

Let Her Be, 1864.

INTERESTING STORY OF THE STEAMER CHICORA.

Mr. A. J. Clark, writing in *The Picton Times*, gives the following interesting history of the *Chicora*:

The steamer *Chicora* of the fleet of the Niagara Navigation Co., was built at Liverpool, or at Birkenhead, just opposite, in 1864. She left the stocks at a time when British shipyards were turning out their speediest craft for what then constituted the most exciting service in the world, namely, the running of the United States navy's blockade of the seceding Southern States. Though built so near the close of the great civil struggle, she yet arrived on this side of the Atlantic in time to make several successful trips into the port of Charleston, S.C. The accuracy of this statement has been denied, but confirmation of it was obtained many years ago by the present owners of the steamer from her war-time captain, who visited Toronto to have a last look at the craft once his pride. He manifested all of a sailor's love for his ship of other days, and even pointed out a slight dent in the hull which he claimed was made by a spent Federal shell.

As a blockade runner the steamer had no upper works and was turtle-backed to the foremast. Everything calculated to make her conspicuous being avoided. No topmasts were used and the rakish funnels, though unusually tall to secure strong draught, were of small diameter.

The close of the war between the States putting an end to the career for which she was built, the low-lying craft was brought to Halifax, where it is probable she received her present musical name, meaning "Land of Flowers." Sold for service on the Great Lakes, she was cut in two to pass the canals and after being rebuilt to fit her for her new duties, was put in commission between Collingwood and Thunder Bay.

On this route during the summer of 1870 came the next event in the *Chicora's* history, and one which gives her a place in the interest of all Canadians, for during that season she did splendid service in forwarding Lord Wolseley's (then Col. Garnet Wolseley) famous Red River expedition for the stamping out of the first Riel rebellion.

As soon as it became known, early in that eventful year, that Canada proposed to use the great lakes as part of the route over which to send her soldiery to the scene of disaffection the American authorities issued strict orders forbidding the passage of Canadian troops or their supplies through the canal located on United States territory around the St. Mary's Rapids. So zealous were the officials at the Soo entrusted with the enforcement of these orders that they even stopped the *Chicora* on her regular trip, though she had neither troops nor contraband of war on board. Not to be deprived of 500 and odd miles of water travel, Col. Wolseley formed the plan of shipping his supplies to the foot of the rapids, having them laboriously portaged over Canadian territory and re-shipped for the passage across Lake Superior. This scheme was carried into effect by a small force under Col. Bolton, but fortunately for the better relations of the two countries the annoying restriction was removed by the Washington authorities before the final departure of the expedition. Consequently to the *Chicora* fell the honor of taking on board at Collingwood Col. Wolseley and his staff and the advance guard, consisting of five companies of the 60th Rifles, and of landing them on the shore of Thunder Bay at what was named Prince Arthur's Landing, in honor of Prince Arthur of Connaught. The troops and their gallant commander left Toronto amidst great enthusiasm, on May 21, 1870, embarked, the same day and were landed on the 25th.

The *Chicora* was purchased in 1875 to found the Niagara River Line, has ever since been yearly engaged in the cross-lake service, and holds to her credit a remarkably successful record. She has an iron hull 210 ft. in length, and is of the side-wheel type. Her engines are those originally placed in her, though they have been in great part rebuilt, and among old lake men her sea qualities, are never slow to receive their meed of praise.

What might be termed the only relic of her early career now preserved aboard the steamer hangs on the rail in front of the pilot-house in the form of a small ship's bell. In its own way it tells all that remains to be recorded of an interesting little history, tells, in fact, practically all that is known as to when and where the vessel was built, and her strange original name.

On the bell is engraved, "Let Her Be, 1864. W. C. Miller, Shipbuilder, Liverpool."