

Registered in accordance with the Copyright Act of 1868.

A TALE

OF

THE WAR OF 1757.

BY AUGUSTUS REWARD.

[Written for the Canadian Illustrated News.]

CHAPTER IX.

While our friends have been arranging their plans, the Indians on the other side are still intently watching. To a careless onlooker, no sign of their presence would have been apparent, but behind every convenient shelter was an Indian. Respect for Lightfoot's rifle kept them thus, for whenever any of them sought to leave their hiding place, its dark muzzle would instantly cover them, and they too well knew how fatal was its fire to trifle with the owner's temper. Edwin and the scout had formed a rampart of the dead, and behind its cover they were safe, but whenever they ventured to leave this strange breastwork bullets pattered on all sides. At length darkness spread its mantle over the earth, and then Lightfoot, touching Captain Herbert on the shoulder, let him know that it was time to commence their journey. The scout was the first to leave. He crawled slowly and silently along the ground, and Edwin followed his example, and the two were soon out of rifle shot from the Indians. They were congratulating one another upon their success so far, when flames arose from where the savages lay, evidently kindled with a double object, to indicate to those of their band who had gone round the ravine, where the enemy lay, and to prevent the two whites from attempting to escape in the darkness. Edwin and his companion, although they still continued their progress, were even more wary in their movements. They saw that the fire was a large one, and the scene of their late encounter was soon perfectly visible to the savages, and it was not long before their sharp eyes detected that the dead were the sole tenants of the spot. Fearful yells told Edwin and Lightfoot that their absence was discovered. They could see some of the warriors preparing to take the leap which had been already so fatal to one of their number, but after considering a while, to the great relief of the watchers, they seemed to think it too hazardous. This was not from want of bravery, but rather because not knowing of the descent from the cliffs, they imagined that our hero and his companion would be intercepted by the rest of the band.

After half an hour's walking they arrived at the place where they were to commence their perilous descent. In the day time this would have been difficult, but by night the danger was still greater, as they had to feel for every ledge of rock. In one way, however, the darkness favoured them, for they could not see the terrible steepness of the ravine, nor were they aware how great at times was their danger. Lightfoot had commenced the descent first, and seemed to think more of Captain Herbert's safety than his own, for every now and then Edwin could hear his voice encouraging him, and indicating to him as best he could where to place his foot. To Edwin it seemed as though they would never end their mid-air journey, when suddenly a struggle was heard, succeeded almost immediately by a thud on the ground beneath. Lightfoot had missed his footing, and it was the sound of his body coming in contact with the ground which his companion had heard. Edwin made the best of his way to the bottom of the cliff, where he was greatly relieved by finding that Lightfoot had not been much hurt by his fall, although it was plainly to be seen, from the way he limped, that this accident would somewhat impede their progress.

Morning set in with a heavy rain, that kind of fine rain which almost imperceptibly wets one through. The sky was overcast, and of a dull leaden hue, and no sign of a favourable change was to be seen; and to add to their discomfort hunger was now torturing them.

Continuing their progress Edwin and his companion reached Fort Edward before night-fall, where they were received with delight. Captain Herbert's company especially were overjoyed at his reappearance among them, for they had believed him dead, and he learnt to his horror that word to that effect had been despatched to Albany.

CHAPTER X.

Edwin could not endure the idea that false tidings should reach Florence, and remain long uncontradicted. With the instinct of a lover he had perceived before his departure that Florence deeply loved him, and he was fearful of the effect which the news might have upon her. He therefore deemed it advisable to ask the commander of the fort for his discharge, which he obtained without diffi-

culty, as there did not appear to be further need of his services, Montcalm having retired to Crown Point, and Teconderago and the British general not feeling justified in advancing upon the enemy. Having resigned his command, his next care was to look for a companion who would willingly brave the dangers of the wilderness with him, and his thoughts naturally reverted to the faithful Lightfoot, who acceded to his request, although still suffering from the effects of his fall.

On a lovely autumnal morning the two friends started on their long journey. The leaves of the trees had been touched by an early frost, which had caused them to assume those beautiful and varied tints so peculiar to Canadian scenery. The nights at this season of the year are always chilly, and our travellers had taken the precaution of carrying with them a thick blanket each. In high spirits they commenced their journey, Edwin because he fondly believed that before long he would be able to console Florence for the grief which he doubted not she would feel upon receiving the intelligence of his supposed death, Lightfoot because he was glad to be of service to one of whose confidence he had received undoubted proof. They had not travelled far when the scout said:

"It would be far better for us, and we should reach Albany much sooner, if we travel by water. Before we started I thought of this, and I remember the place where I concealed a canoe on my way to meet your detachment this spring, and which in another day we shall reach."

Arrived at the place spoken of by Lightfoot, they found the canoe exactly as he had left it, and soon they were afloat upon the Hudson. Relieved of the weight of their guns and blankets, they made rapid way in their little craft, the management of which they both thoroughly understood. To recount the progress made each day would be wearisome and monotonous; suffice it to say, nothing special occurred to retard them. At night they landed, and finding a suitable place made a fire, and after partaking of their simple meal, one watched while the other slept, for though they knew of no lurking enemies, yet were they careful lest when least expected some wandering Indians might attack them. Leaving Edwin and Lightfoot thus travelling, we shall now seek the home of our heroine.

CHAPTER XI.

Is the library which we once before had occasion to visit, Florence and her father were seated. From the appearance of both it was evident that the sad news of Edwin's death had already reached them. Florence was dressed in deep mourning; her lovely complexion was sadly altered, and her eyes, although their beauty could not be dimmed, yet had lost much of their vivacity and brightness. It was but too plain that deep grief was afflicting her, grief which would not only last for days, but might be the means, unless allayed, of bringing the lovely girl to an untimely grave. Her father was striving to console his beloved child by telling her that although the news appeared true, yet looking at the many uncertainties of Indian warfare, Edwin might have escaped into the woods, or was perhaps now a captive of the Indians. These attempts at consolation seemed at times to soothe the young girl, at other moments however they had a contrary effect.

"Oh, father, what is the use of trying to hide the truth from me; did not the cruel letter say that when last Edwin was seen he was bravely fighting against overwhelming numbers, and since then nothing has been heard of him. Oh that I had never consented to his leaving his home; if I had not done so he would not have gone! Alas! he is now lying cold and dead on the battle-field, the prey of wild beasts, or still worse, desecrated by the fiends in human shape who caused his death."

The horrors which Florence had conjured up were too much for her; all strength seemed to desert her, and no longer able to conquer or conceal her emotion, she wept long and bitterly. Her father hoped this natural outburst of grief might relieve the weight of sorrow which oppressed the heart of his gentle daughter, and for a time forbore all remonstrance. With every expression of deep affection, he strove to soothe and console his only and beloved child. Reminding her how injurious such excessive grief must prove, he endeavoured to impart to her mind resignation and calmness.

"Florence, my child," he said, "if Edwin is taken from this world of trial and suffering, he is not lost, but gone before, and doubtless his spirit will be continually watching over his beloved one. Besides, has my Florence no one left on whom to bestow some affection? Does not her father still live? and do you not feel any love for him who so deeply sympathises with your grief, and still hopes to see it relieved? We may yet again even in this life see our Edwin. Who knows but at this moment he is living, but held captive by the Indian foe. Let us not cease in our prayers, nor yet give up hope that he will ere long return to gladden our hearts."

In some measure consoled by her dear

father's words, Florence was at length induced to retire to her room, but not to sleep, for grief and anxiety deprived her for many long hours of that "friend of woe." The old man still sat up, and when his daughter left the apartment, his features plainly gave evidence of the anxiety he felt on her account, and sinking on his knees he prayed earnestly to One who, when earnestly asked, never fails to accord that which we demand, provided it be for our good. For some time the father remained in humble supplication for his darling child, and then with a more hopeful countenance he arose and prepared for rest. Our old friend, Patrick, accompanied the judge to his room. Even on this worthy the melancholy tidings which had brought grief to the judge and his daughter had produced a sad, though almost ludicrous effect. For in spite of his really feeling, and trying to appear grave as befitted the occasion, the merriment natural to his lighthearted nature was continually struggling to shew itself in defiance of his sense of propriety, and the sincere sympathy he felt for the sorrow of his young mistress and his good and kind master.

And now the house was still, and all slept save Florence, who until the near approach of morn sought in vain for "a tired nature's sweet restorer." Little did she think, that one of two forms, now passing and repassing in front of their house, was that of Edwin. The two travellers had come from a long distance, and were much fatigued. To the solitary watchman on his midnight beat, their movements seemed, to say the least, suspicious. Both were armed, he noticed, and one was pointing out to the other the house of Judge Temple. In this life how often are actions, the most innocent and harmless, misconstrued. To the watchman these two men appeared as burglars, bent upon entering the Judge's house, while in reality they were peaceable men, and one was merely showing the house to the other, so that he might be able to return there to in the morning with a message. To the relief of the policeman, they continued on their way, but he resolved to follow them, satisfied they were bent upon some mischief. He could not hear their conversation, for it was conducted in a low tone, and this fact increased the man's suspicion. At length, those he was following stopped opposite the door of Mr. Herbert's house, one of the wealthiest citizens of Albany. Now the watchman was sure the burglars were about to commence operations, he therefore went to procure assistance, for he felt that alone he was unequal to the task of encountering two armed men. When he returned with assistance, the two men were not to be seen; lights were moving through the house, in front of which he had left them. Thinking that robbery, and perhaps murder was taking place, the police made their way to the door, and commenced ringing violently. They soon learned who the two were, whose movements had caused such vain alarm. To their relief they were told that Mr. Herbert's son, whom everyone had believed dead, had returned in safety from the wars, and that he was accompanied by a man who had acted as his guide. The guardians of the law were given some refreshment, and thanked for their trouble, which had happily proved so unnecessary; they then departed but barely convinced that they had not been dreaming.

CHAPTER XII.

The morning after the return of Edwin Herbert, Florence was so ill that she could scarcely leave her room, but not wishing to cause her father anxiety on her account, she dressed, and went about the house as usual. Scarcely had they partaken of their breakfast, for which Florence had displayed but slight appetite, when Patrick announced the arrival of a person who wished to speak to Judge Temple in private. Patrick received permission to show the stranger to the study. Thither the Judge followed, after telling Florence he would soon return to her. Feeling, as he entered the study, not a little anxious as to the cause of a visit at such an unusual hour, he now saw before him a man of about forty years of age, dressed as a trapper; and requesting his visitor to be seated, Judge Temple enquired what was the business about which he desired to speak to him, Lightfoot replied:

"I suppose, sir, you are Judge Temple? If so, I have come from Capt. Herbert to tell you that although said to have been slain on the battle-field, he in reality made his escape from the Indians who had taken him prisoner, and upon reaching home found his father mourning for him. Thinking you would be glad to hear of his safe return, he sent me to tell this news. These glad tidings filled the heart of the affectionate father with happiness. Neither did he forget the gratitude due to the great Healer and Answerer of prayer, when breathed in humility and faith. Scarcely could he restrain his joy, and to the amazement of the scout, the old man excitedly walked up and down the room, exclaiming:

"Oh, you don't know how you gladden my heart by this happy intelligence; you have indeed changed my sorrow to joy. But I was forgetting,—you have not told me your name; do let me know it, that I may ever remember it with gratitude for the consolation you have imparted."

"My name is Lightfoot, sir, and I am a scout in the British service. I have travelled with Captain Herbert from Fort Edward, and we only arrived here last night."

"Oh!" continued the Judge, delightedly, "while I impart this joyful intelligence to you, my worthy friend, pardon my absence, and if you will wait, I shall return immediately."

But Lightfoot, now that his message was delivered, felt himself in the way, and told Judge Temple he would now return to Capt. Herbert. Patrick, therefore, showed the visitor to the door, wondering as he did so what kind of a man he was, for his strange dress had excited the Irishman's curiosity.

On returning to the breakfast room, the Judge found Florence seated pensively near the table. On perceiving her father's approach she strove to assume a cheerful manner, and, more from a desire of having something to say than anything else, she asked her father who the visitor was who had called so early.

"The visitor, Florence," returned the Judge, "is one who has come a long distance, in fact, he comes from Fort Edward, and he tells me that Edwin is supposed to have escaped into the woods, may that he has escaped, for our visitor has been with him, since the date of the massacre."

As this joyous intelligence was heard by Florence, her complexion changed alternately to the deepest crimson, and then to the paleness of marble. In fact the good news was so unexpected, after the grief she had experienced, that it almost overpowered her. And when by eager questioning she ascertained the whole truth from her father, to his alarm she suddenly swooned, and it was some time before he could bring her to herself. Even when she did revive she was so weak that they had to help her to her room where indisposition kept her for a time, notwithstanding her eager anxiety once more to assure herself by the evidence of her own eyes, of the return of one she so fondly loved.

Our readers can well imagine the happiness of Florence and her lover, whose affection seemed intensified by the trials and anxieties of absence. Hours seemed as minutes to the fond girl, who had so lately believed him to be no more, the friend of her childhood, and the lover of her youth.

A few weeks after Edwin's return Mr. Herbert's house one evening was brilliantly illuminated, and from the stir among the domestics, it was evident some gaiety was approaching. Mr. Herbert was giving a grand ball to celebrate the safe arrival of his son, to which all the *élite* of Albany and its vicinity for many miles round were invited, and gladly came to offer their congratulations on an event at once so happy and so unexpected. Dancing commenced, and the ball is at its height. Every type of loveliness had here its representative. But among all the beauty so prodigally displayed none exceeded that of Florence. Her dress was white, and in exquisite taste, and displayed to perfection the contour of her beautiful figure. In her perfect black hair she wore a sprig of red jessamine, which contrasted well with her dark locks. Edwin also looked well and radiant with the joy which filled his heart.

Not many months after this Florence and Edwin were united, and in their new home, the happiness of our old friend the faithful Patrick was not forgotten, and it was the pleasure of his life to minister to their comforts and wants.

Years after his marriage, Edwin received a letter from a friend of his who was fighting on the frontier, and among its contents was the following:

"One day a fine powerful-looking man, somewhat aged, was brought into our post mortally wounded, who repeatedly mentioned your name with his dying breath, and requested he might be buried near a certain ravine which he minutely described. On conveying his body to the place indicated, two skeletons were found just where Lightfoot (for such he called himself) wished to be buried. From their appearance it was evident they had lain there for years, exposed to the storms of winter and heat of summer. There we buried him. Before his death he requested that his rifle, the article he seemed most on earth to prize, might be sent to you, as he said he 'knew you would take care of it.'"

By this intelligence of the fate of the good and faithful Lightfoot Edwin was deeply moved, and when not long after he received the rifle, which at one time had done such good service in the scout's hands, in protecting them from the Indians, he placed it in a conspicuous position in his room, and often did it recall to him the memory of the faithful Lightfoot, and his strange life.

In 1775, when the American revolutionary war broke out, Edwin was found fighting under the flag of old England, and when the country passed from under British rule, Edwin's loyal feelings would not allow him to remain in the land of his birth. He and his family, with many others, entered Canadian territory, and his descendants at this time are no doubt to be found on the soil of the New Dominion of Canada.

THE END.