

A BRAVE WOMAN'S EXPLOIT
—A STORY OF CANADIAN
PATRIOTISM.*

DURING the war of 1812 the Rev. Neville Trueman found ample occupation in ministering to the sick and wounded, and in visiting his scattered flock throughout the invaded territory. He was enabled, incidentally, to render important service to his country. It was toward the end of June, that one afternoon he was riding through the forest in the neighbourhood of the Beaver Dams, near the town of Thorold,—a place which received its name from the remarkable constructions of the industrious animal which has been adopted as the national emblem of Upper Canada,—where there was a small force of British troops posted. In the twilight he observed a travel-worn woman approaching upon the forest pathway, with an air of bodily weariness, yet of mental alertness and anxiety. As she drew near, he recognized a worthy Canadian matron, whom he had, more than once, seen in his congregation in the school-house at the village of Chippewa.

"Why, Mrs. Secord!" he exclaimed, reining up his horse as she attempted to pass him, furtively trying to conceal her face, "are not you afraid to be so far from home on foot, when the country is so disturbed?"

"Thank God, it is you, Mr. Trueman!" she eagerly replied. "I was afraid it might be one of the American scouts. 'Home,' did you say? I have no home," she added in a tone of bitterness.

"Can't I be of some service to you? Where is your husband?" Neville asked, wondering at her distraught air.

"Haven't you heard?" she replied. "He was sore wounded at Queenston Heights, and will never be a well man again; and our house was pillaged and burned. But we're wasting time; what reck my private wrongs when the country is overrun by the King's enemies? How far is it to the camp?"

"Farther than you can walk without resting," he answered. "You seem almost worn out."

"Nineteen miles have I walked this day, through woods and thicket, without bit or sup, to warn the King's troops of their danger."

"What danger?" asked Neville, wondering if her grief had not somewhat affected her mind.

"The enemy are on the move—hundreds of them—with cannon and horses. I saw them marching past my cottage this very morning, and I vowed to warn the King's soldiers or die in the attempt. I slipped unseen into the woods and ran like a deer, through bypaths and 'cross lots, and I must press on or I may be too late."

Not for a moment did Neville Trueman hesitate as to his duty to his country. Wheeling his horse he exclaimed, "You brave woman, you've nobly done your part; let me take you to the nearest house and then ride on and give the alarm."

"I hoped to have done it myself," she said. "But it is best as it is. Never mind me. Every minute is precious."

Without waiting for more words, Neville waved his hand in encourage-

ment, and putting spurs to his horse was out of sight in a moment. In a few minutes he galloped up to the post held by the British picket, and flung himself off his reeking steed—incurring imminent risk of being bayoneted by the sentry, because he took no notice of his peremptory challenge. Bursting into the guard-room, he called for the officer of the day, Lieutenant Fitzgibbon. A few words conveyed the startling intelligence—the alarm was promptly given—the bugle sounded the "turn-out"—the guard promptly responded—the men rushed to arms. Messengers were despatched to an outpost where Captain Ker was posted with two hundred Indians, and to Major de Heren, commanding a body of troops in the rear.

Neville, followed by two files of soldiers, returned to meet the brave Canadian matron to whose patriotic heroism was due the rescue of the little post from an unexpected attack by an overwhelming force. They found her almost fainting from fatigue and the reaction from the overstrung tension of her nerves. Leaping from his horse, Neville adjusted his cloak so as to make a temporary side-saddle, and placed the travel-worn woman thereon. Walking by her side, he held the bridle-rein and carefully guarded the horse over the rugged forest path, the two soldiers falling behind as a rear-guard. As they approached the post at Beaver Dams, the red-coats gave a hearty British cheer. The guard turned out, and presented arms as though she were the Queen; and the gallant Lieutenant Fitzgibbon assisted the lady to alight with as dignified a courtesy as he could use to royalty itself. She was committed to the care of the good wife of the farmhouse which formed the headquarters of the post, and every means taken to ensure her comfort. By such heroism as this did the stout-hearted Canadian women of those stern war times serve their country at the risk of their lives.

Vigorous efforts were now made for defence. Trees were hastily felled to blockade the road. A breastwork of logs was thrown up at a commanding position, in front of which was an abattis of young trees and brush piled up to obstruct approach. Lieutenant Fitzgibbon had only some forty-three regulars and two hundred Indians, to oppose a force of nearly six hundred men, including fifty cavalry and two field-pieces. He must effect by stratagem what he could not effect by force. Every man who could sound a bugle, and for whom a bugle could be found, was sent into the woods, and these were posted at considerable distances apart. The Indians and thirty-four red-coats, concealed behind trees, lined the road. Before long was heard the tramp of cavalry and rumble of the field-guns. As they came within range the buglers, with all the vigour in their power, sounded a charge, the shrill notes ringing through the leafy forest aisles. The Indians yelled their fearful war-whoop, and the soldiers gave a gallant cheer and opened a sharp fire.

The ruse was as successful as that of Gideon and his three hundred men with their trumpets and pitchers, in the wars of the Philistines. After a spirited attack, the advanced guard fell back upon the main body of the enemy, which was thrown into confusion. Some of the cavalry horses

were wounded, and dashed wildly through the ranks, increasing the disorder. The artillery horses caught the infection, and, plunging wildly, overturned one of the gun-carriages in the ditch. At this moment a body of twenty Canadian militia arrived, and Fitzgibbon, to carry out his ruse of affected superiority of numbers, boldly demanded the surrender of the enemy. Colonel Boerstler, the American commander, thinking the British must be strongly supported, to Lieutenant Fitzgibbon's astonishment consented. The latter did not know what to do with his prisoners, who were twice as many as his own force, including the Indians. The opportune arrival of Major de Heren and Captain Villiers, with two hundred men, furnished a sufficient force to guard the prisoners. The chagrin of the latter, on hearing of their deception and capture by a handful of red-coats and red-skins, was intense. The name of the heroic Canadian wife, Mrs. Laura Secord, to whose timely information this brilliant and bloodless victory was due, was honourably mentioned in the military despatches of the day; and her memory should be perpetual inspiration to patriotic daring to every son and daughter of Canada. A portrait of Mrs. Secord, as a venerable old lady of ninety-two, in a widow's cap and weeds, is given in *Lossing's Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812*, page 621; also her autograph and a letter describing her exploit. The Prince of Wales, after his return from Canada in 1860, caused the sum of £100 sterling to be presented for her patriotic service. Lieutenant Fitzgibbon was made a Knight of Windsor Castle.

We greatly deprecate anything that would foster a wicked war spirit in the minds of the young. Even a just war is a great evil, and an unjust war is the greatest of crimes. But every instinct of patriotism and duty warrants us in defending our rights and liberties and native land, when unjustly assailed. The heroic adventure of Laura Secord is one of the most thrilling in the annals of Canadian patriotism. We have pleasure in reprinting from the columns of the *Orillia Packet*, one of the best of our Canadian exchanges, the accompanying spirit-stirring ballad on this subject by D. C. E. Jakeway, of Stayner, Ont.

LAURA SECORD.

On the sacred scroll of glory
Let us blaze forth the story
Of a brave Canadian woman with the fervid
pen of fame;
So that all the world may read it,
And that every heart may heed it,
And rehearse it through the ages to the
honour of her name.

In the far-off days of battle,
When the muskets' rapid rattle
Far re-echoed through the forests, Laura
Secord sped along;
Deep into the woodland mazy,
Over pathway wild and hazy,
With a firm and fearless footstep and a courage
staunch and strong.

She had heard the host preparing
And at once with dauntless daring
Hurried off to give the warning of the fast
advancing foe;
And she fitted like a shadow
Far away o'er fen and meadow,
Where the wolf was in the wild wood, and
the lynx was lying low.

From within the wild recesses
Of the tangled wildernesses
Fearful sounds came floating as she fastly
fled ahead;
And she heard the gutt'ral growling

Of the bears, that, near her prowling,
Crushed their way throughout the thickets
for the food on which they fed.

Far and near the hideous whooping
Of the painted Indians, trooping
For the foray, pealed upon her with a weird,
unclearly sound;
While great snakes went gliding past her,
As she sped on fast and faster,
And disaster on disaster seemed to threaten
all around.

Thus for twenty miles she travelled
Over pathways rough and ravelled,
Braving danger for her country like the fabled
ones of yore;
Till she reached her destination,
And forewarned the threatened station
Of the wave that was advancing to engulf it
deep in gore

Just in time the welcome warning
Came unto the men, that, scorning
To retire before the foemen, rallied ready for
the fray;
And they gave such gallant greeting,
That the foe was soon retreating
Back in wild dismay and terror on that
glorious battle day.

Few returned to tell the story
Of the conflict sharp and gory,
That was won with brilliant glory by that
brave Canadian band.
For the host of prisoners captured
Far outnumbered the enraptured
Little groups of gallant soldiers fighting for
their native land.

Braver deeds are not recorded
In historic treasures hoarded,
Than the march of Laura Secord through the
forest long ago;
And no nobler deed of daring
Than the cool and crafty snaring
By that band at Beaver Dam of all that well-
appointed foe.

But we know if war should ever
Boom again o'er field or river,
And the hordes of the invader should appear
within our land,
Far and wide the trumpets pealing,
Would awake the same old feeling,
And again would deeds of daring sparkle out
on every hand.

STREET TALK.

THERE is an epidemic of "slang." Men use it, boys shout it, and what is far worse, young women and girls speak it. The fact that it comes from the "street" does not prevent its entrance into the parlor. In spite of its vulgarity, it is cherished by those who claim to be genteel. Parents and children should aim to banish it from polite society. This incident may teach the way of eradicating the bad habit:

"Learn to talk like a gentleman, my boy! I am sorry to hear you talk 'street talk!' Do quit it."

"What is 'street talk,' papa?"

"What did you just now say to sister?"

"I told her to be quiet."

"But you said 'Hush up,' and said it very loud and rudely. What did you, ten minutes ago, say to Martha?"

"I told her to get out of my way."

"But you did not say it half so nicely as that. You said, 'Get out of this.' And I think you called her some name."

"That is what I mean by street talk. All such coarse, vulgar words, and especially the rough tone and manner, you hear on the street. They belong to those boys who have never been taught any better, and to those men who, knowing better, yet do not care about the better way. But my boy should never use street talk."

* From Withrow's "Neville Trueman, the Pioneer Preacher: a tale of the war of 1812." Toronto: William Briggs. Price 75 cents.