

Shadow of the Almighty

By Elisabeth Elliot

Chapter One: Strong Roots

Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.

Toward the middle of the nineteenth century the hardwood bush country of Ontario between Lake Huron and Lake Erie was still semi-frontier. Among the many who were attracted there by the promise of good cheap land were the Elliots, from a clan of the southern border of Scotland. They settled a hundred miles west of Toronto, near Molesworth, a tiny country village comprising two general stores, a schoolhouse, lodge hall, two blacksmith shops, and two churches. Of these last, the Elliots naturally chose the Presbyterian kirk. The choice was an auspicious one, for it was here that they encountered the MacAllisters, a family from the north of Scotland. Sunday after Sunday the eight Elliot children associated with the eleven MacAllister children. These friendships eventually led to four Elliot-McAllistey marriages, which in turn produced thirty-six double cousins.

One of the four couples, John and Margaret Elliot, owned a small frame house on a hill, surrounded by orchards and grazing land. John was a hard-working stock-trader, respected for his square dealing, eager that his eight children should learn the value of honest labor. Opportunity for this was not lacking. There was stock to feed in the barns during the long winter from September to May, a large woodhouse to keep filled behind the kitchen, crops to plant and hoe, reap and store, maple sap to collect and boil down, and of course cows to milk and chickens to feed. Often added to these were household chores, for the children's mother was subject to frequent violent attacks of asthma, and these finally necessitated the oldest son Fred's being taken out of school to help at home. Denied the remainder of his formal education, he became an avid reader ...