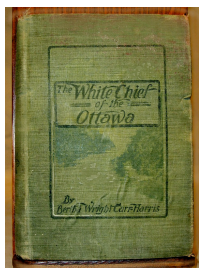


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# The White Chief of the Ottawa - 1903 CA0256

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## **ABOUT THIS CD:**

Although written in the narrative style usually associated with a novel, the author assures us that this is not fiction but a depiction of the facts and events exactly as they occurred, or exactly as her research told her that they occurred.

The tale being told is that of the first settlement of the “white man” in the Ottawa valley, that being the long fertile valley through which the Ottawa - or sometimes the Grand - river flows and today passes by the Canadian Capital city. Philemon Wright, that first settling farmer, in fact set up his homestead on the north shore of the Ottawa river directly opposite the present site of the capital city in what is today the city of Hull, Quebec. He judged the North bank to be superior for the purpose of farming and it was several years before there was any settlement in the site of the present city of Ottawa.

Let me hasten to make it clear that being the first settling farmer doesn't make Philimon Wright the first visitor to this area. Far from it. There were many hunters and trappers of both European and aboriginal extraction working and living along the river's banks at the time of his arrival, and these people play an important role in the evolving story of the Wright family. Bertha Wright Carr-Harris, the author chooses to add authenticity to her account by writing the supposed speech of many of these characters in a sort of phonetic imitation of their accents, including using the actual words they would have spoken, usually a mixture of English, French and the local tribe's dialect. This is a practice that certainly adds color to the story although it does necessitate the reader taking a few stops along the way to sound-out a word before it can be understood.

As Bertha develops her tale of the Wright family we learn a great deal about the life of a settler in the early 1800's. Of their joys. Of their hardships, their fortunes and their misfortunes. A great resource if you want to put some “meat” on the “bones” of your ancestral settlers history.

While this is more like a story than a conventional “history” book it still contains information specific to particular families and about specific locations so our FastFind search-ability feature will be found to be a great asset, particularly as Bertha omitted to index her original text.

## **ABOUT THIS BOOK:**

This copy of the book was originally given to Mabel Kirke in 1904 as a prize for “general proficiency” by the Almonte High School and so has probably remained in the Ottawa valley all of its life which, from its present condition, has not always been an easy one.

One of its misfortunes has been to lose an illustration of Colonel By, the famous builder of the Rideau Canal, from amongst its leaves. All the pages of text and all the other 9 illustrations remain however, and you will not be able to tell from this reproduction that the book was in less than perfect condition.

This valuable book has been loaned to us by its proud owner, Karen Prytula. We were pleased to receive her offer to allow us to scan the book so we could help her to preserve it and at the same time make it more available. Please join us in thanking Karen, and letting her know that her generosity is being appreciated.

*The White Chief  
of the Ottawa*

... *By* ...

*Bertha Wright Carr-Harris*

*With seven full-page illustrations  
by John Innes*

TORONTO  
WILLIAM BRIGGS  
1903

## P R E F A C E .

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“THE White Chief of the Ottawa” is not fiction. It is not a tale with a carefully concealed plot, meant to delude the reader at the beginning and to surprise him at the end. It is something stranger than fiction, a sketch of the life experiences of Philemon Wright and his family, the first settlers in the district of Ottawa. With the exception of the love of Abbie and Chrissy, which are based upon fact, the story is mainly a simple recital of actual facts which cannot be controverted.

The writer is indebted to the following for furnishing valuable data :

Diary and letters of Philemon Wright, 1806-1816.

Bouchette's Topographical Report.

“Travels in the North”—Sir Alexander Mackenzie, 1803.

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## Preface

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“Three Years in Canada”—McTaggart, 1830.

“Shoe and Canoe”—Dr. Bigsby.

Parkman's History of Canada.

Also to traditions of old settlers collected at various times and places. May some of the pictures set forth in these pages inspire us with an ever-deepening appreciation of the self-sacrifice, the energy, the enterprise, of those whose loyalty to the British Crown led them to penetrate the dark recesses of our Canadian forests and brave the trials and vicissitudes of pioneer life.

To these conquering heroes Canada owes much of her prosperity and greatness.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *THE WHITE CHIEF.*

1800.

THE hero of our sketch, Philemon Wright, was a man forty years of age. In appearance he was of a strong, broad build, and stood six feet in his stockings. A wealth of flaxen hair was brushed straight back from a high and noble brow. His face was profoundly meditative. Thick eyebrows shaded the eyes, which were wonderfully quick, observant and penetrating. His features indicated goodness and energy, strength of will and determination. His muscles were the envy of all who felt them.

Like all superior men, Philemon Wright nourished long his projects, but decision once made he set himself to realize them with ardor, obstacles only serving to intensify his energy, for he employed all the resources of his spirit and inflexible will to triumph over them. He was a worthy descendant of the men of Kent who followed Harold to victory through difficulties which to others would have been insurmountable.

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## “ A Ministering Angel, Thou ”

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purty hard up for somethin' to do when I read the like o' that.”

“ It is not so bad as it looks, Andrew,” she said, good-naturedly, as she shook hands with him on leaving.

Soon the messenger of mercy and healing was flying along the road to Paul Mousseau's shanty, where she found poor old Paul at the gate in tears.

“ What is the matter, Mousseau? ” she said, as she tied her pony to a tree.

“ *Le charbon*, Madame, le charbon ; ma bonne femme, I fear she no get well again.”

The charbon was a disease which afflicted many of the French settlers in Canada at that time. A small black spot would appear on the body, resembling a piece of charcoal, which soon spread until the whole body was affected. The only remedy known was to cut out the affected part as soon as it appeared. It was supposed that it was contracted through skinning and eating the flesh of cadaverous animals.

Paul's shanty contained one large, low, common room or kitchen with two windows, a fire-place at one side, one bedroom for the family, with a loft above, where the older boys slept among all sorts or provender and farm tools, and which was reached by a ladder. The walls of the room in which the sick woman lay were adorned with



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## Convent Days

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many words which he spelt according to the sound, and with the supposed meaning attached to each word. In this way he soon had a number of words, phrases and sentences which he at once began to use. He found it very hard to get some words, and the Indians often looked very bewildered when he spoke to them. He tried for a long time to find out the word for 'pike-pole,' and at length decided that it must be '*Am-chee-brin.*' He used the word all the way to Quebec before discovering that it meant '*Un petit brin,*' a common expression among the French-Canadians, meaning 'a little.'"

"But that was not the worst," said the Chief. "When we came to Bastican we went to a Post-house\* for dinner, and the 'bonne femme' introduced with great pride her only child, a black-eyed boy of about two.

"'*C'est un bon petit crapeau, madame,*' I ventured to remark, patting the boy on the head and thinking that I was paying a great compliment.

"But I saw at once, by the angry expression on the woman's face, that I had made a great mistake, which was afterwards explained by one of the men on the drive, who said that it meant,

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\* Not a post-office, but an inn with livery attached, under Government inspection, with fixed tariff of rates per mile for hire of horses for travellers.

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## Mrs. Bancroft's Sugaring-off

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named, with twenty-five hundred men, to open the campaign in Upper Canada about two years ago. As soon as he met Brock he hoisted the white flag and fell back to Detroit, and he and all his men were taken prisoners. Hull was condemned to be shot, but was spared because of his great age, and in consideration of former good service."

"It is no wonder," said Mr. Fessenden, "that the attempt has failed, for it had not the backing of thinking men nor of true Republicans."

"It's an ill wind that blows nobody good," said the Chief. "The price of wheat has gone up three dollars per bushel, and I have just disposed of our fall crop at a profit of \$7,000."

"May the war continue," said Martin Eberts, "and we'll all sow wheat."

"Let us hope that it won't," said Mr. Honeywell, "for I had to go all the way to the front for three barrels of flour, for my family was on the verge of starvation. I had just rolled it into the shanty, when who should come along but Dow and Billings, who wanted to buy two barrels, but I wouldn't sell, for I had hauled it all the way from Kingston on a jumper. Well, sir, they laid down \$50, and walked off with the flour."

But to return to our party. It was a glorious moonlight night, and the young people would

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## A Double Tragedy

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future. Streets are being surveyed, and building lots laid out. They will have a park of six acres, and are reserving large grants for ecclesiastical purposes.”\*

Soon the clatter of horses' hoofs was heard, and a man in military trousers and homespun shirt galloped down to where they had gathered, with the startling announcement :

“ *The Duke is dead!* He was playing with a tame fox which, unknown to us all, had gone mad,” the courier continued. “ It bit him. He was in a fearfully nervous condition all night, but decided to come on. He got into a boat to come down to Chapman's, where your waggon was waiting for him, sir,” he said, turning to the Chief, “ but when we were about five miles from Richmond he leaped out of it and rushed wildly through the woods, and they found him in Chapman's barn in a fit. Dr. Collis bled him, but he died before anything more could be done. We laid the body in the waggon and covered it with a sheet, and the officers and soldiers formed themselves into a guard, and will soon be here.”

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\* Previous to the construction of the locks, it seemed as though Richmond was destined to become an important city at an early date, but the public works offered so many inducements for men to come to Bytown that it dwindled down to a mere village.

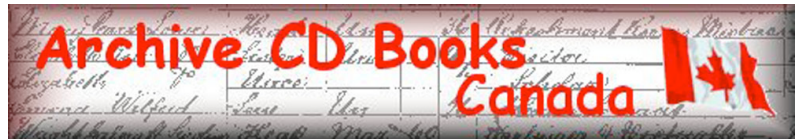
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## After Many Days

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another, with exactly the same results. I was drenched, and steamed, and packed, and baked, externally, and almost poisoned internally with draughts of water which, to say the least, were unclean ; but all to no purpose. They blew upon me, and then whistled. They pressed their extended fingers with all their strength into me. They put their forefingers doubled into my mouth, and spouted water from their own mouths into mine. They applied pieces of lighted touchwood to my flesh in many places. They then placed me on a litter made of saplings, and I was carried by four men into the woods, and as I observed one Indian carrying fire, another an axe, and a third dry wood, I could not but conjecture that they had arrived at the humane conclusion of relieving me of all pain forever. When we had advanced a short distance into the woods, they laid me on a clear spot and kindled a fire against my back. Then the medicine-men began to scarify my flesh with blunt instruments.

“ A great hole was then dug in the ground, which I concluded was to be my burial-place. In this excavation a fire was kept up until the ground was heated to its utmost extent, when the embers and ashes were scraped out. Several layers of damp mud were immediately plastered over this fiery furnace. I was then placed within



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