

From: Catharine Parr Traill, *The Backwoods of Canada. Being Letters from the Wife of an Emmigrant Officer, Illustrative of the Domestic Economy of British North America* (London, England: Knight, 1836).

Letter II

Arrival off Newfoundland.—Singing of the Captain's Goldfinch previous to the discovery of Land.—Gulf of St. Laurence.—Scenery of the River St. Laurence.—Difficult navigation of the River.—French Fisherman engaged as a Pilot.—Isle of Bic.—Green Island.—Regular Pilot engaged.—Scenery of Green Island.—Gros Isle.—Quarantine Regulations.—Emigrants on Gros Isle.—Arrival off Quebec.—Prospect of the City and Environs.

Brig Laurel, River St. Laurence,
August 6, 1832.

I left off writing, my dear mother, from this simple cause,—I had nothing to say. One day was but the echo, as it were, of the one that preceded it; so that a page copied from the mate's log would have proved as amusing, and to the full as instructive, as my journal, provided I had kept one during the last fortnight.

So barren of events has that time been that the sight of a party of bottle-nosed whales, two or three seals, and a porpoise, possibly on their way to a dinner or tea party at the North Pole, was considered an occurrence of great importance. Every glass was in requisition as soon as they made their appearance, and the marine monsters were well nigh stared out of countenance.

We came within sight of the shores of Newfoundland on the 5th of August, just one month from the day we took our last look of the British Isles. Yet though the coast was brown, and rugged, and desolate, I hailed its appearance with rapture. Never did anything seem so refreshing and delicious to me as the land breeze that came to us, as I thought, bearing health and gladness on its wings.

I had noticed with some curiosity the restless activity of the captain's bird some hours previous to "land" being proclaimed from the look-out station. He sang continually, and his note was longer, clearer, and more thrilling than heretofore; the little creature, the captain assured me, was conscious of the difference in the air as we approached the land. "I trust

almost as much to my bird as to my glass," he said, "and have never yet been deceived."

Our progress was somewhat tedious after we entered the gulf. Ninety miles across is the entrance of this majestic river; it seems an ocean in itself. Half our time is spent poring over the great chart in the cabin, which is constantly being rolled and unrolled by my husband to gratify my desire of learning the names of the distant shores and islands which we pass.

We are without a pilot as yet, and the captain being a cautious seaman is unwilling to risk the vessel on this dangerous navigation; so that we proceed but slowly on our voyage.

August 7.—We were visited this morning by a beautiful little bird, not much larger than our goldcrested wren. I hailed it as a bird of good omen—a little messenger sent to bid us welcome to the New World, and I felt almost a childish joy at the sight of our little visitor. There are happy moments in our lives when we draw the greatest pleasure from the most trifling sources, as children are pleased with the most simple toy.

From the hour we entered the gulf a perceptible change had taken place in all on board. The captain, a man of grave, quiet manners, grew quite talkative. My husband was more than usually animated, and even the thoughtful young Scotchman became positively an entertaining person. The crew displayed the most lively zeal in the performance of their duty, and the goldfinch sung cheerily from dawn till sunset. As for me, Hope was busy in my heart, chasing from it all feelings of doubt or regret that might sadden the present or cloud the future.

I am now able to trace distinctly the outline of the coast on the southern side of the river. Sometimes the high lands are suddenly enveloped in dense clouds of mist, which are in constant motion, rolling along in shadowy billows, now tinted with rosy light, now white and fleecy, or bright as silver, as they catch the sunbeams. So rapid are the changes that take place in this fog-bank, that perhaps the next time I raise my eyes I behold the scene changed as if by magic. The misty curtain is slowly drawn up, as if by invisible hands, and the wild, wooded mountains partially revealed, with their bold rocky shores and sweeping bays. At other times the vapoury volume dividing, moves along the valleys and deep ravines like lofty pillars of smoke, or hangs in snowy draperies among the dark forest pines.

I am never weary of watching these fantastic clouds; they recall to me the pleasant time I spent in the Highlands, among the cloud-capped hills of the north.

As yet, the air is cold, and we experience frequent squalls of wind and hail, with occasional peals of thunder; then again all is serene and bright, and the air is filled with fragrance, and flies, and bees, and birds come flitting past us from the shore.

August 8.—Though I cannot but dwell with feelings of wonder and admiration on the majesty and power of this mighty river, I begin to grow weary of its immensity, and long for a nearer view of the shore; but at present we see nothing more than long lines of pine-clad hills, with here and there a white speck, which they tell me are settlements and villages to the south; while huge mountains divested of verdure bound our view on the north side [of] the river. My admiration of mountainous scenery makes me dwell with more interest on this side the river, and I watch the progress of cultivation among these rugged and inhospitable regions with positive pleasure.

During the last two days we have been anxiously looking out for a pilot to take us up to Quebec. Various signals have been fired, but hitherto without success; no pilot has condescended to visit us, so we are somewhat in the condition of a stage without a coachman, with only some inexperienced hand to hold the reins. I already perceive some manifestations of impatience appearing among us, but no one blames the captain, who is very anxious about the matter; as the river is full of rocks and shoals, and presents many difficulties to a person not intimately acquainted with the navigation. Besides, he is answerable for the safety of the ship to the underwriters, in case he neglects to take a pilot on board.

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While writing the above I was roused by a bustle on deck, and going up to learn the cause was informed that a boat with the long looked-for pilot had put off from the shore; but, after all the fuss and bustle, it proved only a French fisherman, with a poor ragged lad, his assistant. The captain with very little difficulty persuaded Monsieur Paul Breton to pilot us as far as Green Island, a distance of some hundred miles higher up the river, where he assured us we should meet with a regular pilot, if not before.

I have some little difficulty in understanding Monsieur Paul, as he speaks a peculiar dialect; but he seems good-natured and obliging enough. He tells us the corn is yet green, hardly in ear, and the summer fruits not yet ripe, but he says, that at Quebec we shall find apples and fruit in plenty.

As we advance higher up the river the country on both sides begins to assume a more genial aspect. Patches of verdure, with white cottages, are seen on the shores and scattered along the sides of the mountains; while

here and there a village church rears its simple spire, distinguished above the surrounding buildings by its glittering vane and bright roof of tin. The southern shores are more populous but less picturesque than those of the north, but there is enough on either side to delight the eye.

This morning we anchored off the Isle of Bic, a pretty low island, covered with trees and looking very pleasant. I felt a longing desire to set my foot on Canadian ground, and must own I was a little disappointed when the captain advised me to remain on board, and not attempt to make one of the party that were preparing to go on shore: my husband seconded the captain's wish, so I contented myself with leaning over the ship's side and feasting my eyes on the rich masses of foliage as they waved to and fro with the slight breeze that agitated them. I had soon reason to be thankful that I had not followed my own wayward will, for the afternoon proved foggy, and on the return of the boat I learned that the ground was swampy just where the party landed, and they sunk over their ankles in water. They reported the island to be covered knee-deep with a most luxuriant growth of red clover, tall trees, low shrubs, and an abundance of wild flowers.

That I might not regret not accompanying him, my husband brought me a delightful bouquet, which he had selected for me. Among the flowers were fragrant red roses, resembling those we call Scotch burnet-leaved, with smooth shining leaves and few if any thorns; the blue flower called *Pulmonaria* or Lungwort, which I gathered in the Highlands; a sweet pea, with red blossoms and wreaths of lovely pale green foliage; a white orchis, the smell of which was quite delicious. Beside these were several small white and yellow flowers, with which I was totally unacquainted. The steward furnished me with a china jar and fresh water, so that I shall have the pleasure of a nosegay during the rest of the voyage. The sailors had not forgotten a green bough or two to adorn the ship, and the bird-cage was soon as bowery as leaves could make it.

Though the weather is now very fine, we make but slow progress; the provoking wind seems determined to blow from every quarter but the right. We float up with the flood tide, and when the tide fails cast anchor, and wait with the best grace we can till it is time to weigh anchor again. I amuse myself with examining the villages and settlements through the captain's glass, or watching for the appearance of the white porpoises tumbling among the waves. These creatures are of a milky whiteness, and have nothing of the disgusting look of the black ones. Sometimes a seal pops its droll head up close beside our vessel, looking very much like Sinbad's little old man of the sea.

It is fortunate for me that my love of natural history enables me to draw amusement from objects that are deemed by many unworthy of attention. To me they present an inexhaustible fund of interest. The simplest weed that grows in my path, or the fly that flutters about me, are subjects for reflection, admiration, and delight.

We are now within sight of Green Island. It is the largest, and I believe one of the most populous, we have passed. Every minute now seems to increase the beauty of the passage. Far as the eye can reach you see the shore thronged with villages and farms in one continuous line. On the southern side all are gay and glittering with the tin roofs on the most important buildings; the rest are shingles, whitewashed. This I do not like so well as the plain shingled roofs; the whiteness of the roofs of the cottages and homesteads have a glaring effect, and we look in vain for that relief to the eye that is produced by the thatched or slated roofs. The shingles in their natural state soon acquire the appearance of slates, and can hardly be distinguished from them. What would you say to a rose-coloured house, with a roof of the same gaudy hue, the front of the gay edifice being garnished with grass-green shutters, doors, and verandah. No doubt the interior is furnished with corresponding taste. There is generally one or more of these *smart* buildings in a Canadian village, standing forth with ostentatious splendour above its more modest brethren.

August 11.—Just below Green Island we took on board a real pilot, who, by the way, I do not like half so well as Monsieur Paul. He is a little bit pragmatcal, and seems evidently proud of his superior knowledge of the river. The good-natured fisherman relinquished his post with a very good grace, and seems already excellent friends with his more able rival. For my part I was very sorry when the new pilot came on board; the first thing he did was to hand us over a pamphlet, containing regulations from the Board of Health at Quebec respecting the cholera, which is raging, he tells us, like a fearful plague both at that place and Montreal.

These regulations positively forbid the captain and the pilot to allow any person, whether of the crew or passengers, to quit the vessel until they shall have passed examination at the quarantine ground, under the risk of incurring a severe penalty.

This was very annoying; as the captain, that very morning, had proposed taking us on shore at a lovely spot called Crane Island, to spend the afternoon, while we waited for the return of the tide, at the house of a Scotch gentleman, the owner of the prettiest settlement I had yet seen, the buildings and grounds being laid out with great taste.

The situation of this island is of itself very beautiful. Around it are the waters of the St. Lawrence, bearing on its mighty current the commerce of several nations: in the foreground are the populous and lively settlements of the southern shores, while behind and far far above it rise the lofty range of mountains to the north, now studded with rural villages, pleasant farms, and cultivated fields. The island itself showed us smooth lawns and meadows of emerald verdure, with orchards and corn-fields sloping down to the water's edge. After a confinement of nearly five weeks on board, you may easily suppose with what satisfaction we contemplated the prospect of spending a few hours on this inviting spot.

We expect to reach the quarantine ground (Gros Isle) this evening, where the pilot says we shall be detained three days. Though we are all in good health, yet, having sailed from an infected port, we shall be detained on the quarantine ground, but not allowed to land.

August 12.—We reached Gros Isle yesterday evening. It is a beautiful rocky island, covered with groves of beech, birch, ash, and fir-trees. There are several vessels lying at anchor close to the shore; one bears the melancholy symbol of disease, the yellow flag; she is a passenger-ship, and has the smallpox and measles among her crew. When any infectious complaint appears on board, the yellow flag is hoisted, and the invalids conveyed to the cholera-hospital or wooden building, that has been erected on a rising bank above the shore. It is surrounded with palisadoes and a guard of soldiers.

There is also a temporary fort at some distance from the hospital, containing a garrison of soldiers, who are there to enforce the quarantine rules. These rules are considered as very defective, and in some respects quite absurd, and are productive of many severe evils to the unfortunate emigrants.*

When the passengers and crew of a vessel do not exceed a certain number, they are not allowed to land under a penalty, both to the captain and to the offender; but if, on the contrary, they should exceed the stated number, ill or well, passengers and crew must all turn out and go on shore, taking with them their bedding and clothes, which are all spread out on the shore, to be washed, aired, and fumigated, giving the healthy every chance of taking the infection from the invalids. The sheds and buildings put up for the accommodation of those who are obliged to submit to the quarantine laws, are in the same area as the hospital.

Nothing can exceed the longing desire I feel to be allowed to land and explore this picturesque island; the weather is so fine, and the waving groves of green, the little rocky bays and inlets of the island, appear so tempting; but to all my entreaties the visiting surgeon who came on board returned a decided negative.

A few hours after his visit, however, an Indian basket, containing strawberries and raspberries, with a large bunch of wild flowers, was sent on board for me, with the surgeon's compliments.

I amuse myself with making little sketches of the fort and the surrounding scenery, or watching the groups of emigrants on shore. We have already seen the landing of the passengers of three emigrant ships. You may imagine yourself looking on a fair or crowded market, clothes waving in the wind or spread out on the earth, chests, bundles, baskets, men, women, and children, asleep or basking in the sun, some in motion busied with their goods, the women employed in washing or cooking in the open air, beside the wood fires on the beach; while parties of children are pursuing each other in wanton glee rejoicing in their newly-acquired liberty. Mixed with these you see the stately form and gay trappings of the sentinels, while the thin blue smoke of the wood fires, rising above the trees, heightens the picture and gives it an additional effect. On my husband remarking the picturesque appearance of the scene before us to one of the officers from the fort who had come on board, he smiled sadly, and replied, "Believe me, in this instance, as in many others, 'tis distance lends enchantment to the view." Could you take a nearer survey of some of those very picturesque groups which you admire, I think you would turn away from them with heart sickness; you would there behold every variety of

* It is to be hoped that some steps will be taken by Government to remedy these obnoxious laws, which have repeatedly entailed those very evils on the unhappy emigrants that the Board of Health wish to avert from the colony at large.

Many valuable lives have been wantonly sacrificed by placing the healthy in the immediate vicinity of infection besides subjecting them to many other sufferings, expenses, and inconvenience, which the poor exile might well be spared.

If there must be quarantine laws--and I suppose the evil is a necessary one--surely every care ought to be taken to render them as little hurtful to the emigrant as possible.

disease, vice, poverty, filth, and famine—human misery in its most disgusting and saddening form. Such pictures as Hogarth's pencil only could have portrayed, or Crabbe's pen described.

August 14.—We are once more under weigh, and floating up the river with the tide. Gros Isle is just five-and-twenty miles below Quebec, a favourable breeze would carry us up in a few hours; as it is we can only make a little way by tacking from side to side when we lose the tide. I rather enjoy this way of proceeding, as it gives one a close view of both sides the river, which narrows considerably as we approach nearer towards Quebec. To-morrow, if no accident happens, we shall be anchored in front of a place rendered interesting both by its historical associations and its own native beauty of situation. Till to-morrow, then, adieu.

I was reckoning much on seeing the falls of Montmorenci, which are within sight of the river; but the sun set, and the stars rose brilliantly before we approached within sound of the cataract; and though I strained my eyes till they were weary of gazing on the dim shadowy scene around me, I could distinguish nothing beyond the dark masses of rock that forms the channel through which the waters of the Montmorenci rush into the St. Laurence.

At ten last night, August the 15th, the lights of the city of Quebec were seen gleaming through the distance like a coronet of stars above the waters. At half-past ten we dropped anchor opposite the fort, and I fell asleep dreaming of the various scenes through which I had passed. Again I was destined to be disappointed in my expectations of going on shore. The visiting surgeon advised my husband and me by no means to land, as the mortality that still raged in the town made it very hazardous. He gave a melancholy description of the place. "Desolation and woe and great mourning—Rachel weeping for her children because they are not," are words that may well be applied to this city of the pestilence.

Nothing can be more imposing than the situation of Quebec, built on the sides and summit of a magnificent rock, on the highest point of which (Cape Diamond) stands the fortress overlooking the river, and commanding a most superb view of the surrounding scenes. I did, indeed, regret the loss of this noble prospect, the equal of which I suppose I shall never see. It would have been something to have thought on and recalled in after years, when buried in the solitude of the Canadian woods.

The opposite heights, being the Point Levi side, are highly picturesque, though less imposing than the rock on which the town stands. The bank is

rocky, precipitous, and clothed with trees that sweep down to the water's edge, excepting where they are cleared away to give place to white cottages, gardens, and hanging orchards. But, in my opinion, much less is done with this romantic situation than might be effected if good taste were exercised in the buildings, and on the disposal of the ground. How lovely would such a spot be rendered in England or Scotland. Nature here has done all, and man but little, excepting sticking up some ugly wooden cottages, as mean as they are tasteless. It is, however, very possible there may be pretty villas and houses higher up, that are concealed from the eye by the intervening groves.

The river is considered to be just a mile across from Point Levi to the landing-stairs below the custom-house in Quebec; and it was a source of amusement to me to watch the horse ferry-boats that ply between the two shores. The captain told me there were not less than twelve of these comical-looking machines. They each have their regular hours, so that you see a constant succession going or returning. They carry a strange assortment of passengers; well and ill-dressed; old and young; rich and poor; cows, sheep, horses, pigs, dogs, fowls, market-baskets, vegetables, fruit, hay, corn, anything and everything you will see by turns.

The boat is flat, railed round, with a wicker at each end to admit the live and dead stock that go or are taken on board; the centre of the boat (if such it can be called) is occupied by four lean, ill-favoured hacks, who walk round and round, as if in a threshing machine, and work the paddles at each side. There is a sort of pen for the cattle.

I am told there is a monument erecting in honour of Wolfe, in the governor's garden, looking towards the St. Laurence, and to be seen from Point Levi: the inscription has not yet been decided upon.*

The captain has just returned from the town. He very kindly brought on board a basket of ripe apples for me, besides fresh meat, vegetables, bread, butter, and milk. The deck is all bustle with custom-house officers, and men unloading a part of the ship's freight, which consists chiefly of rum, brandy, sugar, and coals, for ballast. We are to leave Quebec by five o'clock this evening. The *British America*, a superb steam-vessel of three decks, takes us in tow as far as Montreal. I must now say farewell.

Letter VIII

Inconveniences of first Settlement.—Difficulty of obtaining Provisions and other necessaries.—Snow-storm and Hurricane.—Indian Summer, and setting-in of Winter.—Process of clearing the land.

November the 20th, 1832.

Our log-house is not yet finished, though it is in a state of forwardness. We are still indebted to the hospitable kindness of S—— and his wife for a home. This being their first settlement on their land they have as yet many difficulties, in common with all residents in the backwoods, to put up with this year. They have a fine block of land, well situated; and S—— laughs at the present privations, to which he opposes a spirit of cheerfulness and energy that is admirably calculated to effect their conquest. They are now about to remove to a larger and more commodious house that has been put up this fall, leaving us the use of the old one till our own is ready.

* Since the period in which the author visited Quebec, Wolfe's monument has been completed. Lord Dalhousie, with equal good feeling and good taste, has united the names of the rival heroes Wolfe and Montcalm in the dedication of the pillar—a liberality of feeling that cannot but prove gratifying to the Canadian French, while it robs the British warrior of none of his glory.

The monument was designed by Major Young of the 97th Regiment. To the top of the surbase is fourteen feet from the ground; on this rests a sarcophagus, seven feet three inches high, from which rises an obelisk forty-two feet eight inches in height, and the apex is two feet one inch. The dimensions of the obelisk at the base are six feet by four feet eight inches. A prize medal was adjudged to J.C. Fisher, LL.D. for the following inscription on the sarcophagus:—

Mortem virtus communem
Famam Historia
Monumentum Posteritas
Dedit.

On the surbase is an inscription from the pen of Dr. Mills, stating the fact of the erection of the monument at the expense of Lord Dalhousie, Governor of Lower Canada, to commemorate the death of Wolfe and Montcalm, Sept. 13 and 14, 1759. Wolfe fell on the field; and Montcalm, who was wounded by the single gun in the possession of the English, died on the next day after the battle.

We begin to get reconciled to our Robinson Crusoe sort of life, and the consideration that the present evils are but temporary, goes a great way towards reconciling us to them.

One of our greatest inconveniences arises from the badness of our roads, and the distance at which we are placed from any village or town where provisions are to be procured.

Till we raise our own grain and fatten our own hogs, sheep, and poultry, we must be dependent upon the stores for food of every kind. These supplies have to be brought up at considerable expense and loss of time, through our beautiful bush-roads; which, to use the words of a poor Irish woman, "can't be no worser." "Och, darlint," she said, "but they are just bad enough, and can't be no worser. Och, but they arn't like to our iligant roads in Ireland."

You may send down a list of groceries to be forwarded when a team comes up, and when we examine our stores, behold rice, sugar, currants, pepper, and mustard, all jumbled into one mess. What think you of a rice-pudding seasoned plentifully with pepper, mustard, and, may be, a little rappee or prince's mixture added by way of sauce. I think the recipe would cut quite a figure in the Cook's Oracle or Mrs. Dalgairn's Practice of Cookery, under the original title of a "bush pudding."

And then woe and destruction to the brittle ware that may chance to travel through our roads. Lucky, indeed, are we if, through the superior carefulness of the person who packs them, more than one-half happens to arrive in safety. For such mishaps we have no redress. The storekeeper lays the accident upon the teamster, and the teamster upon the bad roads, wondering that he himself escapes with whole bones after a journey through the bush.

This is now the worst season of the year; —this, and just after the breaking up of the snow. Nothing hardly but an ox-cart can travel along the roads, and even that with difficulty, occupying two days to perform the journey; and the worst of the matter is, that there are times when the most necessary articles of provisions are not to be procured at any price. You see, then, that a settler in the bush requires to hold himself pretty independent, not only of the luxuries and delicacies of the table, but not unfrequently even of the very necessaries.

One time no pork is to be procured; another time there is a scarcity of flour, owing to some accident that has happened to the mill, or for the want of proper supplies of wheat for grinding; or perhaps the weather and bad

roads at the same time prevent a team coming up, or people from going down. Then you must have recourse to a neighbour, if you have the good fortune to be near one, or fare the best you can on potatoes. The potatoe is indeed a great blessing here; new settlers would otherwise be often greatly distressed, and the poor man and his family who are without resources, without the potatoe must starve.

Once our stock of tea was exhausted, and we were unable to procure more. In this dilemma milk would have been an excellent substitute, or coffee, if we had possessed it; but we had neither the one nor the other, so we agreed to try the Yankee tea—hemlock sprigs boiled. This proved, to my taste, a vile decoction; though I recognized some herb in the tea that was sold in London at five shillings a pound, which I am certain was nothing better than dried hemlock leaves reduced to a coarse powder.

S——laughed at our wry faces, declaring the potation was excellent; and he set us all an example by drinking six cups of this truly sylvan beverage. His eloquence failed in gaining a single convert; we could not believe it was only second to young hyson. To his assurance that to its other good qualities it united medicinal virtues, we replied that, like all other physic, it was very unpalatable.

“After all,” said S——, with a thoughtful air, “the blessings and the evils of this life owe their chief effect to the force of contrast, and are to be estimated by that principally. We should not appreciate the comforts we enjoy half so much did we not occasionally feel the want of them. How we shall value the conveniences of a cleared farm after a few years, when we can realize all the necessaries and many of the luxuries of life.”

“And how we shall enjoy green tea after this odious decoction of hemlock,” said I.

“Very true; and a comfortable frame-house, and nice garden, and pleasant pastures, after these dark forests, log-houses, and no garden at all.”

“And the absence of horrid black stumps,” rejoined I. “Yes, and the absence of horrid stumps. Depend upon it, my dear, your Canadian farm will seem to you a perfect paradise by the time it is all under cultivation; and you will look upon it with the more pleasure and pride from the consciousness that it was once a forest wild, which, by the effects of industry and well-applied means, has changed to fruitful fields. Every fresh comfort you realize around you will add to your happiness; every improvement within-doors or without will raise a sensation of gratitude and delight in your mind, to which those that revel in the habitual enjoyment of luxury,

and even of the commonest advantages of civilization, must in a great degree be strangers. My pass-words are, 'Hope! Resolution! and Perseverance!'"

"This," said my husband, "is true philosophy; and the more forcible, because you not only recommend the maxim but practise it also."

I had reckoned much on the Indian summer, of which I had read such delightful descriptions, but I must say it has fallen far below my expectations. Just at the commencement of this month (November) we experienced three or four warm hazy, days that proved rather close and oppressive. The sun looked red through the misty atmosphere, tinging the fantastic clouds that hung in smoky volumes, with saffron and pale crimson light, much as I have seen the clouds above London look on a warm, sultry spring morning.

Not a breeze ruffled the waters, not a leaf (for the leaves had not entirely fallen) moved. This perfect stagnation of the air was suddenly changed by a hurricane of wind and snow that came on without any previous warning. I was standing near a group of tall pines that had been left in the middle of the clearing, collecting some beautiful crimson lichens, S—— not being many paces distant, with his oxen drawing fire-wood. Suddenly we heard a distant hollow rushing sound that momentarily increased, the air around us being yet perfectly calm. I looked up, and beheld the clouds, hitherto so motionless, moving with amazing rapidity in several different directions. A dense gloom overspread the heavens. S——, who had been busily engaged with the cattle, had not noticed my being so near, and now called to me to use all the speed I could to gain the house, or an open part of the clearing, distant from the pine-trees. Instinctively I turned towards the house, while the thundering shock of trees falling in all directions at the edge of the forest, the rending of the branches from the pines I had just quitted, and the rush of the whirlwind sweeping down the lake, mad me sensible of the danger with which I had been threatened.

The scattered boughs of the pines darkened the air as they whirled above me; then came the blinding snow-storm: but I could behold the progress of the tempest in safety, having gained the threshold of our house. The driver of the oxen had thrown himself on the ground, while the poor beasts held down their meek heads, patiently abiding "the pelting of the pitiless storm." S——, my husband, and the rest of the household, collected in a group, watched with anxiety the wild havoc of the warring ele-

ments. Not a leaf remained on the trees when the hurricane was over; they were bare and desolate. Thus ended the short reign of the Indian summer.

I think the notion entertained by some travellers, that the Indian summer is caused by the annual conflagration of forests by those Indians inhabiting the unexplored regions beyond the larger lakes is absurd. Imagine for an instant what immense tracts of woods must be yearly consumed to affect nearly the whole of the continent of North America: besides, it takes place at that season of the year when the fire is least likely to run freely, owing to the humidity of the ground from the autumnal rains. I should rather attribute the peculiar warmth and hazy appearance of the air that marks this season, to the fermentation going on of so great a mass of vegetable matter that is undergoing a state of decomposition during the latter part of October and beginning of November. It has been supposed by some persons that a great alteration will be effected in this season, as the process of clearing the land continues to decrease the quantity of decaying vegetation. Nay, I have heard the difference is already observable by those long acquainted with the American continent.

Hitherto my experience of the climate is favourable. The autumn has been very fine, though the frosts are felt early in the month of September; at first slightly, of a morning, but towards October more severely. Still, though the first part of the day is cold, the middle of it is warm and cheerful.

We already see the stern advances of winter. It commenced very decidedly from the breaking up of the Indian summer. November is not at all like the same month at home. The early part was soft and warm, the latter cold, with keen frosts and occasional falls of snow; but it does not seem to possess the dark, gloomy, damp character of our British Novembers. However, it is not one season's acquaintance with the climate that enables a person to form any correct judgement of its general character, but a close observance of its peculiarities and vicissitudes during many years' residence in the country.

I must now tell you what my husband is doing on our land. He has let out ten acres to some Irish choppers who have established themselves in the shanty for the winter. They are to receive fourteen dollars per acre for chopping, burning, and fencing in that quantity. The ground is to be perfectly cleared of every thing but the stumps: these will take from seven to nine or ten years to decay; the pine, hemlock, and fir remain much longer. The process of clearing away the stumps is too expensive for new begin-

ners to venture upon, labour being so high that it cannot be appropriated to any but indispensable work. The working season is very short on account of the length of time the frost remains on the ground. With the exception of chopping trees, very little can be done. Those that understand the proper management of uncleared land, usually underbrush (that is, cut down all the small timbers and brushwood), while the leaf is yet on them; this is piled in heaps, and the windfallen trees are chopped through in lengths, to be logged up in the spring with the winter's chopping. The latter end of the summer and the autumn are the best seasons for this work. The leaves then become quite dry and sear, and greatly assist in the important business of burning off the heavy timbers. Another reason is, that when the snow has fallen to some depth, the light timbers cannot be cut close to the ground, or the dead branches and other incumbrances collected and thrown in heaps.

We shall have about three acres ready for spring-crops, provided we get a good burning of that which is already chopped near the site of the house,—this will be sown with oats, pumpkins, Indian corn, and potatoes: the other ten acres will be ready for putting in a crop of wheat. So you see it will be a long time before we reap a harvest. We could not even get in spring-wheat early enough to come to perfection this year.

We shall try to get two cows in the spring, as they are little expense during the spring, summer, and autumn; and by the winter we shall have pumpkins and oat-straw for them.



W.H. Bartlett, "Monument to Wolfe and Montcalm, Quebec" (1838).