

**AMONG THE FOREST TREES: OR, HOW
THE BUSHMAN FAMILY GOT THEIR
HOMES. BEING A BOOK OF
FACTS AND INCIDENTS OF PIONEER LIFE
IN UPPER CANADA, ARRANGED IN THE
FORM OF A STORY**

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JOSEPH H. HILTS

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BY THE

REV. JOSEPH H. HILTS,

Author of "Experiences of a Backwoods Preacher," etc.

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Dedication

TO THE DESCENDANTS

OF THOSE BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN WHO BRAVED THE DANGERS,
FACED THE DIFFICULTIES, ENDURED THE HARDSHIPS
AND SUFFERED THE PRIVATIONS OF
PIONEER LIFE IN THIS OUR NATIVE PROVINCE, THIS BOOK IS
RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED.

AND THE AUTHOR INDULGES THE HOPE THAT
ITS PRODUCTION AND PERUSAL MAY BE THE MEANS OF CAUSING
BOTH WRITER AND READER MORE HIGHLY TO APPRECIATE
THE BOON SECURED TO THEM
BY THE NOBLE EFFORTS OF THE EARLY HOME BUILDERS
OF OUR COUNTRY.

INTRODUCTION.

ADVERSE criticism has sounded the death-knell of so many literary productions, that I felt many misgivings when I sent out my first book, "Experiences of a Backwoods Preacher," to seek a place in the arena of Canadian literature. But the favorable comments of the Press, and the hearty commendations of hundreds of the readers of these "Experiences," have encouraged me to try and produce a work that would be more worthy of public favor than my first effort can claim to be.

Acting on the advice of persons of large experience in the book trade, I have written "AMONG THE FOREST TREES," in the form of a story. The book is really a narrative of facts and incidents, around which the imagination has been permitted to throw some of the draperies of fiction. But truth is none the less true because some fancy pictures are found in its surroundings. A good piece of cloth is no less valuable because, by coloring, it is made beautiful. And although a man may be as good a man in an outfit made of sail-cloth, or of an Indian blanket, as he would be if he were dressed in the finest production of the weaver's and the tailor's art, yet no one will say that he would be just as *presentable* in the one case as in the other. So facts may become more impressive, when nicely clothed.

In writing the following pages, three things have been kept steadily in view. 1st. The facts and incidents must be substantially true. 2nd. All the drapery and coloring

must be in strict harmony with pure morality, and with the demands of a sound religious sentiment. 3rd. And the whole must be illustrative of pioneer life, in its conditions and surroundings, and calculated to show something of the toils, privations, hardships, difficulties and sorrows of the early settlers.

Keeping within these limits, I believe that I have produced a book that can with entire safety, and not without profit, be put into the hands of either young or old, since there is not one line from the beginning to the ending that will excite bad passions or mislead the judgment. And while this is true, there is much that will touch the finer sensibilities and sympathies of the reader.

It will be observed that the author has recorded the narrations and conversations as though they were the utterances of others. Hence the first person is generally left in the background.

This method was adopted, because by it a great variety of characters could be brought on the scene, and a larger diversity of style could be presented.

Another thing to which I would call the reader's attention is the fact that dates and localities have mostly been left out of the text of the book. Where these are given they are found in the explanatory notes. This plan was adopted to afford greater facilities for grouping together facts and incidents, that were separated by time and distance, so as to give an aspect of unity to the whole production.

The reader will also observe that the names of persons and places are mostly taken from trees and shrubs and plants and flowers, as these are found in the forest wilds. It may be a mere fancy of mine; but I thought that it would add to the attractiveness of the book, if the names

found in it coincided, as far as possible, with the subject treated of in its pages.

John Bushman is a fictitious name. But he is by no means a fictitious character. If you asked me where he lived, I would answer, you might as well try to confine the almost ubiquitous John Smith to one locality, as to settle the question where John Bushman lives, or more properly, to say where he don't live. Every township and every neighborhood have, at some time, had their first man and first woman, their John and Mary Bushman.

Another thing that is to be noted is this: among the varied characters, and diversified actions described in these pages, there is not a wicked act, nor a vicious person mentioned in the whole book. All the actors are strictly moral if they are not pious, and all the actions are virtuous if they are not religious. I have no sympathy with that style of writing that gives more prominence to the bad than to the good, in human character. Therefore I resolved that, so far as myself and my book are concerned, the devil shall be left to do his own advertising.

And now as to why the book has been-written. Since the thousands of refugees, known as the U. E. Loyalists, came to this country a little over a hundred years ago, wonderful changes have been effected. And these will continue in the future. In the race for ease and opulence, on the part of the people of this country, there is danger that the brave pioneers and their works may be forgotten, unless some records of their noble deeds are handed down to the future.

But very few persons had better facilities than the writer to gain from personal experience a practical knowledge to pioneer life. Both of my parents were born on the Niagara frontier soon after the Loyalists came to this country. I

was but three years old when my father cut his way to his shanty through seven miles of unbroken wilderness; and five-sevenths of my whole life have been spent among pioneer settlers. So that if a personal knowledge of the things written about be of any advantage, I have that knowledge.

One word more. To those readers who, like myself, make no claim to classical learning, I wish to say that I have tried to produce a book that would at the same time both please and instruct you. How far my effort has been successful can be decided only after you have read it.

To my scholarly readers, if I should be so fortunate as to secure any such, I wish to say, Don't use a telescope in searching for defects; you can see plenty of them with the naked eye. And when you find them, which no doubt you will, don't be too severe with your criticisms. But remember that the writer never saw the inside of a college in his life. Remember that he never attended a *high school* until he went as a member of a school board to settle a rumpus among the teachers. And remember that he never had twelve months' tuition in any sort of school. His book-learning has been picked up by snatches of time and while other people slept. No, don't be too severe in judging, nor too quick in condemning. Please don't!

J. H. H.

October 1, 1888.