

MINNIE BELL ADNEY

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

My earliest appearance in public was when at the tender age of five years, my father would put "me on the middle of a big table where amid the admiring circle of workers "winding trees" that is wrapping strips of waxed paper around the grafted joints I would read first a chapter of the bible—my favorites being the 23rd counting out "Sharp's Famous Drum head Cabbage" plants, doing them up into bunches of fifty and twenty-five, tying with strings made of bass wood and wrapping them in a big cool "Sharp's Improved Rhubarb" leaf, counting out change and attending to the customers. At eight years of age, I was a com-



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Psalm, the 22nd Chapter of the Book of Revelations and the 5th chapter, according to St. Matthew. After that came the news from the "Carterton Sentinel." So it seemed perfectly natural that when asked for a sketch about myself, written by myself, the Sentinel should have it to print.

At the beginning I was the onliest kind of a little girl, coming as I did after the loss from diphtheria of the three first-born who lay dead at one time, leaving just one small baby boy, my brother, Franklin. I was a very precocious and very much indulged child. When four years old, I had my life planned out what I would do and be. And then, as always, I had unlimited faith in my power for great achievements. No heights seemed impossible for me. At six years I was working, sitting in the big frames of the hot beds,

potent cook, making pies, cakes and biscuits. I had my own supplies of materials for cooking, and my own utensils as well as my own sweet determined will.

It seemed to me in those days that I lived in a veritable fairyland. I had a garden plot of my very own. In the center was a fine big apple tree upon which grew four varieties of apples—New Brunswicker, Alexander, Honey Pink and Red Astrachan. All sorts of hardy perennials grew all around. My father had a most beautiful garden and orchard, which under his magic hand blossomed and bore abundantly. The most gorgeout flowers of all kinds in their season boomed in riotous profusion and he raised to perfection apples, plums, red and golden raspberries, blackberries, pears and grapes. A long and high fence of boards was

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at the north of the garden, where tender plants and vines were trained. Against this sheltering wall the fruit ripened in the extra warmth coaxed from the sun's rays.

Before my seventeenth birthday we moved up to the "big house" built originally for the manager of the "Iron Works." It was a fine big mansion with twenty-five rooms, including a large one running the whole length of the main house. This my father kept for a music room. In one end was a Steinway piano—the first one imported in the province—and a fine big choral organ. My father adored the "harmony of sweet sounds" and I was encouraged in every way to cultivate my musical gift. I played well when I was seven and my father a good musician himself used to often sit beside me when I practised. My piano was kept in good tune, and if no tuner was handy one was brought from St. John. Our house was always filled with people old and young and when we gave a big party, as we did twice a year, we had an orchestra from Calais or elsewhere. By the time I was ten I was learning the nursery and orchard business—indeed in the late winter the whole family and house became a factory for making trees. A busy hive of from twenty to fifty workers, with my father the chief and head. Always after the dinner hour my father read aloud to us all as we worked. I remember his reading of Jules Verne's "Around the World in Eighty Days," a portion each day as it appeared in installments in the "Daily Telegraph." We never went to Sunday School but every Sunday, rain or shine, from each spring to late fall, we all bundled into a big wooden canoe, seven of us, and taking our food along, went over to the orchard on Sharp's mountain. Mother took along the Bible from which she read and explained selected portions for us. She had a most wonderful and fascinating way of imparting knowledge and telling Bible stories.

My mother was a glorious woman. I never knew her to be cross with us or scold us and she never punished. Her eyes, a deep blue, were like wells of loving light, and looking into their depths was like refreshing the soul anew with love and peacefulness.

At the age of twelve I could harness, drive and manage a horse and was the general "factotum," carrying the letters to mail and doing all the light trucking. About this time I had my first schooling, a little over one year, at the very fine Superior School taught by Dr. Ayer, a college graduate and a great teacher. I went in the senior class and was a "star pupil." My brother and I attended an evening class in writing and a dancing class—although before this time my father had taught me waltzing and other dances. At fourteen I went to Compton, Quebec Ladies' College, for a year and afterward to "St. Margaret's Hall," Halifax, for a term. I stood first in music at both places, and in my examinations made perfect marks in nearly all the studies. I was still working summers in the nurseries and orchards and assisting my father with his scientific experiments. I learned to "do up" all kinds of preserves and pickles which we exhibited at the fairs. I took first prize at the Bangor fair for canned and preserved fruits and jellies.

We had by now the most wonderful and productive orchards in America. In blossom time one could drive for miles along roads bordered on either side by orchards in the highest state of cultivation, the air laden with what to me is the most delicate and fragrant of all perfumes—the scent of the apple blossom. I learned the whole business of making trees, planting and raising, packing and shipping fruit, gardening, taking care of horses, cows, sheep, hens and pigs—in fact I was a regular farmer. At the age of eighteen I went to New York to study music. I lived like a millionaire's daughter, my father lavishly spending money on me. I had the finest masters both for piano and voice. I went to the opera every day and heard all the "great ones," actors and musicians. I studied the first three years with Nunez, a royal graduate of that greatest of all schools, the Paris Conservatoire, then for several seasons from Dr. William Mason, who held the proud position of being the

best teacher of his time on either continent. I had daily voice lessons from Patton, a Belgian, and other equally famous teachers. I always worked hard and to the limit of my strength the last two years in New York I taught music and paid my own expenses. At about this time affairs at home became involved and I began teaching music and working at the fruit. I had an unlimited capacity for hard work, being full of activity, both physical and mental, and I never knew fatigue. I simply led a glorious life at that time. During the fruit season I was up at daylight packing and shipping apples and plums. We exported from fifteen to twenty thousand barrels of apples and from five to six thousand boxes of plums each season. I have taken cars of apples to Boston, getting bigger prices for them than any other apples on the market. I once took a car of plums to Boston, ordered for canning.

The Sharps father and sons at this time were carrying on a large industry. Nothing in the shape of fruit went to waste. The making of cider and vinegar in itself was a good going business. Large warehouses were filled in the fall and early winter with casks filled with cider which later was made into vinegar. A huge press made on an original plan of my father's with a capacity for pressing twenty to thirty barrels of apples was working day and night. A crew of ten to twenty men with apple grinders and all the necessary outfit were kept busily employed. My father bought up all the so-called "natural" apple seedlings, and ground them up for cider and vinegar. Apple seed for nursery stock came from the pumice. One of the tasks which we children loved was measuring and counting the apple seed for planting. Plum seed was gotten from the old red or "horse" plum of which my father bought the entire product of the country side. We kept bees. My father had apiaries in various parts of the county and we always had from one to two hundred hives in the orchards. Beekeeping and raising apples go together for bees make the trees fruitful by the carrying of the pollen. My mother took over the bee industry and had great success. The bees loved her and she could always manage her swarms, moving them with bare hands. I have seen her take a swarm off a branch scraping off the bees with her hands and putting them in the hive. They never stung her. At that time we had all the "foundry property" and had a hundred cots would sheep grazing on the hillside. We learned to raise lambs. The dogs got after our flock killing numbers of them, so this industry had to be given up. My father also introduced and kept the first thoroughbred Jersey cattle. We had nurseries and orchards all. We sold three exclusively in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick and Northern Maine and portions of Quebec. My father kept eight teams hauling ashes and manure all the year round, and everywhere the land blossomed and bore fruit like the "Garden of Eden." At that time, old Carleton County was the most highly cultured and fruitful spot in America if not in the universe. Our place was the mecca of the infirm and the poor. No one was turned away. Everyone could come and sleep and eat and rest. More than once we had two or three families living on the premises. My father did not believe in "jailing for debt" and so not being able to alter the law he simply paid the debt and freed the debtor. At this time we had plenty of money. From tree sales there would come thousands of dollars which my father just kept stuffed in his pockets. Once he left five thousand dollars in bills in his "cooler" pocket hanging on an apple tree in the orchard on the mountain. In the evening needing some money he dispatched Billy Morey, a boy working for him, (who is now with the C. P. R.) by canoe to get it. We had stores of everything. Sugar, molasses, butter, pork, oil and oats, to which all had access. Father would say "help yourself and keep your own account." The men did as they were told, father paying without question.

Father and mother one fall brought the "poor children" from the "poor farm" in family lots and kept them all winter feeding and clothing them, and we always kept a sort of private "orphanage." In 1892 we lost all of our big fine buildings, store houses, and tree cellars by fire, with no insurance. Later my brother took over the nursery business and he and my father planted what was then the biggest and finest orchard in Canada. It contained twenty thousand trees under the highest state of cultivation. These came into bearing in 1892 and my brother valued the orchard at one thousand dollars. After my brother's death, the same year, my younger sisters became the owners of the property.

In 1893 I went to British Columbia where at Victoria I conducted a conservatory of music for six years. This was considered the best on the coast. In 1896 I came home to help manage the big orchard. In the apple picking season we employed a

hundred hands over which I was the "working boss." In the years 1903 and 1904 my father, mother and sister died within a few months of each other. The same paper containing the notice of my sister's death, also contained the notice of the sale under mortgage of the orchard. The property was stolen and what was worse, destroyed. The vandals and Huns are not all in Europe. It would make a whole book to tell the story of the last eighteen years.

I have had great success in my profession of teaching. I have turned out a greater number of musicians than all the rest of the music schools in Canada put together. Twenty-six of my young men pupils enlisted early in the game and fought at the front, each one serving with an unblemished record. Two served in Northern Russia. I am now pursuing my vocation as ever with a class of fifty-seven pupils. The "star" job of my life so far was when after I had volunteered by wire to help with the flu epidemic at St. John's Engineering Depot, I was accepted and placed in charge of an important department of this hospital just opening for the sick nurses. I worked at cooking and assisted with the nursing. There were seventeen of them

and I went on duty sixteen days at seven a.m., and off at 8 p.m. I had two kitchens, two stores and two orderlies to help me. "I delivered the goods" all right. All the nurses got well. It was said to be the only military depot where none died. I got no money for this, not even travelling expenses.

I have no Loyalist blood. One of my forefathers was here before the war of the Revolution and two others fought at Quebec, and received their lands for valor in battle.

At one time two of the Sharps occupied the high position of Archbishop. One being Archbishop of Canterbury and at the same time the other was Archbishop of York. Granville Sharp, after a long fight freed the slave in England, making practical the proud claim of "whoever sets foot on British soil is free" Up to that time slaves seeking refuge there were turned over to their owners.

I come of a long illustrious line of hardy, clean blooded, educated people. My father, Francis Peabody Sharp, was easily the greatest man of his time, doing more for his country than any other man within its bounds. I love children, music, and horticulture. My favorite short

poem is Longfellow's "Psalm of Life"

Life it real, Life is earnest
And the grave is not its goal
Dust thou art to dust returnest
Was not spoken of the Soul.

Let us then be up and doing
With a heart for any fate
Still achieving still pursuing
Learn to labor and to wait."

In conclusion, if I am elected, as I shall be, I shall accomplish the greatest work of all. I shall work first for justice and the people; for an adequate recompense for our wonderful soldier boys who gave for us the prime vigor of their lives, and wrote the word "Canada" large across the history of our lives; for the children of our land, the men and women of tomorrow, that they may have ample opportunity to blossom forth as ideal citizens of our land, true to themselves, their country and their King; for our common cause, without destruction of classes or creeds or the drawing of stringent political lines, for the good of all, the public weal and humanity.

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