

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE AMERICAN WAR.*

BY DR. DUNLOP.

CHAPTER II.

"Cockneys of London, Muscadines of Paris,
I pray you ponder, what a pastime war is."

BYRON.

I JOINED my regiment at Fort Wellington, and a fine jovial unsophisticated set of "wild tremendous Irishmen" I found my brother officers to be. To do them justice (and I was upwards of four years with them) a more honest-hearted set of fellows never met round a mess table. No private family ever lived in more concord or unanimity than did "Our Mess."

Irishmen though they mostly were, they never quarrelled among themselves. They sometimes fought, to be sure, with strangers, but never in the Regiment, though we rarely went to bed without a respectable quorum of them getting a *leetle* to the lee side of sobriety.

"Tempora mutantur," says Horace, but I very much doubt if "nos" (that is such as are alive of 'nos') "mutamur in illis." The Army is very different from what it was in my day—sadly changed indeed! It will hardly be believed, but I have dined with officers who, after drinking a few glasses of wine, called for their coffee. If Waterloo was to fight over again, no rational man can suppose that we would gain it after such symptoms of degeneracy. Such lady-like gentlemen would certainly take out vinaigrettes and scream at a charge of the Old Guard, and be horrified at the sight of a set of grim-looking Frenchmen, all grin and gash, whisker and moustache.

I was not, however, allowed to enjoy the festivities of Fort Wellington, such as they were. The enemy being extended along the line of the right bank of the St. Lawrence, and the Luke of the Thousand Islands, it was necessary that we also should extend and occupy points that might enable us to keep up a communication, and maintain a correspondence with our rear. Besides it was considered highly expedient and necessary, that small bodies of the line should be stationed in defensible positions, to form a nucleus, in case of invasion, for the Indians and Militia to rally round and form upon. Accordingly, a garrison had to be maintained in a block-house in the woods

of Gananoque, between Brockville and Kingston, and our Grenadier Company being ordered for that service, I was detached to accompany them. A block-house is a most convenient and easily constructed fort in a new country. The lower story is strongly built of stone, and the upper, which overhangs it about eighteen inches, (so that you can fire from above along the wall without being exposed,) is built of logs about a foot square. Both stories are pierced with loop-holes for musquetry, and in the upper are four port-holes, to which are fitted four 24-pounder caronades, mounted naval fashion, the whole being surrounded with a strong loop-holed and flanked stoecade, and this makes a very fair protection for an inferior force, against a superior who are unprovided with a battering train, which of course in a few rounds would knock it to splinters.

Except in the expectation of a sudden attack, the officers were permitted to sleep out of the block-house, and a small unfinished house was taken for their residence. The captain and senior lieutenant being, as Bardolph hath it, better accommodated than with wives, we, that is the junior lieutenant and myself, gave up our share of the quarters to them, and established ourselves in what had been a blacksmith's shop, for our winter quarters. In the ante-room to this enviable abode, a jobbing tailor had formed his shop-board, and his rags and shapings proved highly useful in caulking its seams against the wind. By means of a roaring fire kept up on the forge, and a stove in the outer room, we managed to keep ourselves tolerably comfortable during an unusually rigorous winter; and it being on the road side, and a halting station in the woods, we were often visited by friends coming or going, who partook with great *gout* of our frozen beef—which had to be cut into steaks with a hand-saw. Being on the banks of a fine stream, we never were at loss for ducks, and in the surrounding pine woods the partridges were abundant, and the Indians brought us venison in exchange for rum, so that we had at least a plentiful, if not an elegant table, and we were enabled to pass the winter nights as pleasantly over our ration rum as ever I did in a place with much more splendid "appliances and means to boot."