

handy for quick reference. Some children may find the block capital letters hard to read.

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## CHERISHED RECOLLECTIONS

### **Town house, country house: Recollections of a Quebec childhood**

Hazel Boswell. Ed., R.H. Hubbard. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990. 136 pp., \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7735-0721-3.

The title given to these "recollections of a Quebec childhood" is not very racy. It is, however, accurate: the book deals with town life and country life in nineteenth-century Quebec, from the viewpoint of the children of a comfortable bourgeois family. The title is accurate also because the book's content is not exceptionally racy either.

Hazel Boswell deserves much credit for the clarity of her style as she evokes, in rather episodic fashion, a year in the young lives of the children of Sir Henri Joly de Lotbinière, upper class resident of the city of Quebec and *seigneur* of the estate of Lotbinière on the south shore of the St. Lawrence. The subject matter of the narrative derives from things seen and done by these children, in town and in the country, and historically compressed for narrative purposes into the winter and summer of 1872-73. Although the material is more than a hundred years old, and although it was clearly passed on orally in the manner of family anecdotes – transmitted primarily, one supposes, by the author's mother, fourteen-years-old during the year of the narrative and the eldest of the seven children – the author manages to imbue all of the childish adventures and every-day experiences with a real immediacy and interest.

The personalities of the various members of the household, family and servants, are portrayed in a lively way, and the interplay between these personalities are occasionally at the root of some clearly cherished recollection. However, the author further uses the children as a means to paint a series of sketches of daily life in that period: sugaring off in the bush, a log drive, a trip on a paddle-wheel steamer, a sawmill.

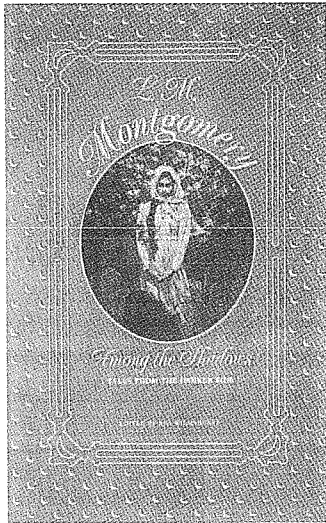
Two relatively minor flaws mar this book. The first has to do with the episodic nature of the subject matter: the work lacks any unifying plot. This will not matter at all to the reader who is content to move from scene to scene, to meet the people the children meet and to share a heterogeneous series of their experiences. Again, the title of the book is at least not misleading.

The second shortcoming of the book is equally understandable, though perhaps more regrettable. The Joly family was firmly anchored in the aristocracy of Quebec. If it is clear that the author sees no drawback to the privilege the children unconsciously enjoyed, we ourselves may be sorry not to have here a slightly broader view of Quebec society in 1872. The children's Irish nanny at one point "scolded them for getting mixed up with 'a pack of dirty ruffians'" who were the local children, and lectured them "on how Christian children of good family ought to behave." It was a very protected childhood the Joly children had; the historic images of it that are afforded us here are full of warm human interest but offer little breadth in the way of real history.

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## MONTGOMERY ON THE DARK SIDE

**Among the shadows: Tales from the darker side.** L.M. Montgomery. Ed., Rea Wilmshurst. McClelland and Stewart, 1990. 310 pp., \$24.95 cloth. ISBN 0-7710-6155-2.



L.M. Montgomery was intrigued by the "darker side" of personalities and situations as her novels, journals, and letters suggest. Anne Shirley is fascinated as child and adult by the eerie and inexplicable, and Emily Byrd Starr is psychic; Montgomery herself tried ouija boards and table rapping and believed that she had felt the loving spirit of Frede Campbell near her after Frede's death. In this third volume of republished short stories collected and edited by Rea Wilmshurst, we find a Montgomery who wanted to evoke the pleasant chill of a brush with the unknown. Within these nineteen magazine pieces the "unknown" may mean peculiarly twisted coincidences, perplexing human emotions, or encounters with another dimension.

As in the other two volumes of Wilmshurst's editions of Montgomery's stories, here, too, we find pieces published as early as 1897 and as late as 1935; some have third-person, some first-person narration; some have compelling dialogue and inspired descriptions, others are melodramatic and overdrawn. Contrasts in subject matter empha-