

THE VARSITY

A Weekly Journal of Literature, University Thought and Events.

VOL. XVIII.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO, MARCH 20, 1899.

No. 20

IN MARCH.

The long, black woods lie drifted deep,
Beneath the high triumphant sun;
Through dripping boughs strange tremors run,
The stirring of the sap asleep.

The rosy haze that rings the sky,
The quickening scent of early day,
The brook's small gurgle, hid away,
Half heard where shrinking snow-drifts lie.

The dazzling frost of breaking morn,
The wind's new freshness in its flight,
All bring their wordless large delight,
And joyance in the new life born.

And though no wood-choir's carols ring,
The wintry fitting chickadees,
With merry chirpings fill the trees,
In homage of the infant Spring.

FRANK L. POLLOCK.

THE ADVENTURES OF A PRISONER OF WAR.

The skirmish at Ridgeway between the Canadian volunteers and the Fenians was fought on the 2nd of June, 1866. The Canadians were at first successful, but some companies of the Queen's Own, having fired away all their ammunition, were relieved by the 13th Battalion. A false alarm of cavalry was raised, and the relieved skirmishers retiring at the double were supposed to be flying from these imaginary horsemen. The skirmishers were recalled, and a square was formed, a movement which left the volunteers at the mercy of the enemy. The attempt to deploy from this formation threw the forces into inextricable confusion, and the Commanding Officer ordered a retreat. This was effected under cover of a rear guard, formed of members of both regiments. The Fenians remained masters of the field, but immediately turned to the right-about and retired to Fort Erie, whence they crossed to the United States during the night.

In what follows, I have strictly confined myself to what I saw and heard.

An excellent account of the campaign is to be found in *The Canadian Magazine*, Vol. X., p. 41.

In the winter of 1865-6, there were thousands of Irishmen in the United States, who had served, on one side or the other, during the Civil War, and who found themselves, when the army was disbanded, without occupation, home or family ties, ready for any adventure that might come in their way. This was the opportunity of the Fenian demagogues, and they were not slow to avail themselves of it. Whether the

organizer of the expedition acted in good faith or not; whether they planned the invasion of Canada as a serious attack upon English rule in Ireland, or whether it was merely a demonstration to show the dupes who had subscribed to their funds that they were getting their money's worth—there is no doubt whatever that the rank and file of the expedition were entirely in earnest, and firmly believed that they were engaged in an enterprise, not only patriotic, but reasonable; because they had been persuaded that the Canadians would gladly seize the opportunity of throwing off the yoke of England, and that the Irishmen in the British army would not fight against them.

Throughout the winter, we in Canada had heard rumors of the intended invasion, and measures had been taken to meet it. The volunteers were called out for active service. There were in Toronto daily parades, and on the banks and Government buildings sentries were nightly posted, partly from the 16th Regiment, then quartered here, and partly from the Queen's Own and the 10th, now the Royal Grenadiers, who furnished a guard on alternate nights. Number 9 Company of the Queen's Own was then made up of undergraduates of the University, and the lecture rooms and corridors were gay with uniforms. The winter passed away, however, without any hostile act, and everyone thought that the Fenians, if they had ever seriously contemplated a raid, had been discouraged by the resolute attitude of the Canadians, and that the danger had passed; when on the last day of May, the news that the enemy were on Canadian soil came like a bolt from the blue. About eleven o'clock on the evening of that day, I was reading for an examination that was to come off on the day following, when a knock at my door announced the entrance of a non-commissioned officer, bearing the order to parade at the drill shed at half-past four next morning for active service on the frontier.

When the morning came it was found that it had been impossible to warn all the company the previous night, and I was detailed to look up the missing ones. We were too late for the first boat, but followed by a later one and reached Port Colborne in the gray of the morning, where we found the regiment embarked on a freight train, eating a frugal breakfast of bread and red herring, which we arrived too late to share. Starting from Port Colborne we soon reached the village of Ridgeway, where we left the train, and quickly getting into our ranks marched off along the road to Stevensville, where we expected to join the column under the command of Colonel Peacock, of the 16th Regiment. Our force consisted of the Queen's Own, the 13th Battalion of Hamilton, and the York and Caledonia volunteers, in all about 840 men, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Booker, of the 13th.