

AN INCIDENT CONNECTED WITH SERGEANT NEILL OF  
THE 24TH REGIMENT AT MONTREAL.

In the middle of the great St. Lawrence there is, nearly opposite Montreal, an island called St. Helens, between which and the shore the stream, about three quarters of a mile broad, runs with very great rapidity, and yet, notwithstanding this current, the intense cold of winter invariably freezes its surface. The winter we now speak of was unusually severe, and the ice on the St. Lawrence particularly thick; however, while the river beneath was rushing towards the sea, the ice was waiting in abeyance in the middle of the stream until the narrow fastness between Montreal and St. Helens should burst and allow the whole mass to break into pieces, and then in stupendous confusion to hurry down towards Quebec. On St. Helens there was quartered a small detachment of troops, and when the breaking up of the ice was momentarily expected, many of the soldiers, muffled in their great coats, with thick storm gloves on their hands, and with a piece of fur attached to their caps to prevent their ears being frozen, were on the ice, employed in attending to the road across it to Montreal. After a short suspense, which increased rather than allayed their excitement, a deep, thundering noise announced to them that the process of breaking up had commenced. The ice before them writhed, heaved up, burst, broke into fragments, and the whole mass excepting a small portion, which, remained riveted to the shore of St. Helens, formed an

artificial pier with deep water beneath it, gradually moved downwards.

Just at this moment of intense interest, a little girl, the daughter of an artilleryman on the island, was seen on the ice in the middle of the river, in an attitude of agony and alarm. Imprudently and unobserved she had attempted to cross over to Montreal, and was hardly half way when the ice above, below, and in all directions, gave way. The child's fate seemed inevitable, and it was exciting various sensations in the minds and various exclamations from the mouths of the soldiers, when something within the breast of Thomas Neill, a young Sergeant in the 24th Regiment, who happened to be much nearer to her than the rest, distinctly uttered to him the monosyllables "Quick march!" and in obedience thereto, fixing his eyes on the child as on a parade banderole, he steadily proceeded towards her. Sometimes before him, sometimes just behind, and sometimes on either side, an immense piece of ice would pause, rear up on end, and roll over, so as occasionally to hide him altogether from view. Sometimes he was seen jumping from a piece that was beginning to rise, and then like a white bear carefully clambering down a piece that was beginning to sink. However, onward he proceeded, until reaching the little island of ice on which the poor child stood, with the feelings of calm triumph with which he would have surmounted