

visits to Detroit until I should be enabled to satisfy all parties there, and particularly my immediate friends, that I was not in reality the spy I had been represented. Feeling the necessity of "holding a candle to the devil," I accordingly enclosed through the agency of a gentleman in Detroit, a note of explanation to the Generalissimo of the Hunters, and the Editor of "The Spirit of '76," from whom I received the following guarded reply:—

"Dernorr, September 20th, 1839.

"Sir,—I acknowledge the receipt of your communication of yesterday from Sandwich, marked 'private,' through the hands of Alfred Brush, Esquire, of this city, with the accompanying documents, which, by your request, are herewith returned.

"The publication in the 'Spirit of '76,' to which you allude, is extracted from the 'North American,' a respectable journal of the State of Vermont. How far it is correct in imputing infamy to the individual whose name is mentioned, is not in my power, nor am I called upon to decide. In republishing the same in my paper, I am not actuated by any design against any individual as yet known to me in this quarter. I am free, however, to say, from the careful perusal I have given the documents, that in my estimation there is not foundation for the slightest doubt of your courage in the affair alluded to.

"I will take notice of the first paragraph of the publication, when enabled to do so by a further insight into the subject matter, and you may rest assured that my sense of justice will ever prompt me to disabuse the public mind on that or any other subject in which due reparation is necessary from me.

"I am, Sir, your most obedient,

"E. A. THELLER.

"———, Sandwich."

It could not, of course, fail to prove particularly flattering to my self-love to have the admission of the conqueror of the walls of Quebec, that there was not the slightest ground for reflection on my reputation for courage, although I was sensible that, like Caesar's wife, that reputation ought not to have been suspected. Furnished, however, with the certificate of the renowned Patriot leader, I was placed in a position to bid defiance to those who should presume to question that courage hereafter, or to deny that, like a servant bearing a good character from his master, I was entitled to all the advantages that certificate could confer. But the General's liberality did not end here. He forthwith issued a decree to the effect that, having made inquiry into the charge brought against me in a recent number of "The Spirit of '76," he had discovered that I was not the guilty party, and therefore the Hunters were on no account to offer me hindrance or molestation. And thus was the threatened hostility avoided, and I ventured over as usual to Detroit.

Theller having expressed, through the gentleman named by him as having conveyed my communication to his hands, a desire to see me, I bearing in memory that he was a man not to be slighted with impunity, assented to his proposal, and an interview accordingly took place in the house of our intermediary. The first and only time I remembered to have seen him previous to this meeting, was when he landed with his fellow prisoners at Quebec, preparatory to confinement in the Citadel. I was, on that occasion, standing at some distance from the crowd which had gathered in a spirit of curiosity to witness the disembarkation of the prisoners, and the action of the "General," as he slowly and gracefully threw his cloak around him, while he cast a look of supreme contempt and defiance upon the assembled and not very courteous multitude, had in it something that was intended to be at once so careless and so dignified—was so completely meant to convey the impression of the presence of a second Napoleon in misfortune, that it would have been difficult not to have selected him as I did for particular remark. Such as he then was I now beheld him,—a man short, heavy, thick-set, with a mouth indicative of firmness, a quick and penetrating eye, and a general expression of feature that incontestably denoted the man of energy and resolution.

After conversing a short time on the subject of the paragraph which had appeared in his paper, he adverted to his recent capture, trial, and captivity, and entered into a most detailed account of the circumstances attending his escape from the citadel of Quebec, which were, in every respect, as he then related them, what he has since described in his "Canada in 1837-38." I listened with that deep attention which his extraordinary narrative could not fail to excite, and when he had closed I told him (not being aware of his intention to print his memoirs) that if he would write out a memorandum of the events he had so startlingly detailed, I would throw them into a form that might render them acceptable to the public. He made no reply to my offer at the time, but on a subsequent occasion informed me that he had come to the resolution of publishing himself, and promised to send me a copy of the book to a part of Canada where I then proposed to reside. This copy, however, although the work has been now some years published, I have never received, and it was only by pure accident that I subsequently fell in with it.

Many persons have been disposed to doubt the accuracy of Theller's statements of extraordinary incident, as connected with his escape from Quebec. I do not participate in that doubt. Independently of the fact of his publication agreeing, in every essential particular, with what he verbally stated to me in Detroit, I am fully of opinion that the man who could have the boldness to conceive, and successfully execute, a plan so daring, and so

seemingly fraught with insurmountable difficulty as that embracing an escape from the prisons of the citadel of Quebec, and in defiance of the presence of two fine battalions of Her Majesty's Guards, could have found no need of descending to invention. The evasion was, of itself, of too absorbing an interest not to throw all extraneous and auxiliary matter into the shade, nor is there any one circumstance detailed in his narrative, as having occurred after his escape, which at all approaches in boldness of design to that which undeniably did take place—namely, his successful exit from the fortress. I believe every word he has related in regard to his evasion, in as far as himself was concerned. There are, of course, some parts of his statement which must necessarily have been given from the statements of others; as, for instance, where he alludes to the unbounded rage of Sir James Macdonnell, on hearing of his escape. This he adverted to, while relating the circumstances to me, in nearly the same language as the following, which appears at page 191, volume 2:—

"If the fury of a demon ever had possession of a man's heart, we might with truth say it was the case of 'the old Highland Chief' (Sir James Macdonnell), at the receipt of this intelligence. Enraged beyond bounds, it had the effect of first depriving him of utterance, but when he did speak, he poured forth such a volley of blasphemous oaths against the guards, the officers, himself, the government, the country, the rebels, and, worse than all, the d—d Yankees, whom, had he the power, he would have sent to sulphurous regions below. His manner, his oaths, shocked all who saw or heard him. Like a madman, he mounted his horse and rode to the citadel, to wreak his vengeance on the guard. When he arrived, he ordered the officers of the guard under arrest, and the soldiers and sergeant Norman into immediate confinement. When he saw the stupid sleeping sentinel,* who was then undergoing the treatment of the surgeon he muttered:—

"'Would that I had the power, I would drive this steel into your heart.'

"At the first sight of Norman † he again burst out afresh with the most threatening oaths, that he would not be satisfied until he saw him hanged, and when Norman, with tears in his eyes, and frightened all but to death, strove to assure him that when he left the room, and locked us up, we were all safe and well, he stopped him,

"'Speak not, or I may be tempted to do you an injury, traitor! I will have your heart wrung out, but I will find the truth of all this: your conduct has brought disgrace upon me, and upon your whole battalion. You, and every man connected with the whole business in this damnable plot, I will cause to sup sorrow.'

All this is, of course, highly overcharged, but there is no doubt that the indignation of Sir James Macdonnell was very great indeed, and that he taxed the Guards with having brought disgrace upon themselves and upon him by suffering the escape of their prisoner. Be this as it may, so much did the brigade feel their military character to be compromised by the unpardonable want of vigilance, that, independently of the five hundred pounds reward offered by the Governor-General for the apprehension of Theller, not less than the enormous sum of one thousand pounds were added by the officers of the regiments of Guards then in Quebec.

Before taking my final leave of Theller, I may as well remark, that although, as I have already stated, I am disposed to accord him every credit for accuracy in all that he has published in relation to his own personal adventures, I am far from pinning my faith on the correctness of all his statements, contained in the two somewhat lengthy volumes he has produced on Canada. For instance, his account of the different affairs between the Patriots and the troops and Loyal Volunteers betrays exaggeration in the enumeration of the forces of the latter as well as of their casualties in action. Moreover there is a labored desire to shew that, as he passed through the province on his way to Quebec, there was a disposition on the part of the inhabitants generally to sympathize with him, and to testify attachment to those principles for the maintenance of which he had so recently contended. This is unjust to the Canadians, the majority of whom, however deficient they may be in other respects, most assuredly lack not loyalty. A few instances of individual interest may have been manifested, but I rather incline to think that the vanity of the writer, or rather to the hero, in leading him to believe that he was the observed of all observers (as indeed in a certain sense he undoubtedly was), also led him to infer indications of sympathy where a contrary feeling was sought to be expressed. As for the waving of the pocket-handkerchiefs of the women, to which he repeatedly and in a spirit of much satisfaction refers, it is quite possible that this action was as much the result of rejoicing at his captivity and contemplated punishment, as of commiseration or concern. Self-love also induces us to view things through a deceptive and flattering medium. I was once marched a prisoner of war and handcuffed as Theller was, through an enemy's country, and a good many pocket-handkerchiefs were waved by bright and buxom lasses, as I then supposed in sympathy for me, but subsequently I had good reason to believe that, what I had taken as a compliment, was intended in a very different sense.

The country about Sandwich and Amerstburgh is exceedingly

* This man was so drugged by Theller during the half hour previous to his escape from the casement, both with porter and spirits mixed with laudanum, that he was literally insensible.

† The sergeant especially intrusted with the care of the prisoners.