

# EVANGELINE



In the odorous air of the orchard  
..... was spread the feast  
of betrothal.

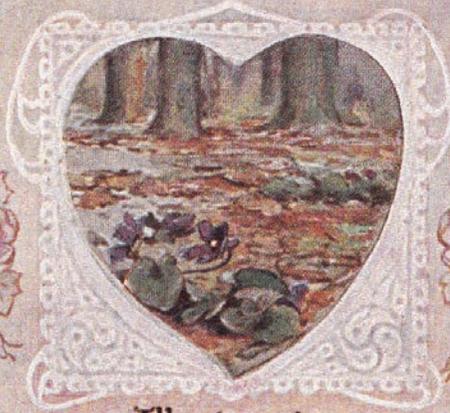
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vangeline

A Tale of Acadie

by

Henry Wadsworth  
Longfellow.



Illustrated by

Arthur Dixon.

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## **EVANGELINE**

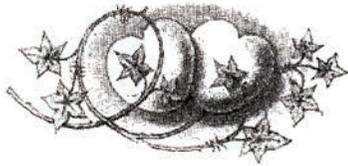
*In 1713, Acadia, or as it is now named, Nova Scotia, was ceded to Great Britain by the French. Some time after, war having again broken out between the French and British in Canada, the Acadians were accused of having assisted the French, and the British government ordered them to be removed from their homes, and dispersed throughout the other colonies, at a distance from their much-loved land. The poem is descriptive of the fate of some of the persons involved in these calamitous proceedings.*



Loud from its rocky caverns,  
    the deep-voiced neighboring ocean  
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate  
    answers the wail of the forest.

This is the forest primeval;  
    but where are the hearts that beneath it  
Leaped like the roe, when he hears  
    in the woodland the voice of the huntsman?  
Where is the thatch-roofed village,  
    the home of Acadian farmers,—  
Men whose lives glided on like rivers  
    that water the woodlands,  
Darkened by shadows of earth,  
    but reflecting an image of heaven?  
Waste are those pleasant farms,  
    and the farmers forever departed!  
Scattered like dust and leaves,  
    when the mighty blasts of October  
Seize them, and whirl them aloft,  
    and sprinkle them far o'er the ocean.  
Naught but tradition remains  
    of the beautiful village of Grand-Pré.

Ye who believe in affection  
    that hopes, and endures, and is patient,  
Ye who believe in the beauty  
    and strength of woman's devotion,  
List to the mournful tradition  
    still sung by the pines of the forest;  
List to a Tale of Love in Acadie,  
    home of the happy.



# PART THE FIRST

## I

IN the Acadian land,  
on the shores of the Basin of Minas,  
Distant, secluded, still,  
the little village of Grand-Pré  
Lay in the fruitful valley. Vast meadows  
stretched to the eastward,  
Giving the village its name,  
and pasture to flocks without number.  
Dikes, that the hands of the farmers  
had raised with labor incessant,  
Shut out the turbulent tides;  
but at stated seasons the flood-gates  
Opened, and welcomed the sea  
to wander at will o'er the meadows.  
West and south there were fields of flax,  
and orchards and cornfields  
Spreading afar and unfenced o'er  
the plain; and away to the northward



Flax for the gossiping looms,  
    whose noisy shuttles within doors  
Mingled their sound with the whir of  
    the wheels and the songs of the maidens.  
Solemnly down the street came  
    the parish priest, and the children  
Paused in their play to kiss the hand  
    he extended to bless them.  
Reverend walked he among them;  
    and up rose matrons and maidens,  
Hailing his slow approach  
    with words of affectionate welcome.  
Then came the laborers home  
    from the field, and serenely the sun sank  
Down to his rest, and twilight prevailed.  
    Anon from the belfry  
Softly the Angelus sounded,  
    and over the roofs of the village  
Columns of pale blue smoke,  
    like clouds of incense ascending,  
Rose from a hundred hearths,  
    the homes of peace and contentment.  
Thus dwelt together in love  
    these simple Acadian farmers,—

Dwelt in the love of God and of man.

Alike were they free from  
Fear, that reigns with the tyrant,  
and envy, the vice of republics.  
Neither locks had they to their doors,  
nor bars to their windows;  
But their dwellings were open as day  
and the hearts of the owners;  
There the richest was poor,  
and the poorest lived in abundance.

Somewhat apart from the village,  
and nearer the Basin of Minas,  
Benedict Bellefontaine,  
the wealthiest farmer of Grand-Pré,  
Dwelt on his goodly acres;  
and with him, directing his household,  
Gentle Evangeline lived, his child,  
and the pride of the village.

Stalworth and stately in form  
was the man of seventy winters;

Hearty and hale was he, an oak  
that is covered with snow-flakes;  
White as the snow were his locks,  
and his cheeks as brown as the oak-leaves.



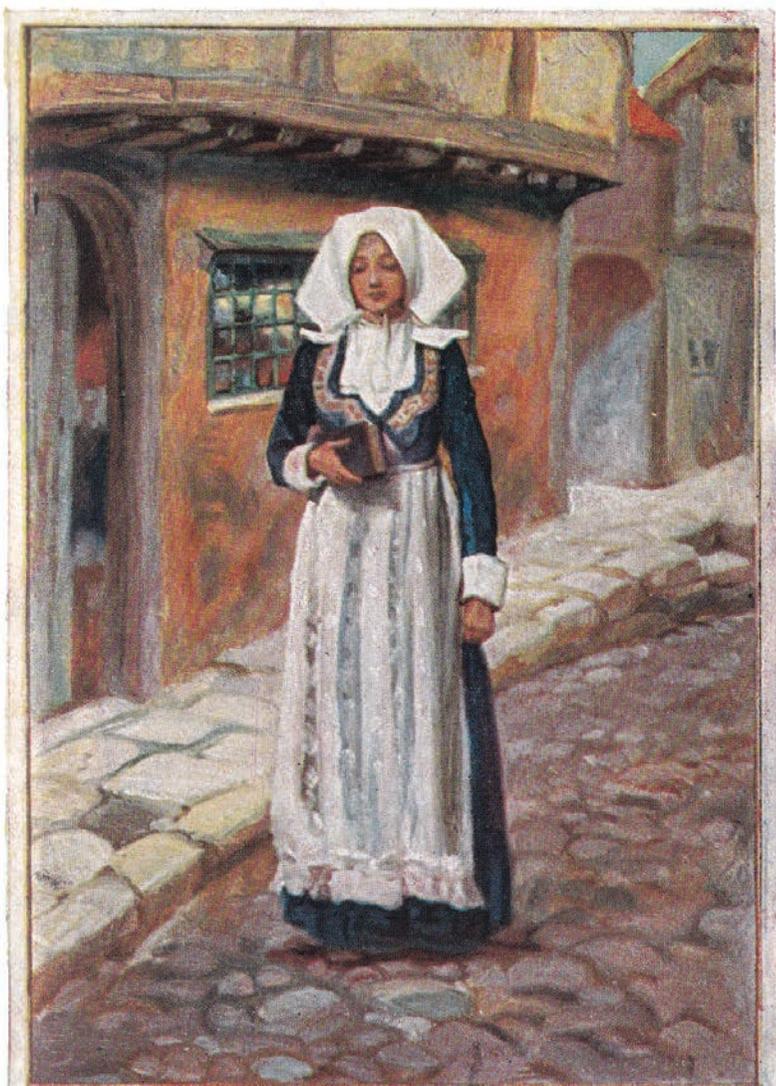
Fair was she to behold,  
that maiden of seventeen summers.  
Black were her eyes as the berry that grows  
on the thorn by the wayside,  
Black, yet how softly they gleamed  
beneath the brown shade of her tresses!

Sweet was her breath as the breath  
    of kine that feed in the meadows.  
When in the harvest heat she bore  
    to the reapers at noontide  
Flagons of home-brewed ale,  
    ah! fair in sooth was the maiden.  
Fairer was she when, on Sunday morn,  
    while the bell from its turret  
Sprinkled with holy sounds the air,  
    as the priest with his hyssop  
Sprinkles the congregation,  
    and scatters blessings upon them,  
Down the long street she passed,  
    with her chaplet of beads and her missal,  
Wearing her Norman cap, and her kirtle  
    of blue, and the earrings,  
Brought in the olden time from France,  
    and since, as an heirloom,  
Handed down from mother to child,  
    through long generations.  
But a celestial brightness—  
    a more ethereal beauty—  
Shone on her face and encircled  
    her form, when, after confession,

Homeward serenely she walked  
with God's benediction upon her.  
When she had passed, it seemed like  
the ceasing of exquisite music.

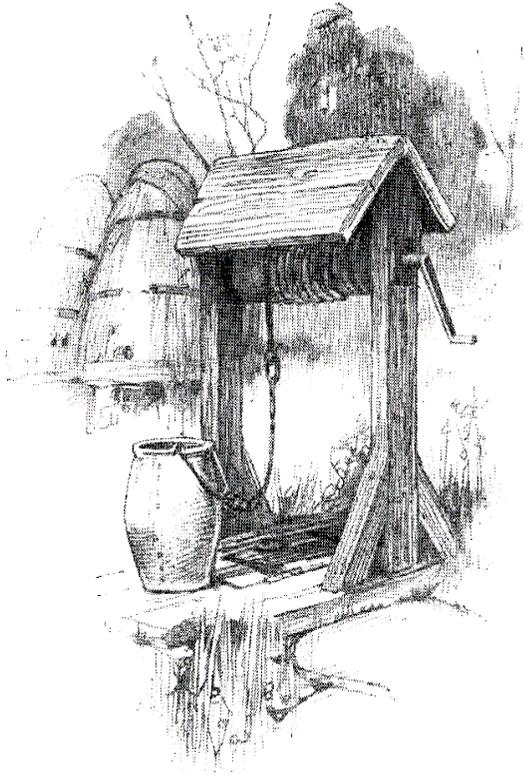


Firmly builded with rafters of oak,  
the house of the farmer  
Stood on the side of a hill  
commanding the sea; and a shady



Down the long street she passed.

Sycamore grew by the door,  
with a woodbine wreathing around it.  
Rudely carved was the porch,  
with seats beneath; and a footpath



Led through an orchard wide,  
and disappeared in the meadow.  
Under the sycamore-tree were hives  
overhung by a penthouse,

Such as the traveller sees  
    in regions remote by the road-side,  
Built o'er a box for the poor,  
    or the blessed image of Mary.  
Farther down, on the slope of the hill,  
    was the well with its moss-grown  
Bucket, fastened with iron,  
    and near it a trough for the horses.  
Shielding the house from storms, on the  
    north, were the barns and the farm-yard,  
There stood the broad-wheeled wains  
    and the antique ploughs and the harrows;  
There were the folds for the sheep;  
    and there, in his feathered seraglio,  
Strutted the lordly turkey, and crowed  
    the cock, with the selfsame  
Voice that in ages of old  
    had startled the penitent Peter.  
Bursting with hay were the barns,  
    themselves a village. In each one  
Far o'er the gable projected a roof of  
    thatch; and a staircase,  
Under the sheltering eaves,  
    led up to the odorous corn-loft.

There too the dove-cot stood,  
    with its meek and innocent inmates  
Murmuring ever of love;  
    while above in the variant breezes  
Numberless noisy weathercocks  
    rattled and sang of mutation.

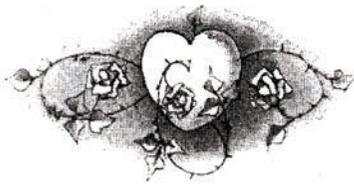
Thus, at peace with God and the world,  
    the farmer of Grand-Pré  
Lived on his sunny farm,  
    and Evangeline governed his household.  
Many a youth, as he knelt in the church  
    and opened his missal,  
Fixed his eyes upon her,  
    as the saint of his deepest devotion;  
Happy was he who might touch her hand  
    or the hem of her garment!  
Many a suitor came to her door,  
    by the darkness befriended,  
And, as he knocked and waited to hear  
    the sound of her footsteps,  
Knew not which beat the louder,  
    his heart or the knocker of iron;





Lay like a fiery snake,  
    coiled round in a circle of cinders.  
Oft on autumnal eves,  
    when without in the gathering darkness  
Bursting with light seemed the smithy,  
    through every cranny and crevice,  
Warm by the forge within  
    they watched the laboring bellows,  
And as its panting ceased,  
    and the sparks expired in the ashes,  
Merrily laughed, and said  
    they were nuns going into the chapel.  
Oft on sledges in winter,  
    as swift as the swoop of the eagle,  
Down the hillside bounding,  
    they glided away o'er the meadow.  
Oft in the barns they climbed  
    to the populous nests on the rafters,  
Seeking with eager eyes that  
    wondrous stone, which the swallow  
Brings from the shore of the sea  
    to restore the sight of its fledglings;  
Lucky was he who found that stone  
    in the nest of the swallow!

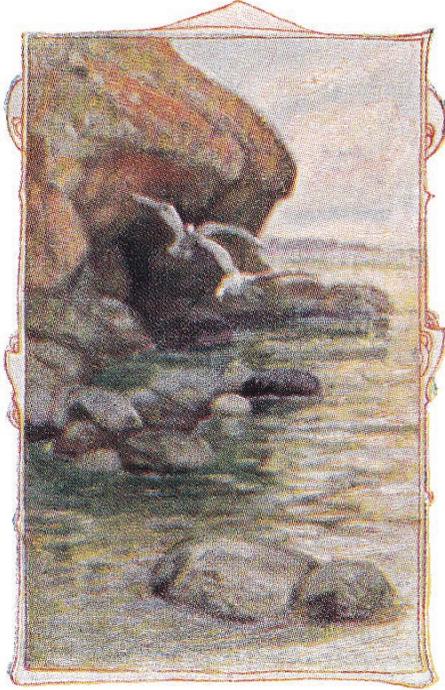
Thus passed a few swift years,  
and they no longer were children.  
He was a valiant youth, and his face,  
like the face of the morning,  
Gladdened the earth with its light,  
and ripened thought into action.  
She was a woman now,  
with the heart and hopes of a woman.  
“Sunshine of Saint Eulalie” was  
she called; for that was the sunshine  
Which, as the farmers believed,  
would load their orchards with apples;  
She, too, would bring to her husband’s house  
delight and abundance,  
Filling it full of love  
and the ruddy faces of children.



**II**

Now had the season returned,  
    when the nights grow colder and longer,  
And the retreating sun  
    the sign of the Scorpion enters.  
Birds of passage sailed through  
    the leaden air, from the ice-bound,  
Desolate northern bays  
    to the shores of tropical islands.  
Harvests were gathered in;  
    and wild with the winds of September  
Wrestled the trees of the forest,  
    as Jacob of old with the angel.  
All the signs foretold  
    a winter long and inclement.  
Bees, with prophetic instinct of want,  
    had hoarded their honey  
Till the hives overflowed;  
    and the Indian hunters asserted  
Cold would the winter be,  
    for thick was the fur of the foxes.  
Such was the advent of autumn.  
    Then followed that beautiful season,

Called by the pious Acadian peasants  
the Summer of All-Saints!  
Filled was the air with a dreamy  
and magical light; and the landscape



Lay as if new-created  
in all the freshness of childhood.  
Peace seemed to reign upon earth,  
and the restless heart of the ocean  
Was for a moment consoled.  
All sounds were in harmony blended.

Voices of children at play,  
    the crowing of cocks in the farm-yards,  
Whir of wings in the drowsy air,  
    and the cooing of pigeons,  
All were subdued and low as the  
    murmurs of love, and the great sun  
Looked with the eye of love  
    through the golden vapors around him;  
While arrayed in its robes  
    of russet and scarlet and yellow,  
Bright with the sheen of the dew,  
    each glittering tree of the forest  
Flashed like the plane-tree the Persian  
    adorned with mantles and jewels.

Now recommenced the reign  
    of rest and affection and stillness.  
Day with its burden and heat  
    had departed, and twilight descending  
Brought back the evening star to the sky,  
    and the herds to the homestead.  
Pawing the ground they came,  
    and resting their necks on each other,

And with their nostrils distended  
    inhaling the freshness of evening.  
Foremost, bearing the bell,  
    Evangeline's beautiful heifer,  
Proud of her snow-white hide, and  
    the ribbon that waved from her collar,  
Quietly paced and slow,  
    as if conscious of human affection.  
Then came the shepherd back  
    with his bleating flocks from the seaside,  
Where was their favorite pasture.  
    Behind them followed the watch-dog,  
Patient, full of importance,  
    and grand in the pride of his instinct,  
Walking from side to side  
    with a lordly air, and superbly  
Waving his bushy tail,  
    and urging forward the stragglers;  
Regent of flocks was he  
    when the shepherd slept; their protector,  
When from the forest at night, through  
    the starry silence, the wolves howled.  
Late, with the rising moon,  
    returned the wains from the marshes,



Into the sounding pails  
    the foaming streamlets descended.  
Lowling of cattle and peals of laughter  
    were heard in the farm-yard,  
Echoed back by the barns.  
    Anon they sank into stillness;  
Heavily closed, with a jarring sound,  
    the valves of the barn-doors,  
Rattled the wooden bars,  
    and all for a season was silent.

In-doors, warm by the wide-mouthed  
    fireplace, idly the farmer  
Sat in his elbow-chair; and watched  
    how the flames and the smoke-wreaths  
Struggled together like foe  
    in a burning city. Behind him,  
Nodding and mocking along the wall,  
    with gestures fantastic,  
Darted his own huge shadow,  
    and vanished away into darkness.  
Faces, clumsily carved in oak,  
    on the back of his arm-chair

Laughed in the flickering light,  
    and the pewter plates on the dresser  
Caught and reflected the flame,  
    as shields of armies the sunshine.  
Fragments of song the old man sang,  
    and carols of Christmas,  
Such as at home, in the olden time,  
    his fathers before him  
Sang in their Norman orchards  
    and bright Burgundian vineyards.  
Close at her father's side  
    was the gentle Evangeline seated,  
Spinning flax for the loom,  
    that stood in the corner behind her.  
Silent awhile were its treadles,  
    at rest was its diligent shuttle,  
While the monotonous drone of the wheel,  
    like the drone of a bagpipe,  
Followed the old man's song,  
    and united the fragments together.  
As in a church, when the chant  
    of the choir at intervals ceases,  
Footfalls are heard in the aisles,  
    or words of the priest at the altar,



*Close at her father's side  
was the gentle Evangeline seated.*

So, in each pause of the song,  
with measured motion the clock clicked.

Thus as they sat, there were footsteps  
heard, and, suddenly lifted,



Sounded the wooden latch,  
and the door swung back on its hinges.  
Benedict knew by the hob-nailed shoes  
it was Basil the blacksmith,  
And by her beating heart  
Evangeline knew who was with him.

“Welcome!” the farmer exclaimed,  
as their footsteps paused on the threshold,  
“Welcome, Basil, my friend!  
Come, take thy place on the settle



Close by the chimney-side,  
which is always empty without thee;  
Take from the shelf overhead  
thy pipe and the box of tobacco;  
Never so much thyself art thou  
as when through the curling

Smoke of the pipe or the forge  
thy friendly and jovial face gleams  
Round and red as the harvest moon  
through the mist of the marshes.”  
Then, with a smile of content,  
thus answered Basil the blacksmith,  
Taking with easy air  
the accustomed seat by the fireside:—  
“Benedict Bellefontaine,  
thou hast ever thy jest and thy ballad.  
Ever in cheerfullest mood art thou,  
when others are filled with  
Gloomy forebodings of ill,  
and see only ruin before them!  
Happy art thou, as if every day  
thou hadst picked up a horseshoe.”  
Pausing a moment, to take the pipe  
that Evangeline brought him,  
And with a coal from the embers  
had lighted, he slowly continued:—  
“Four days now are passed  
since the English ships at their anchors  
Ride in the Gaspereau’s mouth,  
with their cannon pointed against us.