

THE BATTLE OF LAPRAIRIE.*

(1691.)

A BALLAD.

I.

That was a brave old epoch,
Our age of chivalry,
When the Briton met the Frenchman
At the Fight of LaPrairie;
And the manhood of New England,
And the Netherlanders true,
And Mohawks sworn, gave battle
To the Bourbon's lily blue.

2.

That was a brave old Governor
Who gathered his array,
And stood to meet he knew not what
On that alarming day.
Eight hundred against rumors vast
That filled the wild wood's gloom
With all New England's flower of youth,
Fierce for New France's doom.

3.

And the brave old scarce three hundred!
Their's should in truth be fame;
Borne down the savage Richelieu
On what emprise they came!
Your hearts are great enough, O few:
Only your numbers fail!
New France asks more for conquerors,
All glorious though your tale.

4.

It was a brave old battle,
That surged around the fort,
When D'Hosta fell in charging,
And 'twas deadly strife and short;
When in the very quarters
They contested face and hand,
And many a goodly fellow
Crimsoned LaPrairie sand.

5.

And those were brave old orders
The colonel gave to meet
That forest force, with trees entrenched,
Opposing the retreat:
"De Callieres' strength behind us,
And beyond, your Richelieu:
We must go straightforth at them;
There is nothing else to do."

6.

And then the brave old story
Comes of Schuyler and Varennes,*
When "Fight," the British colonel called,
Encouraging his men,
"For the Protestant Religion,
And the honour of our King!"
"Sir, I am here to answer you!"
Varennes cried, forthstepping.

7.

Were those not brave old races?—
Well, here they still abide;
And yours is one or other,
And the second's at your side.
So when you hear your brother say:
"Some loyal deed I'll do,"
Like old Varennes, be ready with:
"I'm here to answer you!"

W. D. LIGHTHALL.

Montreal, June 18, 1888.

*The Battle of Laprairie (August, 1691,) was one of the first collisions of the British and French races in America, and, according to all original accounts, a very brave affair. A colonial force of 266 men, composed about half each of "Christians" and Iroquois, came down Lake Champlain and the Richelieu river in canoes to strike a blow at French Canada. The fort was held by De Callieres and 800 men; but so brisk and sudden was the attack that the colonials were soon in possession of the militia quarter adjoining, where they were attacked; and, after making great slaughter, on hearing the immense disparity of their numbers, they withdrew, "like victors," says Charlevoix (who loved to record a "belle action" on either side), and marched back for their canoes, which they had left guarded on the Richelieu. Varennes, with about 300 men, coming from Chambly, intercepted them, and they were forced to cut through, which they did after a fiercely contested fight of a couple of hours.

*Pronounced "Skyler" and "Varenn."

Lady Stanley is of good Whig stock—a daughter of the late Lord Clarendon, distinguished for his long and important services in the Foreign Office. Her Excellency is highly gifted with mental and physical accomplishments and, as such, will gracefully keep up the traditions of the three ladies who lived before her at Rideau Hall—a countess, a princess and a marchioness.

A MISSISQUOI HOLIDAY.

BY JOHN TALON-LESPERANCE.

I.

I was receiving teller at a bank. Had pretty fair wages and good hours—down at nine, and opening at ten, for business; wicket drawn against customers at three, and off at four. This gave me the remainder of the day. In summer the boon was still greater, for from four o'clock until eight there was light enough to enjoy excursions into the country, by land and water; to the park of Mount Royal, the island of St. Helen's, the shaded lanes of Longueuil, and the bay of Lachine. On my return, I was fresh for the amusements of the evening, whatever they might happen to be. I was always in for a play, an opera or a concert; I hardly ever missed a lecture or a reading, and my Tuesdays and Fridays were generally devoted to the intimate recreation of friends' houses. I belonged to no clubs, having not money enough to spend on luxuries, and I could not afford to go into late hours, as I had been told to make it a rule always to turn up early and ready for my work in the morning.

My name is Owen Hooker. I was born at Fenelon Falls, in a pretty part of Ontario; my early schooling was done there, with the occasional coaching of a clever mother and the keen mentorship of a crippled sister, who was a genius, but, at the age of sixteen, circumstances forced me away from home, and since I have managed to shift for myself.

It was the month of September, and the holiday season was well on. My mates in the bank had nearly all had their turns before me, but coming last, there was the luck of getting a few days more than the others. My plan of travel was soon laid out. Suppose I should visit the English Townships of Quebec? I had often heard that they were the garden of the Province, and that the people there were of the best class of farmers, making money, living well, and educating their children. Of these Townships, chiefly the South-Eastern ones, bordering on the frontiers of Vermont and New Hampshire, I had heard most of Missisquoi. Furthermore, a young man living at Philipsburg, in that township, and who came to town very often, on business with the bank, had invited me out to see him, promising that we should have a good time.

I started out by an early train, choosing to travel by day, in order to see the country, and felt, at the start, that I should be rewarded. The rush through the Victoria bridge was bracing, as the passage from the dark bowels of the earth into the open air and bright sunshine of the summer landscape. The run by rail, from the St. Lawrence to the Richelieu, was over a level plain, studded with French farms, and bounded by a chain of Appalachian spurs. At St. Johns, seated like a queen on the latter river, also called that of the Iroquois, with its barracks, bridges canal locks, and cultured population of mingled English and French, we were detained a while by a change of train, then sped past Iberville, Desrivieres—named after an old Hudson's Bay family,—Stanbridge, and, in good time for breakfast, reached the end of the journey by rail. This interesting spot boasts of three names—St. Armand's, from the tutelary of the parish; Pete Smith, in memory of an ancient settler, who built shops and stores in the hamlet, and Moore's Corners, from the house of one Hiram Moore, which stood at the four cross-roads that became historic ground in the rebellion of 1837. The dwelling is still there, as it was that cold December morning fifty years ago. A square courtyard surrounding the building used to be set with Balm of Gilead trees, but these have been cut down, the more's the pity, and the Moore family have left the village.

A few rods from the tavern, in which I had my morning meal, I was shown the spot where the memorable scene of blood was enacted for which the place is famous. The hamlet itself lies in a quiet valley, with a ridge of hills behind, but my eye was pointed to a particular ridge on the east, looking down sheer on the four roads just men-

tioned. This was the field of battle on the 6th December, 1837. The French insurgents started from Swanton, in Vermont, nine miles from the frontier, with one hundred men, passed Highgate, on the boundary, and pushed forward into Canada. They received reinforcements all the way up, and met with no opposition till they came to Moore's Corners. There they were brought to a halt. As they grounded their arms at the cross-roads, they saw the hills to the left crowned with troops and glistening with musketry. Without loss of time, the engagement began. The Canadians bravely attempted to scale the hill, seeking the shelter of the trees on the sunken roads and the bridge paths. Volley after volley greeted their advance, and, but for the screening they got on the way, they would have been mowed down in great numbers. As it was, the engagement lasted some time without any definite result and might have ended in a hand-to-hand fight, on the brow of the ridge, but the wounding of the insurgent leaders disheartened their followers, who suddenly broke and fled, hotly pursued by the troops charging down the inclined plane, with ringing cheers. On reaching the flat ground, at the four corners, the flying columns took to the woods and thus escaped to the American frontier. The result of the combat, however, was important in that it put an end to all hostile movements in the Richelieu valley and the Eastern Townships for the remainder of the year 1837, and during the whole of the winter of 1837-38.

Among the militia who had borne the brunt of the encounter were the men of Philipsburg—the village to which I was bound. The road betwixt Moore's Corners and Philipsburg is a charming drive, up hill and down dale, through a rich land, thoroughly tilled and held by well-to-do farmers. On the way I stopped at a blue-frame house and met a tall, old man standing on his own grounds, near a barn, a short distance from his dwelling. This was Hamilton Hogle, well known throughout the Townships for the part he took in the battles of 1837, and who then and there told his personal experiences. A little later two or three church spires shot above the trees, the Bay of Missisquoi sprang into sight, like a shield of burnished silver, and a sharp turn of the road led me into the beautiful village of Philipsburg.

A moment later and I had alighted at the inn, when suddenly I heard a voice at my right:

"Why, is that you? Just arrived? You have taken us by surprise."

It was our bank customer, named Thomas Sharpe, and saying this he turned to two young ladies, who must have been in his company, although I did not see them when he first spoke, and introduced them as:

"Miss Greene."

"Miss Suzor."

If I had had any misgivings about coming, a stranger, to Philipsburg, the sight of these two young ladies would have scattered them like mist. Although there was nothing in their demeanour, nor in their dress, different from that of city girls, for instance, I felt at once, and with a comforting assurance, that they were natives of the hamlet and were going to make my holidays a period of rare enjoyment. We have these spontaneous presentiments, sometimes, and shall see whether, in the present instance, mine will come true.

II.

Finishing a little further conference, we parted on the understanding that Sharpe should call for me at the tavern a couple of hours after my luncheon, and when he had despatched his business of the day. The noontide meal helped to buoy my spirits. It was a clean, fresh, wholesome country repast—home-made bread, buckwheat cakes, butter, fish from the bay, eggs, maple syrup, honey, and an ewer of foaming milk. I feasted on these as I should not have done on prepared meats and elaborate pastry, and my relish was edged by the bright thoughts that flitted through my mind. I was picturing the good company that I had fallen into. Sharpe was one of the foremost young men of the place—of good county stock, the owner of fair private means,