cost him; and you got all that my father toiled for during the last twenty years of his life for less than half the cash he laid out upon clearing it.'

'And had the whiskey nothing to do with this change?' said I, looking him in the face suspiciously.

'Not a bit! When a man gets into difficulties, it is the only thing to keep him from sinking outright. When your husband has had as many troubles as I have had, he will know how to value the whiskey bottle.'

2 Weak drink.

3 A man advocating abstinence from liquor, or one who has sworn to abstain.

4 The seizure of goods under law in default of payment.

This conversation was interrupted by a queer-looking urchin of five years old, dressed in a long-tailed coat and trowsers, popping his black shock head in at the door, and calling out,

‘Uncle Joe!—You’re wanted to hum.’⁵

‘Is that your nephew?’

‘No! I guess ’tis my woman’s eldest son,’ said Uncle Joe, rising, ‘but they call me Uncle Joe. ’Tis a sry chap that—as cunning as a fox. I tell you what it is—he will make a smart man. Go home, Ammon, and tell your ma that I am coming.’

‘I won’t,’ said the boy; ‘you may go hum and tell her yourself. She has wanted wood cut this hour, and you’ll catch it!’

Away ran the dutiful son, but not before he had applied his forefinger significantly to the side of his nose, and, with a knowing wink, pointed in the direction of home.

Uncle Joe obeyed the signal, drily remarking that he could not leave the barn door without the old hen clucking him back.

At this period we were still living in Old Satan’s log house, and anxiously looking out for the first snow to put us in possession of the good substantial log dwelling occupied by Uncle Joe and his family, which consisted of a brown brood of seven girls, and the highly prized boy who rejoiced in the extraordinary name of Ammon.

Strange names are to be found in this free country. What think you, gentle reader, of *Solomon Sly*, *Reynard Fox*, and *Hiram Dolittle*; all veritable names, and belonging to substantial yeomen? After Ammon and Ichabod,⁶ I should not be at all surprised to meet with Judas Iscariot, Pilate, and Herod. And then the female appellations! But the subject is a delicate one, and I will forbear to touch upon it. I have enjoyed many a hearty laugh over the strange affectations which people designate here *very handsome names*. I prefer the old homely Jewish names, such as that which it pleased my godfather and godmothers to bestow upon me, to one of those high-sounding christianities, the Minervas, Cinderellas, and Almerias of Canada. The love of singular names is here carried to a marvellous extent. It is only yesterday that, in passing through one busy village, I stopped in astonishment before a tombstone headed thus:—‘Sacred to the memory of *Silence* Sharman, the beloved wife of Asa Sharman.’ Was the woman deaf and dumb, or did her friends hope by bestowing upon her such an impossible name to still the voice of Nature, and check, by an admonitory appellative, the active spirit that lives in the tongue of woman? Truly, Asa Sharman, if thy wife was silent by name as well as by nature, thou wert a fortunate man!

But to return to Uncle Joe. He made many fair promises of leaving the residence we had bought, the moment he had sold his crops and could remove his family. We could see no interest which could be served by his deceiving us, and therefore we believed him, striving to make ourselves as comfortable as we could in the meantime in our present wretched abode. But matters are never so bad but that they may be worse.

⁵ At home.

⁶ Ammon is the name of a Biblical land inhabited by a warlike people with whom the Israelites came into conflict. Ichabod can be found in 1 Samuel 4: 21: ‘She named the child Ichabod, meaning “The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God had been captured.”’ Moodie’s point is that names from the Old Testament are being used without consideration of their negative connotations, as foolish in its way as would be using those of New Testament villains such as Judas, Pilate, and Herod.

One day when we were at dinner, a waggon drove up to the door, and Mr —— alighted, accompanied by a fine-looking, middle-aged man, who proved to be Captain S——, who had just arrived from Demerara⁷ with his wife and family. Mr ——, who had purchased the farm of Old Satan, had brought Captain S—— over to inspect the land, as he wished to buy a farm, and settle in that neighbourhood. With some difficulty, I contrived to accommodate the visitors with seats, and provide them with a tolerable dinner. Fortunately, Moodie had brought in a brace of fine fat partridges that morning; these the servant transferred to a pot of boiling water, in which she immersed them for the space of a minute—a novel but very expeditious way of removing the feathers, which then come off at the least touch. In less than ten minutes they were stuffed, trussed, and in the bake-kettle; and before the gentlemen returned from walking over the farm, the dinner was on the table.

To our utter consternation, Captain S—— agreed to purchase, and asked if we could give him possession in a week!

‘Good heavens!’ cried I, glancing reproachfully at Mr ——, who was discussing⁸ his partridge with stoical indifference. ‘What will become of us? Where are we to go?’

‘Oh, make yourself easy; I will force that old witch, Joe’s mother, to clear out.’

‘But ’tis impossible to stow ourselves into that pig-sty.’

‘It will only be for a week or two, at farthest. This October; Joe will be sure to be off the first of sleighing.’

‘But if she refuses to give up the place?’

‘Oh, leave her to me. I’ll talk her over,’ said the knowing land speculator. ‘Let it come to the worst,’ he said, turning to my husband, ‘she will go out for the sake of a few dollars. By-the-by, she refused to bar the dower⁹ when I bought the place; we must cajole her out of that. It is a fine afternoon; suppose we walk over the hill, and try our luck with the old nigger?’

I felt so anxious about the result of the negotiation, that, throwing my cloak over my shoulders, and tying on my bonnet without assistance of a glass, I took my husband’s arm, and we walked forth.

It was a bright, clear afternoon, the first week in October, and the fading woods, not yet denuded of their gorgeous foliage, glowed in a mellow, golden light. A soft, purple haze rested on the bold outline of the Haldimand hills, and in the rugged beauty of the wild landscape I soon forgot the purport of our visit to the old woman’s log hut.

On reaching the ridge of the hill, the lovely valley in which our future home lay smiled peacefully upon us from amidst its fruitful orchards, still loaded with their rich, ripe fruit.

‘What a pretty place it is!’ thought I, for the first time feeling something like a local interest in the spot springing up in my heart. ‘How I wish those odious people would give us possession of the home which for some time has been our own!’

⁷ British Guiana.

⁸ Consuming (humorous).

⁹ Void her right to legal tenancy. Joe had inherited the land from his father, but his mother had use of it during her lifetime.

The log hut that we were approaching, and in which the old woman, H——, resided, by herself—having quarrelled years ago with her son’s wife—was of the smallest dimensions, only containing one room, which served the old dame for kitchen, and bed-room, and all. The open door, and a few glazed panes, supplied it with light and air; while a huge hearth, on which crackled two enormous logs—which are technically termed a front and a back stick—took up nearly half the domicile; and the old woman’s bed, which was covered with an unexceptionably clean patched quilt, nearly the other half, leaving just room for a small home-made deal¹⁰ table, of the rudest workmanship, two basswood-bottomed chairs, stained red, one of which was a rocking-chair, appropriated solely to the old woman’s use, and a spinning-wheel. Amidst this muddle of things—for, small as was the quantum of furniture, it was all crowded into such a tiny space that you had to squeeze your way through it in the best manner you could—we found the old woman, with a red cotton handkerchief tied over her grey locks, hood-fashion, shelling white bush-beans into a wooden bowl. Without rising from her seat, she pointed to the only remaining chair. ‘I guess, miss, you can sit there; and if the others can’t stand, they can make a seat of my bed.’

The gentlemen assured her that they were not tired, and could dispense with seats. Mr —— then went up to the old woman, and proffering his hand, asked after her health in his blandest manner.

‘I’m none the better for seeing you, or the like of you,’ was the ungracious reply. ‘You have cheated my poor boy out of his good farm; and I hope it may prove a bad bargain to you and yours.’

‘Mrs H——,’ returned the land speculator, nothing ruffled by her unceremonious greeting, ‘I could not help your son giving way to drink, and getting into my debt. If people will be so imprudent, they cannot be so stupid as to imagine that others can suffer for their folly.’

‘Suffer!’ repeated the old woman, flashing her small, keen black eyes upon him with a glance of withering scorn. ‘You suffer! I wonder what the widows and orphans you have cheated would say to that! My son was a poor, silly fool to be sucked in by the like of you. For a debt of eight hundred dollars—the goods never cost you four hundred—you take from us our good farm; and these, I s’pose,’ pointing to my husband and me, ‘are the folk you sold it to. Pray, miss,’ turning quickly to me, ‘what might your man give for the place?’

‘Three hundred pounds in cash.’

‘Poor sufferer!’ again sneered the hag. ‘Four hundred dollars is a very *small* profit in as many weeks. Well, I guess, you beat the Yankees hollow. And pray, what brought you here to-day, scenting about you like a carrion-crow? We have no more land for you to seize from us.’

Moodie now stepped forward, and briefly explained our situation, offering the old woman anything in reason to give up the cottage and reside with her son until he removed from the premises; which, he added, must be in a very short time.

10 Pine wood.

The old dame regarded him with a sarcastic smile. 'I guess, Joe will take his own time. The house is not built which is to receive him; and he is not a man to turn his back upon a warm hearth to camp in the wilderness. You were *green* when you bought a farm of that man, without getting along with it the right of possession.'¹¹

'But, Mrs H——, your son promised to go out the first of sleighing.'

'Wheugh!' said the old woman. 'Would you have a man give away his hat and leave his own head bare? It's neither the first snow nor the last frost that will turn Joe out of his comfortable home. I tell you that he will stay here, if it is only to plague you.'

Threats and remonstrances were alike useless, the old woman remained inexorable; and we were just turning to leave the house, when the cunning old fox exclaimed, 'And now, what will you give me to leave my place?'

'Twelve dollars, if you give us possession next Monday,' said my husband.

'Twelve dollars! I guess you won't get me out for that.'

'The rent would not be worth more than a dollar a month,' said Mr ——, pointing with his cane to the dilapidated walls. 'Mr Moodie has offered you a year's rent for the place.'

'It may not be worth a cent,' returned the woman, 'for it will give everybody the rheumatism that stays a week in it—but it is worth that to me, and more nor¹² double that just now to him. But I will not be hard with him,' continued she, rocking herself to and fro. 'Say twenty dollars, and I will turn out on Monday.'

'I dare say you will,' said Mr ——, 'and who do you think would be fool enough to give you such an exorbitant sum for a ruined old shed like this?'

'Mind your own business, and make your own bargains,' returned the old woman, tartly. 'The devil himself could not deal with you, for I guess he would have the worst of it. What do you say sir?' and she fixed her keen eyes upon my husband, as if she would read his thought. 'Will you agree to my price?'

'It is a very high one, Mrs H——; but as I cannot help myself, and you take advantage of that, I suppose I must give it.'

'Tis a bargain,' cried the old crone, holding out her hard, bony hand. 'Come, cash down!'

'Not until you give me possession on Monday next; or you might serve me as your son has done.'

'Ha!' said the old woman, laughing and rubbing her hands together; 'you begin to see daylight, do you? In a few months, with the help of him', pointing to Mr ——, 'you will be able to go alone; but have a care of your teacher, for it's no good that you will learn from him. But will you really stand to your word, mister?' she added, in a coaxing tone, 'if I go out on Monday?'

'To be sure I will; I never break my word.'

'Well, I guess you are not so clever as our people, for they only keep it as long as it suits them. You have an honest look; I will trust you; but I will not trust him,' nodding to Mr ——, 'he can buy and sell his word as fast as a horse can trot. So on Monday I will turn out my traps. I have lived here six-and-thirty years; 'tis a pretty place, and it

11 Right of occupancy as distinguished from ownership.

12 Than.

vexes me to leave it,' continued the poor creature, as a touch of natural feeling softened and agitated her world-hardened heart. 'There is not an acre in cultivation but I helped to clear it, nor a tree in yonder orchard but I held it while my poor man, who is dead and gone, planted it; and I have watched the trees bud from year to year, until their boughs over-shadowed the hut, where all my children, but Joe, were born. Yes, I came here young, and in my prime; and must leave it in age and poverty. My children and husband are dead, and their bones rest beneath the turf in the burying-ground on the side of the hill. Of all that once gathered about my knees, Joe and his young ones alone remain. And it is hard, very hard, that I must leave their graves to be turned by the plough of a stranger.'

I felt for the desolate old creature—the tears rushed to my eyes; but there was no moisture in hers. No rain from the heart could filter through that iron soil.

'Be assured, Mrs H——,' said Moodie, 'that the dead will be held sacred; the place will never be disturbed by me.'

'Perhaps not; but it is not long that you will remain here. I have seen a good deal in my time; but I never saw a gentleman from the old country make a good Canadian farmer. The work is rough and hard, and they get out of humour with it, and leave it to their hired helps, and then all goes wrong. They are cheated on all sides, and in despair take to the whiskey bottle, and that fixes them. I tell you what it is, mister—I give you just three years to spend your money and ruin yourself; and then you will become a confirmed drunkard, like the rest.'

The first part of her prophecy was only too true. Thank God! the last has never been fulfilled, and never can be.

Perceiving that the old woman was not a little elated with her bargain, Mr —— urged upon her the propriety of barring the dower. At first, she was outrageous, and very abusive, and rejected all his proposals with contempt; vowing that she would meet him in a certain place below, before she would sign away her right to the property.

'Listen to reason, Mrs H——,' said the land speculator. 'If you will sign the papers before the proper authorities, the next time that your son drives you to C——, I will give you a silk gown.'

'Pshaw! Buy a shroud for yourself; you will need it before I want a silk gown,' was the ungracious reply.

'Consider, woman; a black silk of the best quality.'

'To mourn in for my sins, or for the loss of the farm?'

'Twelve yards,' continued Mr ——, without noticing her rejoinder, 'at a dollar a yard. Think what a nice church-going gown it will make.'

'To the devil with you! I never go to church.'

'I thought as much,' said Mr ——, winking to us. 'Well, my dear madam, what will satisfy you?'

'I'll do it for twenty dollars,' returned the old woman, rocking herself to and fro in her chair; her eyes twinkling, and her hands moving convulsively, as if she already grasped the money so dear to her soul.

'Agreed,' said the land speculator. 'When will you be in town?'

'On Tuesday, if I be alive. But, remember, I'll not sign till I have my hand on the money.'

‘Never fear,’ said Mr ——, as we quitted the house; then, turning to me, he added, with a peculiar smile, ‘That’s a devilish smart woman. She would have made a clever lawyer.’

Monday came, and with it all the bustle of moving, and, as is generally the case on such occasions, it turned out a very wet day. I left Old Satan’s hut without regret, glad, at any rate, to be in a place of my own, however humble. Our new habitation, though small, had a decided advantage over the one we were leaving. It stood on a gentle slope; and a narrow but lovely stream, full of speckled trout, ran murmuring under the little window; the house, also, was surrounded by fine fruit trees.

I know not how it was, but the sound of that tinkling brook, for ever rolling by, filled my heart with a strange melancholy, which for many nights deprived me of rest. I loved it, too. The voice of waters, in the stillness of night, always had an extraordinary effect upon my mind. Their ceaseless motion and perpetual sound convey to me the idea of life—eternal life; and looking upon them, glancing and flashing on, now in sunshine, now in shade, now hoarsely chiding with the opposing rock, now leaping triumphantly over it,—creates within me a feeling of mysterious awe of which I never could wholly divest myself.

A portion of my own spirit seemed to pass into that little stream. In its deep wailings and fretful sighs, I fancied myself lamenting for the land I had left for ever; and its restless and impetuous rushings against the stones which choked its passage, were mournful types of my own mental struggles against the strange destiny which hemmed me in. Through the day the stream still moaned and travelled on,—but, engaged in my novel and distasteful occupations, I heard it not; but whenever my winged thoughts flew homeward, then the voice of the brook spoke deeply and sadly to my heart, and my tears flowed unchecked to its plaintive and harmonious music.

In a few hours I had my new abode more comfortably arranged than the old one, although its dimensions were much smaller. The location was beautiful, and I was greatly consoled by this circumstance. The aspect of Nature ever did, and I hope ever will, continue—

‘To shoot marvellous strength into my heart’.¹³

As long as we remain true to Divine Mother, so long will she remain faithful to her suffering children.

At that period my love for Canada was a feeling very nearly allied to that which the condemned criminal entertains for his cell—his only hope of escape being through the portals of the grave.

The fall rains had commenced. In a few days the cold wintry showers swept all the gorgeous crimson from the trees, and a bleak and desolate waste presented itself to the shuddering spectator. But, in spite of wind and rain, my little tenement was never free

13 Moodie is recasting a passage from Coleridge’s verse-drama ‘The Death of Wallenstein’, in which the title character longs for the sight of the planet Jupiter: ‘If I but saw him, ’twould be well with me. / He, is the star of my nativity, / And often marvellously hath his aspect / Shot strength into my heart’ (v. i. 33–6).

from the intrusion of Uncle Joe's wife and children. Their house stood about a stone's-throw from the hut we occupied, in the same meadow, and they seemed to look upon it still as their own, although we had literally paid for it twice over. Fine strapping girls they were, from five years old to fourteen, but rude and unnurtured as so many bears. They would come in without the least ceremony, and, young as they were, ask me a thousand impertinent questions; and when I civilly requested them to leave the room, they would range themselves upon the door-step, watching my motions, with their black eyes gleaming upon me through their tangled, uncombed locks. Their company was a great annoyance, for it obliged me to put a painful restraint upon the thoughtfulness in which it was so delightful to me to indulge. Their visits were not visits of love, but of mere idle curiosity, not unmingled with malicious hatred.

The simplicity, the fond, confiding faith of childhood is unknown in Canada. There are no children here. The boy is a miniature man—knowing, keen, and wide awake; as able to drive a bargain and take an advantage of his juvenile companion as the grown-up, world-hardened man. The girl, a gossiping flirt, full of vanity and affectation, with a premature love of finery, and an acute perception of the advantages to be derived from wealth, and from keeping up a certain appearance in the world.

The flowers, the green grass, the glorious sunshine, the birds of the air, and the young lambs gambolling down the verdant slopes, which fill the heart of the British child with a fond ecstasy, bathing the young spirit in Elysium, would float unnoticed before the vision of a Canadian child; while the sight of a dollar, or a new dress, or a gay bonnet, would swell its proud bosom with self-importance and delight. The glorious blush of modest diffidence, the tear of gentle sympathy, are so rare on the cheek, or in the eye of the young, that their appearance creates a feeling of surprise. Such perfect self-reliance in beings so new to the world is painful to a thinking mind. It betrays a great want of sensibility and mental culture, and a melancholy knowledge of the arts of life.

For a week I was alone, my good Scotch girl having left me to visit her father. Some small baby-articles were needed to be washed, and after making a great preparation, I determined to try my unskilled hand upon the operation. The fact is, I knew nothing about the task I had imposed upon myself, and in a few minutes rubbed the skin off my wrists without getting the clothes clean.

The door was open, as it generally was, even during the coldest winter days, in order to let in more light, and let out the smoke, which otherwise would have enveloped us like a cloud. I was so busy that I did not perceive that I was watched by the cold, heavy, dark eyes of Mrs Joe, who, with a sneering laugh, exclaimed,

‘Well, thank God! I am glad to see you brought to work at last. I hope you may have to work as hard as I have. I don't see, not I, why you, who are no better than me, should sit still all day, like a lady!’

‘Mrs H——,’ said I, not a little annoyed at her presence, ‘what concern is it of yours whether I work or sit still? I never interfere with you. If you took it into your head to lie in bed all day, I should never trouble myself about it.’

‘Ah, I guess you don't look upon us as fellow-critters, you are so proud and grand. I s'pose you Britishers are not made of flesh and blood, like us. You don't choose to sit down at meat with your helps. Now, I calculate, we think them a great deal better nor you.’

‘Of course,’ said I, ‘they are more suited to you than we are; they are uneducated, and so are you. This is no fault in either; but it might teach you to pay a little more respect to those who are possessed of superior advantages. But, Mrs H——, my helps, as you call them, are civil and obliging, and never make unprovoked and malicious speeches. If they could so far forget themselves, I should order them to leave the house.’

‘Oh, I see what you are up to,’ replied the insolent dame; ‘you mean to say that if I were your help, you would turn me out of your house; but I’m a free-born American, and I won’t go at your bidding. Don’t think I come here out of regard to you. No, I hate you all; and I rejoice to see you at the wash-tub, and I wish that you may be brought down upon your knees to scrub the floors.’

This speech caused a smile, and yet I felt hurt and astonished that a woman whom I had never done anything to offend should be so gratuitously spiteful.

In the evening she sent two of her brood over to borrow my ‘long iron’, as she called an Italian iron.¹⁴ I was just getting my baby to sleep, sitting upon a low stool by the fire. I pointed to the iron upon the shelf, and told the girl to take it. She did so, but stood beside me, holding it carelessly in her hand, and staring at the baby, who had just sunk to sleep upon my lap.

The next moment the heavy iron fell from her relaxed grasp, giving me a severe blow upon my knee and foot; and glanced so near the child’s head that it drew from me a cry of terror.

‘I guess that was nigh braining the child,’ quoth Miss Amanda, with the greatest coolness, and without making the least apology. Master Ammon burst into a loud laugh. ‘If it had, Mandy, I guess we’d have cotched it.’ Provoked at their insolence, I told them to leave the house. The tears were in my eyes, for I felt certain that had they injured the child, it would not have caused them the least regret.

The next day, as we were standing at the door, my husband was greatly amused by seeing fat Uncle Joe chasing the rebellious Ammon over the meadow in front of the house. Joe was out of breath, panting and puffing like a small steam-engine, and his face flushed to deep red with excitement and passion.

‘You —— young scoundrel!’ he cried, half choked with fury, ‘if I catch up to you, I’ll take the skin off you!’

‘You —— old scoundrel, you may have my skin if you can get at me,’ retorted the precocious child, as he jumped up upon the top of the high fence, and doubled his fist in a menacing manner at his father.

‘That boy is growing too bad,’ said Uncle Joe, coming up to us out of breath, the perspiration streaming down his face. ‘It is time to break him in, or he’ll get the master of us all.’

‘You should have begun that before,’ said Moodie. ‘He seems a hopeful pupil.’

14 An iron of a special shape for pressing clothes. In Chapter 5, ‘Our First Settlement, & the Borrowing System’, Moodie describes how this woman perpetually borrowed items: ‘Day after day I was tormented by this importunate creature; she borrowed of me tea, sugar, candles, starch, blueing, irons, pots, bowls—in short, every article in common domestic use—while it was with utmost difficulty we could get them returned. . . . This method of living upon their neighbours is a most convenient one to unprincipled people.’

'Oh, as to that, a little swearing is manly,' returned the father; 'I swear myself, I know, and as the old cock crows, so crows the young one. It is not his swearing that I care a pin for, but he will not do a thing I tell him to.'

'Swearing is a dreadful vice,' said I, 'and, wicked as it is in the mouth of a grown-up person, it is perfectly shocking in a child; it painfully tells he has been brought up without the fear of God.'

'Pooh! pooh! that's all cant; there is no harm in a few oaths, and I cannot drive oxen and horses without swearing. I dare say that you can swear, too, when you are riled, but you are too cunning to let us hear you.'

I could not help laughing outright at this supposition, but replied very quietly, 'Those who practise such iniquities never take any pains to conceal them. The concealment would infer a feeling of shame; and when people are conscious of their guilt, they are in the road to improvement.' The man walked whistling away, and the wicked child returned unpunished to his home.

The next minute the old woman came in. 'I guess you can give me a piece of silk for a hood,' said she, 'the weather is growing considerable cold.'

'Surely it cannot well be colder than it is at present,' said I, giving her the rock-chair by the fire.

'Wait a while; you know nothing of a Canadian winter. This is only November; after the Christmas thaw, you'll know something about cold. It is seven-and-thirty years ago since I and my man left the U-ni-ted States. It was called the year of the great winter. I tell you, woman, that the snow lay deep on the earth, that it blocked up all the roads, and we could drive a sleigh whither we pleased, right over the snake fences.¹⁵ All the cleared land was one wide white level plain; it was a year of scarcity, and we were half starved; but the severe cold was far worse nor the want of provisions. A long and bitter journey we had of it; but I was young then, and pretty well used to trouble and fatigue; my man stuck to the British government. More fool he! I was an American born, and my heart was with the true cause. But his father was English, and, says he, "I'll live and die under their flag." So he dragged me from my comfortable fireside to seek a home in the far Canadian wilderness. Trouble! I guess you think you have your troubles; but what are they to mine?' She paused, took a pinch of snuff, offered me the box, sighed painfully, pushed the red handkerchief from her high, narrow, wrinkled brow, and continued:—'Joe was a baby then, and I had another helpless critter in my lap—an adopted child. My sister had died from it, and I was nursing it at the same breast with my boy. Well, we had to perform a journey of four hundred miles in an ox-cart, which carried, besides me and the children, all our household stuff. Our way lay chiefly through the forest, and we made but slow progress. Oh! what a bitter cold night it was when we reached the swampy woods where the city of Rochester now stands. The oxen were covered with icicles, and their breath sent up clouds of steam. "Nathan," says I to my man, "you must stop and kindle a fire; I am dead with cold, and I fear the babes will be frozen." We began looking about for a good spot to camp in, when I spied a light through the trees. It was a lone shanty, occupied by two French

¹⁵ Zigzag fences made of split rails.

lumberers. The men were kind; they rubbed our frozen limbs with snow, and shared with us their supper and buffalo skins. On that very spot where we camped that night, where we heard nothing but the wind sighing amongst the trees, and the rushing of the river, now stands the great city of Rochester. I went there two years ago, to the funeral of a brother. It seemed to me like a dream. Where we foddered our beasts by the shanty fire, now stands the largest hotel in the city; and my husband left this fine growing country to starve here.'

I was so much interested in the old woman's narrative—for she was really possessed of no ordinary capacity, and, though rude and uneducated, might have been a very superior person under different circumstances—that I rummaged among my stores, and soon found a piece of black silk, which I gave her for the hood she required.

The old woman examined it carefully over, smiled to herself, but, like all her people, was too proud to return a word of thanks. One gift to the family always involved another.

'Have you any cotton-batting, or black sewing-silk, to give me, to quilt it with?'

'No.'

'Humph!' returned the old dame, in a tone which seemed to contradict my assertion. She then settled herself in her chair, and, after shaking her foot a while, and fixing her piercing eyes upon me for some minutes, she commenced the following list of interrogatories:—

'Is your father alive?'

'No; he died many years ago, when I was a young girl.'

'Is your mother alive?'

'Yes.'

'What is her name?' I satisfied her on this point.

'Did she ever marry again?'

'She might have done so, but she loved her husband too well, and preferred living single.'

'Humph! We have no such notions here. What was your father?'

'A gentleman, who lived upon his own estate.'

'Did he die rich?'

'He lost the greater part of his property from being surety for another.'¹⁶

'That's a foolish business. My man burnt his fingers with that. And what brought you out to this poor country—you, who are no more fit for it than I am to be a fine lady?'

'The promise of a large grant of land, and the false statements we heard regarding it.'

'Do you like the country?'

'No; and I fear I never shall.'

'I thought not; for the drop is always on your cheek, the children tell me; and those young ones have keen eyes. Now, take my advice: return while your money lasts; the longer you remain in Canada the less you will like it; and when your money is all spent, you will be like a bird in a cage; you may beat your wings against the bars, but

¹⁶ Guaranteeing a loan by becoming responsible for the debt.

you can't get out.' There was a long pause. I hoped that my guest had sufficiently gratified her curiosity, when she again commenced:—

'How do you get your money? Do you draw it from the old country, or have you it with you in cash?'

Provoked by her pertinacity, and seeing no end to her cross-questioning, I replied very impatiently, 'Mrs H——, is it the custom in your country to catechize strangers whenever you meet with them?'

'What do you mean?' said she, colouring, I believe, for the first time in her life.

'I mean', quoth I, 'an evil habit of asking impertinent questions.'

The old woman got up, and left the house without speaking another word.

[During the winter of 1883 the Moodies finally moved into their new house. When spring came they brought in a man and his wife to help work the farm in return for a share of the produce. These people unfortunately proved to be untrustworthy. With them, Mrs Moodie writes, 'commenced that long series of losses and troubles to which their conduct formed the prelude'.]

XI. BRIAN, THE STILL-HUNTER

O'er memory's glass I see his shadow flit,
 Though he was gathered to the silent dust
 Long years ago. A strange and wayward man,
 That shunn'd companionship, and lived apart;
 The leafy covert of the dark brown woods,
 The gleamy lakes, hid in their gloomy depths,
 Whose still, deep waters never knew the stroke
 Of cleaving oar, or echoed to the sound
 Of social life, contained for him the sum
 Of human happiness. With dog and gun
 Day after day he track'd the nimble deer
 Through all the tangled mazes of the forest.

It was early day. I was alone in the old shanty, preparing breakfast, and now and then stirring the cradle with my foot, when a tall, thin, middle-aged man walked into the house, followed by two large, strong dogs.

Placing the rifle he had carried on his shoulder in a corner of the room, he advanced to the hearth, and, without speaking, or seemingly looking at me, lighted his pipe, and commenced smoking. The dogs, after growling and snapping at the cat, who had not given the strangers a very courteous reception, sat down on the hearthstone on either side of their taciturn master, eyeing him from time to time, as if long habit had made them understand all his motions. There was a great contrast between the dogs. The one was a brindled bull dog of the largest size, the most formidable and powerful

brute; the other a stag hound, tawny, deep-chested, and strong-limbed. I regarded the man and his hairy companions with silent curiosity.

He was between forty and fifty years of age; his head, nearly bald, was studded at the sides with strong, coarse, black curling hair. His features were high, his complexion brightly dark, and his eyes, in size, shape, and colour, greatly resembling the eyes of a hawk. The face itself was sorrowful and taciturn; and his thin, compressed lips looked as if they were not much accustomed to smile, or often to uncloset to hold social communion with any one. He stood at the side of the huge hearth, silently smoking, his eyes bent on the fire, and now and then he patted the heads of his dogs, reproving their exuberant expressions of attachment with—‘Down, Music, down, Chance!’

‘A cold, clear morning,’ said I, in order to attract his attention and draw him into conversation.

A nod, without raising his head, or withdrawing his eyes from the fire, was his only answer; and, turning from my unsociable guest, I took up the baby, who just then awoke, sat down on a low stool by the table, and began feeding her. During this operation, I once or twice caught the stranger’s hawk-eye fixed upon me and the child, but word spoke he none; and presently, after whistling to his dogs, he resumed his gun, and strode out.

When Moodie and Monaghan¹ came in to breakfast, I told them what a strange visitor I had had; and Moodie laughed at my vain attempt to induce him to talk.

‘He is a strange being,’ I said; ‘I must find out who and what he is.’

In the afternoon an old soldier, called Layton, who had served during the American war, and got a grant of land about a mile in the rear of our location, came in to trade for a cow. Now, this Layton was a perfect ruffian; a man whom no one liked, and whom all feared. He was a deep drinker, a great swearer, in short, a perfect reprobate; who never cultivated his land, but went jobbing about from farm to farm, trading horses and cattle, and cheating in a pettifogging way. Uncle Joe had employed him to sell Moodie a young heifer, and he had brought her over for him to look at. When he came in to be paid, I described the stranger of the morning; and as I knew that he was familiar with every one in the neighbourhood, I asked if he knew him.

‘No one should know him better than myself,’ he said, ‘’tis old Brian B——, the still-hunter,² and a near neighbour of your’n. A sour, morose, queer chap he is, and as mad as a March hare! He’s from Lancashire, in England, and came to this country some twenty years ago, with his wife, who was a pretty young lass in those days, and slim enough then, though she’s so awfully fleshy now. He had lots of money, too, and he bought four hundred acres of land, just at the corner of the concession line,³ where it meets the main road. And excellent land it is; and a better farmer, while he stuck to his business, never went into the bush, for it was all bush here then. He was a dashing, handsome fellow, too, and did not hoard the money either; he loved his pipe and his pot too well; and at last he left off farming, and gave himself to them altogether. Many a jolly booze he and I have had, I can tell you. Brian was an awful passionate man, and, when

1 The Moodies’ new hired man.

2 One who hunts game on foot or in a quiet or stealthy manner.

3 Rural road separating concessions (grants of land).

the liquor was in, and the wit was out, as savage and as quarrelsome as a bear. At such times there was no one but Ned Layton dared go near him. We once had a pitched battle, in which I was conqueror, and ever arter he yielded a sort of sulky obedience to all I said to him. Arter being on the spree for a week or two, he would take fits of remorse, and return home to his wife; would fall down at her knees, and ask her forgiveness, and cry like a child. At other times he would hide himself up in the woods, and steal home at night, and get what he wanted out of the pantry, without speaking a word to any one. He went on with these pranks for some years, till he took a fit of the blue devils.

“Come away, Ned, to the —— lake, with me,” said he; “I am weary of my life, and I want a change.”

“Shall we take the fishing-tackle?” says I. “The black bass are in prime season, and F—— will lend us the old canoe. He’s got some capital rum up from Kingston. We’ll fish all day, and have a spree at night.”

“It’s not to fish I’m going,” says he.

“To shoot, then? I’ve bought Rockwood’s new rifle.”

“It’s neither to fish nor to shoot, Ned; it’s a new game I’m going to try; so come along.”

Well, to the —— lake we went. The day was very hot, and our path lay through the woods, and over those scorching plains, for eight long miles. I thought I should have dropped by the way; but during our long walk my companion never opened his lips. He strode on before me, at a half-run, never once turning his head.

“The man must be a devil!” says I, “and accustomed to a warmer place, or he must feel this. Hollo, Brian! Stop there! Do you mean to kill me?”

“Take it easy,” says he; “you’ll see another day arter this—I’ve business on hand and cannot wait.”

Well, on we went, at the same awful rate, and it was midday when we got to the little tavern on the lake shore, kept by one F——, who had a boat for the convenience of strangers who came to visit the place. Here we got our dinner, and a glass of rum to wash it down. But Brian was moody, and to all my jokes he only returned a sort of grunt; and while I was talking with F——, he steps out, and a few minutes arter we saw him crossing the lake in the old canoe.

“What’s the matter with Brian?” says F——; “all does not seem right with him, Ned. You had better take the boat and look arter him.”

“Pooh!” says I; “he’s often so, and grows so glum now-a-days that I will cut his acquaintance altogether if he does not improve.”

“He drinks awful hard,” says F——; “maybe he’s got a fit of the delirium-tremulous. There is no telling what he may be up to at this minute.”

My mind misgave me too, so I e’en takes the oars, and pushes out, right upon Brian’s tracks; and by the Lord Harry! if I did not find him, upon my landing on the opposite shore, lying wallowing in his blood, with his throat cut. “Is that you, Brian?” says I, giving him a kick with my foot, to see if he was alive or dead. “What upon earth tempted you to play me and F—— such a dirty, mean trick, as to go and stick yourself like a pig, bringing such a discredit upon the house?—and you so far from home and those who should nurse you.”

'I was so mad with him, that (saving your presence, ma'am) I swore awfully, and called him names that would be ondacent to repeat here; but he only answered with groans and a horrid gurgling in his throat. "It's a choking you are," said I; "but you shan't have your own way and die so easily either, if I can punish you by keeping you alive." So I just turned him upon his stomach, with his head down the steep bank; but he still kept choking and growing black in the face.'

Layton then detailed some particulars of his surgical practice which it is not necessary to repeat. He continued—

'I bound up his throat with my handkerchief, and took him neck and heels, and threw him into the bottom of the boat. Presently he came to himself a little, and sat up in the boat; and—would you believe it?—made several attempts to throw himself into the water. "This will not do," says I; "you've done mischief enough already by cutting your weasand!⁴ If you dare to try that again, I will kill you with the oar." I held it up to threaten him; he was scared, and lay down as quiet as a lamb. I put my foot upon his breast. "Lie still, now! or you'll catch it." He looked piteously at me; he could not speak, but his eyes seemed to say, "Have pity on me, Ned; don't kill me."

'Yes, ma'am, this man, who had just cut his throat, and twice arter that had tried to drown himself, was afraid that I should knock him on the head and kill him. Ha! ha! I never shall forget the work that F—— and I had with him arter I got him up to the house.

'The doctor came and sewed up his throat; and his wife—poor crittur!—came to nurse him. Bad as he was, she was mortal fond of him! He lay there, sick and unable to leave his bed, for three months, and did nothing but pray to God to forgive him, for he thought the devil would surely have him for cutting his own throat; and when he got about again, which is now twelve years ago, he left off drinking entirely, and wanders about the woods with his dogs, hunting. He seldom speaks to any one, and his wife's brother carries on the farm for the family. He is so shy of strangers that 'tis a wonder he came in here. The old wives are afraid of him; but you need not heed him—his troubles are to himself, he harms no one.'

Layton departed, and left me brooding over the sad tale which he had told in such an absurd and jesting manner. It was evident from the account he had given of Brian's attempt at suicide, that the hapless hunter was not wholly answerable for his conduct—that he was a harmless maniac.

The next morning, at the very same hour, Brian again made his appearance; but instead of the rifle across his shoulder, a large stone jar occupied the place, suspended by a stout leather thong. Without saying a word, but with a truly benevolent smile that flitted slowly over his stern features, and lighted them up like a sunbeam breaking from beneath a stormy cloud, he advanced to the table, and unslinging the jar, set it down before me, and in a low and gruff, but by no means an unfriendly, voice, said, 'Milk, for the child,' and vanished.

'How good it was of him! How kind!' I exclaimed, as I poured the precious gift of four quarts of pure new milk out into a deep pan. I had not asked him—had never said

4 Windpipe or throat.

that the poor weanling wanted milk. It was the courtesy of a gentleman—of a man of benevolence and refinement.

For weeks did my strange, silent friend steal in, take up the empty jar, and supply its place with another replenished with milk. The baby knew his step, and would hold out her hands to him and cry, 'Milk!' and Brian would stoop down and kiss her, and his two great dogs lick her face.

'Have you any children, Mr B——?'

'Yes, five; but none like this.'

'My little girl is greatly indebted to you for your kindness.'

'She's welcome, or she would not get it. You are strangers; but I like you all. You look kind, and I would like to know more about you.'

Moodie shook hands with the old hunter, and assured him that we should always be glad to see him. After this invitation, Brian became a frequent guest. He would sit and listen with delight to Moodie while he described to him elephant-hunting at the Cape;⁵ grasping his rifle in a determined manner, and whistling an encouraging air to his dogs. I asked him one evening what made him so fond of hunting.

''Tis the excitement,' he said; 'it drowns thought, and I love to be alone. I am sorry for the creatures, too, for they are free and happy; yet I am led by an instinct I cannot restrain to kill them. Sometimes the sight of their dying agonies recalls painful feelings; and then I lay aside the gun, and do not hunt for days. But 'tis fine to be alone with God in the great woods—to watch the sunbeams stealing through the thick branches, the blue sky breaking in upon you in patches, and to know that all is bright and shiny above you, in spite of the gloom that surrounds you.'

After a long pause, he continued, with much solemn feeling in his look and tone—

'I lived a life of folly for years, for I was respectably born and educated, and had seen something of the world, perhaps more than was good, before I left home for the woods; and from the teaching I had received from kind relatives and parents I should have known how to have conducted myself better. But, madam, if we associate long with the depraved and ignorant, we learn to become even worse than they. I felt deeply my degradation—felt that I had become the slave to low vice, and in order to emancipate myself from the hateful tyranny of evil passions, I did a very rash and foolish thing. I need not mention the manner in which I transgressed God's holy laws; all the neighbours know it, and must have told you long ago. I could have borne reproof, but they turned my sorrow into indecent jests, and, unable to bear their coarse ridicule, I made companions of my dogs and gun, and went forth into the wilderness. Hunting became a habit. I could no longer live without it, and it supplies the stimulant which I lost when I renounced the cursed whiskey-bottle.

'I remember the first hunting excursion I took alone in the forest. How sad and gloomy I felt! I thought that there was no creature in the world so miserable as myself. I was tired and hungry, and I sat down upon a fallen tree to rest. All was still as death around me, and I was fast sinking to sleep, when my attention was aroused by a long, wild cry. My dog, for I had not Chance then, and he's no hunter, pricked up his ears,

5 Cape of Good Hope, South Africa.

but instead of answering with a bark of defiance, he crouched down, trembling, at my feet. "What does this mean?" I cried, and I cocked my rifle and sprang upon the log. The sound came nearer upon the wind. It was like the deep baying of a pack of hounds in full cry. Presently a noble deer rushed past me, and fast upon his trail—I see them now, like so many black devils—swept by a pack of ten or fifteen large, fierce wolves, with fiery eyes and bristling hair, and paws that seemed hardly to touch the ground in their eager haste. I thought not of danger, for, with their prey in view, I was safe; but I felt every nerve within me tremble for the fate of the poor deer. The wolves gained upon him at every bound. A close thicket intercepted his path, and, rendered desperate, he turned at bay. His nostrils were dilated, and his eyes seemed to send forth long streams of light. It was wonderful to witness the courage of the beast. How bravely he repelled the attacks of his deadly enemies, how gallantly he tossed them to the right and left, and spurned them from beneath his hoofs; yet all his struggles were useless, and he was quickly overcome and torn to pieces by his ravenous foes. At that moment he seemed more fortunate even than myself, for I could not see in what manner he had deserved his fate. All his speed and energy, his courage and fortitude, had been exerted in vain. I had tried to destroy myself; but he, with every effort vigorously made for self-preservation, was doomed to meet the fate he dreaded! Is God just to his creatures?

With this sentence on his lips, he started abruptly from his seat and left the house.

One day he found me painting some wild flowers, and was greatly interested in watching the progress I made in the group. Late in the afternoon of the following day he brought me a large bunch of splendid spring flowers.

'Draw these,' said he; 'I have been all the way to the —— lake plains to find them for you.'

Little Katie, grasping them one by one, with infantile joy, kissed every lovely blossom.

'These are God's pictures,' said the hunter, 'and the child, who is all nature, understands them in a minute. Is it not strange that these beautiful things are hid away in the wilderness, where no eyes but the birds of the air, and the wild beasts of the wood, and the insects that live upon them, ever see them? Does God provide, for the pleasure of such creatures, these flowers? Is His benevolence gratified by the admiration of animals whom we have been taught to consider as having neither thought nor reflection? When I am alone in the forest, these thoughts puzzle me.'

Knowing that to argue with Brain was only to call into action the slumbering fires of his fatal malady, I turned the conversation by asking him why he called his favourite dog Chance?

'I found him', said he, 'forty miles back in the bush. He was a mere skeleton. At first I took him for a wolf, but the shape of his head undeceived me. I opened my wallet,⁶ and called him to me. He came slowly, stopping and wagging his tail at every step, and looking me wistfully in the face. I offered him a bit of dried venison, and he soon became friendly, and followed me home, and has never left me since. I called him Chance, after the manner I happened with him; and I would not part with him for twenty dollars.'

⁶ Knapsack.

Alas, for poor Chance! he had, unknown to his master, contracted a private liking for fresh mutton, and one night he killed no less than eight sheep that belonged to Mr D——, on the front road; the culprit, who had been long suspected, was caught in the very act, and this *mischance* cost him his life. Brian was sad and gloomy for many weeks after his favourite's death.

'I would have restored the sheep fourfold', he said, 'if he would but have spared the life of my dog.'

* * *

XXIII. THE FIRE

Now, Fortune, do thy worst! For many years,
Thou, with relentless and unsparing hand,
Hast sternly pour'd on our devoted heads
The poison'd phials of thy fiercest wrath.

The early part of the winter of 1837, a year never to be forgotten in the annals of Canadian history, was very severe. During the month of February, the thermometer often ranged from eighteen to twenty-seven degrees below zero. Speaking of the coldness of one particular day, a genuine brother Jonathan¹ remarked, with charming simplicity, that it was thirty degrees below zero that morning, and it would have been much colder if the thermometer had been longer.

The morning of the seventh was so intensely cold that everything liquid froze in the house. The wood that had been drawn for the fire was green, and it ignited too slowly to satisfy the shivering impatience of women and children; I vented mine inaudibly grumbling over the wretched fire, at which I in vain endeavoured to thaw frozen bread, and to dress crying children.

It so happened that an old friend, the maiden lady before alluded to,² had been staying with us for a few days. She had left us for a visit to my sister, and as some relatives of hers were about to return to Britain, by the way of New York, and had offered to convey letters to friends at home, I had been busy all the day before preparing a packet for England.

It was my intention to walk to my sister's with this packet, directly after the important affair of breakfast had been discussed; but the extreme cold of the morning had occasioned such delay, that it was late before breakfast-things were cleared away.

After dressing, I found the air so keen that I could not venture out without some risk to my nose, and my husband kindly volunteered to go in my stead.

1 Typical Yankee.

2 In the chapter that precedes this one, Moodie writes: 'I was surprised by a visit from an old maiden lady, a friend of mine from C——. She had walked up with a Mr. Crowe, from Peterborough, a young, brisk-looking farmer, in breeches and top-boots, just out from the old country, who, naturally enough thought he would like to roost among the woods.'

I had hired a young Irish girl the day before. Her friends were only just located in our vicinity, and she had never seen a stove until she came to our house. After Moodie left, I suffered the fire to die away in the Franklin stove in the parlour, and went into the kitchen to prepare bread for the oven.

The girl, who was a good-natured creature, had heard me complain bitterly of the cold, and the impossibility of getting the green wood to burn, and she thought that she would see if she could not make a good fire for me and the children, against³ my work was done. Without saying one word about her intention, she slipped out through a door that opened from the parlour into the garden, ran round to the woodyard, filled her lap with cedar chips, and, not knowing the nature of the stove, filled it entirely with the light wood.

Before I had the least idea of my danger, I was aroused from the completion of my task by the crackling and roaring of a large fire, and a suffocating smell of burning soot. I looked up at the kitchen cooking-stove. All was right there. I knew I had left no fire in the parlour stove; but not being able to account for the smoke and smell of burning, I opened the door, and, to my dismay, found the stove red-hot, from the front plate to the topmost pipe that let out the smoke through the roof.

My first impulse was to plunge a blanket, snatched from the servant's bed, which stood in the kitchen, into cold water. This I thrust into the stove, and upon it I threw water, until all was cool below. I then ran up to the loft, and, by exhausting all the water in the house, even to that contained in the boilers upon the fire, contrived to cool down the pipes which passed through the loft. I then sent the girl out of doors to look at the roof, which, as a very deep fall of snow had taken place the day before, I hoped would be completely covered, and safe from all danger of fire.

She quickly returned, stamping, and tearing her hair, and making a variety of uncouth outcries, from which I gathered that the roof was in flames.

This was terrible news, with my husband absent, no man in the house, and a mile and a quarter from any other habitation. I ran out to ascertain the extent of the misfortune, and found a large fire burning in the roof between the two stove-pipes. The heat of the fires had melted off all the snow, and a spark from the burning pipe had already ignited the shingles. A ladder, which for several months had stood against the house, had been moved two days before to the barn, which was at the top of the hill near the road; there was no reaching the fire through that source. I got out the dining-table, and tried to throw water upon the roof by standing on a chair placed upon it, but I only expended the little water that remained in the boiler, without reaching the fire. The girl still continued weeping and lamenting.

'You must go for help,' I said. 'Run as fast as you can to my sister's, and fetch your master.'

'And lave you, ma'arm, and the childher alone wid the burnin' house?'

'Yes, yes! Don't stay one moment.'

'I have no shoes, ma'arm, and the snow is so deep.'

'Put on your master's boots; make haste, or we shall be lost before help comes.'

The girl put on the boots and started, shrieking 'Fire!' the whole way. This was utterly useless, and only impeded her progress by exhausting her strength. After she had vanished from the head of the clearing into the wood, and I was left quite alone, with the house burning over my head, I paused one moment to reflect what had best be done.

The house was built of cedar logs; in all probability it would be consumed before any help could arrive. There was a brisk breeze blowing up from the frozen lake, and the thermometer stood at eighteen degrees below zero. We were placed between the two extremes of heat and cold, and there was as much danger to be apprehended from the one as the other. In the bewilderment of the moment, the direful extent of the calamity never struck me; we wanted but this to put the finishing stroke to our misfortunes, to be thrown naked, houseless, and penniless, upon the world. '*What shall I save first?*' was the thought just then uppermost in my mind. Bedding and clothing appeared the most essentially necessary, and, without another moment's pause, I set to work with a right good will to drag all that I could from my burning home.

While little Agnes, Dunbar, and baby Donald filled the air with their cries, Katie, as if fully conscious of the importance of exertion, assisted me in carrying out sheets and blankets, and dragging trunks and boxes some way up the hill, to be out of the way of the burning brands when the roof should fall in.

How many anxious looks I gave to the head of the clearing as the fire increased, and large pieces of burning pine began to fall through the boarded ceiling about the lower rooms where we were at work. The children I had kept under a large dresser in the kitchen, but it now appeared absolutely necessary to remove them to a place of safety. To expose the young, tender things to the direct cold, was almost as bad as leaving them to the mercy of the fire. At last I hit upon a plan to keep them from freezing. I emptied all the clothes out of a large, deep chest of drawers, and dragged the empty drawers up the hill; these I lined with blankets, and placed a child in each drawer, covering it well over with the bedding, giving to little Agnes the charge of the baby to hold between her knees, and keep well covered until help should arrive. Ah, how long it seemed coming!

The roof was now burning like a brush-heap, and, unconsciously, the child and I were working under a shelf upon which were deposited several pounds of gunpowder, which had been procured for blasting a well, as all our water had to be brought uphill from the lake. This gunpowder was in a stone jar, secured by a paper stopper; the shelf upon which it stood was on fire, but it was utterly forgotten by me at the time, and even afterwards, when my husband was working on the burning loft over it.

I found that I should not be able to take many more trips for goods. As I passed out of the parlour for the last time, Katie looked up at her father's flute, which was suspended upon two brackets, and said,

'Oh, dear mamma! do save papa's flute; he will be so sorry to lose it.'

God bless the dear child for the thought! the flute was saved; and, as I succeeded in dragging out a heavy chest of clothes, and looked up once more despairingly to the road, I saw a man running at full speed. It was my husband. Help was at hand, and my heart uttered a deep thanksgiving as another and another figure came upon the scene.

I had not felt the intense cold, although without cap, or bonnet, or shawl; with my hands bare and exposed to the bitter, biting air. The intense excitement, the anxiety to save all I could, had so totally diverted my thoughts from myself, that I had felt nothing of the danger to which I had been exposed; but now that help was near, my knees trembled under me, I felt giddy and faint, and dark shadows seemed dancing before my eyes.

The moment my husband and brother-in-law entered the house, the latter exclaimed, 'Moodie, the house is gone; save what you can of your winter stores and furniture.' Moodie thought differently. Prompt and energetic in danger, and possessing admirable presence of mind and coolness when others yield to agitation and despair, he sprang upon the burning loft and called for water. Alas, there was none!

'Snow, snow; hand me pailfuls of snow!'

Oh! it was bitter work filling those pails with frozen snow; but Mr T—— and I worked at it as fast as we were able.

The violence of the fire was greatly checked by covering the boards of the loft with this snow. More help had now arrived. Young B—— and S—— had brought the ladder down with them from the barn, and were already cutting away the burning roof, and flinging the flaming brands into the deep snow.

'Mrs Moodie, have you any pickled meat?'

'We have just killed one of our cows and salted it for winter stores.'

'Well, then, fling the beef into the snow, and let us have the brine.'

This was an admirable plan. Wherever the brine wetted the shingles, the fire turned from it, and concentrated into one spot.

But I had not time to watch the brave workers on the roof. I was fast yielding to the effects of over excitement and fatigue, when my brother's team dashed down the clearing, bringing my excellent old friend, Miss B——, and the servant-girl.

My brother sprang out, carried me back into the house, and wrapped me up in one of the large blankets scattered about. In a few minutes I was seated with the dear children in the sleigh, and on the way to a place of warmth and safety.

Katie alone suffered from the intense cold. The dear little creature's feet were severely frozen, but were fortunately restored by her uncle discovering the fact before she approached the fire, and rubbing them well with snow.

In the meanwhile, the friends we had left so actively employed at the house, succeeded in getting the fire under before it had destroyed the walls. The only accident that occurred was to a poor dog that Moodie had called Snarleyowe. He was struck by a burning brand thrown from the house, and crept under the barn and died.

Beyond the damage done to the building, the loss of our potatoes and two sacks of flour, we had escaped in a manner almost miraculous. This fact shows how much can be done by persons working in union, without bustle and confusion, or running in each other's way. Here were six men, who, without the aid of water, succeeded in saving a building, which, at first sight, almost all of them had deemed past hope. In after-years, when entirely burnt out in a disastrous fire that consumed almost all we were worth in the world, some four hundred persons were present, with a fire-engine to second their endeavours, yet all was lost. Every person seemed in the way; and

though the fire was discovered immediately after it took place, nothing was done beyond saving some of the furniture.

* * *

[After the fire, circumstances improved for the Moodies, so much so that Mrs Moodie writes of that time: 'We were always cheerful, and sometimes contented and happy.' The Rebellion of 1837 brought this period to a sudden close, and in 1839, the Moodies departed from the bush to begin their 'life in the clearings'. In the final chapter, Mrs Moodie bids a somewhat sentimental 'Adieu to the Woods,' but concludes her book with two paragraphs of stern warning.]

XXV. ADIEU TO THE WOODS

* * *

Reader! it is not my intention to trouble you with the sequel of our history. I have given you a faithful picture of a life in the backwoods of Canada, and I leave you to draw from it your own conclusions. To the poor, industrious working man it presents many advantages; to the poor gentleman, none! The former works hard, puts up with coarse, scanty fare, and submits, with good grace, to hardships that would kill a domesticated animal at home. Thus he becomes independent, inasmuch as the land that he has cleared finds him in the common necessities of life; but it seldom, if ever, in remote situations, accomplishes more than this. The gentleman can neither work so hard, live so coarsely, nor endure so many privations as his poorer but more fortunate neighbour. Unaccustomed to manual labour, his services in the field are not of a nature to secure for him a profitable return. The task is new to him, he knows not how to perform it well; and, conscious of his deficiency, he expends his little means in hiring labour, which his bush-farm can never repay. Difficulties increase, debts grow upon him, he struggles in vain to extricate himself, and finally sees his family sink into hopeless ruin.

If these sketches should prove the means of deterring one family from sinking their property, and shipwrecking all their hopes, by going to reside in the backwoods of Canada, I shall consider myself amply repaid for revealing the secrets of the prison-house, and feel that I have not toiled and suffered in the wilderness in vain.