

**RETROSPECT OF THIRTY-SIX
YEARS RESIDENCE IN CANADA
WEST: BEING A CHRISTIAN
JOURNAL AND NARRATIVE**

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Retrospect of thirty-six years residence in Canada West: being a Christian journal and narrative
by J. Carruthers

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J. CARRUTHERS

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RETROSPECT

OF

THIRTY - SIX YEARS' RESIDENCE IN
CANADA WEST:

BEING A

Christian Journal and Narrative.

BY

J. CARRUTHERS.

"Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days."

ECCLESIASTES XI. 1.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."—ISAIAH XXXV, 1.

HAMILTON:

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR, BY T. L. M'INTOSH.

1861.

P R E F A C E.

ON writing a Missionary Journal and Narrative of 36 years' residence in Western Canada, down to 1861, I give thanks to Almighty God for such length of years, whilst many of those who were my contemporaries have passed to the grave, and their spirits to God who gave them.

As early as the year 1825, the writer of this Narrative, jointly with the Rev. James Harris, of York, wrote to the Rev. Dr. Brown, of Dalkeith, (by request,) giving him an account of the destitution of the early Presbyterian settlers in the forests of Western Canada, in relation to the ordinances of God, and the blessings of the Gospel. This communication was presented to the Presbyterian Synod of Edinburgh, and received the response that they had not the funds to enable the Synod to send Missionary Labourers to this New Vineyard. The Church of Scotland we understood was also applied to, without success.

Seven years passed away before a vital interest was manifested, either by the Kirk of Scotland, or by the above named Synod. True it is, that from 1817 to 1830, there were a few Presbyterian Ministers labouring in the forests of Western Canada, sowing the seed of the

Word, and gladdening the souls of not a few who had kept the solemn holy days in their native lands. The names of those Ministers will appear in our pages.

This Journal of personal labours and privations I present to a generous Canadian public, trusting that they will receive the simple but truthful narrative of my early Missionary labours in the true spirit of Christian charity—overlooking any inaccuracy or inelegancy in the literature thereof, and accepting it as a brief statement of facts, which may furnish materials for unbounded thankfulness to an Almighty God, when a comparison is drawn between the Gospel ways and means in Canada during that dreary period, and the abundant ways and means which are now everywhere to be found in our highly Gospel-favoured and prosperous land.

Extracts are taken from Smith's well-approved Gazetteer of Canada West, respecting the early settlement of Canada; also a short account of the location of Indians in the Province, formerly in their heathen, and now many of them in their Christianized state. I am also indebted to Charles A. Goodrich for his lengthened account of the British War with the French and Indians in North America, ending in 1763; and to Thomas S. Shenston's "Oxford Gazetteer"; also to Dr. Lillie's volume on Canada.

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RETROSPECT

OF THIRTY-SIX YEARS' RESIDENCE IN CANADA WEST.

CHAPTER FIRST.

MISSIONARY JOURNEY FROM LAKE ONTARIO TO LAKE
HURON—AND RETURN.

Having been appointed, and set apart by prayer, as Catechist and Exhorter, by the Presbytery of York (now Toronto), in connection with the Church of Scotland, to visit the destitute settlers in the Western Section of Upper Canada, I commenced my journey on Tuesday, the 17th day of July, 1832, up Yonge Street, one of the most public roads of the Province, leading north from Lake Ontario to Lake Simcoe.

On Wednesday I crossed the Oak-ridges, a chain of hills running from west to east. Next day I remained in the Township of Whitechurch, and called a public meeting for exhortation and prayer; sung a portion of the 90th Psalm, and delivered a short lecture from a few verses in the first chapter of the Book of Romans. Two experienced Christians joined me in the exercise of prayer, and I trust there was something of the true spirit of prayer with us. Without prayer, as without faith, it is impossible to please God.

“Prayer is appointed to convey
The blessings God designs to give;
Long as they live should Christians pray;
They learn to pray when first they live.”

Friday, 20th July.—I travelled through the Quaker Settlement, on my way to West Gwillimbury; there I met with the Rev. Matthew Miller, one of the first missionaries from home, sent by the Kirk of Scotland, and I have no doubt but that he was especially intended to do much missionary labor in the forest, before becoming the pastor of a congregation. On the same afternoon the Rev. Mr. Miller preached in the new Church—subject Matt. v. 9: “Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.” A happy meeting; the Word was heard with gladness. He was indeed a good preacher, and his heart was in the work. The proclamation of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ was, is and shall be—“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.”—“Great peace have they which love thy law, and nothing shall offend them; Psa. cxix. 165. “There is no peace, saith the Lord, unto the wicked;” Isa. xlviii. 22.

On Sabbath, July 22nd, I met with the Sabbath School children and youths; examined them out of the Shorter Catechism and on the 20th chapter of the Book of Exodus. This meeting was the more interesting as I had taught Day and Sabbath School in this Settlement in the year 1827, and now I observed a considerable advance in scriptural knowledge. Questions and answers were given in both languages—viz. Gaelic and English. The Sabbath School was conducted by Mr. John Matthewson, (an excellent translator of sermons into the Gaelic tongue, at their Sabbath day meetings.) It will be subsequently noticed that several of these Highland settlers formed part of the colony planted by Lord Selkirk at Red River.

Monday, 23rd.—Took my journey from West Gwillimbury to the Township of Essa. The day was very hot, but my mind was strengthened for the work to be done. Tra-