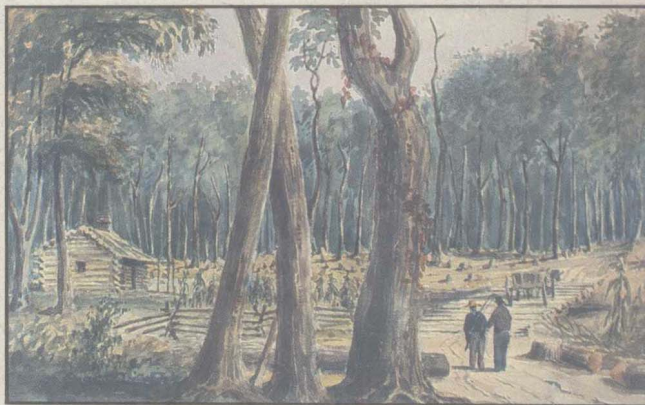


M*Susanna* MOODIE



versus the Bush

Afterword by CAROL SHIELDS

BY SUSANNA MOODIE

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Roughing It in the Bush; or, Life in Canada (1852)
Life in the Clearings versus the Bush (1853)

FICTION

Mark Hurdlestone; or, The Gold Worshipper (1853)
Flora Lyndsay; or, Passages in an Eventful Life (1854)
Matrimonial Speculations (1854)
Geoffrey Moncton; or, The Faithless Guardian (1855)
The World before Them (1868)

FICTION FOR YOUNG ADULTS

Spartacus: A Roman Story (1822)
The Little Quaker; or, The Triumph of Virtue (n.d.)
The Sailor Brother; or, The History of Thomas Saville (n.d.)
The Little Prisoner; or, Passion and Patience (n.d.)
Hugh Latimer; or, The School-Boy's Friendship (1828)
Rowland Massingham; or, I Will Be My Own Master (n.d.)
Profession and Principle; or, The Vicar's Tales (n.d.)
George Leatrim; or, The Mother's Test (1875)

LETTERS

Letters of a Lifetime [eds. Carl Ballstadt, Elizabeth Hopkins,
and Michael Peterman] (1985)

POETRY

Patriotic Songs [with Agnes Strickland] (1830)
Enthusiasm; and Other Poems (1831)

The Author

SUSANNA MOODIE was born Susanna Strickland in Bungay, Suffolk, England, in 1803. The sixth and final daughter of a retired dock manager, she grew up in a middle-class family that encouraged the children in reading and in writing. Her sisters Agnes and Elizabeth would write *Lives of the Queens of England* and other biographies of the aristocracy, her sister Catharine Parr (later Traill) would emigrate to Canada and write several natural history books, and her brother Samuel, another emigrant to Canada, would write of the settler's life. Susanna's juvenilia include poetry and many fiction tales for young adults.

In 1831 Susanna Strickland married John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, a military officer who had returned to England from South Africa to explore publication projects and to find a wife. A year later, they emigrated to Upper Canada (Ontario). In *Flora Lyndsay* (1854), Susanna Moodie gives a fictionalized account of the family's move to Canada, concluding with the journey up the Saint Lawrence River.

For their first seventeen months in Canada, the Moodies lived on cleared farmland near Port Hope. In 1834 they moved to a bush farm in Douro Township north of Peterborough and near the homes of Samuel Strickland and Catharine Parr Traill. The farm was the Moodie home for five years, and *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), describes their life in these two backwoods areas.

From 1837 to 1839 Dunbar Moodie served in the Upper Canada militia, and in 1839 he was appointed Sheriff of Victoria District (later Hastings County). His family moved to Belleville in 1840, their home until his death in 1869. After her husband's death Susanna Moodie spent her time with her various grown children and with her sister Catharine.

Susanna Moodie died in Toronto, Ontario, in 1885.

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SUSANNA MOODIE

Life in the Clearings versus the Bush

With an Afterword by Carol Shields

*"I sketch from Nature, and the draught is true.
Whate'er the picture, whether grave or gay
Painful experience is a distant land
Made it mine own."*

This edition is an unabridged reprint of the first edition of *Life in the Clearings versus the Bush*, published in London, England, by Richard Bentley in 1853.

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to

John Wedderburn Dunbar Moodie, Esq.

*Sheriff of the County of Hastings,
Upper Canada,
this work is affectionately dedicated,
by his attached friend
and wife,*

Susanna Moodie.

Contents

Introduction	9
1 Belleville	17
2 Local Improvements – Sketches of Society	49
3 Free Schools – Thoughts on Education	77
4 Amusements	88
5 Trials of a Travelling Musician	102
6 The Singing Master	115
7 Camp Meetings	138
8 Wearing Mourning for the Dead	161
9 Odd Characters	175
10 Grace Marks	189
11 Michael Macbride	211
12 Jeanie Burns	228
13 Lost Children	240
14 Toronto	249
15 Lunatic Asylum	264
16 Provincial Agricultural Show	276
17 Niagara	290
18 Goat Island	311
19 Conclusion	324
Afterword	335

Introduction

“Dear foster-mother, on whose ample breast
The hungry still find food, the weary rest;
The child of want that treads thy happy shore,
Shall feel the grasp of poverty no more;
His honest toil meet recompense can claim,
And Freedom bless him with a freeman’s name!”

S.M.

IN OUR WORK of “*Roughing it in the Bush*,” I endeavoured to draw a picture of Canadian life, as I found it twenty years ago, in the Backwoods. My motive in giving such a melancholy narrative to the British public, was prompted by the hope of deterring well-educated people, about to settle in this colony, from entering upon a life for which they were totally unfitted by their previous pursuits and habits.

To persons unaccustomed to hard labour, and used to the comforts and luxuries deemed indispensable to those moving in the middle classes at home, a settlement in the bush can offer few advantages. It has proved the ruin of hundreds and thousands who have ventured their all in this hazardous experiment; nor can I recollect a single family of the higher class, that have come under my own personal knowledge, that ever realised an independence, or bettered their condition, by taking up wild lands in

remote localities; while volumes might be filled with failures, even more disastrous than our own, to prove the truth of my former statements.

But while I have endeavoured to point out the error of gentlemen bringing delicate women and helpless children to toil in the woods, and by so doing excluding them from all social intercourse with persons in their own rank, and depriving the younger branches of the family of the advantages of education, which, in the vicinity of towns and villages, can be enjoyed by the children of the poorest emigrant, I have never said anything against the *REAL* benefits to be derived from a judicious choice of settlement in this great and rising country.

God forbid that any representations of mine should deter one of my countrymen from making this noble and prosperous colony his future home. But let him leave to the hardy labourer the place assigned to him by Providence, nor undertake, upon limited means, the task of pioneer in the great wilderness. Men of independent fortune can live anywhere. If such prefer a life in the woods, to the woods let them go; but they will soon find out that they could have employed the means in their power in a far more profitable manner than in chopping down trees in the bush.

There are a thousand more advantageous ways in which a man of property may invest his capital, than by burying himself and his family in the woods. There never was a period in the history of the colony that offered greater inducements to men of moderate means to emigrate to Canada than the present. The many plank-roads and railways in the course of construction in the province, while they afford high and remunerative wages to the working classes, will amply repay the speculator who embarks a portion of his means in purchasing shares in them. And if he is bent upon becoming a Canadian farmer, numbers of fine farms, in healthy and eligible situations, and in the vicinity of good markets, are to be had on moderate

terms, that would amply repay the cultivator for the money and labour expended upon them.

There are thousands of independent proprietors of this class in Canada – men who move in the best society, and whose names have a political weight in the country. Why gentlemen from Britain should obstinately crowd to the Backwoods, and prefer the coarse, hard life of an axeman, to that of a respectable landed proprietor in a civilised part of the country, has always been to me a matter of surprise; for a farm under cultivation can always be purchased for less money than must necessarily be expended upon clearing and raising buildings upon a wild lot.

Many young men are attracted to the Backwoods by the facilities they present for hunting and fishing. The wild, free life of the hunter, has for an ardent and romantic temperament an inexpressible charm. But hunting and fishing, however fascinating as a wholesome relaxation from labour, will not win bread, or clothe a wife and shivering little ones; and those who give themselves entirely up to such pursuits, soon add to these profitless accomplishments the bush vices of smoking and drinking, and quickly throw off those moral restraints upon which their respectability and future welfare mainly depend.

The bush is the most demoralizing place to which an anxious and prudent parent could send a young lad. Freed suddenly from all parental control, and exposed to the contaminating influence of broken-down gentlemen loafers, who hide their pride and poverty in the woods, he joins in their low debauchery, and falsely imagines that, by becoming a blackguard, he will be considered an excellent backwoodsman.

How many fine young men have I seen beggared and ruined in the bush! It is too much the custom in the woods for the idle settler, who will not work, to live upon the new comer as long as he can give him good fare and his horn of whisky. When these fail, farewell to your *good-hearted*, roystering friends; they will leave you like a swarm of

musquitoes, while you fret over your festering wounds, and fly to suck the blood of some new settler, who is fool enough to believe their offers of friendship.

The dreadful vice of drunkenness, of which I shall have occasion to speak hereafter, is nowhere displayed in more revolting colours, or occurs more frequently, than in the bush; nor is it exhibited by the lower classes in so shameless a manner as by the gentlemen settlers, from whom a better example might be expected. It would not be difficult to point out the causes which too often lead to these melancholy results. Loss of property, incapacity for hard labour, yielding the mind to low and degrading vices, which destroy self-respect and paralyse honest exertion, and the annihilation of those extravagant hopes that false statements, made by interested parties, had led them to entertain of fortunes that might be realised in the woods: these are a few among the many reasons that could be given for the number of victims that yearly fill a drunkard's dishonourable grave.

At the period when the greatest portion of "Roughing it in the Bush" was written, I was totally ignorant of life in Canada, as it existed in the towns and villages. Thirteen years' residence in one of the most thriving districts in the Upper Province has given me many opportunities of becoming better acquainted with the manners and habits of her busy, bustling population, than it was possible for me ever to obtain in the green prison of the woods.

Since my residence in a settled part of the country, I have enjoyed as much domestic peace and happiness as ever falls to the lot of poor humanity. Canada has become almost as dear to me as my native land; and the homesickness that constantly preyed upon me in the Backwoods, has long ago yielded to the deepest and most heartfelt interest in the rapidly increasing prosperity and greatness of the country of my adoption, – the great foster-mother of that portion of the human family, whose fatherland, however dear to them, is unable to supply them with bread.

To the honest sons of labour Canada is, indeed, an El Dorado – a land flowing with milk and honey; for they soon obtain that independence which the poor gentleman struggles in vain to realise by his own labour in the woods.

The conventional prejudices that shackle the movements of members of the higher classes in Britain are scarcely recognised in Canada; and a man is at liberty to choose the most profitable manner of acquiring wealth, without the fear of ridicule and the loss of caste.

The friendly relations which now exist between us and our enterprising, intelligent American neighbours, have doubtless done much to produce this amalgamation of classes. The gentleman no longer looks down with supercilious self-importance on the wealthy merchant, nor does the latter refuse to the ingenious mechanic the respect due to him as a man. A more healthy state pervades Canadian society than existed here a few years ago, when party feeling ran high, and the professional men and office holders visited exclusively among themselves, affecting airs of aristocratic superiority, which were perfectly absurd in a new country, and which gave great offence to those of equal wealth who were not admitted into their clique. Though too much of this spirit exists in the large cities, such as Quebec, Montreal, and Toronto, it would not be tolerated in the small district towns and villages, where a gentleman could not take a surer method of making himself unpopular than by exhibiting this feeling to his fellow-townsmen.

I have been repeatedly asked, since the publication of “*Roughing it in the Bush*,” to give an account of the present state of society in the colony, and to point out its increasing prosperity and commercial advantages; but statistics are not my forte, nor do I feel myself qualified for such an arduous and important task. My knowledge of the colony is too limited to enable me to write a comprehensive work on a subject of vital consequence, which might involve the happiness of others. But what I do know I will endeavour to sketch with a light pencil; and if I

cannot convey much useful information, I will try to amuse the reader; and by a mixture of prose and poetry compile a small volume, which may help to while away an idle hour, or fill up the blanks of a wet day.

Belleville, Canada West,
Nov. 24th, 1852.

INDIAN SUMMER.

By the purple haze that lies
On the distant rocky height,
By the deep blue of the skies,
By the smoky amber light,
Through the forest arches streaming,
Where nature on her throne sits dreaming,
And the sun is scarcely gleaming
Through the cloudlet's snowy white,
Winter's lovely herald greets us,
Ere the ice-crown'd tyrant meets us.

A mellow softness fills the air –
No breeze on wanton wing steals by,
To break the holy quiet there,
Or make the waters fret and sigh,
Or the golden alders shiver,
That bend to kiss the placid river,
Flowing on and on for ever;
But the little waves seem sleeping,
O'er the pebbles slowly creeping,
That last night were flashing, leaping,
Driven by the restless breeze,
In lines of foam beneath yon trees.

Dress'd in robes of gorgeous hue –
Brown and gold with crimson blent,
The forest to the waters blue
Its own enchanting tints has lent.
In their dark depths, life-like glowing,
We see a second forest growing,