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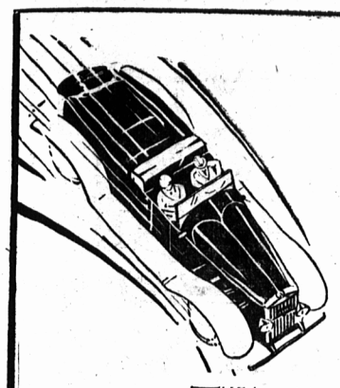

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Carlyle And His Canadian Sweetheart

(By Blodwen Davies in the Canadian Magazine.)

It was in the year when the girl-queen, Victoria, became a bride, a gay, elegant year in old London. Men and women, now pleasantly romantic phantoms, moving across the pages of reminiscences and diaries, were then accustomed to ride together along the padded trail of Rotten Row.

There, one morning, near to the gateway of Hyde Park, two riders approached each other. One was a man somewhere over forty years of age, watching the fashionable show with a half-cynical, half-amused air. He was one of the mightiest of them all, but only a few of them suspected it. In a flash he was tumbling from the lofty perch of his cool reflections, falling trembling, shaken upon the ruins of a youthful dream.

The woman rider who had crossed his vision was a handsome, elegantly dressed, fair-skinned woman, who was idly and thoughtfully tapping her shoe with her riding crop. As they met she raised her eyes, her glance drawn magnetically toward him. For a transitory moment their eyes met and pierced, soul deep. Then without missing a hoof beat, her horse carried on, without a word, and she was gone. None of the chattering crowd knew that for an instant the world had stood still, that a man and a woman, with lightning swiftness, had rehearsed scenes of tenderness, of devotion, of agony.

The man was Thomas Caryle, the woman was his Canadian-born sweetheart, Margaret Gordon.

It was a score of years since Carlyle and Margaret had said their stormy adieux, each of them had taken other mates, yet when many, many more years had passed Thomas Carlyle set down that chance, that brief encounter, among his memories. What would have been the life story of Carlyle if Margaret Gordon, and not Jane Welsh, had become his wife?

There is unlimited material for speculation there, and for one thing, Prince Edward Island would have had a greater share of fame, for Margaret Gordon was born in Charlottetown.

It was in 1770 that an Irishman, Walter Patterson, arrived in the Island of St. John, as it then was, to act as administrator of the British colony. He loved the Island and he made enormous personal sacrifices for it, and in return he expected to be allowed to rule with all the autocracy of one of his own early Irish kings.

On the Island, Governor Patterson contracted an irregular union with a pretty girl by the name of Margaret Hyde, one of a family which had crossed in the same year, and perhaps in the same vessel with Patterson.

Three years previously, when the whole of the island had been given away in one way, by a curious lottery in London, Patterson and his brother John had drawn Lot Nineteen between them, in return for previous services to the state. That lot lies along the shores of Malpeque Bay, but when Patterson established a home he had acquired land across the harbor from Charlottetown on the site of the old French Fort Lajoie and there he and Margaret Hyde lived in the dwelling of the last French Governor. Among their four children was Margaret Patterson.

Enter Margaret Gordon.

Twenty years after Governor Patterson's arrival, young Dr. Alexander Gordon was granted land in the Capital, on part of which St. James' Presbyterian church stands today. A few months after he acquired the land he was married, presumably in St. Paul's church, to Margaret Patterson, while her father was in London struggling for a recognition of his rights on the Island. To Alexander Gordon and his wife were born four children whose births and baptisms are registered in the old records of St. Paul's church. There you may read that on August 24th, 1798, was born Margaret Gordon and there she was baptized on the 23rd of September, 1799.

Dr. Gordon was neither a very lucky nor a very prudent man. In 1800 he was appointed apothecary to the forces in Nova Scotia and in August of that year he set out with Mrs. Gordon and his four little children for Halifax, his property being seized to satisfy his Island creditors. None of them ever returned, except Margaret who a half century later came back to the salute of guns, to fluttering flags and mustered guards, as the wife of the viceroy.

Not long after his arrival in Halifax, Dr. Gordon was court-martialled and deprived of rank and pay for six months. After he was reinstated, the military forces were cut down and he was put on half pay.

In 1803 Dr. Gordon set out from Halifax with his two little daughters for Scotland, there to seek aid from his family, for he was well-born and well connected. Sick at heart for his wife and boys whom he had left in "distressing circumstances" in Halifax, poor Dr. Gordon fell ill on the voyage and died before the ship reached land. So his two little girls, Mary, seven and a half, and Margaret, four and a half, reached England fatherless.

As he was on half-pay at the time of his death, his widow in Halifax could not claim a pension and she was compelled to struggle on alone, taking in dressmaking for the fashionable ladies of Halifax, to feed herself and her boys.

Meantime, by way of contrast, a first cousin of Mrs. Gordon's, in New York, had married no less a person than Jerome Bonaparte, a brother of the Emperor Napoleon!

Mrs. Gordon must have been an attractive woman, in spite of her troubles, for in 1806, when she was thirty-four years of age, she married Dr. Hugh Guthrie, a surgeon in a Worchestershire regiment, stationed in Halifax, who was just twenty-one. He it was who, in the years to come, introduced Margaret Gordon to London society.

Meantime, however, the two little girls had been sent to Scotland, to Dr. Gordon's sister, Mrs. Usher, who lived in Kirkaldy. She was the childless widow of a minister, living modestly on an annuity of thirty-three pounds a year. Her stern Scottish conscience was faced with the duty of sharing it with two penniless orphans. The tranquility of her home would needs give way to childish clatter, the calm of unhampered middle age be disturbed by the training of two girls, the meagre but assured livelihood of her old age give place to ever increasing expenses. Mrs. Usher bravely shouldered her duty. She took the biggest half of Mrs. Gordon's responsibilities, two girls, then regarded as greater responsibilities than assets. All the help she could get for them was the sum of six pounds a year, each, from the army compassionate fund.

Both the girls were pretty and clever, and from the first Mrs. Usher lavished on them all the care and ambitions of a real mother. Two things in particular she set her heart upon, they must be well-educated and well married. The girls were well aware of the duty they owed her and doubtless she had drilled them in the part they had to play. She had no need to teach them the cramping lessons of poverty—they knew all there was to know of that. They were well impressed with the fact that they had to marry money, so well impressed that from the outset Margaret Gordon thoroughly concealed her interest in the moneyless Carlyle.

The Young Schoolmaster,— Thomas Carlyle

The girls went to a private school in Kirkaldy, presided over by a young and brilliant master—Edward Irving. He was a severe disciplinarian, even in those days when the rod was an integral part of education. But Irving was so liberal with his floggings that even Kirkaldy rebelled and set up an opposition school. The new school master came from Edward Irving's home, and his name was Thomas Carlyle.

Irving opened his home, his library and his heart to his rival and there in Kirkcaldy was founded one of the notable friendships of the nineteenth centuries.

The tastes of Irving and Carlyle had much in common. Irving abandoned his customary walks and talks with his pupils and devoted himself almost exclusively to Carlyle. They spent hours and even days rambling over the countryside and exchanging ideas and opinions.

Irving had, previous to the coming of Carlyle, become engaged to a girl named Bella Martin, but subsequently, when one of his ex-pupils, Margaret Gordon, had graduated and blossomed into womanhood, Irving's fancy wandered, and he found himself in love with the fair and witty colonial. But Bella was jealous and determined, and so, two years after his arrival, Irving introduced Carlyle to Margaret Gordon, hoping that where he could not venture, his friend might hope to win.

Of this episode, Carlyle writes:

"By far the cleverest and brightest, however, an ex-pupil of Irving's, and genealogically and otherwise, (being poorish, proud and well-bred) a kind of alien in the place, I did at last make (her) acquaintance . . . . She was of the fair-complexioned, softly elegant, softly grave, witty and comely type, and had a good deal of gracefulness, intelligence and other talent . . . Her accent was prettily English and her voice very fine. An Aunt . . . had adopted her and brought her hither over the seas; and here, as Irving's ex-pupil, she now, cheery though with dim outlooks, was."

Carlyle did not write that until half a century after he had met the "alien in the place."

Carlyle's latest biographer, who is publishing an entrancing life of the Sage of Chelsea, David Alec Wilson, has this to say about her:

"She was one of the living flowers that decorate the earth and inspire men's dreams of heaven."

Bella Martin's jealousy was appeased, Irving resigned to his fate, and Carlyle and Margaret faced the realization of their first love. Margaret was nineteen, Carlyle, twenty-one.

Margaret was instantly aware that the young school teacher had not the remotest chance of finding favor in the eyes of Mrs. Usher, and these two curiously unsophisticated young people promptly began the systematic deception of the shrewd, hawk-eyed aunt and succeeded so well that fifteen months passed before she became aware of their interest in each other.

There is something amusing in the picture of the lean, earnest young dominie sitting in Mrs. Usher's little parlor, and listening to the old Scottish songs which she loved to sing, guarding his glances so well that she did not suspect it was Margaret's song without words to which he was listening all the time! Yet all the while they were stealing rapturous half hours together, exchanging their dearest confidence in the quaint formal restraint of a century past.

Carlyle was now more cheerful, more ambitious than he had ever been before, fired with a desire to make a place in the world for Margaret. He was already earning considerably more than the combined income of Mrs. Usher and her two nieces, but he wanted to set his feet firmly on the path that led up to success. He contemplated emigrating to the new world as a speedy means of advancement, but perhaps it was too far from Margaret. Supposing he had come, to the land of Margaret's birth and that Margaret had followed him!

Instead he went to Edinburgh. How he kept up his correspondence with Margaret, nobody knows, but young people of his day were adept at clandestine correspondence, secret trysts and so on, as the art and literature of that time indicate. Finally he made up his mind to enter law and he consulted Margaret on the subject. Margaret approved, and must hape hoped that eventually he would be able to satisfy her Aunt's demands.

The Rift in the Lute.

Yet it was not long afterwards that Margaret wrote him that their association must cease, that she could never be more than a friend to him. There was an impassioned interview, in which Carlyle begged and pleaded, and Margaret wept but sternly refused to return to their old relationship. Carlyle describes the meeting—or the parting—in Sartor Resartus, for in that, Blumine is drawn from Margaret Gordon, and Carlyle's own story is told in part. Of that farewell Mrs. Usher was apparently not aware, for she arranged that Margaret and Carlyle should bid each other a formal adieu. That painful visit to Kirkcaldy was the last time that Carlyle ever spoke to Margaret, and throughout the interview, Mrs. Usher, "the lean, elderly dame," stood guard.

Carlyle did not take his dismissal easily. He thereafter pressed his claims upon her stormily and earnestly and apparently, they found ways and means to keep up their clandestine correspondence for a time. In one of Margaret's letters she writes him:

"To possess your friendship, I have often said was a constant source of delight to me; to lose it, you may believe, was proportionately painful. Your coming to see me in Fife appeared not only a proof of the noble triumph you have obtained over your weakness (forgive the expression) but seemed an intimation that I still was thought worthy of that esteem with which you formerly honored me. If ever I may have the opportunity of hearing from yourself that in this my last conjecture I am not mistaken, time alone can determine."

After describing to him her plans for the next few months she goes on: that she writes with "the assurance that such a relation of my proposed wanderings will not be troublesome to a friend, a name by which I hope I shall always call you."

Yet in the years to come no one ever heard the name of Carlyle pass her lips! "You must not wear out your constitution by such continual application," she warns him, "still permit me to entreat you not to desert the path Nature has so evidently marked you should walk in. It is true it is full of rugged obstacles, interspersed with little to charm the senses; yet these present a struggle that is fitted only for minds suchcognizably to me, in London twice, as yours to overcome. The difficulties of the ascent are great, but how glorious the summit! Keep your eyes fixed on the end of your journey and you will begin to forget the weariness of the way. You see, I have taken the liberty of a friend, I had almost said of a sister, who is probably addressing you for the last time and who would regret to learn hereafter that Nature, in spite of her unusual bounty, has been cruelly opposed. May Fortune prove propitious to you in every part of your voyage through life; or if that is indeed too much happiness for any mortal in this changing scene, may the storms of adversity ever find you prepared to resist their overwhelming violence."

But it was not her last letter. How interesting that impetuous reply of Carlyle's to Margaret Gordon would be to us today!

"What a risk you did in sending your letter," she writes him. She is glad to hear of his improving health, she tells him, and urges him to rid himself of those "troubles of the soul" which are sapping his strength. "Why indulge those miserable, racking thoughts? You ask me to write you often—this I repeat would not be doing justice to you—think me not vain—I have adopted the title of sister and you must permit me to usurp the privileges of one. You promised never to indulge those vain imaginations which have made us both so unhappy. Yet tell me, do they not still require steadfast restraint? And would I not, by acceding to your request, encourage that weakness it had been my object to remove? . . . Willingly would I advance your happiness, and anxious will I be to hear of that happiness, but (think me not severe) from another source my information must come. You are too generous to wish me to act against my sense of duty. . . If you have no cause to speak gently of this friend, remember 'twas a regard for what was considered the interest of her charge that tempted her to look unkindly upon you. She really esteems you. For my sake return the kindness."

Then comes the end of the letter, a really remarkable and pentrating insight into the characteristics and the needs of the man she loved. It is one of the finest bits of writing in that golden age of letters.

"And now, my dear friend, a long, long adieu. One advice and as a parting one, consider it. Cultivate the milder dispositions of your heart, subdue the more extravagant visions of the brain. In time your abilities must be known; among your acquaintances they are already beheld with wonder and delight; by those whose opinion will be valuable, they hereafter will be appreciated."

Twenty Years After.

It was twenty years after the writing of that letter before Carlyle again saw the girl he had loved so devotedly.

"Speak to her since that 'Good-bye,' then in Kirkcaldy, in 1819, I never did or could. I saw her, recognizably to me, in London twice, in 1840, once with her maid in Piccadilly, promenading, little altered, a second time in that same year, on horseback, both of us."

In all the years that passed between his meeting with Margaret Gordon and the writing of his reminiscences, every detail of their association stood out in his memory like the carving of a cameo.

When Margaret Gordon had at last definitely cut Carlyle out of her life, she went to London, with her aunt and sister, to visit her mother

(Continued On Page 8)

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The Public Forum

This column is open for the discussion by correspondents of questions of interest. The Charlottetown Guardian does not necessarily endorse the opinions of correspondents.

CREDIT TO WHOM CREDIT IS DUE

Sir.—It is reported that the Attorney General, Mr. Saunders, on the Mallett trial gave great credit for the finding of the stolen foxes and for the apprehension of the thieves to Officer Biggar of the Charlottetown Police Force and that he said this was one of the finest pieces of detective work ever done in this province.

Without wishing to depreciate in any wise the work done by Officer Biggar in connection with this case, yet a great measure of credit is due to Officer Moase of Kensington.

It was Moase who was first on the spot, who took measurements, who recognized one of the footprints as being that of one of the parties arrested. It was Officer Moase who led Biggar to the place where the prisoners were arrested and it was he who found the prisoner Binns. In fact without Moase's assistance it is doubtful if the foxes would have been recovered and the prisoners arrested.

This was all within the knowledge of the Attorney General and yet he gave Officer Biggar all the credit and did not even mention Moase's name.

I am Sir, etc.,
KENSINGTON.

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The Company's plants, although operating at capacity, are at present behind in completing orders. Part of the proceeds of the present financing will be used for the installation of an additional fine paper machine, with auxiliary equipment, to be in operation by the end of the current year.

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Net earnings available for interest, depreciation and income tax for the year ended December 31st, 1927 were $331,353, as against the annual interest requirement of these bonds of $137,500. For the year ending December 31st, 1928, it is estimated that net earnings will be approximately $400,000, or 2.90 times the annual bond interest requirement. With installation of the additional paper machine, it is estimated that net earnings for the year 1929 will exceed $500,000.

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CHARLOTTETOWN LIBERAL-CONSERVATIVE ASSOCIATION

A meeting of Liberal-Conservative Electors will be held in the Board of Trade Room on Monday night at 8 o'clock for the purpose of making arrangements for the forthcoming visit of the Hon. R. B. Bennett, M. P., Leader of the Party.

A large attendance is asked for.

W. A. STEWART, President
Queen's County Liberal Conservative Asso

THE GABBS

By Barrie Payne