

taking a cracker and cup of coffee, started after day break. To have left earlier would have aroused suspicion. Her first difficulty was the American advanced sentry. He was hard to deal with, but she pointed to her own farm buildings a little in advance of his post, insisted that she was going for milk ; told him he could watch her, and was allowed to pass on. She did milk a cow, which was very *contrary*, and would persist in moving onwards to the edge of the opposite bushes, into which both she and the cow disappeared. Once out of sight, she pushed on rapidly. She knew the way for miles, but fear rose within her, in despite of herself, and what "scared" her most was the distant cry of the wolf,—they were abundant in those days ; and twice she encountered a rattlesnake,—they are not unfrequent even now. She did not care much for them, as she knew they would run from a stick or a stone, and they did not wait for any such exorcism. At length she reached a brook. It was very hot, and the water refreshed her, but she had some difficulty in crossing. At last she found a log, and shortly after got to the mill. The miller's wife was an old friend, and tried to dissuade her from going on. Spoke of the danger, spoke of her children ; the last was a sore trial, for she was weary and thoughtful, but the thing had to be done, so she was resolute, and having rested and refreshed, proceeded on. Her next trouble was the British outlying sentry, but she soon re-assured him and he sent her on, with a kind word, warning her to beware of the Indians. This "scared" her again, but she was scared still more, when the cracking of the dead branches under her footsteps roused from their cover a party of red skins. The chief, who first sprang to his feet, confronted her, and demanded, "Woman ! what you want ?" the others yelled "awful." The chief silenced them with his hand. She told him, at once, that she wanted to see Fitzgibbon, and why. "Ah," said the Indian, "me go with you," and with a few words to his people, who remained, he accompanied her to Fitzgibbon's

quarters, which she reached about nine on the evening of the 23rd. A few words sufficed to satisfy him. He sent off, forthwith, to his Major de Haren, in the rear and made his own preparations. She found friends in a farm house near, for in those days every body knew every body. She slept "right off," for she had journeyed on foot twenty miles, and safely, God be praised.

In the meantime the American expedition had silently assembled at Fort George, and within a few hours rapidly followed on her footsteps. At twelve of a fine night in June, they had taken up their line of march on St. David's, and at daybreak came upon Kerr and his Indians, already on their guard, and keenly expectant. They numbered about thirty warriors, Mohawks, chiefly of the Grand River ; but Kerr saw, at a glance, the insufficiency of his force to resist, and had recourse to Indian tactics, to retard and harass the enemy and to spread alarm to remote posts. He threw himself therefore, at once, on the rear and flank of the Americans, and opened a desultory fire.

The Americans, throwing out sharpshooters in reply, still pressed forwards, but the Indians were neither to be repulsed nor shaken off. The track through the forest was narrow and broken. The guns and store waggons defiled slowly to the front. The yells and the rifles of the savages rang in the rear. A horror of the war-whoop hung then on the national conscience, and sensational stories, for the most part, had the usual effect of such stimulants on nerve and brain.

Rcerstler and his men had emerged from the forest into an open space, a clearing close by the present village of Thorold. Their guns, waggons, and other encumbrances, had reached a hollow in the road, overhung by a bank clad with beeches. This hollow forms now a basin of the Welland Canal. The spot, which then rang with the outcries of the combatants, now resounds with the hum of industry, and the working chaunt of the sailor.,,

From this point of view, at the present day, to the right and left, may be seen for miles—at the same season of the year—an uninterrupted line of lake craft—ships and brigs, brigantines and schooners, steamers and propellers—bearing testimony to the genius and perseverance of another of the men of 1812, who within the last few months has gone to his rest. Hamilton Merritt, U. E. L., commanded in his youth a corps of cavalry, distinguished in every fray on the Niagara frontier. In mature years he designed the Welland Canal, which unites Lake Erie with Lake Ontario. By dint of resolution he surmounted the prejudices and the difficulties which surrounded the undertaking; died at a good old age, full of such honour as Canada can confer; and will live in the gratitude of future generations.

Si monumentum requiris, circumspice f

It is a curious commentary on the proverbial versatility of the popular breeze, that the promoters and advocates of the Welland Canal were punished by their constituents for the part they took in advancing this great design, and at the next election lost their seats in parliament. Colonel John Clarke, of St. Catharines, one of those to whom this record owes much, relates with pride that he was honoured by this penalty. A few years—the progress of the enterprise, and the surprising increase of prosperity to which it gave rise, brought about the usual reaction, and the distinguished member was restored to his seat by triumphant acclamation.*

In the hollow, below the beech ridge, where the war-whoop of the Indian has now given place to the shriek of the steam-whistle,

* Colonel John Clarke was one of the early pioneers of the Niagara District. He died in 1862 at St. Catharines, C. W., at an advanced age. His surviving daughter is the wife of William McGiverin, Esq., M.P.P.

Boerstler found a fresh foe. From the wood above, on the hill-side, came the ring of the militia musket; and the echoes of the forest multiplied the reports and the fears they created.

Old Isaac Kelly, born and *raised* on 48 Thorold, a septuagenarian, hale and hearty, who still lives not a mile from the spot, tells how, when he was a boy of 18, and was in the act of "hitching up" his horses for the plough, he heard the firing in the wood, and the outcries of the Indians; how he ran to his two brothers, both a-field; how the three got their muskets—they were all militiamen—home, to put in a crop; how, led by the sounds, they crossed the country to the beech grove, meeting eight or ten more by the way, suddenly roused, like themselves; how, from behind the trees, they opened fire on the American train, and on the guns, which were then unlimbering, to the rear; and how the Americans, more worried and bothered than hurt, changed their position, and took up ground in David Millar's apple orchard.

In the meantime, Fitzgibbon had taken rapid measures. Major de Haren, of his regiment, was at some distance in the rear, with three companies, cantoned near where St. Catherines now stands. An estafette, borne by James Cummings of Chippewa, one of the still surviving veterans of that day, had put this force in motion. Fitzgibbon himself was under arms, and on the way, attracted by the firing.

Suddenly he came upon the head of the enemy's column, and found all confusion. The men were scared out of their senses. The officer in command had lost his head. Fitzgibbon made the most imposing display possible of his 30 men; and advanced at once with a white handkerchief. He found Boerstler ready for a parley. Fitzgibbon stated who he was—his rank; that he commanded a detachment of British troops; that his commanding officer, de Haren, with a large reinforcement, was close by; and by a judicious disposition of his men, and some passing allusion to

his scarecrow Indiana—like Robinson Crusoe, when he outmanoeuvred the mutineers—he magnified his numbers in the imagination of his foe.

Beerstler was in a "fix." The Indians yelled horridly ; the militia-men fired without compunction ; the red coats in front barred the way ; a large reinforcement was in their rear—he was, in fact, surrounded and like wild beasts driven into an African corral ; he and his men were bewildered by sounds and sights of fear. He took but short time to deliberate. He surrendered at once—himself and his whole force.

The surrender was embarrassing. Fitzgibbon was, in fact, nearly caught by his *civil* captives. He did not dare show his weakness. He knew not the number of the Indians ; but he did know that the militia force was scant indeed. "Why, sir," says Isaac Kelly, **when he save** in, we did not know what to do with him : it was like catching the elephant!"

Fitzgibbon had presence of mind equal to the emergency. The American officers were called together, and a capitulation framed and penned. In the meantime de Haren hastened on, and scarcely was the capitulation signed, when he came up with 200 bayonets at his back.

The American force, which surrendered, consisted of 542 men, two field guns and ammunition waggons, and the colours of the 14th United States regiment.

The heroine of this achievement, under Providence, was Mary Secord, whose name is inseparable from the story.* When the

"I do hereby certify that Mrs. Secord, the wife of James Secord of Chippewa, Esquire, did, in the month of June, 1813, walk from her house in the village of St. David's to Decau's house, in Thorold, by a circuitous route of about 20 miles, partly, through the woods, to acquaint me that the enemy intended to attempt, by surprise, to capture a detachment of the 49th Regt, then under my command, she having obtained such knowledge from good

Prince of Wales was at Niagara, he saw the old lady, and from her own lips heard the tale ; and learning, subsequently, that her fortune did not equal her fame, he sent her, most delicately and most gracefully, the sum of one hundred guineas. God bless him for *that*, is the aspiration of every honest Canadian heart. He is his mother's own son.

The chief actor, on this 24th day of June, 1813, Colonel James Fitzgibbon, still lives at the advanced age of eighty-three ; and demands some further notice.

He was the son of a farmer—had the advantage of a little early education, and acquired a fondness for reading. His passion for arms was irresistible. At seventeen years of age he enlisted ; and the same day, 25th Oct. 1798, was made a sergeant. At the age of twenty-one he was appointed Sergeant-Major.* He served in Ireland, and before Copenhagen, where the 49th acted as marines. He was appointed to an ensigncy and adjutantcy, and came to Canada. In 1809 he succeeded to a lieutenancy ; and resigned the adjutancy to command a small detachment in the field. His exploits at the Beaver Dam gave him his company. He thus rose by dint of meritorious service, at a time when commissions and

authority, as the event proved. Mrs. Secord was a person of slight and delicate frame, and made the effort in weather excessively warm ; and I dreaded, at the time, that she must suffer in health in consequence of fatigue and anxiety, she having been exposed to danger from the enemy, through whose line of communication she had to pass. The attempt was made on my detachment by the enemy ; and his detachment, consisting of upwards of 500 men, and a field-piece, and 50 dragoons, were captured in consequence. I write this certificate in a moment of much hurry and from memory, and it is therefore thus brief.

(Signed,) JAMES FITZGIBBON,

Formerly Lieut. 49th Regt."

Given by Auchinleck, p. 1/5,..but MrS, Secord possesses the original.,pec.141•

* Morgan's Celebrated Canadians, p. 193.

promotion were not so freely given to deserving men as they are now. He was noted for his soldierly aspect, for shrewd wit, and for pluck which would take no denial. On this, and on all other occasions, during the war, Fitzgibbon made his mark. He was once authorized to raise an independent company — a corps of *enfants perdus*—fighting being looked upon as his especial privilege. It was to be composed from the line regulars. *All* volunteered ; and the *embarras du choix* was the difficulty of the organization.*

At the close of the war he settled in Canada ; and filled many offices of honour and emolument, under the government. His last appointment was that of Clerk to the Legislative Council. He retired on a pension, and returned to his native land, where, in just appreciation of his services, he was made a Military Knight of Windsor. The career of Fitzgibbon is the counterpart of numberless others in Canada. Soldiers, from the ranks, stud and embellish, and enrich the soil; their sons are the most honoured in the land; the exertions of the fathers have become the inheritance of the children ; and their success is an example of what the honest, earnest British soldier, true to himself and his Queen, may achieve, and add, thereby, to the long list of useful citizens and good men who have " risen from the ranks " of their incomparable service.f

It may be pleasing to his surviving contemporaries—it may be profitable to Canadians generally—to know something of the haven the old soldier came to. It is natural that men in these remote regions should be curious about the " Military Knights of Windsor." The enquiry is often made. This institution is as old

* A " Green 'Un" (presumed to be Judge Jarvis), given by Auchinlech, p. 178.

f Since the above was written, our old friend has gone to his rest. An English paper briefly announces "on the 12th Dec. 1863, at his residence in the Lower Ward, Windsor Castle, at the advanced age of 83 years, Colonel James Fitzgibbon."

as that of the Knights of the Garter—indeed it is one year older—for it was founded by King Edward the Third, in the twenty-second year of his reign. The Order of the Garter was created in the next year, A.D. 1349 ; and was inaugurated on St. George's day, 23rd April, at Windsor Castle, as declared by the Black Book, or Statutes of the Order, " for the reward of virtue and the improvement of military valour." The same chivalrous spirit inspired the inferior order of the Military Knights. In the days when a complete lance consisted of the panoplied knight and his five men-at-arms ; in the days of *esquires* and *bas chevaliers*, (now dumped into " bachelor,") endowments were made by monarchs and mighty men for the support of retainers, whose age, whose services, and whose wounds demanded that provision which their own means could not supply. Such are British institutions. "*Date obolum Belisario*," was the doctrine of the mongrel descendants of republican Rome. The Order of the Military Knights of Windsor was instituted in 1348, by our Edward the Third, for the support of twenty-four worn soldiers, " who had distinguished themselves in the wars, and had afterwards been reduced to straits." On death, or vacancy, the appointments are supplied by the crown. The mailed warrior has been succeeded by the veteran of modern days. In unchangeable England, the change is only one of costume. Each member enjoys a small annual stipend, and the advantage of a residence in the Towers of the Lower Ward, and in the connecting curtains, which, in modern parlance, might be called casemates. These residences are peculiarly suited to old soldiers with small means. The only service required, is the attendance of a certain number daily, at the religious offices in St. George's Chapel, where they occupy stalls at the feet of the Knights of the Garter, wearing long, dark blue cloaks, with a scarlet collar, and a Maltese

• Windsor and Eton, by Edw. Jesse, 1841, p. 44.

cross, of like colour, on the left shoulder. Here, amid the sights and sounds of modern warfare (for the Guards of the Sovereign parade daily before their windows) ; surrounded by all the associations of feudal grandeur, with the corbeills and machicolations of the Norman Conqueror above them ; under shadow of that massive keep--the old Round Tower—from whence floats daily the royal standard of England ; with the quaint carvings and florid tracery of St. George's Chapel before their eyes, exists still a noble institution of olden days, well worthy of the imitation of younger countries, more abundant in resources applicable to such endowments.

And lo, at the moment, as if before the wand of an enchanter, rises, by slow degrees, struggling with the mists of memory, a vision of the past. Forty years and more a-gone, when life was young and fresh as morn,

the dewy morn,
With breath all incense and with cheek all bloom,

we can well recall now the figure of an aged man, who daily led by one who loved him well, took his seat in a sunny nook of the wall, hard by the Winchester Tower, on that noble terrace which commands the finest view in all England. Alas ! to him, the winding river, and the. Brocas clump, and the spire of Clewer ; or nearer still, the busy town, and the bridge, and the angler on the end of the " Cobler," tussling with some reluctant barbel ; or the shadowy Slopes below him, or the antlered deer beyond.; or further. still,

Those distant spires, those antique towers,
Which crown the watery glade,

Eton in all its monastic pride—was but as a sealed book, a picture turned to the wall. For, at the storming of Fort Erie, some wild Indian fortress, away in the back woods of Canada, years before, he had lost his precious sight, blasted by an exploding magazine,—

here, in the glad sunshine, day after day, did the old soldier love to sit and tell of savage sights, and scenes of fiery fight "mid antres vast and deserts idle," while we boys—we were two then—listened with gaping delight to the fine veteran, who " raising his sightless balls to heaven," poured forth the gratitude of his heart to his God and to his king, gathering from the fulness of that gratitude, light and gladness, When all else was dark around him.

Ah happy hills I ah I pleasing shades I
Ahl fields beloved in vain!
Where once my careless childhood strayed,
A stranger yet to pain.

Some bold adventurers disdain
The limits of their little reign,
And unknown regions dare descry.
Still, as they run they look behind ;
They hear a voice in every wind.

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CHAPTER XV.

General de Rottenburg succeeds General Vincent—Dearborn retires—Boyd in command at Fort George—American Frontier exposed to attack—Colonels Bishopp and Clark—Clark's career—Hazardous and successful foray on Fort Schlosser—Bishopp, emulous of gallant deeds, attacks Black Rock—Black Reek, now and then—Bishopp Defeats the enemy—Captures the place—General Porter rallies the Americans—The British attacked in turn—Bishopp wounded to death—His worthy career in Europe and Canada—Influence over the Volunteers—The Americans enlist the Indians—Lake Ontario—Commodore Chauncey attacks Burlington Heights—Fails—Again sacks York. Sir James Yeo provokes the Commodore out of Niagara—Two American schooners foundered—Two taken—More expected from Yeo very inconsiderately—Yeo did his duty thoughtfully and well—From Ontario to Lake Champlain—Escapade at Gore Creek on the St. Lawrence—Death of Capt. Milne—Supplies how furnished—How transported in winter and summer—Value of the Commissariat—Sir William Robinson—Commissaries in Canada—Isaac Winslow Clarke—His career—Bateaux Brigades.

Shortly after the affair of the Beaver Dam, and early in July, Major General de Rottenburg succeeded Major General Sheaffe as Lieut.-Governor of the Upper Province ; and as such took the command of the troops from the hands of Major General Vincent. About the same time General Dearborn, harassed in mind and body, withdrew from the command of the American army ; and the defence of Fort George and Fort Niagara, and of so much Canadian ground as the American soldier stood on, devolved on General Boyd.*

An American army of 4000 men was in fact cooped up within the lines of Fort George, on the British side of the river, constantly on the *qui vivo*, a mass of dissatisfied, harassed men, difficult and

costly to feed and supply, and cut off from their own shores by the River Niagara. As has been before said, they held but a selvage of the coast, and were unsafe beyond their advanced sentries; the upper portion of the frontier, on the river, was occupied by the British, and the impolitic concentration of troops below, denuded the coast above, and invited incursion. From the Falls of Niagara up to the village of Buffalo, the, then, line of defence was open to attack by small parties, who could select their point of landing, and who were handled by enterprising officers. Chance had thrown together on the frontier two such men, congenial spirits, Lieut.-Colonel Bishopp, of the British Army, and Lieut.-Colonel Thomas Clark, of the 2nd Lincoln militia. Clark, a Scotchman by birth, was an Indian trader, and forwarder of goods to the western hunting grounds, a member of the firm of Street & Clark. The Indian trader is a soldier half made. The conductor of a brigade of boats into the Indian territory must be able to command men. In lawless and remote regions that command is only yielded to personal character. Like the baron of feudal days, the leader to be obeyed, must possess strength, must display prowess, must show that he has nerve as well as brain ; and yet the highest qualities of brain are taxed to counteract rival traders, and defeat the deadly wiles of the capricious savage. Promptitude, watchfulness, patience, of cold, fatigue and hunger, foresight and forethought qualities essential to the success of an Indian trader—constitute an amalgam which moulds the soldier. From the first outbreak of the war, Clark was foremost in frontier fray. He had acquired the confidence of his men, and obtained the cordial co-operation of those who, like Bishopp, understood volunteers, and could appreciate the merit of the extemporaneous soldier. On the night of the 4th July, while the Americans were celebrating the anniversary of their independence, Clark, who had noted their weakness or their improvidence, collected about 40 of his militia, and crossed the river from

* James, Vol. I, p. 218.