

REQUIRED READING, S. S. R. U.

STORIES FROM CANADIAN HISTORY.

BY THE EDITOR.\*

A RAVAGED FRONTIER.

**I**N the evening of that eventful day, again a family gathering took place at The Holms—for so closely had trial, adventure, and suffering for a common cause knit together the guests and inmates, that they seemed like a family group. The sword of the grandfather, above the mantel, was now crossed by the cavalry sabre of Zenas, and the old Brown Bess was flanked by the dragoon's carbine. Good cheer in abundance spread the board, for the broad acres of the farm and the kindly ministries of nature had not stinted their yield on account of the red battle-year. But an air of pensiveness, almost of dejection, broken by sharp outbursts of indignation marked the social converse. Many incidents of privation and suffering, in consequence of the burning of the town, were told. Indeed the resources of the household had been taxed to the utmost to relieve the pressing distress, and every room and guest-chamber was filled with homeless refugees from the inclemency of the weather.

"There will be a grim revenge for this, before long," said Captain Villiers, who had embraced the earliest opportunity to renew his homage at a shrine that had almost unconsciously become very dear.

"In which I hope to take part," interjected Zenas, with a fierce gesture.

"We must carry war into Africa," continued the Captain. "Hitherto, for the most part we have acted on the defensive. The time has come when we must repay invasion by invasion, and outrage by retaliation." So does the cruel war-spirit grow by that on which it feeds.

"That 'ere fort with its big guns a-grinnin' an' growlin' like mastiffs in their kennels, has bullied us long enough," said Tom Loker, who availed himself of the democratic simplicity of the times to express his opinion.

"It wadna be sae muckle a job to tak it, I'm thinkin'," said Sandy McKay, looking up from his musket that he was oiling and cleaning; "it's no sae strang as it luika. I ken its ravelins and demilunes unco weel, bein' sax weeks a prisoner wi' in thae walls. Gin your ance ower thae brig and inside the outworks, it wad be easy enoogh tae win an' haud the fort."

"That's the rub," said the squire, "to gain a footing and win the outworks. If they keep a vigilant watch it would be a difficult task. The only way would be to surprise the garrison. A few stout-hearted men, well supported, might overpower the guard. That's the way Ethan Allen took Ticonderoga, in the old war."

"Father," said Zenas, with enthusiasm, "It can be done, and must be done, and I must help do it. I claim a place in the forlorn hope. I'd like to be the first man in."

The old man winced a little at the awful contingency of death and danger for his soldier boy, so close at hand;

and Kato gazed at him, with tears of sympathy filling her eyes and the blood mantling her cheek.

"As God wills, my son," answered the sire. "I said the time might come when you should bear the battle's brunt. If your heart calls you I will not say nay. I give you to your country, and dare not hold you back."

"Young maister," said McKay, with Scottish fidelity, "whaur ye gae, I'll gae. I'm an auld mon, noo, an' how better could I gi' ma life, gin sae it's written, than for my King? Forbye I keen weel the place, an' sae God wills, I can guide ye intil it by nicht as weel as ithers could by day."

"I'm not the man to shirk the call to arms when the bugle sounds," remarked Tom Loker, "but I must say I've no stomach for this going before I'm sent. It's a sheer temptin' o' Providence, seems to me."

"Hoot, mon," said Sandy, "what is to be, is to be. Gin ye're to fa', ye'll fa' at the rear o' thae column as sune as at the heid o' it, an' I'm gey sure the first is the mair honourable place."

The night of the eighteenth of December was moonless and dark. A column of five hundred men and fifty militia, filed out of the portals of Fort George, bearing scaling ladders and other implements of assault, as silent as ghosts. At the head march the forlorn hope of twenty men, among whom were Captain Villiers, Zenas, and McKay. But each man, though he bore his life in his hand, walked proudly erect, as if with the assurance of victory, or of a reward more glorious than even victory. They marched several miles up the river to a spot where a crossing could safely be effected without discovery or interruption.

Now began the stealthy march on the devoted fort. Like an avenging Nemesis, shod with silence, the column approached the unconscious garrison of the American fort. Every order was conveyed in a whisper. No clink of sabre, nor clatter of muskets was heard. The snow, which had begun to fall, muffled the tread and deadened each sound. The column wound on in the hush of midnight over the wintry waste, stealing like a tiger on its prey. The piquets, lulled into security by the storm, were avoided by a *detour*. Now amid the blackness of the night, the deeper blackness of the fort loomed up. McKay and Zenas moved to the front beside Captain Villiers who whispered his commands. McKay silently led the way to the sally-port. A huge grenadier grasped the sentry by the throat to prevent his giving the alarm. The forlorn hope went through the small opening of the sally-port, and, well instructed beforehand, rushed to the main gateway, overpowered the guard, and flung open the huge iron-studded gates. The British column now poured in, and before drum had rolled or bugle rung had reached the central quadrangle. The garrison awoke from slumber only to a futile struggle with an exasperated foe, and after a short resistance were compelled to surrender. In this assault the loss of the victors was only six men—a circumstance almost unparalleled in military annals—that of the vanquished unhappily was considerably greater. Three hundred prisoners, three thousand stand of arms, and an immense quantity of stores were captured—the latter a great boon to the well-nigh famished

people of the devastated town of Niagara.\*

We would fain here close this record of retaliation. Enough had been done for British honour and for the punishment of the enemy. But when dread Bellona cries "Havoc," and slips the leashes of the hellish dogs of war, the instincts of humanity seem lost, and baptized men seem in danger of reverting to unredeemed savagery. Trueman expostulated, and pleaded, and prayed for a mitigation of the penalty inflicted on the vanquished, but in vain. In ruthless retaliation for the burning of Niagara, the British ravaged the American frontier, and gave to the flames the thriving towns of Lewiston, Manchester, Black Rock, and Buffalo. At the latter place, an American force, two thousand strong, made a stout resistance, but was defeated, with the loss of four hundred men, by the British, with only one-third the number of troops, December 30.

Thus the holy Christmas-tide, God's pledge of peace and good-will toward men, rose upon a fair and fertile frontier scathed and blackened by wasting and rapine, and the year went out in "tears and misery, in hatred and flames and blood."

The marks of recent conflict were everywhere visible, and—saddest evidence of all—was the multitude of soldiers' graves whose silent sleepers no morning drum-beat should arouse forever. The peaceful parish church of Niagara had been turned into a hospital, where, instead of praise and prayer, were heard the groans of wounded and dying men. Everything in fact gave indications of military occupation and the prevalence of the awful reign of war.

Seldom has the frightful destructiveness of war been more strikingly illustrated. The commerce of the United States was completely crippled by the blockade of her ports. Admiral Cockburn, of the British Navy, swept the Atlantic coast with his fleet, destroying arsenals and naval stores wherever his gun-boats could penetrate. Great Britain also recovered her old prestige in more than one stubborn sea-fight with a not unworthy foe. On a lovely morning in June, the United States' frigate "Chesapeake," of forty-nine guns, stood out of Boston harbour amid the holiday cheers of a sympathizing multitude, to answer the challenge to a naval duel of H. M. S. "Shannon," of fifty-two guns. They were soon locked muzzle to muzzle in deadly embrace, belching shot and grape through each other's sides, while the streaming gore incarnadined the waves. The British boarders swarmed on the "Chesapeake's" deck, and soon, with nearly half her crew killed or wounded, she struck her colours to the red cross flag. In five days the shattered and blood-stained vessels crept together into Halifax harbour, the American captain, the gallant Lawrence, lying in his cabin cold in death; the British commander, the chivalric Broke, raving in the delirium of a desperate wound. The slain captain was borne to his grave amid the highest honours paid

\* The writer was intimately acquainted with an old resident on the Niagara river, who in his youth had been a prisoner in the American fort, and formed part of the forlorn hope which aided in his capture. From him many interesting incidents of the war were learned.

to his valour by a generous foe. Amid the roar of Broadway's living tide, beneath the shadow of old Trinity Church, a costly monument commemorates his heroic and untimely death. A few days later, the British brig "Boxer," of fourteen guns, surrendered to the U. S. brig "Enterprise," of sixteen guns. In one quiet grave, overlooking Casco Bay, beside which the writer, one sunny summer day, meditated on the vanity of earthly strife, their rival captains lie buried side by side. Some kindly hand had decked their graves with tiny flags, which in sun and shower had become dimmed and faded; and planted fair and innocent flowers which breathed their beauty and fragrance amid the shadows of death. So fade and pass away the false and transient glory of arms. So bloom and flourish in immortal beauty the supernal loveliness of virtue and piety.

BEGINNING RIGHT.

**M**ANY people start in life with the idea that when they get rich they will give lots of money to missions and other good objects; but by the time they get rich they forget all about their good intentions, and give little or nothing. The best way is to begin right, as the boys referred to in this letter are doing. Who'll be the next boy to follow their example?—

Listowel, May 29, 1882.

Dear Bro.—Enclosed please find \$3.68 for the "Crosby Girls' Home." I have a couple of boys who are beginning to earn a little money in the summer vacation by working for the farmers, and wish to give a tenth of their earnings to some department of the Lord's work. They have \$2.68 out of their last summer's earnings to give, and have decided to give it to Bro. Crosby's Girls' Home, to which their mother adds one dollar. It is only a small sum, but it is a beginning. You will likely hear from them again.

Yours truly,

—The Outlook. R. J. HUSBAND.

THE WHEEL OF WILLEGIS.\*

(From the German of August Kopisch.

"Willegis, Willegis,  
Recole unde veneris!"

It grieved the lords of Mainz full sore,  
That Willegis the mitre wore.

He was a waggoner's son;

And so, for fun,

The nobles scribbled o'er and o'er,  
Rude cartwheels on the bishop's door,  
But when he saw it, Willegis  
Was not at all displeas'd at this;  
He called an artist, near at hand,  
And quickly gave him this command:

"On every door you see,

I pray you, paint for me  
A wheel of silver in a field  
Of crimson—this shall be my shield;  
And let the proud escutcheon bear  
This motto, writ in letters fair.

"Willegis, Willegis,

Bethink thee whence thy coming is!"

'Tis said that on that very day  
The nobles wiped their scrawls away;

They learned a lesson then,

To honour honest men,

And later bishops bore  
In their escutcheon there,  
From that day unto this,  
The wheel of Willegis.

\* The first bishop of Mainz was the son of an English wheelwright. Eleven hundred years ago he went as a missionary to the Saxon tribes on the Rhine, and to this day the arms of the city of Mainz and its diocese is the waggoner's wheel spoken of in the poem. It is carved on the city gates, and shines on the minister's staff, and is stamped on all official documents.—ED. PLEASANT HOURS.

\* This sketch is taken from a volume by the Editor, entitled, "Neville Trueman, the Pioneer Preacher—a story of the War of 1812," pp. 244, price 75 cents. Wm. Briggs, Toronto, Publisher.