

CHAPTER IV.

IN the autumn of 1801, the regiment was moved from Colchester to Chelmsford, and passed the winter in peace and comfort.

FitzGibbon was pay-sergeant of the grenadier company. He was not a good accountant, and when making out his pay sheet for February, found himself deficient to the amount of nearly £2. He was horror-stricken at this discovery, knowing he had not expended it upon himself, yet dreading the consequences. A recent occurrence in the regiment, of a squad sergeant being tried and reduced to the ranks for the deficiency of one shilling, roused his fears lest the greater deficit should be punished with the lash, and " he would take his own life rather than endure the degradation of stripping in the front of the regiment to be flogged."

Under the pressure of this fear, FitzGibbon did what in after years he said was " no doubt due to my early reading of such romances as the ' History of the White Knight,' of Parismus and Parismenus,' ' The ven Champions of Christendom,' etc., I decided upon applying to the Commander-in-Chief for protection.

" I asked for and obtained a pass for three days to go to London on pretended business. I walked up to

town, and found my way to the Anchor and Vines tavern, close to the Horse Guards, and though tired, at once wrote a letter to the Duke of York, stating the case to him and praying of him to enable me to replace the money so that my colonel might not know of the deficiency ; for, as I looked upon him as the father of the regiment, I dreaded the forfeiture of his good opinion more than any other consequence which might follow.

" On the following morning, I gave my letter in at the door to the orderly on duty. With an anxiety I cannot describe, I walked before that door till night fell, then in despair returned to my tavern. In the course of my romantic reading, I had learned how many were the evil influences surrounding courts and princes, and supposed my letter had been withheld—that probably such letters from people in humble circumstances were never presented to great men. I therefore wrote another letter, adverting to the one delivered at the office door, and again stating my case as before.

" The second morning I took my stand at the door before the hour of opening, and. asked the sentry to point out the Duke of York to me.

" The Duke soon approached. He was in plain clothes and walking. I stepped up to him, saluted him, and held out the letter. He took it, looked at me from head to foot, and passed in without speaking.

" After the lapse of a few, to me most anxious, minutes, I was called, shown into a waiting-room up-

stairs and told that Colonel Brownrigg would see me. He came in presently with my two letters in his hand. He asked if I had written them. I answered, 'Yes.' Upon which he said, 'The Duke can do nothing in this matter before referring to your colonel.'

" 'But it is to avoid that I have made this application.'

" 'In all cases of this kind,' he replied, 'nothing can be done before referring to the Commanding Officer.' Then seeing my agitation, he added, 'The Duke is not displeased with you. Return to your regiment and you will not be treated harshly.' I retired, and it being too late in the day to return to Chelmsford, I went back to my tavern.

" Never having been in a theatre, and learning that I might go into the gallery at Drury Lane at half price, I went, and saw John Kemble and Mrs. Siddons in the characters of Jaffier and Belvidera. On leaving the heated atmosphere of the theatre I found it raining, and was pretty well drenched before I reached my room. This, following the excitement of the two previous days, brought on a bad feverish cold, and I was unable to rise in the morning.

" As my leave expired that day I wrote a note to the agents of the regiment, Messrs. Ross and Ogilvy, to report my illness, and begged of them to forward it to the regiment at Chelmsford. In the course of the afternoon the servant came to my room and told me that two gentlemen were below desiring to see me.

" Startled at this announcement I desired them to

be shown up, when to my dismay I walked the colonel and another officer of my regiment.

" 'Well, young man, what's the matter with you ?'

" I told him, a cold.'

" 'Well,' he said, 'take care of yourself this night and return to the regiment to-morrow.' Adding, 'Perhaps your money is all spent,' he laid a half guinea on the table beside me with the words, 'there is enough to take you home.'

" This kindness so affected me that I could hardly say, 'If you knew what brought me here, you would not be so kind to me.'

" 'I know all about it. Get well and go back to the regiment.'

" It so happened that the colonel had come up to town that morning, and was at the agents' when my note was received. He then went to the Commander-in-Chief's where my letters were put into his hands, when he came on to my room. Later in the evening the colonel's servant came to see me. He was a private servant, not a soldier, and a very intelligent man.

'What's this that you've been doing at the Horse Guards,' he began.

" 'What I would gladly conceal from the world,' I replied.

" Well, I know something about it, for while attending at table at the colonel's brother's house to-day, I overheard a good deal of what the colonel said of you to the company. It seems you have been

writing letters to the Duke of York about some difficulty you have got yourself into, and mentioned the colonel in a way that pleased him and his brother. He said that when the Duke gave him your letters he recommended you to him, saying that he (the Duke) would not forget you. Then the colonel added, ' If the Duke forgets him I will not.' "

Upon his return to the regiment, FitzGibbon's accounts were examined and an error of £1 15s. erroneously entered against himself, discovered—his limited knowledge of arithmetic and book-keeping being accountable for the supposed deficiency.

The 49th, as indeed all the regiments of the line, were at that time in a very inferior state of discipline in regard to drill and field exercises. Sir John Moore's new code of drill was being generally introduced, and FitzGibbon's training under the drill-sergeant in Ireland, as well as his practical knowledge gained in yeomanry , corps, was of great value to him and his company.

In April, he was at Uxbridge recruiting from the militia just then disbanded.

In June, the 49th was sent to Quebec. FitzGibbon, in **order** to take advantage of the long voyage and comparative release from duty, to study, provided himself with books upon military tactics and field exercises. Lying in the boat which hung over the stern of the vessel, he made himself master of every detail contained in the " Rules and Regulations for the Field Exercises of His Majesty's Forces."

Such unusual application was not unnoticed by the colonel, whose attention had been already so favorably drawn to the young sergeant, and upon arrival in Quebec the sergeant-major was promoted to be quartermaster-sergeant, and the sergeant-major's sash given to FitzGibbon, over the heads of the forty older sergeants in the regiment.

In September, 1803, Lieutenant Lewis resigned the adjutancy but not the lieutenancy, and though Colonel Brock recommended FitzGibbon for the vacant adjutancy, there was no available lieutenancy for over two years, and he could only act as adjutant until 1806, when Colonel Brock obtained an ensign's commission for his " favorite sergeant-major," as FitzGibbon was known in the regiment, from the Duke of York, who had not forgotten the lad and his romantic application for his protection, and in December of the same year he succeeded to the adjutancy.

In September, 1802, his company was sent to Montreal, and in the following summer moved on to York.

During these first years in Canada, there are many stories told of the sergeant-major. Desertions from the regiments stationed in Canada to the United States were frequent, but it is recorded of Colonel Brock that he only lost one man during the three years of his personal command. He owed this to his popularity and personal influence with his men, and to the vigilance of his sergeant-major.

I FitzGibbon always protested against the use of the " cat " for trifling offences, arguing that it degraded a man not only in the eyes of his comrades but in his own ; that the sense of shame such punishment left in a man's consciousness pointed invisible fingers of contempt at him and robbed him ' of the courage necessary to face an enemy, as well as of the love for his officers which would carry him to the cannon's mouth with unflinching devotion.

The invariable kindness with which Lieut.-Colonel Brock, although a strict officer in enforcing duty, treated his men, was repaid by their devotion to him. In several of his letters he speaks of the ingenuity of the inducements held out by the Americans to the privates in the regiments at the frontier to desert, and of the necessity of great watchfulness on the part of his officers to defeat them.

Soon after their arrival at York, the sergeant of the guard informed the sergeant-major that three of his men were missing, and that a boat had been taken from a shed in charge of one of his sentries, who had also disappeared. Although at midnight, FitzGibbon reported the circumstance to the 'Colonel, who ordered him to man a bateau with a sergeant and twelve privates.

The roll was called in the barrack-rooms, when three other men, as well as a corporal of the 41st, who had been left at York as an artificer, were found to be missing.

At half-past twelve the colonel embarked, taking

FitzGibbon with him. They steered direct for Niagara, thirty miles across the lake, and arrived soon after daylight. The night was dark, but there was little wind, and though the passage had been made before in an open boat, it was considered a venturesome undertaking. Lieut.-General Hunter, who commanded the troops in both provinces, is said to have expressed his displeasure at the colonel for so rashly risking his life. The deserters were overtaken and induced to return to their duty.

A short time after this adventure a very serious mutiny was discovered at Fort George, then garrisoned by a detachment of the 49th, under the command of Lieut.-Colonel Sheaffe, which, had it succeeded, had certainly ended in the murder of that officer.

Although the day has long passed when such tyrannical rule in an officer's hands would be tolerated, yet one cannot read the account of the treatment the men suffered at the hands of this junior colonel without a feeling of just indignation.

The for black holes in the fort were constantly full. Flogging was the sentence awarded for even trifling offences. The passing of a sentence so heavy that it required to be inflicted at two, three, and even four different periods, when the victim was incapable of bearing the whole number at once, was not uncommon. The " cat " was steeped in brine, before as well as during the infliction of punishment, and the sufferings of the men and their hatred of the tyrant may . be imagined. (See Appendix II.)

Upon the discovery of the intended mutiny, the officers in the garrison held a private meeting and decided to send a secret message to Colonel Brock before taking any public action.

Although not distinctly stated, the impression given is that Colonel Sheaffe was not one of the officers holding this meeting, nor was he cognizant of the message sent to Colonel Brock. The feeling against him was so strong in the Upper Province that, later, it was considered advisable to remove him to Lower Canada.

A schooner then in the river was despatched at once to York. Colonel Brock hurried back in the same schooner, taking his devoted sergeant-major with him. Upon arrival, the colonel requested that the boat should be anchored below the town, where he landed alone, leaving FitzGibbon behind, with orders not to appear until sent for.

Colonel Brock's prompt action in personally arresting the principal mutineer, and by the force of his commanding presence and influence over the men making each one of them in turn arrest his fellow-conspirator, is one of the most dramatic instances of a military command anywhere recorded.

From Brock's letters we know how terribly he must have regretted that any of his regiment had been under another's command, when at the trial and conviction of the ring-leaders in this unfortunate mutiny, they reiterated their assertion that "had they continued under the command of Colonel Brock they would have escaped their melancholy end,"

Lieut.-General Hunter, then in Quebec, ordered that the delinquents should be tried in that garrison, and thither they were sent in September.

FitzGibbon was sent with them. In a letter from Colonel Brock (now in the Canadian Archives), in reference to this court-martial, he says :

" After what I have stated, the general may think proper to give directions to Colonel Mann to keep Sergeant Fern and Private Gagnes and the rest of the witnesses at Quebec during the winter, but I entreat His Excellency's permission for Sergeant-Major FitzGibbon and Sergeant Steans being permitted to join me without delay, which I imagine they will be able to accomplish if allowed to depart the instant it is found their presence is of no further use. Being by themselves they will be able to travel infinitely more expeditiously."

Colonel Brock had been ordered to assume the command at Fort George, and the desertions ceased. He allowed the men greater latitude, permitting them to fish in their fatigue dresses, and in proper uniform to visit the town of Niagara freely, and even to use their muskets to shoot the countless wild fowl, on condition that they provided their own powder and shot.

In June, 1804, Lieut.-Colonel Brock, with a detachment of the 49th, removed to Kingston, and in the September following, to Amherstburg.

Colonel Brock was appointed to the command at Quebec in October, 1804, and it is probable that FitzGibbon went to Quebec with him, but we have no

letters or positive mention of him or where he was stationed until the summer of 1806, when he was in Quebec.

In the autumn of 1805, Colonel Brock returned to England on leave, and before his return to Canada in the summer of 1806, he laid before the Commander-in-Chief a scheme for the formation of a veteran battalion for service in the Canadas, in which FitzGibbon was much interested ; and as his ensign's commission was given him at this date, it is not unlikely, nor out of accordance with Colonel Brock's well-known character for generosity, that he gave his favorite full credit for all the information he had gathered for him of the feeling among the soldiers and the inducements offered to them to desert, both by the Americans across the international boundary line and the settlers in Canada who had taken advantage of the free grants of land and were now prosperous farmers.

FitzGibbon always said he owed everything to Colonel Brock. He lent him books, had him with him at every opportunity, encouraged him in the effort to improve and educate himself, not only in every branch of his profession, but in all that was either of worth or likely to be of practical use to him as a gentleman or in any position he was ever likely to fill, at home or in the colony. FitzGibbon called the orderly room of the 49th his grammar school, and the mess-room his university, Lieutenants Stratton, Brackenbury and Loring his tutors,

When in Quebec he often wrote to Colonel Brock's dictation, learning much of the correct pronunciation of words hitherto unknown to him, through the colonel's corrections.

Upon one occasion, at Quebec, in 1805, Colonel Brock asked the sergeant-major why he had not done something he had ordered. FitzGibbon replied that he had found it impossible to do it.

" By the Lord Harry, sir, do not tell me it is impossible," cried the colonel ; " nothing should be impossible to a soldier. The word impossible should not be found in a soldier's dictionary."

Two years afterwards, in October, 1807, when FitzGibbon was an ensign, Colonel Brock ordered him to take a fatigue party to the bateau guard, and bring round to the lower town twenty bateaux, in which to embark troops soddenly for Montreal, fears being entertained that the Americans were about to invade the province in consequence of the affair between the *Leopard* and the *Chesapeake*.

On reaching the bateaux the party discovered that the tide had left them, and about two hundred yards of deep, tenacious mud intervened between them and the water. It appeared to FitzGibbon impossible to drag the large, heavy flat-boats through such mud, and he had given the word, "To the right face," when it occurred to him that in answer to such a report the colonel would ask, " Did you try it, sir ? " He therefore gave the word, " Front," and said to his men, " I think it impossible for us to put these bateaux

afloat, but you know it will not do to tell the colonel 'so, unless we try it. Let us try—there are the boats. I am sure if it is possible for men to put them afloat, you will do it ; go at them."

In half an hour the boats were in the water. The troops were thus enabled to embark a day earlier than if the order had not been carried out.

It was in this year, 1807, that the first suggestion was made by Lieut.-Colonel John McDonell, late of the Royal Canadian Volunteers, for raising a corps among the Scotch settlers of Glengarry, Upper Canada, but it was not accepted by the Horse Guards or any steps taken to carry it out until it was revived by Colonel Gore in 1811.

In a letter of this latter date from Colonel Baynes to Major-General Brock, a Captain George McDonell is spoken of as being appointed to attempt the formation of a corps from among the settlers of Glengarry. In a postscript endorsed " private," Sir George Prevost's intention of filling up the new corps with as many officers of the line as he could, and with permanent rank, is announced.*

It is interesting to note this, as we shall hear a great deal more of these Glengarry Fencibles before the close of our biography.

The year 1807 was spent in Quebec. The following spring the regiment was moved to Montreal. In September, the colonel, now Brigadier Brock, was

* Tupper's Life and Correspondence of Sir Isaac Brock."

given the command at Quebec, from whence writing to his brothers, he regrets being separated from the 49th.

" Were the 49th ordered hence, the rank would not be a sufficient inducement to keep me in this country. In such a case I would throw it up willingly."*

He was succeeded in the command at Montreal by Major-General Drummond.

Owing to the unfortunate destruction of the books of the 49th, at the evacuation of Fort George, in May, 1813, it is very difficult to ascertain where the various companies were stationed, and, to the ever to be regretted destruction of a quantity of private letters and papers formerly belonging to FitzGibbon, by an ignorant autograph collector, we are deprived of much valuable and interesting information of this period.

Several companies of the 49th, under Major Plenderleath, were stationed at Three Rivers, on the St. Lawrence below Quebec, from 1809 to 1811. FitzGibbon was probably with their detachment, as from incidents in his later life it appears that this officer must have been closely connected with him in the regiment.

Major Plenderleath certainly valued FitzGibbon's friendship highly, and showed his affection for him and his in a substantial manner. Among the papers met with in my researches I found a deed of gift for 100 acres of land given to FitzGibbon's only daughter by his old brother officer and friend. I am not aware who now holds this property, or whether this deed has been sought to complete the validity of the title.

* Tupper's " Life and Correspondence of Sir Isaac Brock."

In September, 1811, the 49th was again in Montreal. Recruiting for the Glengarry Fencibles was in active operation in April, 1812. Lieut. Shaw, the acting paymaster of the 49th, was ordered upon that duty.

FitzGibbon wrote to Colonel Brock in July, •1812, with reference to a company being given to him in the new regiment, and received the following autograph reply :

" YORK, *July* 29th.

" DEAR SIR,-I lament that you should so long have been impressed with the idea that I possessed the means of being serviceable to you. I had scarcely heard of Mr. Johnson's having declined a company in the Glengarry (which would have given me the nomination), but I received an account of his being reinstated. I consequently thought no more of the business, thinking that officer was enjoying the fruits of his good fortune. I know not positively whether Mr. Johnson is reinstated, but being under obligations to promote his views, I cannot possibly interfere to his prejudice. I rather wonder you did not know that Lieut Lamont had long ago my promise of nominating him to the company, provided it became vacant, which, of course, would have precluded my application in your behalf. Although you must be sensible of the impossibility of my taking any steps to forward your views in the present case, yet, be assured, I shall always feel happy in any opportunity that may offer to do you service.

"To a person unaccustomed to my writing I scarcely would hazard sending this straw'.

" I am, dear sir,

" Yours faithfully,

"ISAAC BROCK.

" I should like to be among the 49th at this moment. I am satisfied they will support and even add to their former fame. They have my very best wishes. The 41st are behaving nobly at Amherstburg."

In the fac-simile of this letter from General Brock it will be noticed that the year is omitted in the date, but from the context and frai reference to other correspondence now in the Canadian Archives at Ottawa, relative to Lleut. Johnson (a gentleman who apparently could not decide 'in which regiment he preferred to hold a commission, the Glengarry or the Canadian Fencibles), there is no doubt that the letter was written in 1812.

Owing to the fact that there are very few letters from Brock extant, and those in the keeping of the Archives, the original of this one is a valuable relic. Written on both sides of a single sheet, the paper yellow from age, and many of the characters indistinct, it was difficult to reproduce it faithfully.

The following letter bears an earlier date than General Eirock's, and needs no explanation :

" MONTREAL, *May* 16th, 1812.

" SIR,-I beg you will be pleased to obtain for me His Majesty's permission to resign my commission of adjutant only, in the 49th regiment.

" It is incumbent upon me to state my reasons for wishing to resign the adjutancy, I therefore detail them. Before I entered the army the circumstances of my parents prevented my obtaining such an education as to qualify me to discharge the duties of an officer in His Majesty's service. Whatever know-

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Dear Sir

Yr^{ts}
25th July

I lament that you I trust
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Altho you must be sensible of the
impossibility of my taking any steps to
promote your views in the present
case, yet be assured I shall always
feel happy in any opportunity that
may offer to do you service.

I am pleased in acquainting you
with my having written her and send
this sketch.

I am
Dear Sir, Yours faithfully
Garrigue

I should like to be among the
45th at this moment I am satisfied
that will support and even add to his
former fame they have my best
wishes — He is a beholding party at
Kempthorne —