

with the news. The pair were in consternation; they were loyal Canadians—their hearts were in the cause. If the design succeeded—if Fitzgibbon was surprised, de Haren in the rear would follow. Burlington Heights might be carried, and their country would be lost. Mrs. Mary Secord, the wife, at the age of 88, still lives in the village of Chippewa to tell the story, and wakes up into young life as she does so. What was to be done? Fitzgibbon must be warned. The husband in his crippled state could not move, and moreover no man could pass the line of American sentries. She spoke out, she would go herself, would he let her. She could get past the sentries; she knew the way to St. David's, and there she could get guidance. She would go, and put her trust in God. He consented. At three in the morning she was up, got the children's breakfast, and taking a cracker and cup of coffee, started after day break. To have left earlier would have aroused suspicion. Her first difficulty was the American advanced sentry. He was hard to deal with, but she pointed to her own farm buildings a little in advance of his post, insisted that she was going for milk, told him he could watch her, and was allowed to pass on. She did milk a cow, which was very *contrary*, and would persist in moving onwards to the edge of the opposite bushes, into which both she and the cow disappeared. Once out of sight, she pushed on rapidly. She knew the way for miles, but fear rose within her, in spite of herself, and what "scared" her most was the distant cry of the wolf—they were abundant in those days; and twice she encountered a rattlesnake—they are not unfrequent even now. She did not care much for them, as she knew they would run from a stick or a stone, and they did not wait for any such exorcism. At length she reached a brook. It was very hot, and the water refreshed her, but she had some difficulty in crossing. At last she found a log, and shortly after got to the mill. The miller's wife was an old friend, and tried to dissuade her from going on; spoke of the danger, spoke of her children. The last was a sore trial, for she was weary and thoughtful, but the thing had to be done, so she was resolute, and having rested and refreshed, proceeded on. Her next trouble was the British outlying sentry, but she soon reassured him, and he sent her on with a kind word, warning her to beware of the Indians. This "scared" her again, but she was scared still more when the cracking of the dead branches under her footsteps roused from their cover a party of redskins. The chief, who first sprang to his feet, confronted her, and demanded, "Woman! what do you want?" The others yelled "awful." The chief silenced them with his hand. She told him at once that she wanted to see Fitzgibbon, and why. "Ah," said the Indian, "me go with you," and with a few words to his people, who remained, he accompanied her to Fitzgibbon's quarters, which she reached about nine on the evening of the 23rd. A few words sufficed to satisfy him. He sent off forthwith to his Major, de Haren, in the rear, and made his own preparations. She found friends in a farm house near, for in those days everybody knew everybody. She slept "right off," for she had journeyed on foot twenty miles, and safely, God be praised.

In the meantime the American expedition had silently assembled at Fort George, and within a few hours rapidly followed on her footsteps. At twelve of a fine night in June, they had taken up their line of march on St. David's, and at daybreak came upon Kerr and his Indians, already on their guard, and keenly expectant. They numbered about thirty warriors, Mohawks, chiefly of the Grand River; but Kerr saw at a glance the insufficiency of his force to resist, and had recourse to Indian tactics to retard and harass the enemy, and to spread alarm to remote posts. He threw himself, therefore, at once on the rear and flank of the Americans, and opened a desultory fire.

The Americans, throwing out sharpshooters in reply, still pressed forward, but the Indians were neither to be repulsed or shaken off. The track through the forest was narrow and broken. The guns and store waggons defiled slowly to the front. The yells and rifles of the savages rang in the rear. A horror of the war-whoop hung then on the national conscience, and sensational stories, for the most part, had the usual effect of such stimulants on nerve and brain.

Boerstler and his men had emerged from the forest into an open space, a clearing close by the present village of Thorold. Their guns, waggons, and other encumbrances had reached a hollow in the road, overhung by a bank clad with beeches. This now forms a basin of the Welland Canal. The spot, which then rang with the outcries of the combatants, now resounds with the hum of industry and the working chaunt of the sailor.

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In the hollow, below the beech ridge, where the war-whoop of the Indian has now given place to the shriek of the steam-whistle, Boerstler found a fresh foe. From the wood above, on the hill-side, came the ring of the militia musket, and the echoes of the forest multiplied the reports and the fears they created.

Old Isaac Kelly, born and raised on 43 Thorold, a septuagenarian,

hale and hearty, who still lives not a mile from the spot, tells how, when he was a boy of 18, and was in the act of "hitching up" his horses for the plough, he heard the firing in the wood, and the outcries of the Indians; how he ran to his two brothers, both a-field; how the three got their muskets—they were all militia-men, home to put in a crop; how, led by the sounds, they crossed the country to the beech grove, meeting eight or ten more by the way, suddenly roused like themselves; how, from behind the trees, they opened fire on the American train, and on the guns, which were then unlimbering to the rear; and how the Americans, more worried and bothered than hurt, changed their position and took up ground in David Millar's apple orchard.

In the meantime Fitzgibbon had taken rapid measures. Major de Haren, of his regiment, was at some distance in the rear with three companies, cantoned near where St. Catharine's now stands. An estafette, borne by James Cummings of Chippewa, one of the still surviving veterans of that day, had put this force in motion. Fitzgibbon himself was under arms, and on the way, attracted by the fire.

Suddenly he came upon the head of the enemy's column, and found all in confusion. The men were scared out of their senses. The officer in command had lost his head. Fitzgibbon made the most imposing display possible of his thirty men; and advanced at once with a white handkerchief. He found Boerstler ready for a parley. Fitzgibbon stated who he was—his rank, that he commanded a detachment of British troops, that his commanding officer, de Haren, with a large reinforcement, was close by; and by a judicious disposition of his men, and some passing allusion to his scarecrow Indians—like Robinson Crusoe, when he out-manceuvred the mutineers—he magnified his numbers in the imagination of his foe.

Boerstler was in a "fix." The Indians yelled horridly; the militia-men fired without compunction; the red coats in front barred the way; a large reinforcement was in their rear—he was, in fact, surrounded, and, like wild beasts driven into an African corral, he and his men were bewildered by sights and sounds of fear. He took but short time to deliberate. He surrendered at once—himself and his whole force.

The surrender was embarrassing. Fitzgibbon was, in fact, nearly caught by his own captives. He did not dare show his weakness. He knew not the number of the Indians; but he did know that the militia force was scant indeed. "Why, sir," says Isaac Kelly, "when he gave in, we did not know what to do with him; it was like catching the elephant."

Fitzgibbon had presence of mind equal to the emergency. The American officers were called together, and a capitulation framed and penned. In the meantime, de Haren hastened on, and scarcely was the capitulation signed when he came up with 200 bayonets at his back.

The American force which surrendered consisted of 542 men, two field guns and ammunition waggons, and the colours of the 14th United States regiment.

[It will be remembered that the Prince of Wales visited Mrs. Secord while in Canada, and gave her £100 in acknowledgment of her heroism.—*Ed. J. of Ed.*]

## VII. Biographical Sketches.

### No. 41.—GEORGE BENJAMIN, ESQ.

The *Belleville Intelligencer*, which he formerly edited, says of him:—Mr. Benjamin was born in Sussex, England, on the 15th day of April, 1799, and was consequently 65 years, 5 months and 8 days old when he died. He came to Belleville in 1834, where he has since resided. Before coming to Canada he had resided in North Carolina, one of the Southern States of America, from whence he emigrated to Toronto, where he formed the acquaintance of the late Mr. Samson, who at that time was the leading barrister of Belleville, and through him and others was induced to purchase a printing office, and started *The Intelligencer*, which he continued to publish until 1848, during which time the paper consistently and fearlessly sustained and defended the Conservative party, whose principles he never for a moment deserted. He was always true to his friends, whether he found them labouring in adversity or exulting in victory; to him it was always the same. The first office of public trust he held was that of Township Clerk of Thurlow. This was before the separation of this County from the Midland District, and some time before the introduction of Municipal Institutions, and was appointed a Commissioner by the Bench of Magistrates to settle the monetary difficulties between the old Midland District and this County arising out of the separation, for the satisfactory settlement of which he received the thanks of the Bench. He was afterwards Clerk of the Board of Police of the