



"You cannot pass until Captain Day gives permission."

how to do things, and he does them well, but he cannot help despising a Volunteer, just as an expert in any trade despises an amateur, and added to this, we were Colonials in his estimation, and, of course, did not amount to anything, not belonging to a little island twenty-one miles off the coast of France, where he came from. The chances are that the British officer of to-day takes a broader view of things than he did at that time. He probably knows more than his predecessor did, but my experience of the British officer then was that he was a conceited, swaggering bully, and the only mistake the St. Thomas Militia made during my connection with it was that we allowed so many Regular officers to return alive to London. We might so easily have dropped them from the tall railway bridge, or waylaid them on Talbot Street. Still our mercy toward them merely arose from the inexperience of youth and should not be held against us.

One detestable little rat that came down from London was a Major whom I shall not name; but we called him in the company "Old Shoe-la-humph." He was an undersized individual who put on more side than the six tallest men you will find in Canada to-day. He wore high glazed boots, into which his little trousers were tucked, and the sides of the boots he constantly slapped with a small rattan cane he carried, marching up and down before us, erect as a ramrod, with as much importance in his bearing as if he owned Canada and was in negotiation for the rest of the British Empire. Our officers were quite palpably in terror of him, and as for us, we frankly and cor-

dially hated him. As my ill-luck would have it, Major Shor-la-humph descended upon us the second time that I had drilled with the company, when my military knowledge had so far advanced that I knew it was the butt of the gun that I placed to my shoulder, and not the other end. Captain Day arranged his troops in two lines, and he placed me, very kindly, in the rear rank, in the palpitating hope that my ignorance would be at least partially covered by the men in the front column, who had been longer at the trade. All went well until we came to the bayonet drill, which called upon me and the others to take the sharp-pointed triangular prog that hung from our belts at our hips, and snap it on the muzzle of the gun. You whipped out your bayonet as a Westerner draws his revolver, placed its socket on the nozzle of the gun, shoved it home, gave it a half-turn, when something clicked and there it was, or else something eliked first and you gave it a half-turn afterwards, I really forget at the moment of going to press just how it was, but anyhow, it was a puzzle that was beyond me. I fumbled and rattled away at it, and when the command came to Shoulder Arms my bayonet was up at the top of my gun, wobbling about like a loose-jointed lightning-rod in a storm. I breathed a silent hope that it would remain in position, but this was not to be. The first order was to jab an imaginary man on an imaginary horse, and that passed off all right, because the gun was held upwards at an angle of forty-five. The next order I got through by exercising great care. It was to slaughter an imaginary infantry person in front

of us. The third movement brought disaster; here we had to meet an imaginary company coming up a slope, and so had to turn our guns over and thrust them forward and downward. The three-cornered blade described a beautiful arc in the air, and to my own horror and the consternation of the company, it cleared the front rank, stuck point first in the floor, and there stood trembling, which, indeed, I was doing myself. The little Major, his face red with anger, strode up to the quivering bayonet like a roaring British lion.

"That man stand forward!" he cried.

I stood forward, the front rank opening to let me through.

"What the devil do you mean by *that*, sir?" he shouted, shaking his rattan at the incriminating bayonet.

Now in spite of the fact that I was more familiar with the adjusting of a ploughshare than the fixing of a bayonet I was nevertheless a free man, and was unaccustomed to being addressed as if I were a particularly objectionable kind of dog, so I had the cheek to reply:

"Well, Major, I suppose I jabbed the enemy so hard that the bayonet stuck in his body."

This the Major regarded as insolence, as doubtless it was, and he ordered me at once to the guardhouse where I was left that night to meditate on the inadvisability of trying to be funny with one of Her Majesty's officers.

By the time the Major came round again I knew how to fasten on my bayonet, but he had his eye on me and ordered me out from the rear rank into the front. My own officers looked very uneasy at this transition, as well they might. Strutting up and down the rank he snapped out at me:

"Hold up your chin, sir."

I endeavoured to do so, but with indifferent success. One distinction between us and the Regulars was, that we could not keep our backs so straight, nor could we hold our chins so high in the air, so I suppose that to a real military man we looked somewhat slouchy, but anyhow, the Major said nothing further, but the next time he passed me he raised his rattan and struck me a smart blow under the chin. I have no doubt that this Major was a brave man and possibly before that time, and since, has passed through many dangers with credit to himself, but I can assure him that he never came so close to his death as when he struck me under the chin with his rattan cane. His good luck and mine carried him quickly past me. He was a nervous, energetic, little beggar, never long in the one spot, while I was rather slow and deliberate in my movements, but if he had not got so speedily out of striking distance I should certainly have introduced my bayonet into his stomach, and he would have had no complaint to make that it wasn't fastened securely enough. However by the time he returned my chin was high enough in the air to satisfy anybody, and the wave of anger and resentment had passed over me.

My final bout with the Major occurred in the Hutchinson House, a hotel standing on Talbot Street, then the centre of the place, but now far down town because of the extraordinary growth of St. Thomas towards the east. The Hutchinson House was a square building and most of us looked on it then as probably the largest hotel in the world, which, the chances are, it was not. I don't know why the company drilled that night in the large ball-room on the top floor, which occupied the whole length and breadth of the building, but at anyrate such was the case. During the first part of the drill we acquitted ourselves to our own credit and doubtless to the satisfaction of Her Majesty the Queen, when we were allowed to stand easy. There was an intermission of a quarter of an hour or so, when Captain Day called upon me to mount guard at the door with fixed bayonet and loaded gun. When I took my place he said, half apologetically: