
CHAPTER XVII

THE ZORRA SETTLEMENT AND THE MACKAYS

*A homely folk,
They filled one glen,
With Highland dream and glee;
But now they're George's fighting men,
To win across the sea,
And find their graves where none may ken,
In a far countrie.*

THE Scottish settlers of Western Ontario were, for the most part, folk who had dared to come out from the Old Land because they willed to do so. They were, some of them, evicted tenants from strath and glen. They were, however, not, like the people of other Highland settlements, driven forth, or led by some Moses of colonisation, into a new and strange country, depending on a leader to bring them into their promised land of milk and honey. There were in all the counties sturdy Lowland settlers from Glasgow and the Clyde borders or other Lowland county places. Then there were Highlanders in groups, or mingled with Lowlanders and other folk not of the land-o'-cakes, southern men and women, who knew not the heather and loved not Robbie Burns.

Zorra Settlement and the Mackays

Chief among this great body of Scottish folk was the noted Highland settlement of the township of Zorra, in the county of Perth, in Western Ontario.

As early as 1820 two Scotsmen, brothers, named Angus and William Mackay, came there into the dense, uncleared wilderness, and started to make it their home. They were sturdy Highlanders from the far north of Scotland, and belonged to the great clan Mackay, whose land is historic Sutherlandshire. They cleared a bit of the forest and planted the ground, and fought the fight of the early pioneer with brave hearts and a faith in the future of their adopted land. Nearly ten years later one of the brothers, Angus, returned to Scotland and bore favourable witness concerning the new land in the northern Scottish shire of his fathers; and the following year returned to Canada, accompanied by his aged parents and a whole shipload of his fellow-shiremen.

Many of these were the former tenants of glens made over into sheep-walks by the middle farmers or better-class tenants, who were willing to rent the land from the landlord for a fair rental. Much has been written on this subject, and writers have waxed eloquent over what they have considered the brutal treatment of the evicted glensmen. But the truth was that the glens were overcrowded with a well-meaning, but often impracticable, people, who had for centuries depended on their lord or chief for livelihood. They had all been fighters or deerstalkers or cattle-drovers or

