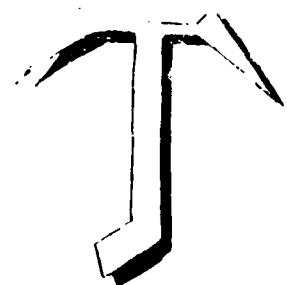


THE KING'S REGIMENT.

AN HISTORICAL SKETCH

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE SERVICES
OF THE CORPS IN CANADA.



HE record of the distinguished regiment which has recently arrived at Halifax dates back over two centuries. The corps was raised in 1685 by King James II. at the time of Monmouth's rebellion; it was composed of ten companies recruited in London, Hertfordshire and Derbyshire, chiefly, how-

ever, in the latter county. The first title given to the regiment was the "Princess Anne of Denmark's Regiment;" the first commanding officer was Lord Ferrars of Chartly, who was succeeded by in November, 1686, by James Fitz-James, Duke of Berwick. During the stormy events of 1688 the rank and file of the corps, as a whole, remained loyal to the King, in spite of harsh treatment received at his hands in the previous September when the Lieut.-Col. and first captains were summarily cashiered. After the Revolution, the regiment was incorporated in King William's army and fought at the Boyne and throughout the rest of the campaign in Ireland. It soon returned to England and in 1697 joined the army in Flanders, and fought at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet, names that will always take high rank in the annals of the British army. By this time the corps was known as the "Queen's Regiment." Its next service was in the Jacobite rising of 1715 and at the battle of Dunblane the regiment suffered severely, losing 101 men and 10 officers killed, 13 men and 1 officer wounded—a disparity which indicates the desperate nature of the fighting.

In 1716, the Eighth was authorized by George I. to bear the title of the "King's Regiment of Foot," and to adopt the badge of the White Horse of Hanover with the motto "*Æc aspera terrent.*" It then served at home until 1742 when it was again ordered to the Low Countries and participated in the victory of Dettingen and the fight at Fontenoy, where our troops, out-numbered two to one, met with defeat. On the breaking out of the Jacobite insurrection of "Forty-five" the "King's" was ordered home and despatched to share in the campaign against the Pretender; it fought at Falkirk and Culloden. It subsequently returned to Flanders and took part in various actions. The regiment was then ordered to Gibraltar and remained on that station until 1751, when it returned home and remained there until 1760 when it was again sent to Germany, and took a prominent share in the fights at Warbourg, Corbarch, Wilhelmstal and others, returning to England in 1763.

In May, 1768, the "King's" embarked for Quebec and were stationed at various points throughout Canada. On the invasion of that country by the American rebels in 1775 the regiment formed part of the feeble garrison of the colony which was strung out, in small and widely-scattered groups from Quebec to Detroit. In the following year an exploit of one of the officers of the corps, Capt. Forster, was, without doubt, the most brilliant event of the campaign, and reflected the highest credit on himself, on his corps, and on the loyal French-Canadians who aided him. With the exception of Quebec and the extreme western posts, the invaders were in possession of the country during the winter of 1775-6 and the subsequent spring, and, early in the season, they built a fort at the village of Cedars, on the St. Lawrence, about midway between Montreal and the British post at Oswegatchie (now Ogdensburg) where Capt. Forster was in command. Under instructions from General Carleton, Forster left Oswegatchie on 12th May, 1776, to attack the fort at the Cedars with his entire garrison consisting of 2 lieutenants, 2 sergeants, 1 drummer and 35 rank and file of the King's and 11 volunteers, together with 160 Indians, the latter under the command of the Chevalier Lorimier. On the 14th May he reached St. Regis where he was joined by 54 more Indians, making his total force 266 men. The American fort was garrisoned

by 390 Continentals under command of Major Butterfield. Forster and his party reached their destination on the 18th, and at once summoned the fort to surrender. Butterfield acquiesced on condition that the garrison be allowed to march out with their arms; this was refused, and a desultory attack with small arms begun, Forster having no cannon. On the following morning he was reinforced by a party of 30 Canadians under command of M. de Montigny; but hearing that supports for the garrison were *en route* from Montreal, de Montigny and his men were sent to intercept them. At 4 o'clock on the same day Butterfield surrendered, stipulating only for the safety of the lives and clothing of his men.

The Indians grumbled at this and claimed the right of the "free plunder of the garrison" as had been promised them by a Committee of the American Congress should they espouse the rebel cause and aid in the reduction of the British posts of Niagara and Detroit. Forster refused this claim, and with very few exceptions the American prisoners were landed safe in barracks with their packs and possessions inviolate, some money and a few watches being the extent of the robbery by the savages.

The reinforcement from Montreal, consisting of 140 men under command of Major Sherborne, was by this time near Vaudreuil and on the 20th Forster despatched two Canadian officers M. Lorimier and Maurer with 98 Indians and Canadians to reinforce de Montigny. They missed him, but unexpectedly fell in with Sherborne's force and attacked it with so much vigour that after a short fight and the loss of 5 or 6 men, the American officer surrendered unconditionally, and were taken to the Cedars. The Indians claimed the last party as their prisoners, and as their chief had been killed in the fight, wanted to put some of them to death; this Forster strenuously resisted and finally he and his officers paid the savages a money compensation in lieu of the prisoners' lives. The latter were plundered *but not a single man was killed*. This is worth noting, as Congress afterwards spread far and wide the report that several of Sherborne's party had been murdered, and the historian Bancroft repeated this inaccuracy in his "History of the United States."

Forster now advanced towards Montreal and on reaching Ste. Anne's, placed 250 of the prisoners there in charge of de Montigny, and the rest at Oka in the care of the resident priests; he then continued his advance towards Montreal, but found the enemy in such strength that he determined to retreat to the Cedars. He halted at Vaudreuil and collected all the prisoners there; but in view of their number and the smallness of his force, arranged with Arnold a cartel of exchange and returned all the captives to the Americans on condition that they were not to serve again during the war. This cartel was afterwards deliberately broken by the American Congress, on the flimsy pretext of the murder of several of the prisoners—a charge which is not borne out by an unprejudiced analysis of the evidence.

Capt. Forster returned to Oswegatchie with his little force. His gallant conduct brought him both praise and promotion. Sir Guy Carleton wrote him from Montreal, under date 20th June, 1776: "Your last expedition has acquired you great honour; the next, I hope, will prove no less fortunate." On the 5th of November of same year, Forster was promoted to a majority in the 21st North British Fusiliers, and never rejoined the King's.

The regiment took no further prominent share in the campaign and returned to England in 1785. During the war with France, which broke out in 1792, the flank companies aided in the capture of Martinique and Guadeloupe. In 1794 the regiment was sent to Flanders as part of the Duke of York's army, subsequently proceeding to the West Indies. They then did garrison duty in Guernsey and Minorca, following which they formed part of the force sent to Egypt, and distinguished themselves at the battle of Alexandria on 21st March, 1801, and in other engagements of the campaign. From Egypt they were sent to Gibraltar, and thence in quick succession to Portsmouth, Hanover, Copenhagen, Halifax (in 1808) and West Indies. They returned to North America and on the outbreak of the war of 1812 against the United States were quartered in various posts on the Canadian frontier. The flank companies formed part of a brigade of observation stationed at Blairfindie, near Lacolle, the brigade being commanded by Lieut.-Col. Young of the King's regiment; this force was not, however, called on to engage the enemy. During the winter the corps was moved farther west, and at the attack on York by the Americans on 30th