BUSINESS NOTICE

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Chatham, N. B., Sept. 24, 1898.

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Board Works June 1 00

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E. A. STRANG

How Finley McGill Held the Pier

BY ROBERT BARR.

This is a story of war's alarms, and the agony that comes through man's inhumanity to man. It is generally supposed that it is upon the common soldier that the brunt of battle falls; but very often highly-placed officers are called upon to suffer for their country, and it is the pathetic tale of one of these war dogs that I now set myself to relate, hoping that his heroism may thus retain a place in the annals of the land. If Madame History, after listening to my tale of woe, reserves a modest niche in the temple of fame for Captain Angus McKerricher, I shall be more than satisfied.

We, in Western Canada, were always a bloodthirsty gang, and our military system has since been plagiarised by Germany and France. Service in the ranks was compulsory, and one whole day in the year was devoted to drill, the consumption of stimulants, and the making of effete Europe tremble. This memorable annual festival was the 24th of May, the birthday of the Queen. Unless a day in the middle of harvest had been chosen, no more inopportune time could have been selected than the 24th of May, so far as the farmers were concerned. The leaves were just out on the trees, the roads were becoming passable again through the drying of the mud, and spring work was at its height. It was, therefore, extremely inconvenient for farmers to turn their ploughshares into muzzle-loaders, and go from three to thirteen miles to the village and revel in gore, yet the law made attendance compulsory.

For years the rigour of military discipline had been mitigated by a well-known device. Some neighbour, at the reading of the roll, would shout "Here," when an absentee's name was called, and so the reports that went in to the Government always showed the most marvellously constant attendance on duty that has ever gone on record. No wonder the Queen sat securely on her throne, and was unafraid.

Thus the Empire ran serenely on until Angus McKerricher was made captain of the militia. I don't know why he was appointed, but I think it was because he was the only man in the district who owned a sword, which had descended to him from his Highland ancestry, doubtless escaping confiscation by the English soldiery, and was thus preserved to become the chief support to the British throne—certainly a change from its use in younger days. I was a small boy when Angus first took command, but I well remember the dismay his action spread over the district. Angus knew personally every man in the county, which, to parody Gilbert, was

A fact they hadn't counted upon,
When they first put his uniform on.

The captain's uniform consisted of his ordinary clothes, rendered warlike by a scarlet sash, looped over the left shoulder, and tied in a sanguinary knot under the right arm, or "oxter," as Angus termed that portion of his body. But what added perturbation to the feelings of the crowd assembled on the parade-ground was the long claymore, held perpendicularly up the rigid right arm, the hilt almost down to the knee, the point extending above the head, as Angus stood erect, with heels together and chin held high. Even the dullest of us could perceive that the slovenliness of our former captains, in happy-go-lucky style of deportment, was a thing of the past. We were now face to face with the real terrors of war, in the person of Captain Angus McKerricher.

The stout yeomanry were all drawn up in line, and beside the statue-like figure of the captain stood the town clerk, or whatever the official was who kept the roll of able-bodied citizens, between the ages of eighteen and forty-five, who were liable to military service. The day began with the calling of the names.

"Peter McAlpine!"
"Here."
"John Finlayson!"
"Here."
"Dugald McMillan!"
"Here."
"Sandy McCallum!"
"Here."
"Baldy McVannel!"
"Present."

At this juncture the suddenly uplifted sword of the captain stopped the reading of the roll.

"Baldy McVannel, step forward from the ranks!" was the sharp command of the armed officer. There was a moment's apprehensive silence, but no one stepped from the ranks, which was not to be wondered at, for Baldy was at that moment peacefully ploughing his field seven good miles away, and "present" had been answered by his friend and relative, McCallum, who had varied the word from his own answer, "Here," the better to escape notice, a plan which had always been successful before. Deep was the scowl on the captain's face.

"Put him down fur a fine," he said to the clerk.

"He's over the aadge," cried McCallum, who felt that he had to stand by his absent friend.

"He's neither over not under the aage, Sandy," said the captain with decision; "he's between thirty and forty, and he should have been here this day, as he very well knows. Put him down for a fine—a dollar."

An ignored law suddenly enforced carries consternation into a community. The infliction of these fines made a greater financial panic in our district than the failure of the Upper Canada Bank. More than two-thirds of the effective warriors of the township proved to be absent, and the commercial agitation caused by this unexpected clapping on of fines penetrated to the furthest bounds of the municipality. A dollar was, indeed, a dollar in those days, and not to be lightly parted with. However, such was the law, and there was no help for it; but the inflicting of the penalty did nothing towards increasing the popularity of the captain, although it did increase the attendance on parade for many a year after.

Vengeance came swiftly. It had been anticipated that it would take the form of a fight between McKerricher and one of the indignant friends of an absentee as soon as parade was over, and the friend had taken on board sufficient whisky to make him quarrelsome, which was not as large a quantity as some of our temperance friends might imagine. There was Celtic blood in the locality, and it flowed freely from punched noses on less momentous occasions than the day of the grand muster. After the dismissal of the troops, the captain kept his good sword in his hand, and it was still too early in the afternoon for any to have courage enough to attack him with bare fists. That was expected later, for it takes time to reach the proper pitch, even with potent Canadian malt. However, revenge presented itself to the captain in strictly legal guise. A villager, learned in the law, engineered the matter, and the constable arrested McKerricher on the charge of carrying a knife with a blade longer than the statutes allowed. About that time there had become prevalent a villainous-looking dirk, with a long, sharply-pointed blade, which shut up like an ordinary jack-knife, but which had, at the back of the handle, a catch, which held the blade rigid, once opened. This weapon had, in more than one row, which, in ordinary circumstances, have been innocent enough, proved disastrous, and a law had been passed to suppress it. No man was allowed to carry, concealed or in sight, any knife with a blade more than six inches long, and there must be no device that held the blade rigid. It was alleged that McKerricher's sword violated this ordinance, and that he had paraded the town with this illegal instrument in plain sight, to the terror and dismay of her Majesty's faithful subjects, be the same more or less, in the case made and provided, etc.—in fact, I do not remember the exact legal phraseology of the indictment, but, anyhow, it was in words to that effect. In vain the captain pleaded that the sword was a necessary implement of his new trade as militia officer, and that the peace and comfort of the realm had not been visibly interfered with through his carrying of it; but it was easily proven that he had retained his sword while not on duty, and that said instrument was a knife within the meaning of the Act, its blade being more than six inches in length, firmly affixed to the handle aforesaid. The magistrate fined him five dollars, and administered a solemn warning from the bench.

"Cot pless her," exclaimed an indignant Northerner, when the verdict was made known; "if she waants ta lah, let her have awi ta lah!"

In other words, if the law against absentees was to be enforced, let us also set the law regarding jack-knives in motion.

But it was the Fenian scare that brought out the superb Napoleonic qualities of Captain McKerricher, as great crises always develop the latent genius of notable men. "To arms!" was the cry, and everything that would shoot, except the blacksmith's anvil, with which we used to celebrate the Queen's birthday, was brought into requisition. Shotguns, muskets and rifles were brought down from their wooden pegs along the hewn walls of the log houses. We youngsters were set at moulding bullets, and it was great fun. Every house possessed bullet moulds, iron arrangements, like a pair of pincers, with metal cups at the business end, where a small hole at the junction of the closed cups enabled you to pour in the melted lead. There was also a couple of sharp blades, forming part of the handles, which, working on the principle of nut-crackers, enabled you to clip off the lead protuberance, and leave a perfectly moulded bullet, which would kill a man as effectively as if it had been cast by the Government. Mounted men had rushed galloping up the main roads from the lake and along the concession lines, shouting as they passed, "The Fenians are coming!" pausing for no comment, but hurrying forward with the news. It needed no other warning to cause every man who could shoulder a gun to make his way as quickly as possible with whatever weapon he had to the village which he knew would be the rendezvous. It seems sunny to look back on this commotion, for there was no more chance of the Fenians coming to our part of the country than there was of the Russians; nevertheless, we did not stop to think about that until later, and if invaders had come, I am willing to risk an even dollar that they would have wished themselves safe once more in Buffalo saloons, in spite of the justly celebrated reputation of our own brands of liquor, for they would have come into a peaceful community that would rather fight than eat. Few of us knew anything about the merits of the Irish question of that day; out attention being absorbed in politics that pertained to the talismanic names of "John A.," or George Brown. Still, if invasion came, we were all willing to fight first and inquire into the case afterwards.

The northern shore of Lake Erie—at least, that part with which I am acquainted—is a coast perfect as a defence. High perpendicular clay walls, quite unscalable, form a barrier which no enemy of sense would care to encounter. It must not be supposed that I am accusing the Fenians of having been men of sense, for I have no such intention; but even they would hesitate to attempt the clay walls of Western Canada. However, the eagle eye of the commander at once viewed the weak point in our defence with an unerring instinct worthy of Von Moltke. This was the pier. A creek flowed into the lake, and a road to the shore ran along the banks of this creek. At the terminus of the road had been built a pier, some hundreds of feet in length, jutting out into the lake. Here, in peaceful times, schooners from Cleveland, Erie, or Buffalo, had loaded themselves with oaken staves or prime wheat. Captain McKerricher saw that once the pier was captured the Empire fell. He therefore massed his force on either bank of the ravine, so that a withering cross-fire would discommode the enemy as he came up the valley—not a bad formation either. Thus the embattled farmers stood prepared to fire a shot which, if not heard round the world, would at least echo to the village two miles away. As evening drew on, preparations were made for camping out all night on these heights, and guards were set on the pier, Finley McGillis at the post of danger, the end nearest to the Fenians; while McCallum and McVannel held down the shore end, all three prepared to wade in blood should any miscreant attempt to kidnap the pier, except the limited liability company which rightfully owned it. Sentries were placed round the camp inland, and outposts farther off. Never was there more firm discipline exacted from any body of soldiers. The rigour of the British army was nothing as compared with the martinet character of the regulations of this camp. Captain McKerricher in person visited every sentinel, and informed him that this was no 24th of May parade, but real war, and that any sentinel caught asleep would be forthwith shot instead of being fined a dollar; and that if a man lit his pipe he would spend the rest of his life in Kingston Penitentiary.

But the invincibility of a camp is unknown until it is tested. The captain resolved to put the firmness of his sentinels to the proof. He took no one into his confidence; and here again his likeness to Napoleon is evidenced—he never let any of his subordinate officers know what the next move on the board was to be. There was a small skiff in the creek, and the evening darkening early because of a coming storm, the captain pushed out the boat unobserved, and rowed some distance to the west, then turned south and out into the lake, finally coming north again toward the end of the pier. The night was black, relieved by an occasional glimmer of lightning on the surface of the lake, and the wind was rising. McKerricher's quest was getting to be an unpleasant one, for he was essentially a landsman, and the increasing motion of the boat was disagreeable; but what will a man not do and dare for his country's sake? It is probable that he discried the form of Finley McGillis against the dark sky before the sentinel caught any indication of the boat on the murky water. Finley said afterwards that he was just wondering whether he dare risk a smoke in his isolated position, and trust to putting his pipe out if he heard a step coming up the pier, when he was startled by a voice from the lake—

"Surrender! Drop your gun, and save your life. Surrender, in the name of the Fenian Brotherhood!"

McGillis made no reply, and the captain began to think he had caught his chief sentry asleep; but as the wobbling boat became dimly visible to the man on the end of the pier, Finley said slowly—

"I can see ye now! If ye move hand or fut I'll blow ye out of the water!"

"That's all right," said the captain hastily; "I'm glad to note that you are on the alert. I'm Captain McKerricher."

"A likely story!" replied McGillis contemptuously. "The keptin's no' a mahn to risk himself in a bit shallop like that, an' a storm comin' up. Yer ma preesoner, an' ye'll be a dead mahn in another meenit if ye pit hand to oar."

"You fool!" cried the angered voyager. "How could I know about McKerricher if I were a Fenian?"

"Oh, it's easy enough to hear aboot McKerricher, and it's verra weel ken't in the Auld Country and in the States that he is oor keptin'. Yer a wolf in sheep's clothing, that's whut ye are, and jist listen ta me. There's a ball nearly an inch thick in this musket, an' that'll be through ye before ye can say 'click,' if ye don't do whut I tell ye. Then in this shot-gun at ma feet there's a load of slugs, that ull rive yer boat ta bits if ye attempt ta mak' aff. Is there a rope in that boat?"

"Yes."

"Then throw it ta me, if it's lang enough."

This was done, and Finley tied the end of it to one of the upright piles.

"Hand you up they oars. That's right. Now yer ta the windward o' the pier, an' nice an' comfortable fur the nicht."

"You are surely not going to keep me here all night, and the rain coming?"

"The rain's no' was warse fur you than fur me. A buddy munna be ower parteecular in time of war. If ut should be that yer the keptin', I'll mak' ma apologies in the mornin'; if yer the Fenian ye said ye were, then Aang'as 'll hang ye fur yer impidence in takin' his name."

"Fire one gun in the air, and call the officers. You have two, so there's no risk. Disobey your captain at your peril, and I'll have you court-martialled in the morning."

"I'll fire aff naething ava'. I'm not gaun ta waste a shot, an' poother sa dear. If I fire, it will be at you; and, besides, if I did fire, the whole camp would be shootin' at once from a' the heights in this direction, an' while I'm compelled to risk being shot by the Fenians, it's no' in the bargain that I should stand fire from ma own frien's; an' a bullit fra the north kills as readily as yin fra the sooth."

The wind rose, the boat rocked, and the rain came on.

"Give me the oars, at least," implored the captive; "that rope will break and then I'll be adrift and helpless."

"The win's doon the lake, so, if it breaks, ye'll jist come ashore aboot Long Point."

But the rope did not break, and very soon the captain was past the point where conversation is a pleasure; for however brave he might be on land, he had never been intended for the navy.

"Yer no' used ta a boat," commented the sentinel, who had been a fisherman in the Highlands. "It's unco hard at the time, they tell me; but ye'll be a the better fur it in the mornin'."

When day broke Finley McGillis expressed the utmost consternation and surprise to find that his prisoner was really his captain.

"Man! Who wud ha' beleeved that!" he cried in amazement.

The subordinate officers, who helped their haggard captain out of the boat, advised him strongly to say nothing about the incident. This, so far as I know was the only naval encounter that occurred at the time of the Fenian raid, and it goes to show, as I said in the beginning, that those who devoted themselves to the cause of their country suffer unrecorded hardships, for which, alas! medals are not given. Even this section of history is futile, for, as what I have set down is strictly true, I could not give real names, because I have had no opportunity of consulting with either captain or sentinel, and do not know but one or other might object to the revelation of his identity.—Cassell's Magazine.

WEEL-PIPED MUTCHES.

Oh! weel dae I min' the days that are gane,
O' goblins, ghaists, warlocks an' wutches!
An' weel dae I min', when I was a wean,
The auld wives and grannies wore mutches!
Braw, clean, snod, an 'weel-piped mutches!
Noo scarce dae I ever see ony,
Wi' ribbons that whisk'd roon like swutches,
Frae faces baith kindly an' bonnie!
'Neath my mither's white mutch there was grace,
Like a halo set a' roon her heid!
There was love in her bonnie sweet face,
When she sat doon at nicht for to read!
Oh! she smiles at me yet in my dreams,
When I pu' the lang strings o' her mutch!
An' her face wi' merriment gleams,
As she ca'd ma a tricky wee wutch!
Braw servant lassies, in hoose an' in ha',
Look'd blythesome, an' couthie, an' cheerie,
In mutches—white as the new driven sna',
! When they stroll'd oot at nicht wi' their dearie!
Nae trouble to kiss neath the mutches,
Their e'en were sae temptin' an' bonnie;
An' gey an weel-pleased were the wutches
When lips were aft pree'd by their Johnnie.
Sich warrin', an' daurin', an' doin,
'Mang the lassies an' lads o' langsyne,
Wi mutches the wutches were wooin',
Till the lads lost their balance o' min'!
The lads are no noo in sich passion,
For the lassies wear fal-de-ral hats!
Since mutches hae gane oot o' fashion,
Lads and lassies are prim as auld cats!

Toronto. JOHN IMRIE.

Sir Wilfrid Lawson will be horrified with the Exchequer receipts of last year. It appears that each man, woman and child in England last year consumed 31 1-2 gallons of beer.

ATAVISM AMONG ANIMALS.

Whence the Horse of To-Day Derives His Swiftness and Powers of Endurance.

Dr. Louis Robinson, an English zoologist, has just given to the world an account of his investigations as to the origin of the habits and mode of life of certain animals, and the conclusion at which he seems to arrive is that all such phenomena may be explained on the ground of atavism. Thus he claims that the horse of our day derives his swiftness and power of endurance from the fact that his ancestors in former days were obliged to flee from, and frequently to defend themselves against, their great enemies, the wolves. In like manner he claims that the reason why the horse shies is because his ancestors were forced to be constantly on the alert against hidden enemies, and that the reason why he rears and plunges is because only by pursuing such tactics could his forefathers shake off wild animals who had leaped upon their backs.

Sheep when frightened immediately rush off to the highest point they can reach. The reason, says Dr. Robinson, is because all sheep originally inhabited mountainous districts. And this, he claims, is also the reason why they wear a thick fleece of wool all the year through, the summer temperature in mountainous districts being almost as cold as that of winter. Finally, we are assured that the reason sheep invariably follow a leader is because their ancestors were obliged to go in Indian file through the narrow mountainous passes.

Pigs have also engaged Dr. Robinson's attention. He was puzzled for a good while as to the cause of their grunting, but now he thinks he has discovered the real reason. The pigs of to-day, he says, evidently grunt because their ancestors made their homes in thick woods, and only by making this sound could they keep track of each other and guard themselves against going astray from the common herd. Commenting on this latter explanation, a scientist suggests that Dr. Robinson might now do well to spend some time in trying to find out why the horse neighs and why the dog barks.

SPRING SMILES.

He—What are you two girls talking about? She—Nothing; are your ears burning?

The dog wouldn't touch the meat you got for him. I hope you didn't waste it. No, indeed. I saved it for your breakfast.

The Mistress—Mary, don't let me catch you kissing that butler again. The Maid—Lor', mum, I don't mean to, but you do bob aroun' so!

Mrs. Honkley, severely—It's not necessary for me to ask where you were and what you were doing last night. Mr. Honkley, brightening—I'm glad of that, for I couldn't do it to save myself.

Baker—Our chairman says we ought to be able to carry the election by good, honest work. Carker—I hope that isn't all he has to depend on!

When is a joke not a joke? said the Irish comedian. Judging from my experience, when the audience laughs at it, replied the Hebrew impersonator.

She, coquettishly,—I read the other day, Cousin Charley, that marriage is declining. He, inspired,—O, that's quite wrong. Marriage is—accepting. Seizes the opportunity and proposes.

What are you sighing for? asked the Registry Department of the Dead Letter Office. No one has so many rejected addresses as I, was the sorrowful reply.

'Tis now the gentle humorist,
That merry, happy grig,
Fills up apace his daily space,
With lines on "gedtle sprig."

Casey—Doolan offered to prove to me in black an' white that Oi war a fool. Clancy—Phwat happened thin? Casey—Oi proved to him in black an' blue thot he war a liar.

Tonsorial Artist—I am using a new kind of shaving soap. Most of the gentlemen that get shaved here say it's the best I've ever had. Customer—Well, that's merely a matter of taste!

Fuddy—Heckle complains that after all his labor in behalf of the public he gets nothing for it. Duddy—And more than he deserves. Nothing is too good for him. I have heard him say so himself.

Mrs. Greene—Funny how mothers will believe that their own children are so much better than anybody else's children. Mrs. Gray—I know it. If all people, now, were like my little Georgie, it would not be so strange.

Mistah Mose—I tell yo', dat Pompey's pergressive! Jes' look at him puttin' all his ground in flowah beds! Mistah Smiff—What's pergressive 'bout dat? Mistah Mose—Why, he won't hab tuh go aftah chickens now. Dey'll come to him.

GOOD EYESIGHT.

Brawley, given to boasting—Do you know, I suppose I've the best eyesight of any person going.

Litesum—Oh, there's no doubt of that. That book you praised so highly you were able to read without stopping to cut the leaves. Don't believe another person in town could do it.

NOT FOUND YET.

School Visitor, examining scholar—Where is the North Pole?

I don't know, sir.

Don't know! Are you not ashamed that you don't know where the North Pole is?

Why, sir, if Sir John Franklin and Dr. Nansen and Captain Nares and Markham couldn't find it, how should I know where it is?

BICYCLE RIDERS IN GERMANY.

It is estimated that there are in Germany at the present time no less than 3,120,000 bicycle riders. The average value of each wheel is placed at 200 marks, or $50. Bicycle dealers place the sum expended by wheelmen in the empire at 624,000,000 marks, or $156,000,000.

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