

REQUIRED READING, S. S. R. U.

STORIES FROM CANADIAN HISTORY*

BY THE EDITOR.

LUNDY'S LANE.



VERY possible provision that wise foresight could suggest was made for the defence of the Niagara Frontier towards the close of the war of

1812-15. Fort George was strengthened and re-occupied. A new fort—Fort Mississauga—with star-shaped ramparts, moat, and stockade, had been constructed at the mouth of the river. Its citadel is a very solid structure, with walls eight feet thick, built of the bricks of the devastated town of Niagara. A narrow portal with a double iron door admits one to the vaulted interior of the citadel, and a stairway, constructed in the thickness of the wall, conducts to the second story or platform, which is open to the sky. Here were formerly mounted many heavy guns, and the fire-place for heating the cannon-balls may still be seen.

One day toward the latter part of July,—It was the twenty-fifth of the month, a day for ever memorable in the annals of Canada,—early in the morning a convoy of schooners and barges, filled with armed men, was seen gliding up the Niagara River, their snowy sails gleaming beyond the fringe of chestnuts that bordered the stream. The Union Jack floating gayly at the peak, and the inspiring strains of "Britannia Rules the Wave" swelling on the breeze as the fleet approached, gave the assurance of welcome reinforcements to the struggling army in the field.

And right welcome those reinforcements were that day. Disembarking at Queenston landing, and climbing the steep hill, they marched through smiling orchards and green country roads to the bloody field of Lundy's Lane, where many of them ended life's march for ever.

We shall depend for the further record of that eventful day on the narrative of Zonas, as subsequently reported, with all the vivid touches of personal experience and eye-witness. With bandaged head and one arm in a sling he sat at the kitchen table, explaining to his father and some neighbours the fortunes of the fight. His story, disentangled from the interruptions of his auditors, was as follows. "You see," he said, making a rude diagram of the battle on the supper-table with the knives and forks, "General Riall took up a strong position on Lundy's Lane early in the day, with the regulars and the Gleggarry militia; and Lieutenant Colonel Robinson commanded the sedentary militia. The enemy lay on the other side of Chippewa Creek, and didn't move till late in the afternoon. If they had come in the morning, they could have crushed us like an egg-shell," and he suited the action to the word, by crushing into fragments one that lay upon the table.

"But we got it hard enough as it

* It was found impossible to finish this series of sketches in PLEASANT HOURS for 1882. They will be concluded in two or more numbers of the present year.

was. General Winfield Scott,* began pounding away at us with his artillery just before sundown. We expected to be reinforced before long, so we determined to hold the hill where our own battery was planted at any cost. The sun went down; it got darker and darker; still the cannon flashed their tongues of flame, and the deadly rattle of the musketry went on without a minute's pause for three mortal hours. The Yankee sharpshooters crept up in the darkness behind a screen of barberry bushes growing in the panels of a rail fence, and at a volley picked off all the gunners of our battery but three. Then, with a cheer, they rushed forward with the bayonet, and wrestled in fierce hand-to-hand fight with our infantry for the guns, which were alternately taken and re-taken on either side.

"Our troop of dragoons was ordered to charge up the hill and re-capture the guns. I had only time to lift up my heart in prayer, and say 'Lord have mercy upon us,' when a round shot struck my horse. He reared straight up and fell backward, partly falling upon me. All at once everything got black, and I heard not a sound of the din of battle that was raging round me. After a while, I don't know how long, it seemed like hours, I became aware of a deep thunderous sound that seemed to fill the air and cause the very earth to tremble, and I knew it was the roar of the Falls. Then I felt an intolerable aching, as if every bone in my body was broken. I opened my eyes and saw the moon shining through the drifting clouds. I was parched with thirst and raging with fever, and felt a sharp pain piercing my temple. Raising my arm to my head, I found my hair all clotted with blood from a scalp wound.

"Just then I heard a rattle and a cheer, and galloping down hill full in the moonlight, right toward the spot where I lay, a brass field-gun fully horsed, the drivers lashing the horses with all their might. I was afraid they would gallop over me, and raised my arm to warn them aside. But they either didn't see or couldn't heed, and on came the heavy cannon, lurching from side to side, the polished brass gleaming in the moonlight like gold. I heard a deep shuddering groan as the heavy wheels rolled over a wounded man beside me, crushing the bones of his legs like pipe stems. As the plunging horses galloped past, one iron-shod hoof struck fire against a stone just beside my head. In the momentary flash I could see the hoof poised just beside my face. I remember I noticed that it had been badly shod, and one of the nails was bent over the edge of the shoe. By a merciful Providence, instead of dashing my brains out he stepped on one side, and I received no further hurt. After the roar of the battle had ceased, while the solemn stars looked down like eyes of pitying angels on the field of slaughter, I managed to crawl to the road-side and wet my parched lips with some muddy water that lay in a cattle track. In the morning Trueman found me and took me off the field, and here I am laid up for one while. I pray God I may never see another battle. It is a sight to make angels weep and devils rejoice, to see men

* Afterwards Commander-in-Chief of the United States armies.

thus mangling each other like wild beasts of prey."

"Amen!" said his father. "Even when it is just, war is the greatest of calamities; and when unjust, it is the greatest of crimes."

Sadder still was the story told by Neville Trueman to Katharine Drayton, as he conveyed to her the dying message of Captain Villiers. The Captain was gallantly cheering on his company, when a bullet pierced his lungs. He fell from his horse and was bore to the rear, and carried into the little Methodist Church, which had been turned into a temporary hospital. Here Neville Trueman was busily engaged in far different ministrations from those which were the wont of that consecrated spot. The seats had been removed, and beds of unthreshed wheat sheaves from the neighbouring harvest-fields were strewn upon the floor.

As the bleeding form of Captain Villiers was brought in, Neville saw by his deathly pallor and his laboured breathing that he had not many hours to live. He sat down beside him on the floor and took the hand of the dying man, which he softly caressed as it lay passive in his grasp. Opening his eyes, a wan smile of recognition flickered over the pallid countenance. He tried to speak, but in vain. Then he pointed to his breast pocket, and made signs which Neville interpreted as a wish that he should take something out. He obeyed the suggestion, and found the copy of Wesley's Hymns given him by Katharine Drayton, but now, alas! dyed with the life-blood of a loyal heart.

"Tell her," said the dying man, but he faltered in his speech. Then, with difficulty opening the book, he turned to a passage where the leaf was turned down and a hymn was marked with the letters "H. V.," the initials of Herbert Villiers. The hymn was that sublime one beginning—

"Now I have found the ground wherein
Sure my soul's anchor may remain:
The wounds of Jesus, for my sin
Before the world's foundation slain;
Whose mercy shall unshaken stay,
When heaven and earth are fled away."

The dying eyes looked eagerly at Neville as the latter read the words; but when he replied, "Yes, I will tell her, and give her back her book enriched with such a sacred recollection," a look of infinite content rested on the pallid face.

"I bless God I ever met her," faltered the failing voice. "Tell her," it continued with a final effort, "Tell her—we shall meet again—where they neither marry—nor are given in marriage—but are as the angels of God in heaven!" And with a smile of ineffable peace the happy spirit departed from the carnage of earth's battles to the everlasting peace of the skies.

The fellow-officers of Captain Villiers erected over the grave in which their comrade was buried, beneath the walls of the humble Methodist Church, a marble slab commemorating his valour and his heroic death. With the lapse of five-and-sixty years, however, its brief inscription has become well nigh illegible through the weathering of the elements, and the grave has become indistinguishable from the mouldering mounds on every side around it. But beneath the funeral hatchment of his father, on the chancel walls of Melton-Mowbray Church, is a marble shield

charged with a cross enguled and a wyvern volant, and a record of the untimely death of the hope and bastion of the house on the banks of the far-off Niagara.

NEW YEARS THOUGHTS.

BY THE LATE MRS. J. B. LADY, U.S.A.

FAREWELL, Old Year! the rustle of whose garment,
Fragrant with memory, I still can hear
For all thy tender kindness and thy bounty
I drop my thankful tribute on thy bier

What is in store for me, brave New Year,
hidden
Beneath thy glistening robe of ice and
snows?
Are there sweet songs of birds, and breath of
lilacs
And blushing blooms of June's sweet Eden
rose?

Are there cold-winds and dropping leaves of
autumn,
Heart-searching frosts, and storm-clouds
black and drear?
Is there a rainbow spanning the dark heaven?
Wilt thou not speak and tell me, glad New
Year?

As silent art thou of the unknown future
As if thy days were numbered with the
dead;
Yet, as I enter thy wide-open portal,
I cross thy threshold with glad hope, not
dread.

To me no pain or fear or crushing sorrow
Hast thou the power without His will to
bring;
And so I fear thee not, oh, untried morrow!
For well I know my Father is thy King.

If joy thou bringest, straight to God, the
giver,
My gratitude shall rise; for 'tis His gift:
If sorrow, still, mid waves of grief's deep
river,
My trembling heart I'll to my Father lift.

If life's full cup shall be my happy portion,
With thankful joy I'll drink the precious
draught;
If death, my waiting soul across Life's ocean
But little sooner to my home 'twill waft.

So, hope lit New Year, with the joys
uncertain,
Whose unsolved mystery none may foretell,
I calmly trust my God to lift thy curtain;
Safe in His love, for me 'twill all be well.

A SAD MARRIAGE.

A STORY is told of a young wife's luckless choice of a heartless wretch of a husband. She was the daughter of a clergyman, and in her own right enjoyed a competency. She married a fast young fellow who also owned a modest fortune. He promised to leave his wicked ways, and for a time after his marriage did so, but liquor conquered him and he soon forgot his promises. One step after another brought him to want, and then he commenced to pawn his own, his wife's, and his child's articles of wear. The baby's cot went for drink and the bed his wife lay upon also. At length the unfortunate lady was compelled to seek support and shelter at the House of Industry and Refuge. She is said to be now dying of consumption, superinduced by the crime of the man who had promised to protect and love her. He is a wanderer on the streets and elicits as much indignation as compassion from those who know him and his wretched history.

A LADY, when admiring the stars on a bright night in a tropical climate, was suddenly asked in the most innocent way by her little son of five years old if those were the nails that held up heaven.