

A ROMANCE

BRILLIANT CAREER OF A CANADIAN IN THE
BRITISH NAVY.

There is no duty so pleasing, no pleasure so acceptable, as that which is afforded in chronicling the names of those who from time to time have distinguished themselves, and by fine talent, assiduous labor, and untiring energy, have repeatedly brought their native country into favorable notice, and have enabled it to stand shoulder and shoulder with modern nationalities. Many have won honors which will remain green as long as their country's history shall be studied. Canada has her statesmen and orators, her merchants and bankers. In arms, the late Col. Dunn, of Toronto, won a Victoria Cross by his valor in the charge of the Six Hundred at Balaklava. Many other Canadians have won an enviable fame in defence of their country. The following sketch is to record the exploits in a more humble capacity of one in the navy of Great Britain.

Edward Bouchard is a native of Quebec, having been born there on Christmas Day, 1823. His immediate vicinity to the salt water and the irresistible attractions of ocean commerce to him, also often employed about the shipping, determined him to make the sea his path of life. He accordingly when 15 years old shipped in the merchant service, where his quickness and steadiness won him the regard of the officers and men of his ship. After seven years' service, being at Tower Hill, in London, while in his 23rd year, he enlisted, in Nov., 1845, as an able seaman in the Navy. Four months afterwards he was sent on the *Bittern*, 16 guns, where in the short space of five months he was made a first-class petty officer. In this capacity he was shipped on the *Castor* a 36 gun frigate, commanded by Commodore Wyval. This vessel was ordered to the Cape at the breaking out of the Caffir war, in which he took part, having been sent on shore with 500 other blue jackets. They were ten months in the "bush," where by his bravery he distinguished himself, especially in his coolness while being attacked, and also in following the hidden bushmen through a valley, on which occasion the Kaffir Chief was taken and the war closed. He and his comrades when dismissed to their vessels by Colonel Groy, Governor General at the Cape, received that officer's thanks and he added that he would prefer 500 "blues" to 1,500 regulars. For this war he obtained a medal.

His next cruise was made in the *Styx*, 6 guns, Capt. Hall, which almost immediately was ordered to the Burmese contest, which broke out in 1853. For six months he was again on land, and engaged in the desultory warfare, carried on. In a short but bloody skirmish, he was severely wounded in the leg. He was removed on a stretcher, and for a number of weeks was in a precarious condition. However, he then rapidly recovered. He received his second medal then.

As every one knows when the Russian war began in '54 the whole fleet was in a greater or less degree engaged. Four vessels the *Styx*, *Hastings*, *Cybele*, and *Grappler* went Northward near Japan, in order to intercept any Russian vessels attempting to pass that way. After waiting a length of time, they unexpectedly came upon two huge Russian men of war, off the post of Petropaulski. In a sharp and sanguinary battle of two hours, the enemy, who was

many times the weight and size of the English, struck his colors. The two vessels were taken, together with 800 prisoners of war. For this action, those engaged received a special medal, and he was particularly commended by his commanding officer for his coolness during the engagement. On the *Styx* he was made Chief Petty Officer, which is as high as a sailor may aspire without a commission.

In 1859 his vessel, the *Styx*, went to China and it was chiefly through his instrumentality that Canton fell, and the Chinese war closed. He and his fellow "blue jackets" under command of Captain Hall of the *Styx* were encamped some hundreds of yards in front of the huge city gates, the position of which and the adjoining wall was so strong, that no immediate hopes of its fall could be entertained. So sure were the Chinese of their strength, that they posted no sentries along the parapet, and consequently the pickets supplied by the "tars" patrolled to the very wall. Captain Hall's camp was continually in danger from a *sortie*, and even serious fears were held by that officer that in such a case he would be compelled to retire from his position. The morning of the day on which Canton was taken, Edward Bouchard went on duty at one o'clock, and while visiting his posts found everything "regular" until he came to the last picket, who was near the gate. During the usual conversation with this sentry, he thought he heard a noise inside the wall. He remarked it and they listened intently. Becoming satisfied that something of an unusual character was going on within, he procured a long scaling ladder, and with much difficulty climbed the wall near the gate. Cautiously looking over, to his great surprise he saw an immense number of Chinese, working by the aid of lanterns, and quite noiselessly getting guns into position. Counting these he numbered twenty. Descending he sent the very reluctant picket up, in order that if necessary he might have evidence to establish the correctness of his alarm. The picket having returned, they instantly reported the preparations the Chinese were hurriedly making for a *sortie* to Capt. Hall, who as instantly took speedy measures to defeat their plans. The alarm was given about half past 1 o'clock, and by 3 o'clock twenty-one guns and a large number of artillerymen were ordered up. The guns, heavily charged with canister and grape, were placed in a semi-circle position before the gate, with the "blues" and artillerymen drawn up as close as possible. Just as the break of day was glimmering along the sky the moment for the dreadful work arrived, for then the huge gate began to open slowly inward. When nearly swung open at a given signal, there came from the dark outside a blinding flash, and the tremendous battery and some hundreds of rifles were simultaneously discharged upon the doomed and thunder-struck Chinese. The effect of this cross fire was terrific in the extreme; guns and men were literally torn to fragments and blown all over the street, the emptied rifles were rapidly reloaded, the guns dragged in through the gate and tumbled on the horrified *sortie* party. Another awful volley, and a charge was made when awful slaughter ensued. The result of all this was that upwards of 1,200 Chinese were killed and Canton taken. The Chinese little thought, when preparing their battery for the destruction of the little camp before their gate, that they were giving an opportunity to their enemies to conquer and reduce their town, and bring their Emperor to sue for peace.

Admiral Sterling at once recommended

the subject of this sketch for a Victoria Cross, which some six months afterwards arrived, and was added to the collection of three medals already on his breast. Capt. Wall expressed himself highly gratified to be the one who fastened it on.—The Admiral several times presented him with packages, which were found to contain considerable sums of money. At this time, as upon several occasions previously (once at the cape of Good Hope) Bouchard was offered a commission, which he declined, being under the belief that he would be compelled to remain in the navy as long as he would in the slightest degree be capable to serve. It is to be regretted that he did not, for he certainly would have made proportionately as conspicuous a mark.

He was again placed on the *Castor*, Commodore Trotter. The fifth vessel in which he saw service was the line of battle ship *Renown*, 101 guns, Captain Forbes. His last ship was the *Phaeton*, 51 guns, Captain Tatem. From this man-of-war he was landed at Sheerness, where for sixteen months he had charge of ship and naval stores in the barracks of that port. His time before his discharge was too short to allow him to go to sea again.

In June, 1866, he was discharged, having a Victoria Cross, four medals, a pension of £26 stg., besides other emoluments, and, above all, a character without stain or reproach during a service of 21 years.

After bidding his old "salts" farewell he came home and resided four years with his friends at Cape Breton. But he had forgotten his native language, and acquired such love for the sea, that he found it impossible to remain on land, and consequently he has since been in the merchant service, and is now 2nd mate on the *Sunbeam*, a large vessel trading between London and Montreal. Mr. Bouchard says he has not had time to get married, but will do so this winter. He has his friends warmest wishes, and they hope he may conclude the life so honorably borne throughout, in happiness, and that the Ports in which he shall heave his last anchor, may be well adapted to him.

A most unsoldierlike cry is raised annually at the end of the drill season, of "The general is coming," and becomes worse year by year. The result is a general brushing up of everything, and though many battalions are scarcely moved by their commanding officers out of the tenor of their ways, the majority are. Every imaginable drill, &c., is gone through and crammed into a fortnight, *ad nauseum*. Now, the question is asked in military circles, how far the regularity and frequency of inspections tends to increase the efficiency of the army? No doubt regiments should be inspected but commanding officers should be duly impressed that their regiments should always be ready for inspection, and that the present excitable "brushing-up" system is not the least necessary, and should at once cease.—*Court Journal*.

Col. Coffin, the head of the Ordnance Lands Bureau, arrived in St. Johns on Monday evening, and inspected the barracks the following morning. It is rumoured that the Ottawa government will claim compensation for the amount of the damage occasioned to this property by the recent fire. The demand would not be unreasonable, inasmuch as the military authorities agreed to restore the buildings in the same condition as they were received from the old Province of Canada.—*St. Johns News*.