

A PATRIOT GENERAL

BY

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AFTER William Lyon Mackenzie's failure in the rebellion of 1837 he made his way to the United States, arriving on the south side of the boundary line December 11th of that year. The following evening he addressed a large crowd in a Buffalo theatre, and there for the first time met Thomas Jefferson Sutherland. Sutherland was an American citizen of Scottish descent, and at the time living in Buffalo. He at once threw himself into the movement to assist the Canadian insurgents, showing decidedly more ardour than discretion. He was much more enthusiastic than Mackenzie himself in drumming up recruits, and his showy street displays called down on him the rebuke of the suffering, ardent Mackenzie.

Sutherland was of no very high type. Theller, his comrade and co-Brigadier-General, calls him "a plumed popinjay and blustering Bobadil" whose subsequent conduct "was but an exposure of imbecility, indecision, avarice, meanness, treachery, and cowardice; he had neither firmness nor fortitude, he had neither skill nor daring." He was, however, of somewhat imposing personal appearance and was gifted with a copious flow of words, which some considered eloquence.

In common with most of his countrymen, he believed that Canadians were groaning under the iron heel of monarchical tyranny and that three-

fourths of them were disposed to try an appeal to arms to establish political independence. He describes himself as "an ardent admirer of democratic institutions and an enthusiastic advocate of political freedom," and he entertained "the desire to obtain the . . . applause which might . . . accrue to . . . the agents in the establishment of another independent republic on the continent of America."

It was to Sutherland that was due whatever credit might attach to the plan of occupying Navy Island, and he was made second in command of the Patriot Army (then under Van Rensselaer) with the title of Colonel. While by no means of the influence, capacity, or military experience of Van Rensselaer, he could and generally did keep sober, which is more than can be said of his chief.

Some five or six hundred men ultimately were mustered on the island, and there they formed a camp covered by the flag of independence with its two stars symbolical of the two Canadas.

Sutherland was always in evidence. When not at the camp, he was making for Canadian independence elsewhere. He got in Buffalo an extraordinary story that the Canadian authorities were sending a negro cook to poison all his gallant band, and he warned his forces accordingly.

In Detroit at the same time there was a similar movement in favour