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Published by Ronald Caplan on 1990/1/1

However, soon the ship's boys, dressed in their best finery, transformed into a brigade of waiters, appeared on the deck carrying with respect trays richly laden with refreshments. The serious people of the colony began to realize that the meeting had a purpose. The young ladies, happily gifted with an enormous appetite, so characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race, were equally well-disposed to accept these offerings and, during the very short intervals which they allowed the orchestra to take in order to rest, they renewed their energy. I cannot imagine how our cooks had managed on such short notice to make such a large variety of petit fours and cakes, enough to stock three sweets shops. What was even more curious was the air of timidity and graciousness with which our young ship's boys, the little devils, did their duty towards the ladies. One of them, the most devilish of the lot, lowered his eyes like a young virgin, while he offered his refreshments in English to the best looking ladies. During the day he had learned just the one sentence and it was the only one he knew, and probably the only one he would ever know, unless, later, he might wish to extend his erudition in this particular vocation, which is something I cannot imagine. There had been such passion and such gaiety in the dancing that, near midnight, it was necessary to call a halt for a few minutes, if only to take a breather. That was the moment the sailors requested permission to sing as a choir. That was a gallantry about which they had not said a word before. They performed very well. But, as is the custom in all professions, they never sang anything remotely connected with the sea, rather they entertained us with the charms of Swiss cottages and glaciers. It is easy to have a Swiss imagination on the ocean, and it is quite probable that in the valleys of Uri and Unterwalden the poetry of the demented seas is much appreciated. At last we dined, then after dinner we went to bed, everyone happy. A few ship's boys were sick because they had partaken of the refreshments meant for the guests but, the following day nothing showed and the Gassendi left only a pleasant memory in the secret recesses of a young imagination. The ballroom disappeared. The cannons returned to their accustomed places and everything returned to normal. It will readily be seen that, by the small number of persons who could come to the ball, the population is very small. I do not know the official number. I do not think that it could be much more than a thousand souls. In the surrounding area, loghouses are fairly rare; regular houses, all built with boards, are rarer still. What is called a village is, in fact, a series of houses spread throughout the forests on a distance of more than a league. French Village is the most remarkable of those that I have seen. It is inhabited by the descendants of our compatriots, the former owners of the entire country, because it is a known fact that the entire island once belonged to us. Cape Breton was then part of Acadia and the Acadians were nearly all farmers and ploughmen who came from Normandy. It is surely worth mentioning that this Province which, today, shows not the slightest interest in overseas immigration, had such a liking for these parts during the sixteenth and especially during the seventeenth centuries. Perhaps the peasants then entertained



illusions which were cruelly deceived. Among those illusions it was thought that there was a fertile soil everywhere in these new lands. A part of Acadia perhaps corresponds to this description but, generally speaking, and notably in the area surrounding Sydney, it certainly is not so. In order to lose such a notion, it is only necessary to consider the method used to cultivate the land. They begin by felling the trees, then in the space destined for cultivation, a fire is set in order to get rid of the remaining stumps. The ashes provide a first fertilizer which prepares the soil for the next year when a crop of potatoes is planted. In the second year, barley or rye is planted since wheat does not do well in this very harsh climate. During the third year it is still possible to try sowing however, generally speaking, the product is so mediocre that, for a fourth year, the place is abandoned and a new clearing is started somewhere else. However, the trees grow back. After a little while you have a thick wood and cutting is done again. Forest fires and clearings arrive quickly at the same end. It will be appreciated, then, that this is not a fertile land.

Consequently, the inhabitants are few and far between and they keenly feel this lack of generosity from the soil that they cultivate. There is a great deal of hardship in this forsaken part of the world. The usual necessities are expensive because almost all of them must be brought from outside and, in order to buy them, it is necessary that the few things which can be sold remain at a corresponding value. All these circumstances explain why the population is diminishing rather than growing, and it is not far-fetched to predict that those who have not sought a better living in other parts of the island, in Nova Scotia, in Canada or in the United States, will opt for Sydney Mines. Then the forest will reclaim all the land that has been so painstakingly taken from it. Our thanks to Robert Pichette, Sydney, for his translation from Gobineau's *Voyage ' Terre-Neuve*. The book was first published in 1860 and reprinted by Editions du Jour, 1972. The photos of Gobineau are taken from that book. Robert Pichette's recent book *Pour l'honneur de mon prince... (For the Honour of my Prince...)*, 50 vignettes of Acadian history in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton Island originally aired on CBC (Radio-Canada) is published by Michel Henry (P.O. Box 1273, Moncton, N. B. E1C 8P9) • 188 pages, \$18.95. The painting and the engraving of Sydney are courtesy of the Beaton Institute, University College of Cape Breton. The only key to trouble-free and long car life is regular and careful maintenance. For over 25 years, maintenance • solely of European cars • has been our occupation. If you don't wish to maintain your car, neither do we!! if you do, we'd like to help!! EUROCAR SERVICE LTD. 649 WESTMOUNT ROAD SYDNEY 564-9721 rmr wn OVERLOOKING SYDNEY HARBOUR Irnn Tel: (902) 539-6550 Toll Free: 1-800-565-9409 Vistjotel 59 Units * Open Year Round Licensed Dining Room open 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. with Home-Styled Meals 140 Kings Road SYDNEY Nova Scotia BIP 6J9 jIG