



Love Strong as Death: Lucy Peel's Canadian Journal, 1833-1836 (Studies in Childhood and Family in Canada)

J.I. Little

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A transcription of Lucy Peel's wonderfully readable journal was recently discovered in her descendent's house in Norwich, England. Sent in regular installments to her transatlantic relatives, the journal presents an intimate narrative of Lucy's Canadian sojourn with her husband, Edmund Peel, an officer on leave from the British navy. Her daily entries begin with their departure as a young, newlywed couple from the shores of England in 1833 and end with their decision to return to the comforts of home after three and a half years of hard work as pioneer settlers.

Lucy Peel's evocative diary focuses on the semi-public world of family and community in Lower Canada's Eastern Townships, and fulfils the same role as Susanna Moodie's writings had for the Upper Canadian frontier. Though their perspective was from a small, privileged sector of society, these genteel women writers were sharp observers of their social and natural surroundings, and they provide valuable insights into the ideology and behaviour of the social class that dominated the Canadian colonies during the pre-Rebellion era.

Women's voices are rarely heard in the official records that comprise much of the historical archives. Lucy Peel's intensely romantic journal reveals how crucially important domesticity was to the local British officials. Lucy Peel's diary, like those of such counterparts as Catherine Parr Traill, also suggests that genteel women were better prepared for their role in the New World than Canadian historians have generally assumed.

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