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OUR CENTENNIAL STORY.

THE BASTONNAIS:

A TALE OF THE AMERICAN INVASION OF CANADA IN 1775-76.

By JOHN LESPERANCE.

BOOK III.

THE BURSTING OF THE TEMPEST.

I.

QUEBEC IN 1775-76.

Quebec is the most picturesque city in America. Its scenery is unrivalled. Rock, forest and water combine to make its position an unfailing charm to the student of landscape art. As it is to-day, so was it one hundred years ago, or if there is a difference, it is in favor of the latter date, for the pick and the axe had then made fewer inroads upon the sublime work of nature.

Quebec is the most historical city in America. One of the very oldest in date, it is by far the most notable in stirring annals. From its earliest origin, it was the theatre of important events whose results stretched far beyond its walls, and swayed the destinies of the whole continent. Its records are religious, diplomatic, military and naval. Its great men were missionaries, statesmen, soldiers and sailors. The heroic explorers of the Far West were its sons or went forth from its gates. Jogues looms up beside Brebeuf. Champlain and Frontenac open the luminous way along which have trod Dorchester and Dufferin. The blended glory of Wolfe and Montcalm is immortal, and the renown is hardly less of the young, ill-fated Montgomery. Where was there ever a greater sailor than Iberville? The history of the Mississippi Valley is linked for all time with the names of Marquette, Hennepin, Joliet and LaSalle.

It follows that, in this era of centennial reminiscences, no city in America is more interesting than Quebec, and an additional charm is that we have comparative ease in placing it before the eye as it was a century ago.

In the winter of 1775-76, the population was about 5,000 souls. Of these 3,200 were women and children. All the men were made to wear arms. Those who refused were ordered out of the walls. There were probably not one hundred English families in the town. The English language was spoken only by the military. The times were hard. Provisions at first were abundant, but fire-wood was scarce. Fortunately the winter on the whole was mild. The houses during the day were partially deserted. The men were on guard. The women were on the streets gadding. They found plenty of occupation, for the air was thick with rumors. A besieged city must perforce be a nest of gossip, a hive of cock-and-bull stories. The regulars looked smart in their regimental uniforms. The militia wore such toggery as they could get—grey homespun coat with red sash, cowskin boots, and the traditional *tuque bleue*. The trappers not being allowed into the town, furs were rare, and women of the lower classes were obliged to go without them altogether. The centres of attraction were the guard-rooms and sentry-boxes. There the episodes of the siege were recounted. There all manner of serious and comic incidents occurred to relieve the monotony of the long winter months. The principal barracks were in Cathedral Square, in that venerable Jesuit College which is to be pulled down during the present year. The three chief outposts were St. Louis, St. John and Palace Gates. These were the three original French Gates, improved and strengthened by the great engineer, de Lery. Through them, sixteen years before, the army of Montcalm passed after its defeat on the Plains of Abraham, and then passed out again, crossing by a bridge of boats to the camp at Beauport. Through them one year later, the broken army of Murray rushed back in flight from the disastrous field of St. Foye. But for those strong gates built by the hands of Frenchmen, the victorious French army, under Levis, might have recovered Quebec, on that memorable day, and regained possession of New France. Bitter irony of fate! Along the avenue where Prescott Gate was afterwards erected, palisades were raised by James Thompson, Overseer of Works, to bar the advance of the Americans from that quarter. Thompson survived till within a few years ago, and his name, as we shall see later on, was intimately associated with the siege. All these defences were in Lower Town, or within the walled portion. In Upper Town and under the Cape, the eastern extremity was defended by batteries in Dog Lane or Little Sault-au-Matlot, and the western end, at Pless-de-Ville, by a masked battery. Going from one to the other of these constituted the round of military service. The Lower Town was chiefly guarded by militia. They went and came singing their French songs, the very cadence of their bands.

Vive la Canadienne
Et ses jolis yeux doux.

then received its consecration, and the light-hearted fellows kept step to *c'était un petit bonhomme et la claire fontaine*. Along with the singing there was much good natured conversation. War has its grim humors. One party standing in the Cul de Sac on the site of the chapel built by Champlain, made mirth at the

expense of Jerry Duggan, late hair dresser in the town, who had gone over to the enemy and was "stiled" Major amongst them. Jerry was said to be in command of five hundred Canadians, and had disarmed the inhabitants of St. Roch, a suburb of Quebec, without opposition. Another party, grouped in front of the Chien d'Or, laughed heartily at the *Canadiens Bastonnais*, Canadians who had joined the rebels, because they were stationed on the ice of the river to keep patrol. "A cold reward for treason," they said. Mysterious visitors went in and out of George Allsopp's house, in Sous-le-Fort street. Allsopp was chief of opposition in Cramahé's Council. The outposts were enlivened every night by the arrival of deserters. Some of these were spies. The information they gave of the enemy was very puzzling. Every morning at headquarters, when the roll was called, some one was found missing, having escaped to the Americans. About one third of every army cannot be depended upon. The length of the siege produced dearth of provisions, which had not been carefully husbanded from the start. So early as January, beef rated at nine pence, fresh pork at one and three, and a small quarter of mutton at thirteen shillings. Notwithstanding repeated refusals, the besiegers periodically repeated the walls with flags of truce. A needless and unaccountable courting of humiliation. Every now and again, the enemy succeeded in setting fire to houses within the walls. The consequent excitement relieved the monotony of the blockade and was an event to talk about. The garrison made frequent partial sorties in quest of fire-wood, sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully. Fatigue parties dug trenches in the snow, without the walls, by way of exercise or bravado. Sentinels at the Block House and other exposed points were frequently frost-bitten. A kind of sentry box was fixed on a pole, thirty feet high, at Cape Diamond. Thence could be seen the tin spire of St. Foye Church, but not the Plains of Abraham, in force. Over the American camp, the red flag waved. Some thought it was the bloody flag, by way of threat. But it was no more than a signal to the prisoners within the town. About one hundred men were picked up and formed into an Invalid Company to guard these prisoners. Amongst this guard were some "piqueed" who did not formerly perceive the meanness of their behaviour," as the old chronicle tells. On dark nights, rockets were sent up and large fires made on the ramparts and the high streets to confound the enemy's signals. There was much generous rivalry between the French militiamen and the British regulars. The former were greatly encouraged by the priests who went among them familiarly in their long black robes. The Seminary, in Cathedral square, where the Bishop resided, was as much frequented by the soldiery as the headquarters of MacLean in the Jesuit barracks on the other side of the square. Monseigneur Pontbriant was as truly the defender of Quebec as General Carleton. The most curious signals of the Americans were fire-balls which burned from one in the morning till three. Whenever these were seen, the garrison prepared more actively for an attack. Spite of precautions on both sides, communication to and from the beleaguered town was carried on to a considerable extent. A bold, active man could always go in or out from the side of the river under the Cape, or along the valley of the St. Charles. The Continentals had not men enough to effect a complete blockade, and the garrison was not sufficiently numerous to guard every obscure outlet. But spite of these deficiencies, for eight long months—from November 1775 till May 1776—Quebec was virtually cut off from the rest of the world and the theatre of one of the most important military events in the history of America.

II.

CARY'S MESSAGE.

As soon as Pauline had entered the gates of the town, Cary Singleton leaped into his sleigh and turned his horse's head towards the camp. But before he could proceed, Batoche was at his side. The young officer had not had occasion to exchange a single word with the singular being, but his thoughts had been much occupied with him during the long night ride, and it was with some satisfaction that he now had an opportunity of addressing him.

"I must thank you, sir," said he, "for your service to the young lady."

"I did it for her sake, as she is my granddaughter's godmother. And for her father's sake, who is an old friend," replied Batoche, quietly. And he added immediately:

"I am prepared to do you a service, sir."

Cary looked at him in surprise. Was he in the presence of an enemy? Had he fallen into an ambush from which this man was willing to rescue him? Or if a friend, what service could he refer to? Might it be a message to Pauline? Strange as it may seem—and perhaps it will not appear so strange after all—the very thought, as it flashed upon him, created a throbbing sensation in his heart. Had this little timid girl, after only a few hours' interview, so ingratiated herself into his affections, that the unexpected opportunity of communicating with her once more excited a flutter of pleasurable surprise. Rapidly as these surmises passed through his mind he had not time to resolve them, before Batoche resumed in these simple words:

"I am returning at once to Sieur Sarpy's."

For a moment, Cary was unable to make a syllable of reply. He looked hard at the old man as if to fathom his inmost thoughts. But the latter did not flinch. His countenance wore that expression of utter blankness and conscious unconsciousness which is an attribute of resolute men, and which only kindred spirits are gifted to understand.

Cary was as much impressed by his quiet manner as he had been by his singular offer. He asked himself the following questions sharply one after the other. What did this man know of him that he should connect him in any way with the Sarpys? How should he be in possession of all his comrades? Zulma had not known him when he presented himself at her door, last night. Sieur Sarpy exchanged only a few words with him, and certainly did not treat him as a familiar. And who was this Batoche? Was he a friend or an enemy of the cause of liberty? Perhaps he was a spy?

During the interval, Batoche stood immovable while the snow piled in inches on his round shoulders, but at length, divining the thoughts of Cary, he said in a low voice:

"The day is advanced. I can wait no longer."

His reflections being thus broken up, Cary immediately replied:

"You are returning to Sieur Sarpy's, did you say?"

"At once."

"But the roads will be all blocked."

"I know all the by-paths."

"Our troops are advancing and might arrest you."

The old man only smiled.

"I will give you a pass."

Batoche took off his glove and produced from his pocket a folded paper.

Cary opened it, and recognizing the signature of Colonel Meigs, returned it with a smile.

"I thank you for your offer," said he.

"Here is a little message which you will deliver to mademoiselle Zulma."

Saying which, he wrote a few lines in pencil on a leaf of his pocket book.

"She will receive it at noon," said Batoche, taking the message, and, without the addition of another word, he stalked away on his snow-shoes.

Cary returned to camp just in time to take part in the forward movement of his corps. The main body did not break up its quarters till five days later, but on the 29th November, the day on which the events just narrated took place, Morgan's riflemen were ordered to lead the van towards Quebec. That same afternoon, therefore, Singleton found himself nearly on the same spot which he had occupied in the early morning.

THE UNREMEMBERED BRAVE.

The snow-storm continued in unabated violence. The low lines of the sky seemed to lie upon the earth, the sounds of nature were deadened to mystical murmurs, the long streams of flakes lay like a white curtain drawn aslant across the face of heaven, and universal silence pervaded the land. Every body was within doors where the exterior calm had penetrated, and where the families nestled around the hearth as if conscious of the visible protection of God. It seemed like a desecration that this holy silence should be disturbed by the iron tread of armed men, and that the peace sent down from above with every grain of snow should be violated by designs of vengeance and the thirst of human blood. Unseen through the storm, the riflemen of Virginia advanced towards the grey walls of the devoted town. Unheard through the tempest, the garrison of the ancient capital moved to the gates and ramparts. Unseen and unheard, the armies of Arnold and Montgomery, which had now combined, were making their last preparations to depart from Pointe-aux-Trembles and march for the final catastrophe in this dread tragedy of war.

Sieur Sarpy sat in his arm-chair after dinner, absorbed in the reading of a book, and apparently under the blessed influence of the peaceful, noiseless weather. From the staidness of his manner, it was evident that he had forgotten the events of the previous night, and was unconscious or oblivious of what was going on among the belligerents around Quebec.

He was interrupted in his occupation by the entrance of the maid who announced the arrival of Batoche. The sound of the name surprised him a little, but without moving from his seat, he said quietly:

"Show him up."

The two old men had not been many minutes together, before they knew and understood each other well. They were both of an age and had known one another in former and better days. After the usual preliminaries of recognition were gone through, Batoche said:

"I have been on my legs for fourteen hours, and must now whence I came before night. I am old now and have not the endurance of fifteen years ago. Hence I must be brief, although my business is of the greatest importance. Please give me all your attention for half an hour."

Sieur Sarpy closed his book and holding up his right hand, asked:

"Is the business political or personal?"

"Both. There is question of crime on the hand, and of mercy on the other. I appeal to your humanity."

At that moment, Zulma appeared at the door of the room, but was about to withdraw at once, when Batoche turned towards her, and with a sweetness of manner that one would never have suspected in him, said:

"I hoped mademoiselle will enter. I have no secret for her. We all know that she is her father's trusted counsellor. And mademoiselle will be pleased to learn that her brother and her friend, little Pauline, have entered safely within the gates of Quebec, and that the young officer, having rejoined his command, is now somewhere near the walls of the town. Before parting from him this morning, he requested me to hand you this little note."

Zulma's hand trembled as she took the paper, but she did not open it. When she was seated, Batoche immediately resumed:

"You are aware that Governor Carleton has arrived in Quebec?"

"Yes, we heard the guns of the Citadel proclaiming the event," replied Sieur Sarpy.

"That happened just ten days ago. It was the most terrible blow yet struck against our cause."

"Your cause, Batoche?" said Sieur Sarpy, looking up.

"Aye, my cause, your cause, the cause of us all. See here, M. Sarpy. This is no time for mincing words. We must stand up and take a part in this war. We did not provoke it, but it has come and we must join it. You may prefer to remain neutral. I do not say you are wrong. Your health is poor, you have a young daughter, you have large estates. But for me and hundreds like me, there is only one course. I am an old French soldier, M. Sarpy. Remember that. I fought on those plains yonder under the noble Marquis. I fought at St. Foye under the great Chevalier. I have seen this beautiful country snatched from France. For sixteen long years, I have seen the wolves at work tearing from us the last shreds of our patrimony. They killed my daughter. They have made an outcast of me. I have prayed that the day of vengeance might come. I knew it would come. I heard it coming like distant thunder in the voice of the water-fall. I heard it coming in the wild throbbings of my violin. And, thank God, it has come at last! These Americans advance to meet us. They stretch out the right hand of fraternity. They unfurl the flag of liberty. They too suffer from the tyranny of England, and they ask us to join them in striking off the fetters of slavery. Shall we not act with them?"

Sieur Sarpy's head fell upon his breast and he answered not. Zulma sat forward on her chair, with dilated eyes fastened on the face of the speaker, and her own features aglow with the enthusiasm that shot from him like living electric tongues.

Batoche who had risen from his seat during this impassioned outburst, now resumed it, and proceeded in more subdued language:

"If Carleton had not returned to Quebec, the war would perhaps be ended now. He was beaten everywhere in the upper country, at Isle-aux-Noix, at Chambly, at Longueuil, at St. Johns. He fled from Montreal after losing striking a blow. All his army surrendered there and at Sorel. All his ships were captured. All his stores were seized. And do you know how he escaped?"

"In an open boat, I am told."

"Yes, in an open boat. He passed at Sorel, where the Americans were watching for him, and the oars were muffled in their locks so that he could not be heard. The boat was even paddled with open hands in the most dangerous places."

Zulma listened eagerly to these details which she had not heard before. Sieur Sarpy's single remark was:

"Wonderful!"

"And do you know who piloted him?"

"Captain Bouchette, I believe."

"Yes, Joseph Bouchette. And what is Joseph Bouchette?"

"A French Canadian!" exclaimed Zulma, unable to contain herself.

"Aye, mademoiselle, a French-Canadian. But for this Joseph Bouchette, a French-Canadian, Carleton would never have reached Quebec, and the war would now be ended."

"By this you mean that the Americans would have Quebec, the only place in all Canada that is not theirs already," said Sieur Sarpy, with considerable energy.

"Just so. Now, it is about this Joseph Bouchette that I have come to see you."

Both Zulma and her father involuntarily started.

(Continued.)

HUMOROUS.

A square meal costs a round sum on the Centennial grounds.

PEOPLE learn wisdom by experience. A man never wakes up his second baby to see it laugh.

It may sound like a paradox, yet the breaking of both wings of an army is a pretty sure way to make it fly.

AN eminent teetotaler would only consent to sit for his portrait on condition that he should be taken in water colours.

How sad it is at this season to see a man looking back upon a mispent life to reflect that he has no relations in Philadelphia.

THERE is a growing feeling among the American people that the man who can hear a fellow mortal complain of a cold in the head, and abstain from telling him what to do for it, is the man who should be the next president.