

GABLE ENDS.

THE STORY OF A DAGGER.

"Is this a dagger which I see before me?"—*Macbeth*.

THE dagger which Macbeth saw, or thought he saw, was an unsubstantial thing . . . "a dagger of the mind, a false creation proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain!" The dagger I have in view in writing this article is a reality "in form and substance," and to my mind is worthy the consideration of the archaeologist or the relic-searcher. I am neither the one nor the other, but I have a great regard for the manners, customs, traditions, and, for that matter too, the history, of my country as shown in old-time relics as contrasted with modern contrivances. But to my story.

A few weeks since, I was walking down Elizabeth-street, Toronto, when I was accosted by a man at the door of his own house (240 Elizabeth street), who remarked that he understood I took an interest in the past of the Province,—to which I gave my assent. Mr. James J. Smith, the person to whom I allude, then asked me to step into his house and he would show me something that he thought might be of interest and which he highly prized. It turned out to be a dagger, the well-tempered steel blade of which was ten inches long and the handle of which was made of buckhorn, four and a-half inches long. At the point of junction of the handle and the blade there is a cross-bar, at one end of which there is a tiny screw-driver, and at the other an equally tiny hammer head, which might have been used in the setting of a gun-lock or arquebus. The blade itself is beautifully chased, and, I should judge, is of Damascus steel. On the blade is inscribed and can well be deciphered with the naked eye, "1635," showing that it was manufactured in that year.

The weapon was found about ten years ago in digging a cellar for Riley & May's Billiard Parlor, or on the premises where Riley & May's Billiard Parlor is erected on Adelaide-street, Toronto. When discovered it was about six feet below the

surface of the ground and was standing erect, the point down in the earth and the handle toward the hand. It was much covered with rust and other apparently deleterious matter, but, singular to say, was not corroded perceptibly except in one place about an inch from the point, and that, to the finder, seemed as if caused by blood and other substance.

Mr. Smith and the actual finder of the relic, who was working with or for him when this discovery was made, secured the dagger, burnished it up, till now the steel blade is almost as bright and gleaming as when first made. Now the question is how did this dagger come to be in the place where found, six feet below the surface of the earth and standing upright? Its erect posture would seem to indicate that the hand of man had so placed it, and that in leaving the ground he had either forgotten it or let it remain in his haste to retreat.

Was this dagger at one time the weapon of offence or defence to one of the party of Frenchmen who were garrisoned at the old French fort—Fort Rouille, in the Exhibition Grounds, marked by an obelisk to perpetuate the memory of the Old Fort? The inscription on the obelisk reminds us that the date of the occupation by the French was 1749. Beside the obelisk is also a massive granite boulder bearing the following inscription:—"This cairn marks the exact site of Fort Rouille, commonly known as Fort Toronto, an Indian Trading Post and stockade, established A D. 1749, by order of the Government of Louis XV., in accordance with the recommendation of the Count de la Galissoniere, Administrator of New France, 1747-1749."

It is not impossible that some trader at the Fort possessed this weapon, and that in hunting or exploring the woods around the Fort he may have lost his dagger. Or is it going too far to say that the dagger may have belonged to Hennepin, or La Salle, or some of their company in their great voyage of discovery of western lands in 1678? That both these