

The Canadian Militia:—A Historical Sketch.

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I bring before your notice no great story of the soldier's glory; I cannot sing, as old Virgil did, of mighty deeds of arms and of men; I cannot, with Macaulay, weave into heroic measure "lays of the brave days of old;" neither can I rouse Scottish blood into enthusiasm with stories such as bewitched our childhood, of the desperate valor of Wallace and of Bruce, or gladden the English heart by recounting great battles like Trafalgar and Waterloo. I can but try to portray to you in unskilled language some of the endeavors of our forefathers, and of our brothers of the present day, to keep intact and safe from internal trouble or foreign invasion the great inheritance of this great Dominion. And yet, was there ever nation born into this world under a fiercer or more glorious struggle than that which dyed with blood the Plains of Abraham on the 13th of September, 1759, when in the midst of heroism and of death the *fleur de lis* of France gave place on the rocky Citadel of Quebec to the ensign of Great Britain? To most of you the story of this great achievement is well known, but inasmuch as from it sprang the British Canada of to-day, and that in it I find the first record of an English volunteer in Canada, a slight reference to it and to its hero—General Wolfe—now may not be amiss. In the assault Wolfe himself led the way at the head of the Louisburg Grenadiers. Then over the fields arose the British cheer, mixed with the fierce yell of the Highland slogan. The clansmen drew their swords, keen and swift as bloodhounds. A shot shattered Wolfe's wrist; he muffled his handkerchief about it and kept on. Another shot struck him and he still advanced. When a third lodged in his breast, he staggered and sat on the ground. Lieut. Brown, of the Grenadiers, one Henderson, a *volunteer*, and a private soldier, aided by an officer of artillery, who ran to join them, carried him in their arms to the rear. He begged them to lay him down; they did so, and asked if he would have a surgeon. "There's no need," he answered, "it's all over with me." A moment after one of them cried out: "They run! See how they run!" "Who run?" Wolfe demanded, like a man roused from sleep. "The enemy, sir. Egad, they give way everywhere." "Go one of you to Col. Burton," returned the dying man. "Tell him to march Webb's regiment down to Charles river to cut off their retreat from the Bridge." Then, turning on his side, he murmured, "Now, God be praised, I will die in peace!" And in a few minutes his soul had fled. For his country Wolfe died, as did his worthy opponent, Montcalm, one of the bravest of the brave sons of France. Measured by the numbers engaged, the battle of Quebec was but a heavy skirmish; measured by results it was one of the greatest battles of the world. From this decisive victory and from the graves of those two heroes what marvellous results have sprung! Under the monument to Montcalm and his gallant followers lies buried the supremacy of France in the new world, and from the resting place of Wolfe has grown and flourished the sturdy Anglo-Saxon race, spreading, like one of Britain's stately oaks, its mighty branches over an entire continent, from wave to farthest wave, from the Atlantic to the Pacific ocean.

After the conquest, commenced, as a matter of course, the reorganization of the government of the colony, as it was styled in the documents of the day. Through the kindness and courtesy of an old Montreal friend, well known to many of you, Mr. Douglas Brymner, now keeper of the archives of the Dominion in the Parliament buildings, Ottawa, I find the earliest records of the Canadian militia, *i.e.*, of the *British* militia. The first entry is in the year following the conquest. On the 19th day of September, 1760, Governor Amherst (afterwards Lord Amherst) writes to Colonel Haldimand to the effect that the militia of Montreal, under the old regime, should meet on a certain day and give in their arms, after which they should take the oath of allegiance to the British crown, when their arms would be returned to them or placed in an armory. And thence on, from time to time, we see mention made of the militia. On the 25th March, 1764, Col. Haldimand writes to General Gage with reference to the difficulty of obtaining the necessary militia-force, but that he had secured a certain number, having given the command to M. de Montizambert, the ancestor of one of our best soldiers, and most efficient artillerymen to-day, Lieut.-Col. C. E. Montizambert, commandant of the Citadel at Quebec, and as his lieutenants one M. de Richeville, also of the colony, and one Mr. Smith, who has always been employed in the militia. I suppose there has always been some one of the name of "Smith" in the militia from that day to this. Then, on the 4th April, 1771, Quartermaster-General Robertson writes to Colonel Haldimand from New York as to the raising of two regiments in Canada, to be officered by young gentlemen of family in Canada, in order to show that the *noblesse* there may be employed to more advantage in ours than in the French service. I also find a curious item in one of these letters, complaining that the captains of the militia are very much troubled

by "bad lawyers." I leave it to your experience to say whether this race has become extinct or not. Let us hope that it has. As it is impossible for me here to enter into a history of the struggles of the earliest colonists and their wars, principally with the Indians, I cannot do better than refer you to the delightful works of Parkman. Talk of novel reading for recreation and rest to the mind; there can be nothing more exciting and interesting than those true historic stories. Because we are what is called a Colony, and a comparatively new country, because we have no ancient ivy-crowned and castellated ruins, we are apt to imagine we have no history, that is no Canadian history. Why, the very ground we walk on, the city we live in, the country round about us, its rocks, its rivers, its graceful elms and lovely scenery, all could tell a wondrous story of the desperate fights and struggles engaged in here, of the suffering of delicate women, pious nuns, devoted and self-sacrificing priests and dauntless soldiers. From the founding of the little pallisaded town of Montreal by Maisonneuve in 1642 as a mission colony, under the protection of the Holy Virgin, as the records have it, and for many years afterwards under both the French and English regimes, Indian wars and attacks were of constant occurrence. Probably on the very ground on which St. Paul's church is built the fiendish war whoop of the Hurons and the Iroquois frequently resounded, carrying fear and death to the hearts of many a brave pioneer, with the horrid savage accompaniments of torture, scalping and burning to death of the prisoners. Those two old Martello-like towers at the Priest's farm, familiar to all of us, formed part of the fortifications of an outlying post built chiefly for the protection of the converted Iroquois Indians by the Sulpician fathers at a very early date. Beyond these sanguinary and horrible contests there is nothing specially upon the subject of these remarks until the year 1775 to '76. From the commencement to the end of the American war of independence (the declaration of independence by our neighbors was, as you all know, made in 1776, and the preliminaries of peace signed in 1783-4,) we constantly find reference to the Canadian militia, particularly to their gallant conduct in the defence of Quebec, when in December, 1775, it was assaulted by the Americans under Gen. Montgomery, during which attack he met his death, as any one who has seen the placard on the rock at Quebec can testify. The Americans set up scaling ladders, but the fire kept up by the Canadians was so deadly that the assailants, driven back, were fain to take shelter in the houses. Then an intrepid militiaman—named Charland—advanced amid a shower of bullets, seized the ladders and drew them inside the barricades. The Canadians were soon relieved, and the Americans were slowly driven off from Quebec and its environs, and eventually from the frontier of Canada, the struggle being continued, says Garneau, the historian, rather between antagonistic militias than between the royalists and the troops of the Congress in the Canadian arena. When the Legislative chambers opened in Quebec in 1793, we find the Governor, Lord Dorchester, calling the attention of Parliament to the organization or reorganization of the militia. Two battalions were afterwards raised, and eventually disbanded, but apparently the force was maintained in some shape. We find frequent references to it, as, for example, of orders being sent to captains of militia to arrest all such persons as should endeavor to break the King's peace. If captains of the militia of the present day were permitted this amusement, there would be some lively times, and broken heads occasionally. Then when trouble commenced to brew between Great Britain and the United States an unfounded rumor was set on foot that the mere appearance of the American flag amongst the Canadian militia would cause them to rise in a body and join the American Federation. The Americans, who mooted this in order to put an end to European domination in all parts of this continent, eagerly propagated the report through their numerous journals. Accordingly in the summer of 1807 a grand military demonstration was made, a fifth part of the colonial militia being called out, and ordered to be ready to march at the first signal. The balloting for men, and their training afterwards, was cheerfully and briskly carried on to a degree which belied the insinuations thrown out against the loyalty of the Canadians. All, however, was comparatively quiet until the war broke out in 1812.

(To be continued.)

English Militia and Volunteers.

It is always satisfactory for soldiers to see the general newspapers discuss military subjects, especially when they are approached in the grave and thoughtful manner in which the *Daily News* of the 12th inst. deals with the important question of the militia. All that the writer has to tell is no news to those behind the scenes. We all know that the militia is 28,000 men below its proper strength; that the men cannot shoot; that the annual course of instruction is about as unpractical a preparation for war as ever was devised by the mind of man; and that the officers as a class are by no means sufficiently educated profes-