

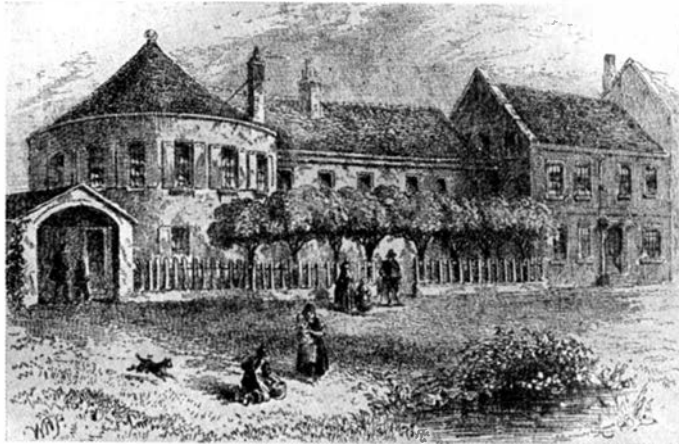
(XIII) ESSEX TO CANADA



LONG before the Dorsetshire labourers had returned to England, mature consideration had been given by the Central Dorchester Committee in London to ways and means of permanently removing the six men from the power of their former persecutors. It was felt that if they returned to Tolpuddle, sooner or later they would be exposed to the petty tyranny which squire and farmer knew how to impose so dexterously.

When the Committee first started its duties, its sole purpose was that of protecting the wives and families from hardship whilst the breadwinners were absent. The response was such that not only were the Committee enabled to do this adequately, but a considerable surplus remained. Many schemes were examined for utilising this to the best advantage, until finally it was proposed that an effort should be made to place the labourers on farms of their own. This would furnish a living testimonial of the esteem in which they were held by Trade Unionists and the public generally.

The Committee decided to await the return of the labourers before coming to any decision, and it was not until the dinner which was given in April, 1838, in their honour at White Conduit House, that Thomas Wakley publicly announced the project. The



WHITE CONDUIT HOUSE, ABOUT 1820

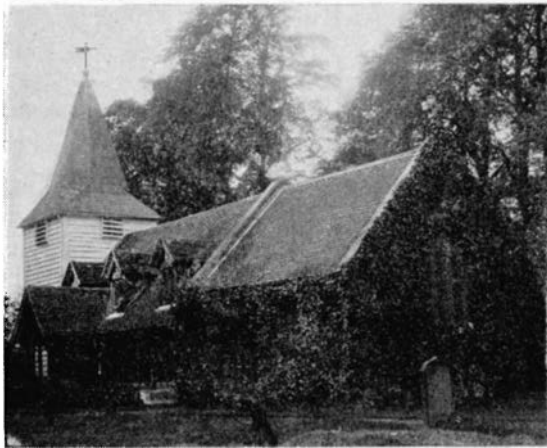
proposal was received with acclamation, and Loveless and his colleagues readily embraced the opportunity extended to them. They expressed the sincere wish that they should be settled near one another. The comradeship which had endured through the dark days of adversity, ought to be preserved and strengthened in the bright future which was dawning for them.

In May, 1838, the Dorchester Committee launched the Dorchester Labourers' Farm Tribute, as the fund was called, from which was to be purchased the farms and equipment. Inquiries were instituted and the Committee availed themselves of a most advantageous offer to lease the New House Farm, Greensted Green, near Chipping Ongar, Essex. The farm was pleasantly situated on high ground with a splendid view of undulating country, reminiscent in some respects of the county of their birth.

The comrades
placed on
farms

Farms leased
near Ongar,
Essex

Accompanied by an agricultural expert, George Loveless went down to see the farm which consisted of about eighty acres of arable and pasture land, with farm house and homestead attached. They were both favourably impressed, and so, in August, 1838, George and James Loveless, together with James Brine, were comfortably installed on the farm. The lease of this farm had a further seven years to run, and the price paid by the Committee for the farm and equipment was only £640.



GREENSTED CHURCH, ESSEX

The
Standfields at
High Laver

The Standfield family were located on another farm at High Laver, near Harlow, and about four miles from Greensted. Their farm, too, was charmingly situated and extended over 43 acres. Unfortunately, James Hammett had not then returned, and

as his wife desired to remain at Tolpuddle, the Committee granted her a sum sufficient to keep her in comfort pending her husband's arrival.

George Loveless devoted his leisure time to engaging the agricultural labourers in the cause for which he had suffered so much. The village parson at Greensted Green, the Rev. Philip Ray, whose tiny flock apparently left him plenty of time to pry into the doings of his neighbours, publicly reprobated them. He complained that the Parish was being disgraced by having a lot of convicts brought into it. Certainly, being dissenters, they did not attend his pretty little church crowded with historic memories, dating back before the Norman Conquest.

The Rector
objects to
"Chartists"

When, early in the following year the sixteen members of the Dorchester Central Committee visited Loveless' farm, the Reverend gentleman nearly burst with indignation, and feverishly wrote to the Bench of Magistrates at Chelmsford, and to the Lord Lieutenant of the County, reporting that a mob of Chartists had recently assembled at Greensted.

Meantime, organisation in Dorset was not being neglected. On November 14, 1838, a meeting took place near Blandford in support of the people's Charter. For days before the meeting a notice was displayed signed by George Loveless, calling upon the labourers to join the working men's association. Despite the threats of the farmers, some 200 of whom attended on horseback to intimidate the labourers, nearly 6,000 people listened to the speakers.

James
Hammett
reaches the
farm

James Hammett arrived at the New House Farm in August, 1839. On September 22 of that year he was given a public welcome at the Victoria Theatre, Waterloo Road,

London, now widely known as the Old Vic., the democratic home of classical opera and drama, where a benefit performance was given in support of the Fund. It had been announced that Hammett would attest his thanks for the help which had been given to his family during his absence. But when he arrived at the theatre and saw the crowded attendance, he, who had never quailed at the prospects of hardship, was unable to command his feelings sufficiently to address them. Even George Loveless, eloquent and practised speaker that he was, was unable to control his emotion when he gazed over the sea of kindly faces, glowing with sympathy. His self-possession vanished. Memories of those bitter years surged up within him, and with tears streaming down his face he could utter only a few broken sentences of gratitude. It was left to John Standfield, now twenty-five years old, to give something of the story which the overstrained emotions of the older men prevented them from telling.

Back on their farms, on the edge of Epping Forest, replete with romance and legend, they never lost an opportunity to proclaim the burning faith within them. They threw themselves with enthusiasm into the Chartist Movement, and, as we learn from the *Morning Post*, soon after their arrival at their new homes, Chartist newspapers were seen in active circulation. Night after night the agricultural labourers from the adjoining parishes, plodded their way over the fields to attend the meetings of the newly-formed Chartist Association at the New House Farm.

They form a
Chartist
Association at
Greensted

It is a platitude that time speeds where happiness resides. James Hammett had long gone back to Tolpuddle, and the time was approaching when consideration would have to be given to other provisions for the future. The farm had not been bought outright, and the lease was due to expire in the summer of 1845.

Around the cosy fire at the New House Farm, the comrades had many and animated discussions as to what should be done.

James Brine was now a married man, having espoused the daughter of his old comrade, Thomas Standfield. Elizabeth Standfield and he were married at the Parish of Greensted, in Essex, on June 20, 1839. His new responsibilities gave him a deeper interest in the conversation of the elder men than might otherwise have been possible.



COBURG THEATRE, LONDON; LATER THE VICTORIA, 1830

James Brine
marries
Elizabeth
Standfield

What should be done? Should they remain in the county of Essex, and try to make arrangements for a new lease? Much as they would have liked to have gone back to Tolpuddle, it was felt that to do this would be to expose themselves to the vindictiveness of their former oppressors. James Hammett had returned, but he had not remained a farm labourer. With natural adaptability, he had turned to building work, a trade in which he remained until he retired from active service.



NEW HOUSE FARM, GREENSTED, ESSEX

In those conversations round the Essex fireside, someone had spoken of Canada, the new country full of hope and prospects beyond anything that appeared possible in England to men of initiative and resource. Why should not they, too, go to Canada? Communications with their friends were soon established, and ultimately, in the spring of the year, they found themselves once more upon the heaving billows, sailing with their faces to the west. With their little capital, they would be able to shape their own destinies in a land free from the conventions and prejudices inseparable from English country life, amongst those to whom those earlier pages of their life, grim and yet glorious, were unknown.

It is not surprising that there are a good many obscurities about the Canadian part of their story. It appears that they made a compact amongst themselves that the story should be kept locked in their own breasts. They were going into a strange country, they would have to form new friendships with people of whose views on life they knew nothing. Perhaps, after all, it might be the best to shroud those days between 1834 and 1838 in silence. Well was that compact kept. Their children learned very little of what had happened, and the grandchildren were almost entirely in the dark until 1912, when the account was transmitted overseas of the unveiling of the Memorial Arch, erected in their honour at Tolpuddle.

H. J. Brine, who was born in Tolpuddle in the same house in which his Uncle James had been arrested, and who went out to Canada in 1855, recalls the news he gave them of the presentation which was made to James Hammett. He described to George Loveless and the Standfields how Hammett had been lionised at a great gathering of Trade Unionists. They were all delighted at the honour which had been bestowed on their old comrade, but they repeated what they had said many times before, "Don't talk about our transportation. Don't tell the children." Their resolve to maintain silence, may be better understood, perhaps, when it is realised that the district in which they settled was regarded at that time as a stronghold of Orange Toryism, full of prejudice and intolerance of radical principles.

The proposal
to emigrate to
Canada

The compact
of silence

Apparently they reached the American continent in the spring of 1844, although another account gives it as 1846. The voyage in a sailing ship through the freezing seas of the north Atlantic, must have been a terrifying experience to the women and children. A further sorrow was added to the over-burdened hearts of the Loveless family by the loss of a daughter on the passage.

Where they landed cannot be definitely stated. The present descendants of the Standfields assert that the families all came to New York, travelled from thence by train to Buffalo, and then by ship to Port Stanley, from where they trekked by ox-team to London, Ontario. George Loveless settled on a farm about two miles from the site of the first Methodist Church at Siloam, London. This church which he helped to build, was burnt down, being a wooden frame building, and the present church was erected in its place on the same site. Although he moved later to another farm, he always resided at London, and lived happy and contented until he passed into his last sleep on March 6, 1874. To the end he was true to his principles and never disguised his outspoken views. He was equally firm in his adherence to his religious faith, and regularly held bible classes at the house which he had built. He preserved his love for flowers and his garden was a blaze of colour, regarded with good-natured envy by his immediate neighbours.

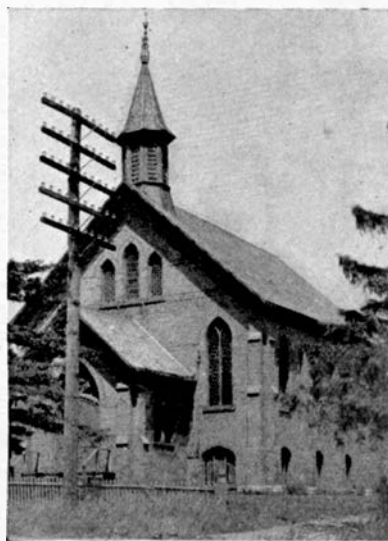
Little is known about his brother, James, save that he became caretaker of the Methodist Church at Siloam, where he remained until his death. This good, quiet man never regretted the sacrifice which he himself had made, and looked on George with a kindred affection and love to that which David bore to Jonathan. They sleep near one another in the little churchyard at Siloam. Not far from them lies Thomas Standfield, who was at a farm at Bryanstone, London, where his happy disposition and melodious singing, together with his striking appearance rendered him beloved and respected by all who knew him.

His son, John, remained for a time with his father from whom he had inherited a great love of music. He created the choir at Bryanstone, which became famous over a great part of Western Ontario. Later, he left the countryside as a farm worker and became an hotel proprietor in East London. Always active and public spirited, he rose to become the Mayor of the district. He, too, died and was buried in London.

James Brine, as has been stated, married the daughter of Thomas Standfield, and their first child was only a few months old when they crossed the Atlantic. At first he rented a farm at Bridgewater, now called Homesville, near Clinton, Ontario, not far

The
Lovelesses
at London,
Ontario

The graves at
Siloam



SILOAM CHURCH, ONTARIO

James Brine
at St. Mary's,
Ontario

from the shores of Lake Huron. Unfortunately, his crops were destroyed by grasshoppers and he removed to Carters Farm, London. He afterwards purchased a farm at Blanshard, Perth County, about four miles south of St. Marys, Ontario, and about twenty-five miles north of London. His farm at Brine's Corner, was well known, and when he died on August 11, 1902, in his ninetieth year, his loss was mourned far and wide. He was buried in the churchyard at St. Marys.

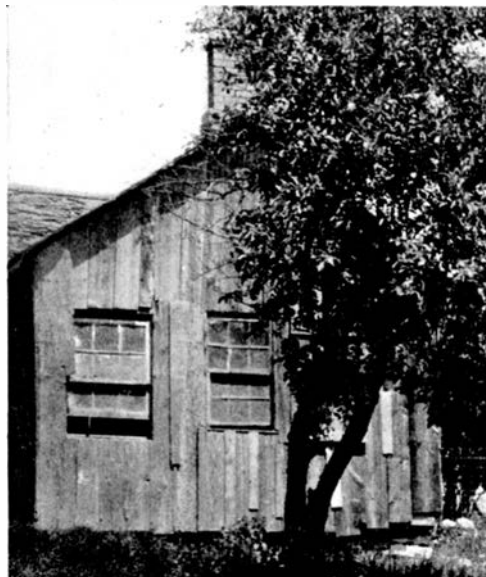


GEORGE LOVELESS

A nephew's
account of the
arrest

These quiet, resolute, steadfast products of the English countryside, left behind them numerous descendants in Canada, many of whom have occupied important positions in the commercial, industrial and civic life of the community. The historian of the family was H. J. Brine, the nephew of James Brine, of whom we have already spoken. He wrote the pamphlet, *Christian Songs*, in which he gave for the first time to the public of the American continent some of the more intimate details of the struggles of his heroic relatives.

He asserts that young James Brine was arrested by his own father, the village constable at Tolpuddle. This has been repeated by other writers, but it scarcely seems to be credible. In the first instance, there is a discrepancy in the name of the constable as given by H. J. Brine. His pamphlet refers to the constable as John Brine, whereas in the Court records the name is James—a fact which is confirmed by George Loveless in his pamphlet, *The Victims of Whiggery*. Secondly, none of the martyrs ever mentioned this dramatic arrest of a son by his own father, an omission which, if the story was true, would be almost unaccountable. Thirdly, the mother of James Brine, Catharine, applied as the records show, for parish relief during the time her son was transported. She had at various times, prior to that date, received parochial assistance because of the low wages which her son was then receiving. It is fairly certain that she was a widow at this time, depending upon the earnings of her son. It is scarcely possible that if she had been the wife of the village constable, she would have needed parish relief.



ORIGINAL HOME OF JAMES BRINE IN CANADA

As has been stated, James Hammett did not accompany his comrades to Canada, but returned to Tolpuddle, where he went into the building trade. So far as can be ascertained, on only one occasion did he break through the reserve which characterised him. That was when in March, 1875, Joseph Arch presented him with an illuminated address and a silver watch on behalf of the National Agricultural Labourers' Union. It was on that occasion, as has been stated earlier, that Hammett avowed that he had been sold like a slave for £1 whilst in Australia. The address and the watch which he received, still remain in the cherished possession of his niece, Mrs. Mary Hammett, who lives to-day in the village in which James Hammett spent so many years of his life.

In the evening of his days, his eyesight became seriously affected. Rather than be a burden on his family, he insisted much against their inclinations, on going into the Poor Law Institution at Dorchester where his last days were spent. He rests in the quiet village churchyard at Tolpuddle, the only one of the six brave men who reposes in his native soil. His grave, carefully tended by his aged niece over these many years since he was laid to rest on November 21, 1891, will not long remain without tribute from those who honour him. Neither "stolid urn nor animated bust back to their mansions can call the fleeting breath," but at least the passer-by will, after the autumn of 1934 has flown, see a recognition of the esteem and affection with which his memory is regarded by Trade Unionists.

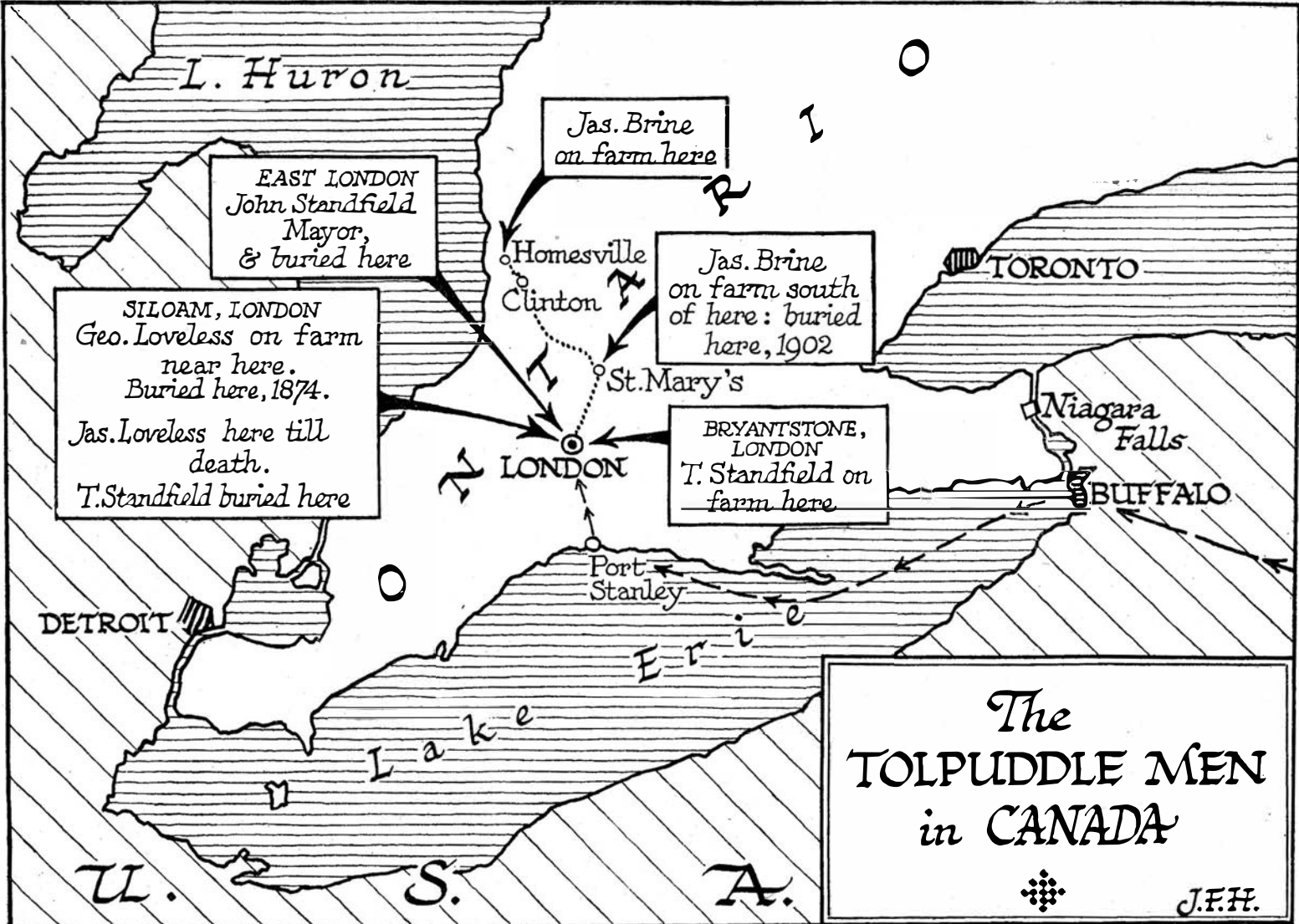
James
Hammett a
builder at
Tolpuddle



JAMES HAMMETT



LONDON, CANADA WEST, 1849



L. Huron

EAST LONDON
John Standfield
Mayor,
& buried here

Jas. Brine
on farm here

Jas. Brine
on farm south
of here: buried
here, 1902

SILOAM, LONDON
Geo. Loveless on farm
near here.
Buried here, 1874.
Jas. Loveless here till
death.
T. Standfield buried here

BRYANTSTONE,
LONDON
T. Standfield on
farm here

The TOLPUDDLE MEN in CANADA

J.F.H.



U. S. A.

Lake Erie

Port Stanley

LONDON

St. Mary's

Homesville
Clinton

TORONTO

Niagara Falls

BUFFALO

DETROIT