

# THE SCOTCH-IRISH IN AMERICA.

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## SCOTCH-IRISH WOMEN PIONEERS.

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HISTORY is continually busy with the valiant and virtuous deeds of our forefathers. Occasionally this monotony is broken by stories of the heroic and helpful lives of the mothers of nations. Woman's voice is rarely raised to protest against this seeming injustice; for with that unselfish love which loses itself in the deeds of father, husband, and son, she is content to remain in the background, or even in obscurity, if so be a brighter crown of honor may come to those she loves. It is the more fitting, therefore, that the men of this Scotch-Irish Congress should declare the parity of womankind with mankind in the service, sufferings, and success of pioneer life.

Undoubtedly the Scotch-Irish have been eminent path finders of American civilization. The majority of those who pushed the advance columns of civilization into the wilderness southward, southwestward, and westward were sprung from the stock that settled the Scotch Plantations in Ulster. They are not entitled to the exclusive honor of this service, for those of other races and blood were to be found in the van of frontier civilization. Yet the bulk of these founders and pioneers are to be classified as once was "Franciscus Mackemius" in the University of Edinburgh, as "Scoto-Hibernius."

But men of whatever race were not alone in these advances and adventures. Side by side with them, woman walked the forest trail, floated over the lonely river in canoe or flatboat, and in the clearings amidst primeval forests reared the cabin home, the cabin school, the cabin church, and planted the roots of our widespread prosperity and civilization. All honor to the pioneer mothers, the women of our Scotch-Irish stock! We ask it not in the name of courtesy, but in the name of justice; not because it is a graceful thing for men to speak in complimentary terms of women, but because it is the honest thing for the truthful historian to declare the facts of national beginnings. When the honors of history are being served out, truth and justice, which are the soul of chivalry, require us to remember that "neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man."

The Scotch-Irish race has given America some of her noblest founders and heroes. From Francis Mackemie and Philip Embury,

from John McMillan and Peter Cartwright, to Bishop Simpson and Bishop John Hall; from James Caldwell, the famous "fighting chaplain" of the First New Jersey Brigade of Continentals, to Chaplain Bishop McCabe; from Gov. Mifflin, Pennsylvania's first chief magistrate, to Gen. Hastings, her last governor; from Alexander Hamilton to James G. Blaine; from Andrew Jackson to Ulysses S. Grant; from Patrick Henry to William McKinley, the Ulster Scots of America have led in the advance columns of Western civilization. But call them up before you and question them: "Who are the persons to whom you owe the largest debt for the nurture of those virtues and qualities that enabled you so highly to serve your country?" As with the voice of one man they will reply: "My mother!" "My wife!"

Yes; it is said truly that the "hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." But it would seem a just and pleasant thing if that hand could sometimes feel the grip of the scepter and the touch of the laurel crown upon the fair brow of her womanhood. Let those who dispense the world's coronation favors bear this in mind.

#### PERSONAL APPEARANCE OF PIONEER WOMEN.

What manner of persons were these women founders of the republic? Let your imaginations take a century flight into the past and look in upon a group of pioneer women. They are fine specimens of womanhood, above the medium height for the most part; strongly and some of them stoutly built; with fair complexions, eyes of various shades of gray and blue, round heads well shaped, full faces with generous lips, cheeks ruddy and with high bones, broad and high foreheads with brows well overhung and wide between the eyes. Faces they are which indicate a thoroughly warm heart, an intelligent and courageous stock, a race worthy to be and likely to be the mothers of a noble progeny.

Stalwart of frame no doubt they were, with muscles hardened under the strain of toil; hale and hearty, vigorous and strong, able to wield the ax against the trunk of a forest monarch or the head of an obtruding savage; to aid their husbands and fathers to plow and plant, to reap and mow, to rake and bind and gather. They could wield the scutching knife or hackling comb upon flaxen stocks and fibers, as well as the rod of rebuke upon the back of a refractory child. They could work the treadle of a little spinning wheel, or swing the huge circumference of the great one. They could brew and bake, make and mend, sweep and scrub, rock the

cradle and rule the household, including often the sovereign lord thereof himself. Every one of them could do with her one pair of hands what a half score of women in these days would think themselves overtasked to attempt.

Is it strange that under such discipline as this the hands of our pioneer ancestress should have been wider and browner and her feet less dainty than those that our *fin de siècle* woman can squeeze into A 1 French kids? Surely we will not think the swart and size gained by these women founders of the nation less worthy than if gotten in the sports of a summer holiday. Rather we will count the rugged muscles and sturdier limbs and browner skin the honorable trophies of a service which even the kingliest soul should delight to honor.

#### DRESS OF THE WOMEN PIONEERS.

One would not look for elegant toilets in such a gathering as we have fancied, but the dresses would at least be suitable to the era and environment. Newcomers to the settlement wore woolen frocks which pioneer life had not yet had time to fret into tatters; many had linsey or linen gowns, all home-made; and a few had found the art of using dressed deerskins, especially for jackets and slip-ons. The white linen folder over the breast was common; and hoods and plaited sunbonnets covered the heads, and the elders clung to the full-frilled cap. Of shoes there was a great dearth, though some of these folk did own such articles, for Sunday use, however; on ordinary occasions they were shod with home-made cloth shoes known as shoe packs, or Indian moccasins of deerskin. Here and there a relic of the old land and life, a trinket, ring, pin or brooch, garnished the homely toilets; but for the most part faddles of every sort were wanting. The Sunday dress differed little from their workday uniform, with somewhat more carefulness, of course, to be trim and trig, and that they were. A sweet and wholesome company, honest and true to the core of their kindly hearts, lusty and supple, and ready to go merrily to work and devoutly to worship.

#### THE PIONEER WOMEN'S WORK.

What was the service that filled up the life measure of these heroines of the frontier? To begin with, they must be got to the border settlements. They were not aborigines. Many of them were not born on American soil. They were exiles, fugitives from the oppressive laws and hard conditions that injustice, bigotry, and un-

wisdom had laid upon their life in Ulster. Equally with their male friends they suffered the bitterness of persecution, and even more than they the keen pain of parting with one's native land and kindred. Then followed the miseries of the long passage a-shipboard, in the wretched little craft that then crossed the Atlantic. At last they landed in Philadelphia. They were strangers in a strange land. Many remained in the City of Brotherly Love and contributed the largest factor to the making of her prosperity. Many drifted southward. A great company took up their line of march westward, and filing northward and southward settled the rich valleys of Pennsylvania. Still westward pushed the incoming streams of Ulster emigrants. The frontiers of civilization were left behind them. The wooded heights of the Alleghenies rose before them. Rude wagon roads were lost in Indian trails. Pack horses were the vehicles of transportation. The children were swung in willow creels across the horses' backs, and the women, too, sometimes found rest in the same rough carriagos. Oftener they trudged the narrow trail, forded rivers, threaded dark and tangled mountain paths, traversed vast forests within whose depths lurked the real perils of savage beasts and savager men; and which enfolded creatures of imagination no less terror-striking and tormenting to the mind. Who can adequately depict the bodily fatigue and pain and the mental tortures of that long, tedious, and perilous journey from the seacoast to the frontier which our pioneer grandmothers endured?

If one were simply to consider the point of personal suffering to body and to mind, caused by the peculiar conditions of frontier settlement, he must give the meed of praise to women. There was an excitement about the dangers of frontier life, and an engrossment of mind and affections which had strong attractions to a male organization, and gave large compensation for physical hardships endured. A journey on horseback through several hundreds of miles, making bivouac in the open air, was not a serious trial to a man; but was a sore affliction to a woman with a babe at her breast. To face the mysteries of the wilderness; to listen to the strange night cries of wild animals; to cower under the ever present yet ever unseen terrors of the lurking savage foe; to endure the weariness of body which pack horse traveling involves to an inexperienced rider, and bear the fret and anxiety of caring for helpless children—all this bore with especial hardship upon the women.

## HOME MAKING IN THE WILDERNESS.

Arrived on the frontier, the hard work of home making began. Home? There was no home! Not a house, often, for miles around. The foxes had holes, the birds of the air had nests, the insects were housed in their snug habitats of paper or silk, of wood or clay; but our Scotch-Irish women in that border wilderness literally had not where to lay their heads. A wooded knoll hard by a spring, or a sheltered rock of bottom land by a creek side, would be chosen for the site of the new home. There, in lairs of dry leaves they bivouacked under the trees and stars until a rude log cabin could be put together. A one-roomed hut with a mud floor and a mud chimney! But it was a paradise to a woman after the damp ground and the open air.

The "Old Log Cabin" home, the home of the women pioneers! the norm of American civilization, the evolutionary germ of the splendid social structure that rises around us to-day in this capital city of the Keystone Commonwealth! What poet shall sing its glory, the glory of lofty service in the progress of humanity? The log cabin home, the log cabin school; the log cabin church—these are the true symbols of the heroic era of our country's genesis, and the presiding and guiding spirit thereof was the pioneer woman!

In these humble log huts began the work of home building, constructing that prime factor of all strong and good social order, the family. The family is the unit of society, the true basis of the best civilization; and in pioneer family building woman was the chief architect. The husband indeed must fend and fight for wife and weans, for steading and glebe; he must shoot game, and chop down trees, and clear up fields and plant grain; but the duty and burden of home making fell upon the wife and mother. And well our Scotch-Irish pioneers did their work.

## PIONEER WOMEN'S HOME PLENISHING.

What sort of plenishing had these frontier heroines for their new cabin homes? Let us take a sample from a journal of one of these emigrants, written nearly one hundred and twenty years ago:

There was neither bedstead nor stool nor chair nor bucket; no domestic comfort but such as could be carried on pack horses through the wilderness. Two rough boxes, one on the other, served as a table; two kegs for seats; "and so," said the journalist, "having committed ourselves to God in family worship, we

spread our bed on the floor and slept soundly until morning. The next day, a neighbor coming to our assistance, we made a table and stool, and in a little time had everything comfortable about us. Sometimes, indeed, we had no bread for weeks together; but we had plenty of pumpkins and potatoes, and all the necessities of life."

Pumpkins and potatoes! Necessities of life! Such was the home welcome of the Scotch-Irish bride of a Scotch-Irish minister who became one of the most eminent men in our history, Dr. John McMillan. However, the journalist adds: "Such luxuries we were not much concerned about. We enjoyed health, the gospel and its ordinances, and pious friends. We were in the place where we thought God would have us to be, and did not doubt that he would provide everything necessary, and, glory be to his name! we were not disappointed."

The original settlers, of course, did not even have the luxuries of "pumpkins and potatoes," to begin their culinary duties therewith. They had, in sooth, to invent a cuisine. Everything must be begun anew. The wild fruits, wild berries, and wild game and the fish of the New World were utilized. Indian corn was a new cereal to these Ulster housewives; but it had to be wrought into the primitive *menu*, mush and milk! It was a novel sort of porridge for our grandams, but they learned to make it. Can you make it, O colonial dames and daughters of the Revolution, who owe all or a goodly moiety of your right to wear the badges of these patriotic orders to the Scotch-Irish heroines who sent their husbands and sons into the ranks of Washington's colonials. If not, make haste to learn, for the Pennsylvania Scotch-Irish Society has adopted mush and milk, or "pioneer porridge," for the typical racial dish, as our New England brethren have adopted baked beans and brown bread! Ah! some of us can yet behold in vision of childhood the golden yellow paste bubbling and puffing in the great pot, and the rosy-cheeked Scotch-Irish dame, with a frill of white hairs around her broad brow, stirring the sputtering, savory mess with a big wooden spoon, or serving it out into bowls of creamy milk. O mush and milk! Pioneer porridge for aye! Next morning, fried mush with wild honey from a near-by bee tree! Or pone bread, or Johnnycake, or Indian meal griddle cakes! That was not all of the new cereal, for—O ye gastronomic divinities!—there were roasting ears and succotash!

Can an Irishwoman do without her "cup o' tay?" Go ask your "kitchen ladies," ye descendants of the pioneers. But how got our ancestress "tay" in that wilderness? She extemporized a tea plant



from the root of sassafras, and over its steaming pungency dreamed of the savory herb of far Cathay, and imagination did the rest! As to sugar, she had discovered the sugar maple, and her sugar plantation and sirup refinery were in the adjoining grove. [Let this suffice: from a few dishes learn all! Not the least claim which our Scotch-Irish ancestress has to a substantial and permanent fame is that she invented a new and delectable system of cookery! Doubtless if this fact can be surely fixed in the convictions of the lords of creation, they will straightway build the woman pioneer a monument, and will garnish it with carved and bronze cooking utensils. For, is it not known (among womenkind at least) that "the dearest spot" in "home, sweet home," that "dearest spot on earth" to most of us, is to the average male—the *dinner table!*

Cooking was not the only sphere that solicited her creative faculty. The pioneer woman had to invent a pharmacopœia. Wounds and sickness came, and must be cared for. The forest was full of healing "yarbs," if she could only find them. And some of them she did find—and perhaps our octogenarian members still have recollections of ginseng and snakeroot teas, and slippery elm poultices, and the like. The woman pioneer had to be physician and surgeon, trained nurse and apothecary, all in one, and often supplied the patient, too, in her own person.

In times of personal sickness, and during the illness of children, the strain upon women thus situated must have been intense. Such a life indeed developed self-reliance, fertility of resources, strong and independent characters; but many fell under the grievous strain, and thus became veritable martyrs of civilization. "They died without the sight." They lie, like the heroes who died on many a foughten field for liberty and human rights, in "unknown graves." But their works do follow them. They are the nameless heroines of history, like the Syrophenician woman, and the widow of Sarepta, and the widow who gave the mites unto the treasury, and the "other women" which did minister unto Jesus. We know only their deeds, the rich fruitage of their lives. Their names are hidden from the eyes of history, but they shine in eternal luster upon the recording angel's book of benefactors of mankind.

Not only were the ordinary household cares in woman's hands, but to her belonged the duty of providing the household wearing apparel. "She sought wool and flax and wrought willingly with her hands." In many cases, almost all the clothing, both for men and women, for feet and head as well as for body, were manufactured in

these log cabins, by the hard-working pioneer women. Our grandmothers began the century as our children and grandchildren are ending it—at the treadle of a wheel! Our end-of-the-century girl glides over smooth roads on the silent bicycle; the beginning-of-the-century girls made forest cabins hum with the music of the spinning wheel.

In the temples which we rear to Jehovah the adornments of the carver are placed only upon those stones that form the outer courses, and these alone are open to the eye and win the admiration of the observer. But behind these, hidden from sight, are the inner courses of rock; and beneath these the foundation stones of all, buried within the ground. Yet they serve no less useful purpose and form no less important part in making and maintaining the sanctuary of the Most Holy. It is even thus with the pioneer woman's work in upbuilding the home, the school, and the Church in the wilderness. Her service has rarely been thought of, more rarely uncovered by the historian's researches, and still less often set in winning form before after generations. None the less, her work has been essential to the final triumph of religion, society, and civilization. In the day when all unseen labors of love shall be made known, the infinite Spirit of justice and truth will recognize the toils and tears, the trials, sufferings, and martyrdoms of the women builders of Church and State. In the house of eternal glory in the heavens these daughters of the Lord shall verily be as polished stones "after the similitude of a palace." No doubt they had their faults and failings. Yet, in sincere piety, genuine kindness, cordial hospitality, cheerful submission to hardships; in fidelity to country, to liberty, to home, to children, and to husband; in energy of character, patient endurance, unswerving faith in God, loving attachment to their Church, earnest support of God's ministers; in courage, presence of mind, and even prowess in times of imminent peril, the world has produced few women who have excelled these Scotch-Irish handmaids of the Lord, who helped their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons to redeem the American wilderness to civilization.

#### THE PREMISES OF A PIONEER HOME.

Would you have a glimpse of the outer premises of one of these pioneer homes, in which your Scotch-Irish ancestress reigned supreme? A clearing around the cabin was given up to a field of Indian corn and pumpkins, a patch of potatoes and a small planting

of flax. Beyond this the high timber was "girdled" or ringed around the butt with an outchopped belt to kill leaves and cut off shade and thus allow the plants to grow between, time and help being too scant to permit full clearing at first. A sty close by held a sow and litter of pigs. Other porkers were running wild in the woods, feeding upon the rich mast. Beechnuts, hickory nuts, pig-nuts, and acorns were abundant in their season, not to speak of other lush morsels which swine affect.

"But what good could they do," you ask, "running wild that way in the woods?" What good? Had they not guns? Ay, and the mistress of the cabin was by no means dependent upon the master thereof, for she could take her own rifle from the buckhorn bracket over the fireplace, and shoot a wild porker or other wild beast for that matter.

It would have been ill housekeeping in the wilderness had it not been for that humble beast. To say nothing of its flesh in various forms of ham, sausage, side meat, souse, and spareribs, the bristles helped vastly in the rude sewing in vogue, through the use of leathern and deerskin clothing; brushes too came of them, though not as serviceable as might be. Moreover, and the cabin housewife thought this no small matter you may be sure, pigs were the enemies of rattlesnakes and copperheads. Oh! these were the terror of her life, next to the savage foe. She trembled not for herself alone, but for the children, and never knew when they might be poisoned unto death. Blessed Ireland, where no snakes ever harbored!

Another occupation of the pioneer housewife was the care of the garden and the cow. There is no visible connection between the two objects, except the fact that the Scotch-Irishmen always had a strong antipathy to gardening and milking. What may have been the origin of this prejudice might be hard to determine, but many of you will bear witness that it had invincible lodgment in the minds of Scotch-Irish masculines, and exists even to the present day. There was nothing for it then, but that the women folk should do what was held to be woman's work: take care of the little garden patch, and look after the cows.

Within the Virginia rail inclosure, one could hear in the early morning or evening the pleasant note dropped ever and anon upon the quiet air from the instrument tied about the throat of the bell cow. The forestry was so thick round about the humble settlement that the cows need stray but a short way to be out of sight.

Then, whether morning or evening, the housewife knew just where to go to bring them in.

And oh, it was a comely sound! the tink, tink, tinkle of the bell as the beast walked along and nipped the grass; or the sharper *rink, tink, ring-aling* as she swung her head back to whisk off the gnats and flies. Ever in the morning that was the first sound listened for through the mist; and when she had near-by neighbors, and the herds got together, so nicely did her ear get tuned to the sound of her own cow bell, that she could tell it amid all the clamor of the rest, as she could the voice of her own child in the hullabaloo of a score of romping children.

When the children were small she would tie them in bed to hinder them from gadding off, and to fend them from the fire and from snakes; and, taking trail by the tinkling of the bell, make her way through the rank growth, all beaded with dew, to where the beasts grazed; and so back to get the breakfast, with drabbled skirts, and moccasins wet and clammy to the feet. Your deerskin shoes might be pretty, and all that, but in wet weather they were only a respectable way of going barefoot. How she missed the stout leather shoes and warm woolen clothing of dear old Ulster! Ah, well! she could console herself with the reflection that she had a lordly domain of her own, the half of whose acreage would be a barony in the "auld country."

In addition to these and other cares was the ever present dread of an Indian attack. At times an alarm would be sounded through the settlements by riders hastening in hot speed to the scattered cabins, and then with the utmost expedition wife and children, and such household belongings as the exigency required, were hurried away to fort or blockhouse built at some convenient point in the settlement. Here for days, often for weeks, these congregated families must abide, suffering great inconveniences from their cramped surroundings, and haunted continually by fear of attack, or the dread that husband and father, who had gone off to meet the foe, might fall a victim to tomahawk or scalping knife. One need not be told that the chief sufferers through the wear and tear and fret and anxiety of these trying occasions were the women.

If ever the saying that "a good wife is from the Lord" was verified, it was in the case of the Scotch-Irish matron. Providence had fitted her for the important duties of her mission, and, with cheerful alacrity, ready sympathy, and never-failing courage and ability, she discharged her own onerous duties, and supported her

husband in his. If Wordsworth has truly limned the character of a perfect woman, we can affirm that in most of the qualities which enter into his pattern the Scotch-Irish matron was not lacking:

The reason firm, the temperate will,  
Endurance, foresight, strength, and skill;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned  
To warn, to comfort, and command;  
And yet a spirit still, and bright  
With something of an angel light.

"To command;" no doubt our ancestral dames could do that. They were masterful spirits, and they had need to be. Men do not make marble statues of heroines out of putty or soft soap. Such a splendid historic structure as the American republic was not to be reared on sand hills and daubed with untempered mortar. Those Scotch-Irish pioneers had good backbones, straight and well stiffened with Scotch granite and the "Shorter Catechism." As to that "something of an angel light" of which the poet speaks, one needs, perhaps, to pause and query. The artists have not yet depicted angels shod in moccasins and woolen shoe packs, robed in plaid flannel petticoats and linsey-woolsey aprons and sacks, and capped with a plaited poke sunbonnet. But if the ideal angel of the celestial host be one who serves, who stands in the world's retrospective vista as one whose life function was "not to be ministered unto, but to minister," and to give her life for many, then our Scotch-Irish women-founders were veritable Angels, and written with a capital "A" at that. We might place in her laurel crown the three plumes of the Prince of Wales, for to her also belongs the princely motto, *Ich dien*—I serve.

In the case of numbers of our Scotch-Irish heroes the obligation to woman was not limited to the wife. The fathers were, with scarcely an exception, men of scant means, and often straitened for money to pay for their sons' education. The expenses had to be pinched from the necessities of the household, and even the sisters in many cases wrought in the fields that their brothers might be kept at school. We have known examples of women who labored with their own hands, denying themselves the ordinary comforts of life; who submitted to what was even worse, to come to womanhood without the coveted advantages of education for themselves, in order to support a brother in academy or college, and thus attain for him the sacred ministry. Ay, we could tell of women also who, to win for their brothers this distinction, denied themselves the gift of loving companionship with strong and loyal spirits who wooed them to wifedom, and so lived and died volun-

tary celibates for the glory of God and the honor of their family "Old maids" you have heard them called. Be it so. Nothing can quench the halo of glory that shall forever play around a name over and against which such deeds may be recorded.

But back of that the pioneer's obligation to woman began where debt and duty begin with us all, at the source of earthly love: Motherhood. It must have been the mother's spirit that animated the household to its sacrifices, and the mother's hand that guided home industries to the common end. How much self-educated men owe to their mothers! And how much does the world owe them for the gift of their sons! Abraham Lincoln was a self-educated man, but it was his mother who first gave him the impulse toward education and the first training; for she taught him the rudiments of writing, and encouraged him to persevere against opposition and discouragement in his purpose. Alas! one of the first efforts of his faltering pen was writing a letter to an itinerant preacher, an old friend of his mother, to come and deliver a sermon at her grave. Many a pioneer mother, like Lincoln's, did not live to see her sons attain the object of her holy ambition, but survived long enough to make that purpose sure. Of such a mother children and children's children can say, as Cowper said of his mother:

My boast is not that I deduce my birth  
From loins enthroned and rulers of the earth;  
But higher far my proud pretensions rise—  
The son of parents passed into the skies.

The life of the pioneer mother lives in that of her children. It was denied to her to know on earth how far beyond her highest hopes God had answered her prayers and rewarded her self-denial; but in that world where mother and children have long been united surely she has learned it all. Her spirit is not dead, but throbs today in the bosoms that feel, and speaks in the words that utter, the high and virtuous and beneficent achievements of her descendants. Out of the past century her hand has been reached—the hand that rocked the cradle in the rude log cabin—and has laid its potency on this vast assembly to draw us to this Congress, whose purpose is to honor and perpetuate the memory of the pioneers of our ancestral stock. Yes, her work lives here, and shall traverse the ages, interblended with the work of her children.

This record is not solitary; it is the type of a changeless law. On that imperishable tablet where Honor's hand inscribes the deathless names of the just and wise and good, the highest and fairest there are only MOTHER, written large.