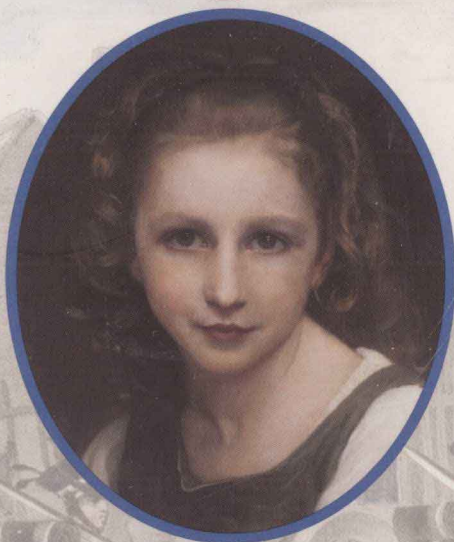


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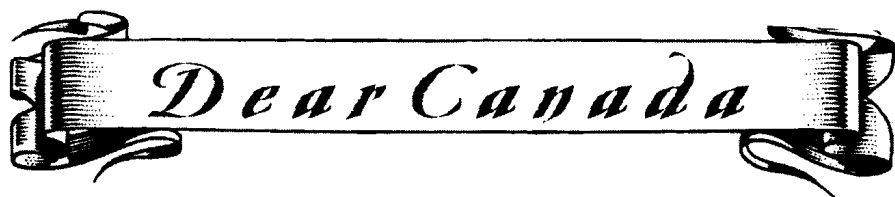
A Rebel's Daughter



The 1837 Rebellion Diary of
Arabella Stevenson



Toronto, Upper Canada, 1837



A Rebel's

Daughter

The 1837 Rebellion Diary of
Arabella Stevenson

BY JANET LUNN

Scholastic Canada Ltd.

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Toronto, Upper Canada,
1837



Arabella Stevenson
Monday, 11 December, 1837
Stevenson House
Toronto, Upper Canada

Dear Diary,

I have brought this wretched diary out from the drawer in my desk, a thing I never, ever thought I would do, but I shall not write to a book as though it were a human person. Definitely NOT. But I must write or I shall burst. (Ha! Mama cannot see what I have written. There, I will write it again, B-U-R-S-T.) Oh, but what has happened is worse than writing every last vulgar word in the entire English language — worse than absolutely every last thing you could imagine in the entire world. Papa is in the gaol, Charlie has disappeared, and we are in disgrace and I have no friends and nothing is right at all. And that horrid Mr. Mackenzie has run away.

There! I wrote that name Mama said was never, ever, to be mentioned in our house. Mackenzie. WILLIAM LYON MACKENZIE. I hate him. What happened is all his fault for writing those horrid things about the legislature in his *Constitution* news-

paper and making good men like Papa agree with them. But I truly do not believe Papa agreed with them. I truly do not. It is a terrible mistake that Papa is in the gaol. Papa was NOT a rebel. He was a reformer. I heard him say that. The government men will soon find this out and Papa will be home.

Sophie says there is talk that none of the rebels will go free. She says "them as don't get hanged, Miss Belle, are certain sure to be sent off to that prison island way down to the other side of the world." She does not know where it is or what it is called but there are gigantic birds there that feed on people. (The Saylor's footman told her that.) Convicts are sent there. People who have stolen things and murdered people. Not barristers like Papa. This will NOT happen to Papa. Papa is NOT a rebel. He will soon be set free. I know he will be.

There has been a stupid rebellion against the government. Part of it was almost right here in Toronto. Just last week! A great mass of working men and backwoods farmers with rifles and pikes and clubs came marching towards us from north of the city. They almost got right into the city. We were all terrified. There were battles (but not right in the city). Some men were killed and houses were burned. The rebellion is over now (well, it is over in Toronto). The government men won and Papa is in the gaol — but that is a mistake.

Dr. Strachan denounced the rebels from the pulpit in St. James yesterday but we were not there to hear him. I expect I should be glad we were not. I found out about it today in school. Mama refuses to leave the house. She has taken to her bed with a cart-load of smelling salts.

Now I have smudged the precious diary. I am NOT going to cry! I swore on Papa's big Bible that I would not cry another tear and I will not!

Later

I have had my supper. It was stewed mutton (from the roast at dinner, I expect) with potatoes and carrots, and apple tart for afterwards, but Mama did not come down, Charlie is not here and Papa — oh, everything is so horrible!

Even later (past midnight)

There is no fire in the grate and it is very cold but I cannot sleep. Today in school was — it was — it was just horrible! Everyone was absolutely, completely, totally hateful. I wish I had stayed at home.

“Oh, Arabella, it is too dreadful. Your own father. How you must suffer.” Spiteful Maud Adams said that.

I was walking up the front steps behind her, hur-

rying because it was so cold, and she turned right around to say it. Then she sniffed and turned her head away and went into the school. Mary Spencer actually pulled her skirts away from me, but Mary always does absolutely everything Maud does. Neither of them spoke to me again all day.

Nor did anyone else. Not a single girl was willing to stand my friend. It is not that I was the most popular girl in school (I do not believe one can be popular if one is not precisely pretty AND is good at sums) but I did have friends. I thought I had friends, but not even Jane or Patty spoke to me yesterday. Patty slipped a note into my hand at closing time. She wrote, "*My mother will not permit me to speak to you. I am devastated.*" She signed it, *Love, Patty* and put a whole row of X's and O's but that did not make me feel one bit better. I walked home alone and it was snowing. I did NOT cry.

Interruption. Dolly just jumped into my lap. She does not like it when I write — or when I read. She plumps down on my lap and shoves herself between me and the book. She sits there like a tall grey shadow. Now she has stalked off twitching her tail because I pushed her away — I had to, I need to write this.

I do not suppose it matters about the girls not speaking to me (except for Jane and Patty), as I am not going back to that school. This afternoon Miss St. Clair sent a horrid note around to Mama. It said:

I think it would be best if Arabella were to withdraw from the Miss St. Clair School for Young Ladies.

I can hear her say it in her high, stuck-up English voice. Miss St. Clair thinks no one born in Upper Canada can be as fine as people born in England — which, of course, is just as Mama thinks. So I do not find it difficult to conjecture what Miss St. Clair must think of a girl whose Papa is in the common gaol.

I will never return to that school, not even when Papa comes out of the gaol and everyone wishes to be my friend again. I could never have imagined this happening to me. How can I bear it? For once in my life I think as Mama thinks, “What is to become of us?”

Well, what is?

Tuesday, 12 December

Dear Diary,

There, I have done what I said I would not do. I have written to you as though you were a person. I must talk to someone even if it is a bundle of blank pages. I wonder if I should give you a name. Perhaps Rosamond after the girl in the story about the purple jar? I like the name Rosamond even if I do not much like that story.

Dear Rosamond — no, not Rosamond.

Perhaps Naomi after the good woman in the Bible?

Dear Naomi — no, not Naomi.

Perhaps Mr. Great-Heart from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, but I think of you as a girl, a girl to confide in.

Well, I suppose I must say Diary and consider that a proper name. I wonder if, the next time Dolly has kittens, I might call one of them Diary?

I did not wish to think of you this way because, when Aunt Parley in England sent this book to me last year at Christmas, a picture of Augusta Milroy hopped into my head. I could see her little yellow ringlets bobbing up and down, up and down, while she jabbered on about her DI-I-I-ARY with its "ADO-O-O-RABLE tiny golden latch." Now here I am writing in a DI-I-I-ARY and it HAS a little gold latch. Just like Augusta's (but I do NOT think it is adorable).

Well, Diary, if we are to be friends, since I know what you look like, I had better tell you what I look like. Then you will know my outsides as well as my insides (well, to be precise, my inside thoughts). To be honest, I do not truly wish to tell you what I look like because Mama says that my looks are the despair of her life. Charlie is handsome — which, I presume, is why Mama prefers him (of course, he is a boy). He is tall, even for fifteen, and has fair, curling hair like her own, but he has brown eyes like Papa's. And his face is long like Papa's — and mine.

I have dark hair like Papa's, which I sometimes

wear in a plait down my back. My eyes are grey and neither large nor small. My mouth is too wide (Mama says) and my face is pale. I am not well favoured, Diary, but, I am pleased to relate, neither am I especially ill favoured, and my voice is pleasing enough. I am short of stature for my age. (Did I tell you that I am twelve years old? I am. I became twelve last August the thirteenth.) I am only a trifle over four feet and two inches and I fear that I am VERY thin.

I am not thin because I am given to physical exercise. I have no desire to run or skip rope or climb trees with the boys as my friend Patty does (my erst-while friend Patty). Nor do I wish to play battledore and shuttlecock or swim with Charlie as Patty and her sister Caroline do with their brothers. I am perfectly content to applaud them in their games when they require someone to do so. This is not because I think, as Mama does, that these activities are not suitable for young ladies, it is because I am of a more contemplative nature. No, that is not true. Diary, I shall be honest with you, I am completely not interested in sporting activity. I do like to walk, and to skate in winter but, otherwise, I prefer to read books or play chess with Papa than — oh dear, I do not suppose there are any chess boards in the gaol.



Wednesday morning, 13 December

Dear Diary,

I fear I left you with a dangling thought last night but I am sure you understand why I did so. I am full of resolution this morning.

First I mean to describe to you where I am — perhaps I had better say where we are. We are in my bedroom and the sun is shining through the big window that looks out over the front garden and Lot Street (I consider Lot Street the pleasantest street in Toronto). There is a cosy fire in the fireplace and I am sitting at the desk Granddad made for me two years ago from the maple tree that crashed to the ground in a lightning storm on his farm. It still bears, just a very little, the scent of fresh wood. I love my desk.

I love our house, too, but it seems so big now. There is not a soul here but Mama and me. (Sophie and Mary and Peggy are here, of course, but they are all below stairs.) Mama keeps to her rooms all the time, even for meals, and no one comes to visit. No one. It is so lonely. I suppose I ought not to be too surprised that Jane does not come because she is even more timid than I, but Patty is not. If she were in my place, I would find a way to see her, no matter what Mama said. I know I would. How can she be so cruel?

Everything is like a horrible dream — but what if it is all true? What if Papa does not ever come out of

the gaol? What if Charlie never comes home? I know he was not with the rebels because the night the rebellion began he said he was joining Colonel Fitzgibbon but he has not been home since. What has happened to him? Wherever can he be? Diary, I am so frightened!

I wish we had gone to church on Sunday to remind God that we are in dire need of Him. (No, I do not, I have just remembered about Dr. S.) I pray every night by my bed but I am not sure God really hears us if we do not go to church. I could almost wish to ask Sophie if I might go with her next Sunday, even though she goes to the Roman Catholic Church and I would have to sit with the servants, but I am not sure if even Sophie would want to be seen with me.

I pray for us all, but especially for Papa. I miss him fearfully. Papa is quite serious. He does not laugh a lot, but when he smiles, it is the most wonderful thing. When Papa smiles, it is better than a whole week of birthdays. I love him so much. We have such good conversations together — he talks to me as though I were grown up. We talk about books — Papa loves poetry, which I own I do not always understand, except for the funny sort. We talk about gardens and geography and mathematics and, last year, when Gran and Granddad died in the week after Christmas from the diphtheria, we talked about them and about dying and I felt a little less sad afterwards.