

Registered in accordance with the Copyright
Act of 1868.

A TALE OF THE WAR OF 1757.

BY AUGUSTUS HEWARD.

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

CHAPTER VI.

WHILE these incidents have been taking place at Fort William, Florence naturally felt the greatest anxiety as to the fate of her lover. Various rumours had reached Albany relating to the fortunes of the war. Some of these were alarming in their nature, others reassuring.

One evening our heroine and her father were seated together in the library; they were examining a map, and judging from Florence's close attention it was evident that she was deeply interested in their occupation. The father was pointing out the sites of Forts William and Edward, and they were both talking of the time when Edwin would return to claim his bride.

"You see, my child, here Fort William is situated; it is commanded by a man who has never known fear, under him Edwin will learn many valuable lessons in the art of war."

"Yes, dear father, and Edwin is a nature which will easily remember any lessons of a noble kind. Oh, father, how I pray for his safe return."

"My dear Florence, you must not give way to over-anxiety about Edwin; no doubt Providence will safely guide him through the passing storm of war, and when he does return it will be with more experience and knowledge of the world, acquired under circumstances which will tend to make him appreciate more than ever the peace and comforts of home."

For the time all further attempt at conversation was out of the question, owing to the noise caused by a wordy quarrel in the passage.

"Now, Patrick, let me go. I must give the master the letter, you know."

"Shure didn't the judge tell ye that no one was to go near him, for he wished to spake private with Miss Flory."

"Now, Patrick, don't be foolish; this letter must be given to the judge, or he will be angry."

"Oh, Biddy, you're a woman and I suppose I'll have to give in, for there's nothing can bate ye at talking; but if ye must have your way, let me bring in the letter, for I have an ill-giant way of spakin', and maybe I will make the matter of this inthruption all right with the master."

This edifying conversation had been overheard by Judge Temple and Florence, and they determined to wait and see how Patrick would apologize for what he called the matter of the inthruption. A gentle knock was now heard, and Patrick in his best style commenced his apology.

"I would never have dared to disturb you, sir, but Biddy would insist upon bringing you this letter. I think, sir, it's from the safe of war it is, and so I thought I would be so bold as to bring it to you."

"Give me the letter and don't be making any speeches, Patrick."

"Me speechifying, your honour; I wouldn't attempt it, for of all our family, and they were a large one—there was Bill, and Gim and Mike, but to mention names, as the papers says, is not needful; it's enough for me to tell your honour that out of the whole family there was only one could blarney, and that was my sister Kate."

"Patrick, leave the room at once, and don't let me hear any more of your family history."

Pat obeyed, muttering as he did so: "It's meself as knows that there's royal blood in my family, for me mother told me so herself."

When the judge and Florence were once more alone the letter was opened and read and re-read. It was from Edwin, and was written from Fort Edward, evidently but shortly before he left that post; its contents were to the effect that the Marquis of Montcalm was advancing on Fort William; that a strong reinforcement was preparing to leave for that post, and all hands were confident in the success of the British arms. It was also expected that General Webb would attack the French in the rear, should they invest Fort William. Altogether the letter tended in a great measure to reassure Florence and her father, so much so that Florence's countenance and manner seemed to change as though by magic upon reading the letter. Perhaps this happy change, however, was brought about still more by a little *billet-doux* which was enclosed to her. Leaving our heroine thus happy we must again draw our readers' attention to Fort William, where events of great importance were taking place.

CHAPTER VII.

SINCE our last look at the fort, Col. Munro had despatched a messenger to Fort Edward, asking General Webb to advance to his aid, as he could not hold out much longer, ten of his cannon having burst, and provisions rapidly failing. The answer to this letter had been intercepted by Montcalm, and in it General Webb not only refused to advance to the distressed garrison's assistance, but actually advised Munro to surrender. The chivalrous Montcalm, not desiring to take a mean advantage of this news, which he knew would gall and mortify the spirit of his brave adversary, offered the English honourable terms; they were to be allowed to leave the post they had so gallantly defended, with all the honours of war. The troops, however, were not to be allowed to load their muskets, Montcalm having promised a sufficient guard from his army to protect them from the Indians, should they be so treacherous as to attack the virtually unarmed men.

It was on the night before the capitulation that Edwin and the scout were standing together; Lightfoot was assuring Edwin that he knew the Indian character too well to trust to their standing passive spectators while the troops whom they hated passed in safety from their reach. He also told Edwin that he would not wait for the departure of the troops, but would steal forth that night and endeavour to make his escape. He accordingly, having looked carefully to the priming of his rifle, cautiously left the fort.

For some time Edwin could distinguish his form by the light of the moon, creeping slowly along, and when last he saw the scout he was lying on the ground as motionless as a log. At this moment a cloud passed across the face of the moon, and when she again shone forth Lightfoot was nowhere visible.

"Strange, he has taken a direct line to where the Indians are lying; he cannot intend to go over to the enemy."

Far different was the scout's motive for acting thus strangely; he was about to see what the Indians were doing in their encampment. He soon managed to reach the border of the forest; here he remained for some time intently listening. At last he seemed to have made up his mind, and once more commenced making his way towards the Indian camp, when about twenty yards from their fires he halted and lay down.

"It's not likely any of the varmints will come this road, as the ground is so swampy that even to an Indian it would not be pleasant to make his way across it."

From Lightfoot's hiding-place he could plainly see the Indians, to whose view he took the greatest care not to expose himself for a moment, lest some of their number might perceive him. There appeared to be about five hundred, and it was evident that some of their chiefs were preparing to harangue them, for they were seated in a circle and seemed to be holding a council. A strange and savage band were they, and the scout saw among them warriors from each tribe of the Six Nations confederacy. To a man unaccustomed to forest life, they would have appeared all alike. Not so to Lightfoot; by their paint and scalplocks he could distinguish the various tribes. There were Oneidas, Senecas, Mohawks, Cayugas, Onondagas, and Tuscaroras. All at once Lightfoot started, for Redhand, his deadly enemy, arose to address the savage throng.

"Warriors," he said, "you have heard that the pale-faced chief, who calls himself our ally, has determined to let the redcoats leave the fort at to-morrow's sunrise in peace. Is this right? Let the warriors look around their circle, and they will notice many braves are absent. Where are they? They are lying dead in front of the fort; their spirits, before departing for the happy hunting grounds, call upon you to avenge their death. Warriors, shall they not be listened to?"

Then the speaker paused as though waiting for an expression of their opinion, and the pause was not without effect, for a fierce murmur was heard to issue from the throats of the savage band.

"No; I know the Six Nation warriors would not allow it; if they did they would be women, and Redhand would not be seen fighting among them. Redhand does not speak long; he has not a long tongue, but he has a long arm. Redhand is a great warrior; many times has he led his braves to victory. To-morrow Redhand will raise the war whoop. Let the warriors be ready with their scalping knives."

The conclusion of this speech was greeted with applause, and it was evident that it embodied the sentiments of a large majority of the Indians. The next chief to rise was one whose bent form and tottering footsteps gave token of his great age.

"Warriors of the Six Nation Indians, listen to the words of Blackfox, over whose head the snows of many winters have passed. As Redhand has said, the Yengees have made a treaty with our French fathers. But how long will this last? Let the warriors wait, and nourish their strength; before long these nations, who came over the great salt lakes, will again be at one another's throats, and then our young braves will have their chance. As for the spirits of those that are gone, are they not happier than if here? Where they are now

the Manitou will give them separate hunting grounds, where no pale face shall ever tread. Blackfox would rather be there than here, for he sees the day is not many moons off when the redman must disappear from the land of his fathers; the cursed firewater is killing him; if our warriors would not put their lips to it, then they might talk of driving the pale-faces from the great lakes. Let, therefore, the word of our French father be held sacred. Blackfox sees that it will not be for long. Blackfox has finished."

This speech was not followed by any applause, and evidently gave dissatisfaction to the council. Blackfox was followed by various other chiefs, and all of them were in favour of attacking the English. We shall omit noticing these, with one exception, and this was Greywolf, who, by his many deeds of savage bravery during the siege, had raised himself in the estimation of the warriors.

"Greywolf is young, and perhaps his words may not be so oily as the old man's who has just spoken. Did Greywolf say man? If so he did not mean it, for he sees that years have made Blackfox a woman. He says that our warriors who are slain will be happier where they are; but Greywolf would like to ask who is to give them warm skins to journey with to the happy hunting grounds. Our dead are not buried, but lie where the birds of the air devour them. To-morrow the redcoats who have caused this will pass from beneath our knives, and when they are safe they will laugh at the children of the forest. Are we to be made toys of? Did Montcalm ask our wishes when he agreed to let the English go? No, warriors, you were treated like dogs, and if you do not show the French and English that you are men, you will always be so treated. Greywolf for one intends to steep his knife in blood to-morrow, and he who stays away from the fight and follows the council of Blackfox is a coward, and should be hoeing corn with our women on the shores of the great lakes."

From the way in which the last speech was received, it was evident to Lightfoot what would be the Indians' course on the morrow.

"I knew it; there will be a massacre to-morrow," he muttered, "unless the French interfere. What madness for our troops to leave their works with unloaded rifles; it seems to me like giving one's life as a present to the murdering ruffians. Lightfoot will at least try to get out of their reach, but in the end Redhand shall not escape. Let me see, from the look of the sky I should say it wanted but an hour from daylight. I can manage to make some distance by that time."

From very seldom having any one to whom to impart his thoughts, the scout had acquired the habit of soliloquizing. Aware of the danger of discovery, he proceeded warily and with caution on his way; he could hear the challenge of the French sentries, and it required great care to avoid the many out-lying pickets. There was yet another danger, if he approached too near the Fort he might be fired upon, as its occupants had no intention of allowing any of the enemy near their works until the appointed time for surrender. Lightfoot fortunately knew the ground well, and was thus able to proceed with tolerable certainty.

From the appearance of the sky it was evident that the morning light was about to break. He continued on steadily until he deemed it advisable to stop and ascertain exactly his position. He had not long to wait, for soon the sky became of a clear colour, and the morning broke.

The scout found that he had made good progress during the darkness, as he was now a full half mile from the Fort. Climbing a tree, he could perceive that all was stir and bustle at the Fort, and soon he heard the roll of the drum calling the soldiers to their ranks. Thinking he could see all that passed from his hiding-place, Lightfoot resolved not to desert it.

Before long he discerned the head of the column of soldiers leaving the Fort, and he noticed that as the last of the garrison left the post which they had so long and gallantly defended, the flag of old England was hauled down, and the Fleur-de-lys of France was soon seen to take its place. Following in the rear of the troops Lightfoot observed a crowd of women and camp followers.

The scout now for the first time remarked several Indians on the outskirts of the woods, and as the troops advanced their numbers constantly increased, and most of them carried rifles. For some time all went on peaceably, and the head of the English column was already hidden from view by the forest scenery, when suddenly there arose confusion and disorder among the soldiers. Straining his eyes to discover the cause, it was soon explained.

He perceived many dark forms struggling with the camp followers, to whom it was evident the men did not intend to give up their property without resistance. And now the dreadful war whoop sounded upon his startled ear, and the Indians rushed in numbers from where they had been lying in wait, and the work of destruction commenced. He saw many a brave fellow fiercely struggling to protect the poor women and children, and among those who fought most valiantly he could plainly see Captain Herbert and his men.

They had been the last to leave the Fort, and Edwin had the mortification of hearing many insulting remarks about the English as he quitted its walls. At open warfare our hero knew no fear, but under the annoyances of a siege his spirit chafed, and it was, therefore, with a feeling of relief that Captain Herbert left the walls of Fort William.

Visions of future happiness with his beloved Florence flashed across his mind, but from this train of thought he was rudely awakened by perceiving fierce and scowling faces peering at him as he passed.

"After all, if the scout should be right," mused Edwin, "and these Indians were to attack us, what a terrible situation for the poor women and children."

As he advanced he noticed that the number of the Indians increased; it was also evident that they were becoming bolder. Already some of the women had been despoiled of various articles; in most cases they bore these losses uncomplainingly, but matters were not destined to remain in this state long.

An Indian using great roughness towards one of the women, a soldier seized the warrior who had thus acted and threw him violently to the ground; in an instant knives were drawn, and the life of the brave but rash man was in jeopardy. Seeing this, several of the soldiers rushed in to save their comrade. We do not assert that this particular quarrel was what caused the storm to burst, for even more barbarous acts were taking place on the line of march, but this was the cause of the first blood spilt near Captain Herbert, for the brave fellow who had interfered to defend the helpless was at once killed by the Indians.

Captain Herbert now saw that nothing remained but to fight, so drawing his sword, he called upon such soldiers as were near to put themselves under his lead and endeavour to keep back the Indians.

Already the dreadful war whoop had sounded, and Edwin, although fighting bravely, saw that he would have the greatest difficulty in defending his own life, and his eyes were shocked by the sight of women, whom he was powerless to help, being butchered in cold blood. Already he had cloven in the skulls of two of the demons, and he was now engaged in a deadly fight with a third. Parrying a blow from the Indian's tomahawk, Edwin, with lightning-like rapidity, pierced the Indian to the heart, but before he could recover his balance, his arms were pinioned from behind, and he was a prisoner. Two warriors securely bound him, then taking him roughly by the shoulders, they urged him into the forest and left him there, bound hand and foot. From where he was he could hear the shrieks of the victims gradually grow fainter and less frequent, till at length Edwin knew the work of death was at an end.

Edwin now saw his captors coming towards him, many of them with weapons in their hands, dripping with blood, and not a few of them with reeking scalps in their belts. Edwin knew that he was either destined for torture at the stake, or a long captivity, perhaps one from which he might never escape; and although the young soldier was undaunted, yet these apprehensions would force themselves upon his mind.

That morning he had started, as he thought, on a march which would bring him towards home, instead of this he was now a captive, and, for aught he knew, might, without a moment's notice, suffer a cruel and horrible death. And now they made him understand partly by speech, and partly by signs, that he must come further into the forest. Many of the savages were maddened by drink, and with the diabolical love of torture natural to them, would advance towards Edwin as if to stab him, and did his eye but wince in the least when thus threatened, it afforded them the keenest enjoyment.

At length the savages arrived at their destination, and commenced making preparations for remaining there some time. The place which they had chosen for their camp was remarkably suitable for such a purpose; it was one of those natural openings in the woods so noticeable for their beauty. The grass was of a rich green, and through the centre of the little clearing a sparkling rivulet wound its way, giving life and beauty to the vegetation around. Our hero was not left, however, to muse upon the beauty of the spot; he was dragged roughly along, and securely bound to a large tree.

To add to the unpleasantness of his thoughts, he now noticed several of the savages in earnest conversation, and from their frequently pointing towards him, he knew that he was the subject of their remarks. He had repeatedly tried, whenever the eyes of guard were not directed towards him, to loosen his bonds, so that upon the first favourable opportunity, he might make a desperate effort to escape. He found all his attempts vain, however, and his spirit began to sink when he considered the tortures which probably awaited him.

To be continued.

There are two eventful periods in the life of a woman—one, when she wonders whom she will have, and the other, when she wonders who will have her.