

MIRAMICHI

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Miramichi by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

MIRAMICHI

MIRAMICHI.

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MIRAMICHI.

CHAPTER I.

THE DUBOIS HOUSE.

“WELL, verily, I did n't expect to find anything like this, in such a wild region,” said Mr. Norton, as he settled himself comfortably in a curiously carved, old-fashioned arm-chair, before the fire that blazed cheerily on the broad hearth of the Dubois House. “’Tis not a Yankee family either,” added he, mentally. “Everything agreeable and tidy, but it looks unlike home. It is an Elim in the desert! Goodly palmtrees and abundant water! O! why,” he exclaimed aloud, in an impatient tone, as if chiding himself, “should I ever distrust the goodness of the Lord?”

The firelight, playing over his honest face, revealed eyes moistened with the gratitude welling up in his heart. He sat a few minutes gazing at the glowing logs, and then his eyelids closed in the blessed calm of sleep. Weary traveller! He has well earned repose.

There will not be time, during his brief nap, to tell who and what he was, and why he had come to sojourn far away

from home and friends. But let the curtain be drawn back for a moment, to reveal a glimpse of that strange, questionable country over which he has been wandering for the last few months, doing hard service.

Miramichi,* a name unfamiliar, perhaps, to those who may chance to read these pages, is the designation of a fertile, though partially cultivated portion of the important province of New Brunswick, belonging to the British Crown. The name, by no means uneuphonious, is yet suggestive of associations far from attractive. The Miramichi River, which gives title to this region, has its rise near the centre of the province, and flowing eastward empties into the Gulf of St. Lawrence, with Chatham, a town of considerable importance, located at its mouth.

The land had originally been settled by English, Scotch, and Irish, whose business consisted mostly of fishing and lumbering. These occupations, pursued in a wayward and lawless manner, had not exerted on them an elevating or refining influence, and the character of the people had degenerated from year to year. From the remoteness and obscurity of the country, it had become a convenient hiding-place for the outlaw and the criminal, and its surface was sprinkled over with the refuse and offscouring of the New England States and the Province. With a few rare exceptions, it was a realm of almost heathenish darkness and vice. Such Mr. Norton found it, when, with heart full of compassion and benevolence, thirty-five years ago, he came

* Pronounced *Mir'imishel*.