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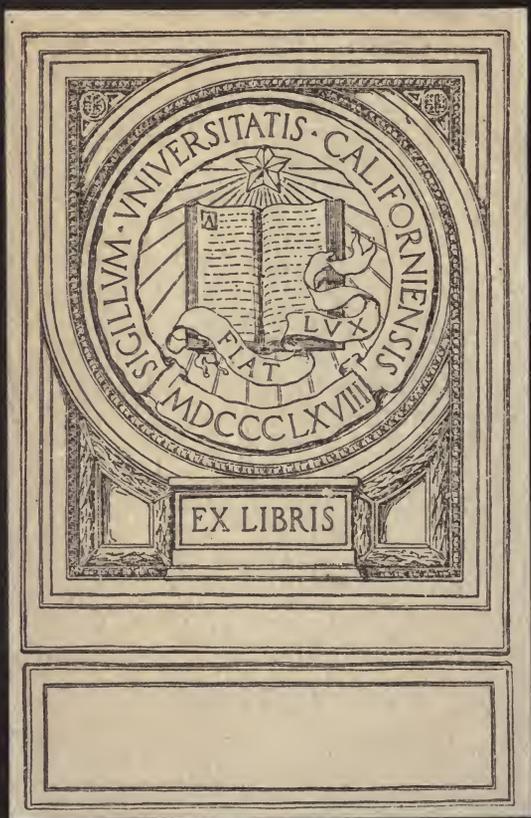
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**COMING
OF THE
LOYALISTS**

BY

C. HAIGHT

*Author of "Country Life in Canada Fifty Years Ago,"
"Here and There in the Home Land," "Before
the Coming of the Loyalists."*

TORONTO :
HAIGHT & COMPANY.
1899.



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An edition of 1,000 copies printed.

U. E. SERIES. No. 2.

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READ BEFORE THE UNITED EMPIRE LOYALISTS' ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO
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COMING OF THE LOYALISTS.

When the treaty of peace was ratified many of the less prominent loyalists with their sympathizers imagined that the victors would be content to bury the hatchet, cease their persecution, and that in a short time peace and good-will would reign throughout the country. They soon discovered that this was a delusion, that their foes were more relentless than ever, and that there was nothing for it but to flee their homes, and consider themselves fortunate to escape with their lives. Those who had taken a more conspicuous part, anticipating what would follow, had already sought protection within the British lines. Now was seen a strange and distressing sight. Men, women and children of all ages and conditions parting with friends, and with tear-stained cheeks turning their backs upon the homes that had sheltered them and which were bound to them by the tenderest recollections, and with such effects as they could carry with them, hastened along the highways that led to the larger towns on the Coast—then in the hands of the British—from Savannah to New York to take ship to some land, God only knew where, for they did not. The scenes that were witnessed at the different towns before and during the evacuation were in many cases heart rending. The protection guaranteed by the treaty to the loyalists was violated at once, there was no safety for them only within the British

lines, and they were often horrified by seeing their friends, who had not been so fortunate, seized and shamefully maltreated and in some cases hanged by the dozen. No wonder they were terrified and glad to make their escape with their lives. So great was the number of refugees that fled to New York to place themselves under the protection of the British General then in command, that he was sorely perplexed what to do with them. Thousands had escaped from the New England States to New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Other thousands had fled from the South to England and the West India Islands, and thousands more from New York and the adjoining States had sought his protection, and were looking to him to transport them out of the country. The principal danger that presented itself and which he wished to avoid, was the overcrowding of some of the places, which would add to the difficulties of the refugees instead of lessening them.

In the midst of this embarrassment his thoughts were directed, it would almost seem providentially, to a certain man, a refugee then in New York, who bore the name of Grass. There was a bit of history connected with this man of which Sir Guy Carleton had heard and which he thought might prove useful. During the time of the French War this Capt. Grass had been made prisoner and was for two years a captive at Fort Frontenac. Sir Guy remembering this sent for him, and questioned him about the country and so favorably did Grass speak about it that Sir Guy at once determined to make use of the information and through it find relief from the embarrassing position in which he was placed. He then asked Capt. Grass if he would undertake to conduct a colony of loyalists to Canada, which he consented to do. Five

vessels were at once procured and furnished to convey the banished refugee loyalists to Upper Canada and despatched under the conduct of Capt. Grass. They sailed round the coast of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and up the St. Lawrence to Sorel at the mouth of the Richelieu river, where they arrived October 17th, 1783, and disembarked.

Why the vessels did not return to Quebec or go on to Montreal which they had time to do, is not stated. The prospect must have been very depressing. Winter was rapidly approaching and there was not a single place of shelter in which they could put themselves. It is true they had some linen tents, but these would afford but poor protection from the cold. The gravity of their position drove them to immediate action, and every hand that could wield an axe or handle a saw was put in requisition and very soon there arose on the banks of the river, as if by the magic of an enchanter's wand, a village composed of rude and unsightly huts and shanties, which if any one of them had come upon a few months before they would have taken as a settlement of some semi-civilized tribe but a remove above the Indians, and in these hastily improvised kennels, inferior to the cow sheds they had left behind, they were to pass a long dreary winter. If there had been only a few of them the prospect would not have been so discouraging, but here were five ship loads of human beings dumped on the inhospitable shores of the lower St. Lawrence, probably three or four thousand souls, composed of aged men and women, married couples with their children, mothers with infants in their arms, young men and delicate maidens, boys and girls, many of them were cultured and had filled important positions, some of them had been in affluent circumstances, and there was not one who had not been the possessor of a comfortable

home.] The transition which a few months had brought about to them must have been heart rending to contemplate. But there was nothing for it but to put their trust in God, and face the situation, which they did with stoical fortitude. All that could be done was done to protect the aged and the women and children. Every crevice was carefully filled with moss and clay to keep out the biting North wind, but after doing the very best they could their case was miserable beyond description. They were huddled together in these wretched holes like pigs, shivering day after day through weary months with cold and suffering with frost bites, wanting the most common conveniences and possessing but few cooking utensils, but that did not so much matter for they had but little to cook. Their larder was mostly limited to hard tack, and these poor souls waited on, listening to the Northern blast as it shrieked around their hovels, whirling the snow into billowy drifts which sometimes covered them up, but this was not so bad for it shut out the wind and frost and made their huts warmer. The difficulty was that of having to dig a way out, but this they did without grumbling.

All things come to an end, and we can well imagine with what pleasure they watched the coming spring, the gradual wasting of the snow, the disappearing of the ice, and the swelling buds on the trees. At last the day of emancipation came and some time in May, probably about the middle of the month, they set out on their voyage West in batteaux. This at that time was a very laborious journey, but they toiled on manfully day after day making slow but steady progress, the river presenting but few obstacles until Montreal was reached. After that they had to encounter the fierce rapids which occur on the way as

far as Prescott, but these tremendous obstacles to navigation were overcome, and in July they arrived at Cataragui, ten months having passed since their departure from New York, well pleased no doubt that their wearisome journey had come to an end, and there for the present we shall leave them and return again to the State of New York. But before proceeding let me mention a thought that has occurred to me. What momentous results not unfrequently flow out of comparatively trivial incidents. A man is made prisoner, a common occurrence in war time, and is held a captive for two years in a trading-post far away from civilization; after his release he wanders away and in the course of time finds himself a refugee in New York with thousands of others. The fact of his early captivity becomes known to the Governor, who is in sore perplexity where to send the multitude of loyalists under his protection, makes inquiry of him about the nature of the country in the vicinity of his captivity and hears it so well spoken of that he despatches a colony of refugees to it, and thus it came to pass that through these two quite common occurrences in the life of one man the first contingent of loyal prisoners were sent, and became the founders of the fairest province in the Dominion of Canada.

If a stranger had been visiting the State of New York early in the spring of the year 1784, his attention could not fail to be arrested by the strange things that were occurring there. Small groups were to be seen tramping along the highways in every part of the State and all were bending their way towards the North. Another thing quite as noticeable was the stern resolve that marked the expression of the men's faces, and the firm tread of their feet on the roadway as if every footfall as they passed on was an emphatic protest against the cruelty which

first robbed them and then expelled them from their homes. The women and children that accompanied them—together with a few personal effects—were mounted on pack-horses. The distressed look and tear-stained cheeks touched a more tender chord of the observer's heart. As he passed on he met other groups who bore the same appearance and were pressing on in the same direction, and so day after day as he pursued his journey he was continually meeting people apparently in the same state of mind and going the same way, to the North. There were two questions that would naturally arise in this observer's mind. What did it mean? and whither were they bound? In the first place it meant that these travellers had the courage of their convictions, they had been and still were loyal to their King and country and were prepared to accept the consequences. The clamor the rebel leaders made about the oppressive acts of the British ministry had enough truth in it to give them a pretext to raise a hue and cry for liberty, but the ears of these men were too keen not to detect the false notes in it. They knew the real motive was independence and the spoils that would fall into their hands. That they were right had been proved a thousand times throughout the progress of the war. They had no faith,—how could they have?—in a people who had all along proved recreant to the principles they so loudly advocated. They were shouting for liberty on one hand and practising the worst kind of tyranny on the other. They had secured a treaty of peace by entering into a solemn obligation to make good the loyalists' losses, not to molest them or confiscate their property, and yet their first act was to do the very thing they had pledged themselves not to do, and not only that, after maltreating and robbing them, had served them with a summary no-

tice to quit the country. And in answer to the second query, they were on their way to Canada where they would still be under the protection of the British flag and where they expected to enjoy liberty in its truer and higher sense. In this they were not deceived, and we are proud to say that there is no country under the sun that enjoys it to a greater degree than we do.

As we have intimated, this movement was general from almost every part of the State and the number was augmented by stragglers from Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Massachusetts and Vermont. The first aim of these unfortunates was to strike one or the other of the two military highways that led to Ogdensburgh or Oswego. As they proceeded on their way others joined in with them. On they went through the dust, under a broiling sun or wading through mud in the pelting rain. Still on they trod, day after day, heart sore and foot sore, weary and faint, only too glad when night overtook them that they might lie down by the road side and rest with no other covering than the starry heavens. In the earlier part of their journey they might be fortunate enough to fall in with a barn or shed in which to find shelter, and sometimes a woman living on their route had compassion on their unfortunate sisters and their poor children and took them into their houses. The sufferings and hardships these poor creatures had to endure as they pursued their terrible journeys week after week, covering the weary miles with aching limbs, their way often leading through leagues of lonely wilderness and living like gipsies, was truly heart rending. The very thought that these recitals are but feeble and imperfect pictures of actual occurrences in the lives of our ancestors, is enough to bring the salty tear to light in the eye of a stoic.

Many more of the refugees selected the water route either by the way of Lake Champlain and down the Richelieu river to Sorel and then ascending the St. Lawrence—most of those that went that way remained in Lower Canada—or leaving their boats at Plattsburgh and going across country to Ogdensburgh. The most popular route was up the Hudson river to Albany, which was on the verge of civilization at that time. It may be well to mention here, that the difficulties to be encountered either by land or water were greatly enhanced from the fact that then nearly the whole of Northern New York was an unbroken wilderness. A little above Albany the Mohawk river joins the Hudson. This river, which runs through the entire length of that beautiful strip of country known as the Mohawk valley, the late home of Sir Wm. Johnson and the tribe of Indians to whom it owes its name and who, after the war, was granted a large tract of land on the Bay of Quinte, to which place they removed about this time and where a remnant of the tribe still lives. But to return, at the debouchure of the above river the voyageurs leave the Hudson and follow it as far as Fort Stanwix—Rome. At this point there was a portage of twenty miles or more over which their boats and effects had to be carried to Wood Creek, which they descended into Lake Oneida, and thence down the Oswego river to Oswego, and from that either across the lake by schooner or around the foot of the lake to Kingston, to which point nearly all the refugees we have been speaking of converged. My grandfather Canniff came by this route, an account of which will be found in my book, "Country Life in Canada," and also in the second volume of "Dr. Ryerson's History of the American Loyalists," and so after weeks and months had passed since their exodus began, coming

as they did from different States and widely scattered districts, most of them having travelled many hundreds of miles, through the bush, over badly constructed roads, ascending rivers and navigating lakes, exposed to dangers innumerable, in dread of Indians and wild beasts, and when the long toilsome day was done and night closed in upon them, with no other bed to retire to for the rest they so much needed but the green turf, and perhaps a gnarled root of a tree for a pillow and the canopy of heaven for a blanket, and even in such unfavorable conditions if they could have passed the night undisturbed, they might have opened their eyes to the morning sun, refreshed. But the shadow of the approaching night brought with it clouds of mosquitos whose persistent assaults drove away sleep. At that time too myriads of frogs in adjoining swamps awoke to their duty and began their croaking with surprising unanimity, sending forth waves of unmelodious sound which broke on the ear with painful force, and as if these free concerts, which extended far into the night, were not sufficient to test human patience, the prowling wolves on the hills joined in and made the night still more hideous by their cruel howls. Dr. Ryerson says: "A considerable number came to Canada from New Jersey and the neighborhood of Philadelphia on foot through the then wilderness of New York, carrying their little effects and small children on pack horses and driving their cattle, which subsisted on the herbage of the woods and valleys, and in many cases when in difficulty were assisted by the Indians. The hardships, exposures and privations and sufferings which the first loyalists endured making their way from their confiscated homes to Canada were longer and more severe than anything narrated of the Pilgrim and Puritan fathers, whose hardships and persecutions were trifling in

comparison to the persecutions, imprisonments, confiscations and often death inflicted on the Loyal adherents of the Crown."

Of the many thousands of the refugees who had fled from their homes to the different British possessions in America in quest of security and a home where they might again begin in the world, none were more fortunate than those who had found their way to what is known as the Bay of Quinte Country. It possessed all the requisites both as to position and soil that an intelligent settler could ask for. The bay along whose shore so many of them were to plant new homes and make another start in life is one of the most beautiful sheets of water on this Continent. How it came by its name is unknown, or what white man first traversed it. It was a scene the like of which few men have had the good fortune to discover. Its far reaching wooded banks and charming recesses, its sedgy shore and gravelly beach, constantly changing as it bends inwards and presenting new and more attractive pictures to the eye, could not fail, if the beholder had in the smallest degree the painter's receptive sense of the beautiful, to have filled his soul with delight. Long before the Frenchman came it had been one of the leading routes used by the Indians, either when on the war path or hunting expeditions. Many and many a time have long lines of canoes filled with dusky warriors glided silently and swiftly over its bosom bent on some hostile enterprise. Many a time has the warwhoop echoed along its shores. It was a favorite hunting ground and stopping place. I have picked upon the old farm in my early days dozens of flint arrow heads and some stone chisels. In one of the fields there was a bowl shaped depression in and around which, as the soil was turned up by the plow, bits

of soft earthenware were discovered; there was quite a quantity of it at one time. During the French regime their voyagers traversed the Bay on their way to the trading posts of Niagara and Detroit. The whole land as far as the Pacific, West, and the Arctic in the North was a vast hunting ground. The Frenchmen were keen after the rich furs, and to facilitate the traffic with the Indians established these trading posts which were in fact small forts, and which were frequently used for more serious purposes. Of these the principal ones were Frontenac, Niagara and Detroit.

In 1783 Sir Frederick Haldimand, then Governor of the Province of Quebec, instructed the Surveyor-General, Major Holland, to proceed to Western Canada and lay out a range of townships on the Bay of Quinte west of Kingston, at which place his instructions were to begin. After laying out proper reservations for the town and fort, he was to survey the townships each of which was to be six miles square, the lots to contain each 200 acres and to be twenty-five in number each range. This was known then as township number one, afterwards Kingston. The survey of the four townships which extended along the North shore of the bay to where it turns the West point of the last township, was not completed until July of the following year, and indeed the fourth township was not quite done then, and the hut of Surveyor-General Holland who had made this his headquarters, was still standing when the batteaux of Major Vanalstine's band were pushed upon its shore. After this was done the surveyors crossed over the bay and laid out township No. 5, which lies in Prince Edward County on the North shore and opposite numbers 3 and 4, subsequently townships number 6 and 7, in the same county were surveyed, and so on, until

Kingston

all the land around the bay had been laid out. These townships were not named for a good many years afterwards and the people became so accustomed to designate them by the numerical prefix that they continued to do so long after they were named. It was the general custom after I had grown to manhood. These townships all received royal names, and as you know King George the Third had a goodly family—fifteen children—the loyalists found no difficulty in making a selection. The first was named after the King, Kingston and then in their order Ernestown, Fredericksburgh, Adolphustown, Marysburgh, Sophiasburgh and Ameliasburgh. In consequence of the delay in completing the survey the refugees had to wait in Kingston, and a large number of them had been there for some time and all were growing impatient, for the season was passing and it was therefore a matter of grave importance to them to get located as soon as possible.

The distribution began in July, the Governor, who was in Kingston at the time, assisting. The allotment of the townships were made in the following manner. To Captain Grass, who had been the main instrument in bringing the people to this section, the Governor said: "Captain Grass as you were the first person to mention this fine country and have been here formerly as a prisoner of war, you must have the first choice; the townships are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, which do you choose?" "I will take No. 1," replied Grass. The Governor then gave out the remaining numbers as follows: Number two to Sir John Johnson, number three to Colonel Rogers, number four to Major Vanalstine and number five to Colonel McDonell, after which the several companies proceeded with their leaders to the townships that had been assigned to them, and then drew their land by lots as being the most

satisfactory way of doing it. The process was very simple. The number of a lot was written on a slip of paper, these strips were put in a hat or small box into which the settler thrust his hand and drew out one. These numbers were duly recorded with the drawer's name, to whom afterwards the government issued patents or deeds, but in the meantime they at once took possession of the lots, and it is worthy of mention that several persons in the fourth town drew the lots they wanted.

It will not be out of place to mention the following incident here. At the time the allotment was made, the Governor said to Capt. Grass, "It is too late in the season to put in any crop, what will you do for food?" The Captain replied, "if they were furnished with turnip seed there was still time to grow some." "Very well," said the Governor, "you shall have it," and it was sent. They cleared a spot of ground in the centre of which Kingston now stands, and raised a fine crop of turnips which served for food the ensuing winter with the government rations. The original settlers along the St. Lawrence and the Bay of Quinte were largely composed of soldiers of disbanded regiments; nearly all of the 84th were placed in the second and third townships. The settlers of the fourth were mostly men who had not been in the regular service and among them a number of Quakers, while the fifth was handed over to the Hessians. The German and Dutch soldiers made very poor settlers. It is said the question was often asked why the government settled the Hessian regiment there. The supposition was that the soldiers could not work on land, they could find fish in the water along the lots and so live and support their families.

Having followed the loyalists to their promised land and having seen that the portion each was to get had been received, let us take a look around. Upper Canada at the

date this people set their feet upon its shores was an unbroken wilderness from end to end and the undisputed home of Indians and wild beasts. The section which had been assigned to the refugees for settlement consisted of a range of townships running along the North shore of the St. Lawrence from Cornwall to Kingston and West around the Bay of Quinte, a narrow strip of country about two hundred miles in length. There was not a cleared rood of land nor a hut to be found within its bounds—save at Kingston—the limitless forest pressed its serried edge to the water, presenting a bold front to its assailants and for many a long day, aye for many a year in fact, did their sinewy arms smite it with their keen edged axes, before which it melted away.

At midsummer 1784—as we have seen, a large number of people—several thousands, had gathered at Kingston. Their appearance certainly did not suggest anything in the way of an excursion party pausing at a health resort where they could guzzle nasty mineral water and fancy it did them good. No, they had been giving King George a hand and rather got the worst of it. The old gentleman having still quite a bit of land left on this side the water, and feeling sorry for them, told them to come and he would give it to them. Here they were, and according to promise, each man had received his 200 acres and went into possession, which he had no sooner done than he discovered he had a huge white elephant on his hands. Great trees covered the farms from end to end. There was not a place where they could plant anything. The lookout was discouraging indeed. If they had come there properly equipped to undertake the heavy task of clearing away the forest it would have been different, but they had been literally dumped into it, inexperienced and practically unprepared for the work at hand. I cannot conceive of a

more pitiful picture than these unhappy creatures presented at that time. Just fancy several thousand people composed of men, women and children scattered through the woods for a couple of hundred miles; many of whom had not so much as a hut into which they could crawl for shelter and rest, exposed to the weather and to the bites of the mosquito and black fly, without the means of subsistence and living on the coarse rations furnished by the government. The discomforts of such a life to a people who had known brighter days were grievous to bear and they must have felt it keenly. But "when the —— drives one needs must go" it is said. There was but one way out of it, and that was to do as they had done with former difficulties, face them like men, and the quicker they commenced and the harder they toiled the sooner they would reach what they were after.

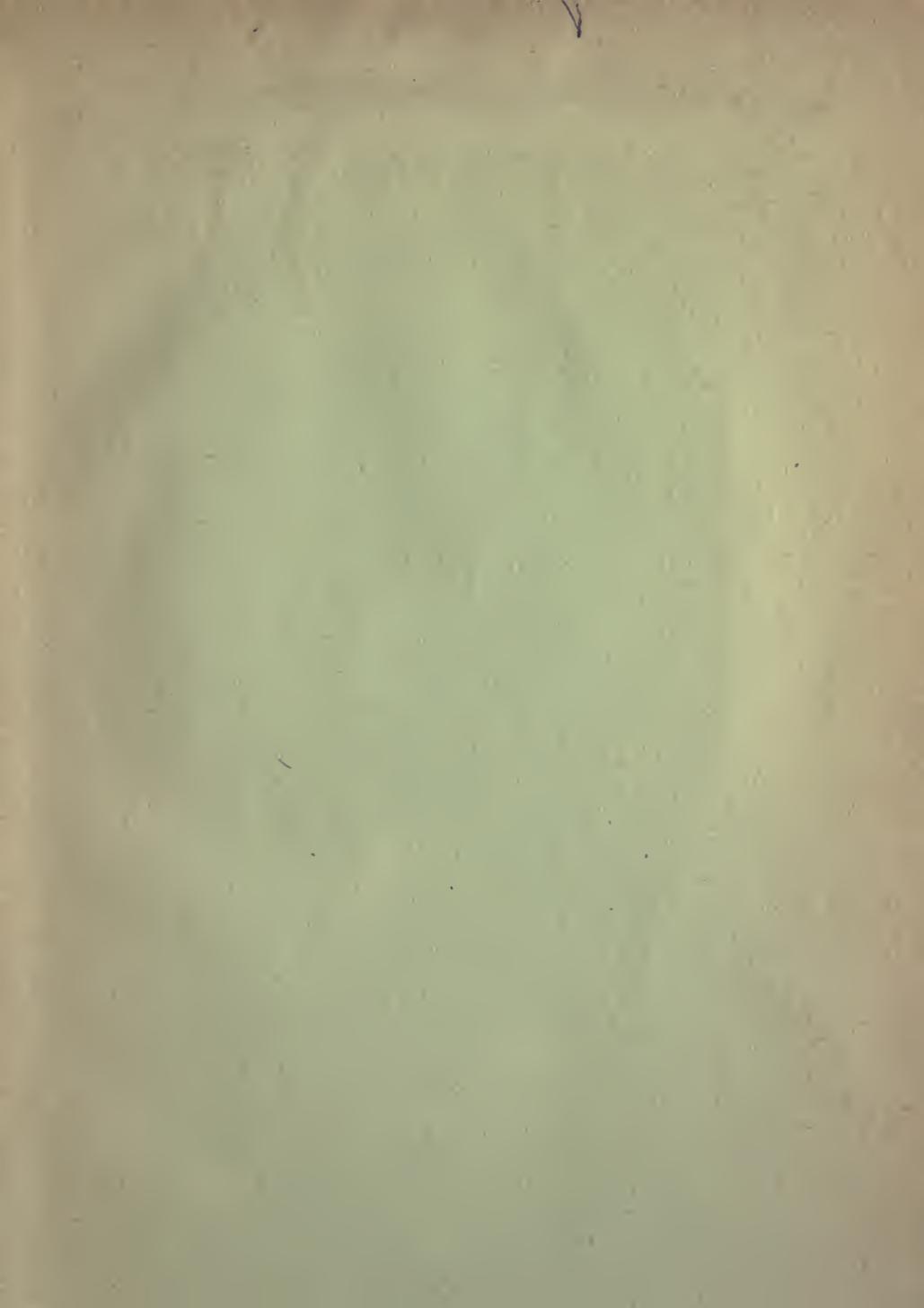
The first thing that presented itself to the settler's mind was to provide a place in which he could put himself and family, and in those days even the construction of such a rude tenement as a settler's shanty is understood to be was attended with considerable difficulty from the fact that there were no boards to be had. Logs could be cut, notched and rolled up on one another for walls very quickly, but the roof was the trouble, and here human ingenuity, which is seldom beaten, steps in and fills the want, with the bark of trees.

In a very short time all along the bay were to be seen the evidences that the settlement of a new country had begun in the curling smoke ascending from the cabins, the ring of the settler's axe in the woods, and the crash of falling timber.

It will be quite clear to every one that if the loyalists had not been supplied with food in these early days they must have perished. They arrived in the country in a state

of destitution, and even if they had been in a much better case than they unfortunately were, the laborious task of clearing away the forest, was one that could not be pushed with any rapidity. Three years of hard work at least had to be put in before sufficient land could be reclaimed on which they could subsist, and in the meantime if they had not had a source of supply to fall back on their position would have been hopeless. The government had foreseen this and for three years furnished them with rations, clothing and implements.

The difficulties they had to contend with the first three or four years were very great, particularly the third year, which is known as the "hungry year"—1787-8—During this terrible year many of them were on the eve of starvation, and the deprivations and sufferings of all were most severe. If I had time I could tell you sad stories about those days which I have heard from the lips of the sufferers themselves when I was a boy. After this terrible time the tide turned and the world seems to have gone more smoothly with them. There is nothing more heard about want, but the daily grind went on, and for many years to come hard work and plenty of it was to be the normal condition of their lives. But with good food and many added comforts this could be submitted to without complaint. My recollection goes back to the beginning of the '30's. At that time fifty years of the country's life had passed and carried with them all the old men and women as well as nearly all the middle aged of the original settlers. Those who were young at the time had now grown old and were the grandfathers and grandmothers of my early days, and a fine robust race they were. They had borne "the burden and heat of the day" patiently. God had richly blessed the labor of their hands and made of them a contented and happy people.



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