

HISTORIC CANADA, VI. Ile-aux-Noix.

PART II.—UNDER THE BRITISH.

The smoke of the great conflict between the British and French had hardly cleared away before trouble began to brew between the British and the New Englanders. It is obviously outside the scope of a paper of this sort to either outline the history of the revolution or to pronounce on the quarrel. It is well to remember, however, that most questions have more than one side to them, and some Americans admit candidly enough that Great Britain was clearly within her technical rights, though unwise in their enforcement. The statesmen of those days being merely human, and without the gift of second sight, could not foresee the wonders to be brought about by electricity and steam, otherwise we might have had Imperial Federation a hundred years ago, and the "Schism of the Anglo-Saxon race" might never have occurred. However, the "Schism" was destined to take place, and early in the difficulty an army of liberation was despatched to free the Canadians from the British yoke. "In the autumn of 1775 Gen. Schuyler sailed down Lake Champlain with a considerable force of Americans and appeared before St. Johns. Informed that the garrison there was too strong to attack he returned to Ile-aux-Noix and fortified it. From this post he sent out a declaration among the Canadians by Col. Allen and Major Brown, assuring them that the Americans intended to act only against the British forts and not to interfere with the people or their religion."

From here also Ethan Allan set off on a scouting expedition, during which it occurred to him that it would be a brilliant feat to capture Montreal with 200 American Rangers, which resulted in his getting sent to England, through the courtesy of Gen. Sir Guy Carleton, who went out to meet him as soon as he heard of his arrival in the neighbourhood.

"Early in October the Americans, under Gen. Montgomery (Schuyler being ill) left the island and proceeded to St. Johns, whence they marched to Quebec. From that time till the close of the revolution no permanent garrison was established there, but the island was the stopping place for the troops of both parties when passing up or down the lake.

"It was the principal scene of the negotiations between some of the leading men of Vermont and British officers, which were so adroitly managed by the former as to keep an English army of 10,000 men quite inactive for about three years."

Not the last or only occasion on which bluff old honest John Bull has been hood-winked by his adroit offspring, as Canada has only too good reason to remember.

With the exception of the semi-warlike and diplomatic events just noted, the island does not seem to have figured in the war of the Revolution.

After the close of the war this post apparently dropped out of notice altogether until the war of 1812, when its importance as a frontier post and cover-point for Montreal being recognized by our military authorities, it was promptly occupied and the existing works erected.

It became at this time a place of considerable importance. In addition to Fort Lennox, of which the illustrations are views, Bouchette mentions two other forts of less extent, but proportionately strong, with ditches round them also; besides these there are several block-houses at the different points that could be deemed assailable by an enterprising enemy." He describes Fort Lennox as being an irregular fort at the west end of the island, "very well constructed, and of great strength, surrounded by a ditch, and mounted with guns of large calibre."

"In 1814 the island was still further strengthened by a boom extending across the river and a line of gun-boats moored in a direction that their fire might completely enfilade the whole passage; by these means it was always safe from attack, even if the enemy should have an unopposed force on the lake. At the east end of the fort is a slip for building ships; and from thence the Confidence, of 37 guns (831 tons) was launched."

Before giving an account of this vessel and her loss, it may be well to take up first James' account of the first naval action before Ile-aux-Noix in the war of 1812.

"On the 3rd of June, 1813, two American sloops appeared in sight of the British garrison at Ile-aux-Noix. Three gun-boats immediately got under weigh to attack them; and the crews of two batteaux and two row-boats were landed to annoy the enemy in the rear, the channel being very narrow. After a contest of three hours and a-half, the two sloops surrendered." They proved to be the Growler and the Eagle, mounting 11 guns each, and having a complement of 50 men each, both under the command of Lieut. Sidney Smith of the U. S. navy. "We lost 3 men wounded; the Americans 1 man killed, 8 severely wounded and, including the latter, 99 prisoners. No British naval officer was present. The feat was performed by detachments of the 100th regiment and Royal Artillery, under Major Taylor, of the former."

Mr. James then goes on to describe the expedition from Ile-aux-Noix to Plattsburg when the British, under Capt. Everard, of the Wasp, destroyed the American arsenals, block-houses, barracks, military stores, and a number of vessels, while the American general, Hampton, with 4,000

men, did not seem to take any kind of interest in his proceedings. The prizes, the Growler and the Eagle, were employed on this expedition.

Excepting some abortive suggestions for the capture of Ile-aux-Noix by General Wilkinson, the next occasion on which we find it mentioned in the history of the war was one which should always be a source of patriotic pride to British and Canadians alike. Though Ile-aux-Noix was some miles distant from LaColle Mills, there were connecting links which, perhaps, justifies one in connecting it with the battle.

"The American army (under Wilkinson) commenced its short march at 10 o'clock on the morning of the 30th (March 1814.) His force consisted of 3,999 men, according to his own statement, including 100 cavalry and 11 guns.

Major Hancock held the mill with 180 men, without artillery, while at two miles distant, in one direction, was one company of regulars (the 14th) and at the same distance, in another, two companies more of volunteers. At Ile-aux-Noix were part of a battalion of Marines and two more companies of the 13th, as well as two sloops and three gunboats.

I quote these details (from James' Military Occurrences) because American imagination swelled the number of troops to the respectable figure of 2,500.

The American force arrived before the mill at half-past one (p.m.)

What followed is familiar at least in outline to most Canadians,—the unhesitating determination of our men to hold out to the last; the incessant nature of the action maintained for over five hours; the brilliant charges of our men against the artillery of the enemy and the final defeat of the latter,—should, like the 5th of November, never be forgot. Soon after the action began Major Hancock sent off a message to Ile-aux-Noix asking for reinforcements.

It does not require much imagination to picture the arrival of the breathless orderly—"The enemy attacking in force; forward what men you can spare;" then the hurried muster in the barrack square, the orders ring out, the gates are swung open, and the little detachment files out (over the drawbridge) with quick eager tramp, to plunge shortly into the slough of a frontier road in early spring; presently they reach the scene of action and receive orders to charge the guns. "This was instantly done in the most resolute manner, but the overpowering numbers of the enemy and the destruction caused by the flanking fire of his infantry and riflemen stationed in the woods, rendered the efforts of the gallant fellows unavailing." When the two companies of Canadian militia came upon the scene a second charge was made, but without success. The commander of the American artillery gives the following testimony as to the behaviour of our troops:—"The ground was disputed inch by inch, in our advance to the mill, and the conduct of the enemy that day was distinguished by desperate bravery. As an instance, one company made a charge on our artillery, and at the same instant received its fire, and that of two brigades of infantry," while the American brigadier-general, Bissell, said: "There were two desperate sorties made, in which the artillery was left without a man."

The two sloops and gunboats were also ordered up from Ile-aux-Noix, but as the ice still held in the Lacolle river they were not able to get within striking distance.

During the latter part of the action our men ran out of ammunition, and three messengers were sent back to Ile-aux-Noix with a request for fresh supplies, but only one of them managed to get through the American lines.

R. C. LYMAN.

(To be continued.)

Dick and John.

(AN EPISODE IN COLLEGE LIFE.)

BY SPRIGGINS.

Dick is a well-formed, large-boned youth with light blue eyes and fair, curling hair. Presumably, he has come to college to study; howbeit he attends lectures irregularly and devotes himself heart and soul to athletic sports. He is captain of the football team; his room is filled with prizes won by him at innumerable races. There are none at college who can compete with Dick in contests where strength of limb and long endurance give the victory.

Of different calibre is John. He is dark and quiet; his face is cast in a melancholy mould, though at times, when he is roused, it has been known to blaze into unexpected jollity. John is studious. But, though he burns the lamp late poring over his books, he loves a joke quite as much as the more irrepressible Dick.

The students all love the latter; his wonderful feats are a never-ending topic of discussion amongst them. They hold him as a very fine personage, indeed; and, according to their lights, they prophesy great things for him when he is no longer kept back by the restraint of college life.

The professors look kindly on John, and they say, with oracular vagueness, that he will certainly make a name in the world some day. They praise his application, and they nod their heads assuredly when his ability is under discussion. John is no athlete, but he is not a prig. His parents are poor, and they are put to some straits to give him a good education. He is determined to make the most of his opportunity, and in his heart he has sworn to shine some day in the great busy world. The day is not far distant when he will be cast adrift to fight the fight, and he knows it. He boasts not, nor does he retort angrily when his more

careless fellow-students chaff him for his dull, studious ways. He merely smiles good-naturedly, but his persistent labour falters not—a strong-willed, keen-witted, sensitive youth is our friend, John.

And Dick's parents are wealthy. What need is there for him to study? He will in time inherit riches and position. As for a name, is not his already an honoured one? Has he not reduced the quarter of a mile record by an infinitesimal fraction of a minute? And, when he walks the street, does he not hear the murmured admiration that greets the champion amateur boxer of the college? Out upon thee! Has not Dick reaped laurels enough?

Though so different in habits and in disposition, my two heroes are great friends. Dick slaps John on the back and declares with hearty approval that he is not half bad. And the young stalwart would, I think, stand by his friend to the last if occasion required it.

John, in his quiet, non-committal way, has a regard for Dick that is equally warm. The two live in the same boarding house, a stone's throw from the college. Dick has a bedroom and sitting-room; John contents himself with one apartment only. But his more luxurious friend insists that the spare room shall be common to both. It was decided finally one day after a sharp controversy, which ended in the studious John finding himself borne through the air at an uncomfortable angle and deposited on the floor in one corner of the apartment which was the subject of their heated discussion. And he was told sternly that henceforth that particular corner was his to litter up with books and to splutter ink about in as much as he pleased. And the studious one yielded perforce. The great bond of union between them is a love of fun. John, in his droll, quiet way, loves a joke quite as much as the more boisterous Dick. Then they both smoke, and both are medical students in the same year. John is useful to Dick, for he can give him pointers and coach him when an "exam" is in prospect. Dick is useful to John because his gay chatter and rollicking flow of humour serves to enliven him. There is no ceremony between the two, they are too intimate for that. It is the greatest possible triumph when one succeeds in getting a "rise" out of the other. Each is on the *qui vive* to guard against a practical joke being sprung on him by the other. And neither lets pass an opportunity of having one at his friend's expense.

One night John comes to his room; it is rather late, for he has been detained down at the city hospital in hopes of witnessing an operation on one of the patients. It is an interesting case, and John is bent on seeing with his own eyes all that it is possible to see connected therewith. He has only been prevailed upon to leave on the solemn assurance of the doctor in charge that he will advise him if the operation is to be effected during the night. As he fumbles at the door of his lodgings with his latch-key he hears the clock strike from a neighbouring church. He counts ten strokes, and rejoices complacently, for he knows Dick rarely retires before eleven o'clock, and he comforts himself with visions of a pipe and cosy chat. Before ascending to his chamber, however, he leaves word that it is likely a messenger will call for him during the night.

"If so, waken me at once, for it will be from Dr. K—." I shall be wanted at the hospital—important operation there," says John, in a tone of no small importance.

The housemaid, with whom he has left these directions, promises obedience, and my hero hurries up-stairs to his room. To his surprise, the light is out.

"Humph!" he growls, disconsolately, "the festive Dick is not in yet."

However, he lights the gas and, taking off his coat and boots, proceeds to make himself comfortable in a pair of Dick's slippers and a dressing-gown belonging to the same. Then he selects a favourite pipe and looks about for some tobacco. There is none to be found. Suddenly he recollects that the previous evening he left his pouch in his friend's bedroom; he rises from his seat and saunters in there to get it. It is dark, so he strikes a match and turns on the gas. Then he beholds his friend in bed, trying vainly to sleep. On a chair nearby are his football clothes, and a tumbler is on the dressing table with an egg yet unbroken inside of it.

"Hello, old man!" says Dick, yawning. "First practice of the season to-morrow. I have got all my things ready and set the alarm clock for half-past six. Must have a good night's sleep, my boy."

"But," protests John, plaintively, "I want to have a smoke. There is an important operation at the hospital to-night, and Dr. K— promised to send for me when it is performed. I may be called for at any moment. Get up, like a good chap, and have a smoke with me."

"Go to thunder!" replies Dick, politely. He cares very little about an operation at the hospital, but it is of great importance to him that to-morrow is the first football practice of the season. "Get out and let me have a sleep." With that he rolls over on his side, turning his face to the wall.

John mutters a feeble complaint, finds his tobacco and, after noting with a comprehensive glance the preparations his friend has made for an early awakening, he departs. He light his pipe and, taking from a shelf a medical book, prepares for a good evening's work. Two hours pass thus, and still he reads on, stopping every now and again to take a note or refill his pipe. At last he looks at his watch; it is half-past twelve. Apparently there is to be no operation to-night. At any rate, it will probably not be until very late, or rather very early in the morning, so he determines to get to bed and trust to the maid to call him.

(To be continued.)

* Rev. Principal Grant.

† Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution.—Benson J. Lossing.

‡ Topographical description of Canada.—Jos. Bouchette.

§ Naval Occurrences of the Late War.—William James (late of His Majesty's navy.)