

The Defence of Teawatha.

A TALE OF 1837.

By W. F. Young.

[The following story, founded, as the writer tells us, "on a local legend," will be read with appreciation of its humor, no matter what the political color of the reader. At this day, the justice of Mackenzie's objections to the "Family Compact" is evident to all; nevertheless, the terror which his name "as rebel" carried among good Conservative settlements of the time, may be readily imagined. The names of the places, etc., have, of course, been disguised.]

Early in the spring of 1815 a canoe might have been seen on the Ooze River, passing the Town of Teawatha. A few miles above that village, it left the main stream, and was paddled westward up Blackman's Creek, in the direction of the Vienna Plains. The occupants of the canoe were two men, whose appearance, movement and carriage of body betrayed them to the watcher as soldiers. In fact, they were no less individuals than Lieutenant Dorrit and Ensign Graham, both lately of His Majesty's th Horse.

They had won enough glory in war, so they said, since they had almost captured Marshal Soult in one of the numerous skirmishes in that long-drawn-out battle of the Pyrenees; and had had many other hairbreadth escapes, out of which their wonderful skill and bravery brought them safely; but in which men of less skill and bravery would inevitably have perished. Now, in the new country of Upper Canada, they were going to settle, to conquer the giants of the forest, and hew out homes in nature's wilderness.

There have been many laughable stories told of the early blunders made by young Englishmen farming on Canadian soil; but neither is Lieutenant Dorrit or Ensign Graham the subject of any such tale. They took as naturally to farming as a duck does to water; or, to use their own simile, as naturally as they had previously taken to warfare. Whenever Ensign Graham would make the above remark he would lay his hand on a long scar across his cheek, cut by the sword of Marshal Soult, and the whole details of that wonderful episode would be poured into the listener's ear.

Dorrit settled on the Vienna Plains, two miles south of the Village of Claremont. His friend went farther north, crossing the town line and settling on the second concession of the newly-organized township of Waterloo. It was esteemed a lucky epoch by the local bodies of volunteers the day that brought those two veterans of Wellington's battles into their companies. They hailed them as superiors, and soon colonelships in the local regiments became the property of the two officers.

Still, old men tell stories of "training day," which was held annually on George III's birthday; when all the farmers of Claremont Township, mullen stalks in place of guns in their hands, "marched," "wheeled," "tioned," and performed one thousand and one other manoeuvres at the command of Colonel Dorrit. In the heat of the June day, stacking their arms by the roadside, they would lie down in the shade and listen to the Colonel tell tales of the "Peninsular War." Never was Dorrit known to forget to tell that great event of his life in full detail, always ending with words much like these: "And so, boys, you see, if my horse had not stumbled at the critical moment, and Colonel Graham's sword flying through the air in such an unaccountable manner, we would surely have captured Marshal Soult."

As time passed on, the reputations of the Colonels increased steadily among their neighbors. At logging bees, school meetings, or at country dances, they were clearly in their element, and took the lead in everything.

Little Jimmy Price was an orphaned English boy—one of the first of his social position to cross the Atlantic to labor on a Canadian farm. He worked for Colonel Dorrit. While

others respected his master, Jimmy worshipped him. His delight on a winter's evening was to draw his chair to the fireside and listen to the Colonel's wonderful tales of Spanish battlefields. Of almost equal rank to Colonel Dorrit in Jimmy's opinion was Colonel Graham. Days when the latter came from his home in Waterloo Township to visit Colonel Dorrit were indeed colored letter days to Jimmy Price. The two soldiers would sit side by side on the rail fence and recount reminiscences of olden days; and Jimmy lying on the ground below drank in the stories with eager gusto. What, though the stories were practically the same day after day! Who would ever weary of true tales of heroes recounted by themselves? Jimmy Price often wondered why people talked so much about the Duke of Wellington, when the success of nearly all his plans was brought about by the skill and daring of either Colonel Graham or Colonel Dorrit. At such times he felt like regarding the Iron Duke as one who had stolen his reputation from the deeds of men lower in rank but higher in military knowledge and soldier-like conduct than himself. To do the Colonels justice, they never to their dying day spoke of their old General with any words but those expressing the deepest regard and enthusiasm, which Price considered to be great magnanimity on their part.

Troublous times came to Canada. Wars and rumors of wars filled the air. William Lyon Mackenzie, the "arch-traitor," from publishing seditious articles in his "Colonial Advocate," had appealed to the sword. Mr. Torkington, member for Teawatha County, was not only tainted with Mackenzie's heresy, but was actually urging by all the force of his eloquence his constituents to rise in arms against the "tyrannical" Family Compact.

"A good thing it is," said the loyal man to his friend, "that we have Colonel Dorrit in the county. It won't take him long to crush the rebels if they should rise."

It is not the purpose of the author to weary the reader with an account of any of the prominent battles of the rebellion of '37. Any good history of the country gives full details of everything that took place. This tale is concerned with a rumor that spread through the country in the month of October, 1838; a report which declared that Mackenzie, with his horde of border ruffians, had crossed from Navy Island to the mainland, had repulsed McNab, captured the Welland Canal, and was in full march toward Teawatha.

Stories of the atrocities of the rebels filled the air. Robbery, arson and murder were being committed along the line of march. Fear filled the souls of the citizens of Teawatha. What was to be done? The town council quickly decided. The place was to be defended at all costs. Messengers were to be sent to every loyal person in the county, bidding them hasten to the defence of Teawatha. Colonels Graham and Dorrit were to have command.

Bad news travels fast. Tidings of what was impending and what had been decided reached Claremont before Lieutenant Grace, the civic messenger. Colonel Dorrit and Jimmy Price were out in the fields husking corn. A gun lay in the reach of each. Raising his eyes, the Colonel saw a man on horseback riding across the fields towards them.

"See here," said Dorrit, rising to his feet in his excitement, "I am going to the forest to hunt. If yonder horseman is from town with a message for me to lead the brave volunteers against the rebels, fire off your gun three times, pausing a few seconds between each shot, and I shall promptly return to perform my duty to my King and country."

Then without waiting for the man to drive one hundred yards, he vaulted over the fence and disappeared among the trees, leaving the English boy full of surprise and wonder at his master's strange conduct.

Lieutenant Grace soon approached and delivered to the boy his message. Though Jimmy did precisely

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