

Maypole Point*

by Rachel Field

Wherever you go in the State of Maine
You'll come across some old French strain--
A scarlet thread in the sober skein
Of later settlers, since first Champlain
Charted those islands of the sea
In the name of France and the Fleur-de-Lis.
Changed, misspelled, and lost perhaps,
You can find some yet if you search the maps,
A scattered handful of six or so
With Mount Desert and Isle au Haut.
Those lilies of France were far too frail
For the bitter winters; the northeast gale;
The sharp-toothed ledges; the icy tides;
The bristling spruce on the mountain sides;
For a land that succors a needy tree
Can be less than kind to a fleur-de-lis.
It's years now since they were broken and lost;
Sturdier stock has weathered the frost.
But here and there in some far place
A name persists, or a foreign face;
A lift of shoulder; a turn of head;
Along with an Old World chest or bed;
A Breton Bible; a silver spoon;
And feet more quick to a fiddle tune;
A gift for taking the last, mad chance
Because some great-great came from France.

* Excerpted from the poem, "Maypole Point" in *Calico Bush* (MacMillan Company, 1931), ix-xi. Used by permission of Radcliffe College.