

Fort Niagara, N.Y.

The most important objects of historic interest at the mouth of the Niagara River are the ruined remains of Forts George and Mississauga, the old camping-ground on which the Indian commissioners used to distribute the gifts and allowances of the British Government to the tribes of the Six Nation Indians, and the venerable Anglican Church of St. Mark's, in whose hallowed burial-ground are interred the mortal remains of very many of the early soldiers, to whose heroism, endurance and self-denial we are in no small degree indebted for the preservation of the Niagara peninsula, if not of the whole of Canada, as a dependency of the British Crown. These places are all on the Canadian side of the river, and lie within short walking distance of one another, and, besides these, on the opposite or United States side, stands old Fort Niagara, occupying the site on which was erected the first stockade, palisade, or whatever it was in the shape of fortification that was constructed by the earliest European adventurers who dared to penetrate into these far inland regions. The history of the American Fort Niagara dates back at least a century before that of either of the forts on the Canadian side or of St. Mark's Church, whose history is inseparably linked with theirs. It may, therefore, help us a little to understand the series of events that have taken place in these regions if we first take a glance at the fort over which the Stars and Stripes still wave, and then follow the chronological order of such significant occurrences as have impressed their mark upon the country. Securing the services of an antique Charon, a compound of the fisherman and ferryman, we speedily row across the river, approach the ever open gate of the fortress by a rising path, ask and readily receive permission to enter from a courteous caretaker in semi-military attire, and immediately find ourselves within the lofty walls, which, backed by broad and deep embankments of earth, form the principal outer defence of the fort. A walk all through the enclosure and around the battlements is enough to show us that the lines of fortification, the magazine and the other requisite buildings are still in good preservation. For some reason or other our American cousins seem to have taken sufficient pride in this old historic landmark to induce them to protect it against the corroding influences of time and exposure. Repairs have been regularly made from time to time as occasion might require in the buildings and in the embankments, and the result is that the whole structure presents an appearance of comfort and solidity, as great, in all probability, as it ever possessed in the palmiest days of its existence. The earthworks have been strengthened by a facing of a solid brick wall several feet in width, within whose massive thickness loop-holed galleries and chambers have been constructed in several places—the wall, where it contains no such intra-mural rooms, being double and having the hollow space filled in with grouting of earth, sand and mortar, stone and broken brick. No doubt it was a formidable fortress in the olden time and capable of offering a very stubborn resistance to any attack that might be made against it, whether by the fire-arrows of the aborigines or the scarcely more effective artillery employed a century ago by the whites; but it is perfectly safe to say that the solid double strengthening wall would not withstand a second volley from a modern heavy piece of ordnance. It would in fact be almost certain to crumble to pieces by the mere shock of the concussion of a heavy gun of modern construction discharged against an attacking foe through one of its own embrasures. The massive earth embankments, however, will still prove a somewhat formidable barrier, for the earth does not fall in masses, nor is it easy to form a breach in such a structure—balls or shells generally imbed themselves in the loose soil, and do little or no serious damage to the embankment or its defenders. The fort cannot, nevertheless, be regarded as a stronghold in modern times: neither in design, strength, appearance, nor in any other quality is it to be compared with Fort Henry at Kingston while the fortifications of Quebec and Halifax are as far superior to it as it may possibly be to the rude stockade or pioneer fort against the Indians that once occupied its site. It looks very much better than the mud banks that now stand on the sites of Fort Mississauga and Fort George; but the ruins of either would be as capable of offering effectual resistance to an assault of modern artillery. The American troops have recently been removed to more comfortable berths in the "new quarters," a few minutes walk from the fort, which is now tenanted merely by a couple of caretakers and their families, and may be regarded as having been virtually abandoned.

The Niagara route to the West and North-West was discovered in the year 1669, and soon began to draw to itself a considerable portion of the traffic which had all been previously carried on by way of the Ottawa Valley and Lake Nipissing. In 1678 La Salle erected a palisaded stronghold on the site now occupied by Fort Niagara, in order to prevent his retreat from being cut off while he was pushing to the westward by Lake Erie, and a curious old Indian legend relates that while he was contemplating the building of the brigantine Griffin, the first vessel that ever floated on Lake Erie, he was induced by his friend, Gironkouthic, an Iroquois chief, to consult a famous Indian oracle at the Devil's Hole, a wild chasm three miles below the falls on the American bank of the river, and that he was answered in accordance with what did afterwards actually happen, that his death would be brought about by treachery, a prediction that possibly might not have been accomplished had he not too utterly disregarded the warning of the soothsayer. Four years after the erection of La

Salle's palisades a daring attempt was made by the French and their northern Indian allies, the Hurons and Algonquins, to secure the Niagara river. The attempt was, however, unsuccessful,—the allies were totally defeated by the warlike Senecas and Iroquois at Fort Frontenac (now Kingston), the French retreated precipitately to Montreal, and the northern Indians returned home crestfallen. But in 1687 the French, aided by an Indian contingent from Mackinac, defeated the Senecas and erected a wooden fort on the lines of La Salle's palisades. There they left a garrison, which was shortly afterwards surprised by the Seneca warriors and cut to pieces—ten men only escaping to bring news of the disaster. The southern Indians did not, however, long remain masters of the fort. It was again captured by the French and strengthened by a strong stockade and a blockhouse, described by Père Charlevoix, who visited the district in 1721, and five years afterwards, in 1726, it was still further strengthened by the addition of four bastions, in accordance with the terms of a treaty entered into by the French and Indians. In 1749 the Marquis de la Jonquière built a stone fort on the same site, and for the possession of this stronghold was fought, ten years later, one of the most gallant and stubborn contests of the whole struggle between the French and English for supremacy in North America. Brigadier Prideaux, who commanded the English forces, was killed early in the series of engagements, and the command devolved upon Sir William Johnson. The French garrison was ably and valiantly commanded by Pouchot, who did everything that pluck and skill could compass to retain the colour in its position at the top of the flagstaff; but the fates were against him. Ligneris and Aubrey, with 1,100 French soldiers and 1,200 Indian braves, marched to his assistance from the Detroit river. They were both intercepted and led into ambushes by the vigilance of the English commander, their forces cut to pieces and scattered to the winds, and they themselves were taken prisoners of war. The gallant Pouchot could not believe the tidings when conveyed to him at the ramparts by a British officer, and could hardly credit an officer of his own whom he sent immediately to ascertain the truth or otherwise about this saddest disaster that had yet befallen the arms of France in the New World; but it was all too true. The British were victorious at all points, and on the 25th of July, 1759, Pouchot and the surviving remnant of his gallant garrison marched out with all the honours of war and laid down their arms in token of submission on the shore of Lake Ontario. During this memorable siege one of the most active and daring of the younger British officers was the gallant Loyalist Captain John Butler, who had previously distinguished himself at Lake George, and was destined once more to distinguish himself in the War of Independence as commander of the celebrated regiment of Loyalist volunteers known as Butler's Rangers. We shall see his memorial tablet by-and-by on the walls of St. Mark's Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake. The consequences that resulted directly from the fall of Fort Niagara are matters of history. All the French forts as far as Erie were surrendered to the British, and French influence in the districts of the Great Lakes became thenceforward a memory of the past. Four years later a detachment of British troops set out from Fort Niagara to convey a consignment of provisions and stores to Fort Schlosser, on the American side of the river, opposite Navy Island. On their way they were surprised and massacred by a band of Indians near the ill-omened Devil's Run, and from that terrible disaster the little creek that flows through that gorge of death obtained the significant cognomen of the "Bloody Run."

The war of 1776 hardly touched the Niagara frontier: the country was still in the hands of the Indian aborigines and there were consequently no worthy objects of attack to be molested by the armies on either side. At the end of the war the east bank of the river was given up to the States, but Fort Niagara still remained in the hands of the British and was garrisoned by British troops, while settlements of U. E. Loyalists began to be made along the Canadian side of the river; but this state of things could not last. The Canadian town of Niagara was laid out in 1791, as we have seen in a previous paper, and in anticipation of the early giving up of Fort Niagara, the lines of Fort George were marked out on the Canadian side to protect Canadian interests. Governor Simcoe saw the absurdity of the position clearly and acted accordingly, by removing his capital to Toronto. The year following the removal, that is, in 1794, Jay's Treaty gave up Forts Niagara, Oswego, Detroit, Miami and Michilimackinac; and two years afterwards, the British flag was lowered and the Stars and Stripes were, for the first time, unfurled to the breeze from the top of the old flagstaff of Fort Niagara. Here it remained till the war of 1812, when the fort was shelled so vigorously by Fort George during the progress of the battle of Queenston Heights that the garrison was obliged to evacuate it for a time. They returned on the conclusion of the armistice which immediately followed, and retained possession till the 18th of December, 1813, when the fiery impetuosity of Col. Murray and his gallant troops took the first draughts from the cup of their revenge by driving the too confident Yankees first out of Fort George and immediately afterwards out of their own fort on the American side. Both forts remained in the hands of the British till peace was declared and Fort Niagara restored, but these things belong to the history of the War of 1812, and, as we have already said, it is not our intention to produce such a history. The only sequent events in the history of Fort Niagara are unimportant.

HISTORIC CANADA, III.

Brock's Monument, Queenston Heights.

The story of the battle of Queenston Heights has been so ably re-told of late that there is no need to again enlarge on the valour shown during all that eventful day by our troops. While a most decisive victory, it resulted in our greatest loss. The death of Sir Isaac Brock has indelibly stamped a sad preëminence on the struggle on Queenston Heights. From the battlefield to the grave is usually a short road in a dead soldier's life. The mournful fatality of the 13th of October was quickly followed by the solemn funeral procession from Queenston to Newark; there a rest that friends might have a last look at the remains of one so dear to all; and then the stately ceremonial of a soldier's burial in a fitting spot—a bastion in Fort George, just completed by his orders. While his name and deeds were fresh in the memory of all, the Provincial Legislature erected a monument on the heights where he fell. Its height from base to summit was 135 feet, and from the level of the Niagara river 485 feet. It was in the form of a Tuscan column on a rustic pedestal; the diameter of the base was seventeen and one-half feet, and an iron railing surmounted the pillar. It bore the following inscription:—

Upper Canada
has dedicated this monument
to the memory of the late
Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K. B.
Provisional Lieut.-Governor and commander of the forces
in this Province,
whose remains are deposited in the vault beneath.
Opposing the invading enemy,
he fell in action near these heights,
on the 13th of October, 1812,
in the 43rd year of his age,
Revered and lamented
by the people whom he governed,
and deplored by the Sovereign
to whose service his life had been devoted.

The remains of the General and his gallant Aide-de-Camp, Lt.-Col. McDonell, of the York Militia, were removed from the first place of interment (Fort George) on the twelfth anniversary of the battle and deposited, with all befitting solemnity and state, in the receptacle prepared at the foot of the monument. The day was an unusually fine one, and a vast concourse of people had assembled from all parts of the country; and the presence of large detachments of troops from the Imperial and Militia regiments gave additional interest to the ceremony. H. M. 76th Regiment formed the guard of honour; the battalions of Militia lined the road from Fort George to Queenston; while a detachment of the Royal Artillery, posted on the heights, fired a salute of nineteen guns. The remains of Brock and McDonell lie side by side. The coffin of the former bears two oval plates of silver, on the first of which is the following inscription:—

Here lie the earthly remains of a brave
and virtuous hero,
Major-General Sir Isaac Brock,
Commander of the British Forces,
and President administering
the Government of Upper Canada,
who fell, when gloriously engaging the enemies
of his country,
at the head of the Flank companies
of the 49th Regiment,
in the town of Queenstown,
on the morning of the 13th of October, 1812.
Aged 42 years.
J. B. Glegg, A. D. C.

The second plate reads as follows:

The remains of the late
Major-General Sir Isaac Brock, K. B.
removed from Fort George to this vault,
on the 13th of October, 1824.

While on the coffin of the brave McDonell is the following:

The remains of
Lieut. Col. John McDonell,
Provincial Aide-de-Camp to the late
Major-General Brock,
who died on the 14th of October, 1812,
of wounds received in action the day before,
Aged 25 years.

The two heroes lay in peace for sixteen years, when their rest was disturbed by a scoundrel named Lett. On Good Friday, the 17th April, 1840, this man—the father of the dynamite school of the present day—secretly placed a large quantity of gunpowder into the monument, and exploded the same with such effect as to damage the column beyond repair. Lett had taken arms against the Government during the rebellion of 1837-38, and had been compelled to fly to the United States on the collapse of that unwarranted outbreak. His cowardly spirit thus thought to revenge itself on Canadian justice. The indignation of the public was aroused in all parts of the Province, and a great and remarkably enthusiastic gathering was held on Queenston Heights on the following 30th of July. It was decided to erect on the site of the mutilated column a monument far more grand and impressive.

Again the anniversary of Brock's death witnessed another pageant to his memory, for on the 13th October, 1853, his remains and those of Col. McDonell were re-interred at the base of the new monument. The foundation stone was then laid with due solemnity by Lieut.-Col. McDonell, brother of him to whose memory they were assisting to do honour. The column was completed in 1856 and is an exceptionally fine piece of work. It is one of the highest monuments in the world, measuring 190 feet from the ground to top of statue. Suitable inscriptions are engraved on the column, and it stands to-day a fitting tribute to a man whom all patriotic Canadians delight to honour.