

"Flatfoot" Rifle Corps.

H. Price Webber Writes Amusingly of the St. John Militia of Bye-Gone Days.

The bravery of our Canadian Contingent in South Africa has been variously written about and commented upon, and I have been asked to relate some circumstances connected with the time when all the citizens of St. John were summoned for duty as members of the militia.

In pursuance to notice we were ordered to report for duty on an evening in the early summer, and were politely informed no excuses would be taken for absence from duty.

Behold us, then, drawn up in line on the barrack green and ready to show that we were, indeed, the "bravest of the brave."

Our captain was a well known auctioneer of the city, long since gathered to his fathers and he was very good tempered and good natured but both qualities were sorely tried by the members of his company.

The next man to me in the ranks was Chas Lafferty, then a barber of the city, and now doing a good business in the same line in Summerside, P. E. I. On the other side of me stood Thomas Lawson, who displayed considerable wit during the inspection.

Somebody had called us the "Flatfoots,"—why I do not know; and the nickname always clung to us.

The gallant captain, who was on horseback, proceeded to give us a short address as to what was expected of us, and said: "You have been called upon to report for duty, and are here to show your devotion to your country."

"You are wrong," said a voice in the rear; "we are here because we can't help it."

"Silence in the ranks," thundered the captain. "Fall in!"

There was a large ditch right in front of where I was standing, and just as the captain said "Fall in," somebody in the rear rank gave me a push, and over I went into the ditch.

"Save him! save him!" cried out the whole party.

Charlie Lafferty did not exactly hear what was shouted and thinking of his business said:

"Shave him? certainly. Next!"

A roar of laughter greeted this sally. I scrambled out of the ditch covered with mud, and feeling pretty cheap.

The captain turned his lightning glance on me, and said:

"Boy, what are you doing? What are you about?"

Before I could say a word, Tom Lawson answered:

"He is obeying orders—he fell in!"

A perfect yell of approval broke from the crowd at this clever reply.

The captain resumed his remarks after order had been restored.

"Members of the St. John militia," he said, "your promptness in complying with the command of the government shows clearly and conclusively that you are worthy of especial encouragement. Should the necessity arise for you to march forth to battle with any foe an aureole of glory will—"

Just as he got this far, voices in the rear shouted:

"Are you all done?"

"Any advance?"

"Give me a bid!"

"Do I hear any more?"

This tickled all hands as it was a favorite way our captain had of speaking when selling goods at auction.

The officer however did not like these animadversions on his calling, for he replied:

"No remarks, please. Order! order!"

Just then some very ingenious individual actuated by the laudable desire of seeing whether the captain's charger was a rapid steed, tied a bunch of thistles to the animal's tail.

The horse grew restive, and all of a sudden made a bolt for the barrack gate, and went up Wentworth street, never stopping till he got to the top of the hill.

As the horse started somebody shouted:

"Going!—going!"

And as the captain cleared the gate.

"Gone!" said Tom Lawson.

After our officer's somewhat abrupt departure, a consultation was held to determine which branch of the service we belonged to—cavalry, artillery, infantry, sappers and miners, or the military train.

"For my part," said Tom Lawson, "I know very little about cavalry, artillery, infantry, sappers and miners, military train, sea fencibles, land fencibles, horse marine, or foot marine. But put me behind the big drum! There's where I live!"

The arguments were numerous and vari-

ed as to where we belonged, when a gruff voice shouted:

"Boys, the canteen is open!"

A mad rush was at once made for that interesting quarter, all doubts were dispelled—we knew where we belonged.

The martial spirit was thoroughly aroused and army songs were sung.

One of the patriotic ballads then in vogue was "The Soldier's Tear," the first verse of which was as follows:

"Upon the hill he stood
To take a last fond look
Of the valley and the village church,
The cottage by the brook;
Old sights and sounds came o'er him
Familiar to his ear;
The soldier leant upon his sword
And wiped away a tear."

A new version of the above was sung by one of the members of the militia, and was a clever parody:

Behind the door he stood,
A tumbler in his hand,
And calmly he surveyed the wood,
And looked upon the sand;
Old sights and sounds came o'er him,
Familiar to his ear;
The soldier leant upon his sword,
And then—drank up his beer!

A furor of applause was given this song and it was fully deserved.

Charles Lafferty warbled very sweetly.

"My native land—
My fatherland—
How sweet to die for thee!"

In the meantime the gallant captain had returned, and as I was walking up and down, on guard the sole representative of the Flatfoots he accosted me and said:

"Where are the troops?"

I pointed to the barracks and he went in.

The lamps had been lit, as it was now dark, but as there appeared to be a lack of oil all had gone out but one, and as the officer entered he was greeted with the following ditty which was being sung by one of the company, and was a clever parody on the "Last Rose of Summer."

'Tis the last lamp on the table
Left burning alone;
All its oily companions
Have burnt out and gone,
I'll not leave thee, thou lone one,
To go out in smoke;
Since the rest are in darkness
Why you must be broke!

The captain gazed around—his indignation knew no bounds.

"I will cashier every one of you," he said.

"Can't do it," said a member; "you can only cashier the officers, and we are simply privates."

"Then I'll fine you," said the captain.

"Well," remarked Tom Lawson, "he may cashier the officers, but he can't fine us for"—producing an empty pocket book, "there is no cash here!"

A perfect yell of delight greeted this remark.

Somebody then shouted:

"Fall in! Form fours! By your right. Quick, march!"

All hands then paraded round the barrack green, singing at the top of their voices, the following words, to the tune of the "British Grenadiers."

Hurrah my boys! We'll give it them
Until they want for no more;
We are the boys to do the work,
The Flat-foot Rifle Corps!

"And this said the captain, as he gazed sadly after us, "this is glory! This it is to be a soldier!"

H. PRICE WEBBER.

Keeping Nothing From Him.

"And are you sure you love me with all your heart, and you never will deceive me in the slightest thing?"

He—"Yes, darling, I love you, and I never will deceive you, and will you always tell me the truth and the whole truth, and never try to keep anything from me?"

She—"George, dearest, how can you ask it?"

And then when he asked her how old she was, in order to put it in the marriage certificate [she made herself eight years younger than that she knew herself to be.

International Courtesies.

Polite Foreigner—"Mon ami. Es et ze way to ze yon Mooseem Breetesh zat zoe can eestruct me."

First Rough—"Wot d' yer sie?"

Polite Frenchman—"Es et zoe way to ze von Mooseem Breetesh zat zoe can e-estruct me?"

Second Rough—"D' yer know wot 'e's a siecing of Bill?"

First Rough—"Blowed if I do!"

Second Rough—"Then why don't yer 'it 'im acrost the mouth."

An Indian Summer Girl.

"What has come upon my daughter?" grunted the great chief. "She is like a goose feather blown by the wind. One day she smiles upon the love of Foxtail, the soothsayer, and the next she frowns like the thunder cloud. How? Is he not great medicine?"

"Yes, father," replied the wilful maiden, whose education among the Eastern pale faces had been almost complete. "Therefore he should be well shaken before 'taking."

Damaging.

"I'll either beat him or bust him," said the candidate.

"It is a scheme of my own getting up, too."

"What is it?" asked the benchman.

"I've got a story about his sending a hundred dollar note to the parents of a kid named after him."

"Some men," remarked Uncle Eben, "has jes' enough activity in 'em to keep 'em 'um bein' any good fob hitchin' posts."

Miraculous Escape.

A Fairville Young Lady Describes That Canoeing Accident at Grand Falls—One Drowned.

Miss Millie Bosence of Fairville has returned from an extended visit to Grand Falls, a visit which was greatly marred by the sad fatality which occurred on July 23, when Miss Bosence, Miss Bertie Dixon and Mr. Ed. Smith were paddling about in the river between the famous falls and a series of rapids some miles below. The bare fact that Miss Dixon found a watery grave upon this occasion has been stated in the papers, but Miss Bosence describes the accident and surrounding circumstances most vividly. For exciting moments, miraculous escapes and seemingly intervention of Providence, this canoeing party has seldom had its parallel in New Brunswick.

The jolly party of young folks never dreamed of the sad fate awaiting the jolliest of their number as they embarked in the frail canoe and launched out from the raft landing. The fourth member of their party, Mr. Simpson of St. John (west) refrained from entering the canoe, as he thought the fragile craft's capacity already taxed.

After paddling about in midstream for half an hour or so two of the party became conscious of the fact the canoe was drifting fast with the current in the opposite direction to the landing place. Miss Dixon, who was an expert canoeist, knew this, although she had said nothing, but plied all the more laboriously with her paddle. Mr. Smith divined the course of her extra exertions and added more vigor to his paddle as well, daring not to frighten Miss Bosence with any remark as to the gravity of their situation.

Below but a short distance the dangerous rapids were seething, while far above could be heard the roar of the majestic falls. The night was pitchy dark and between the sheer and barren banks of the river the black ugly looking stream twisted and snarled itself into a thousand unfriendly eddies. The fire built by friends at the starting point grew smaller and dimmer, as the bark craft lost ground continually. All efforts to stem the tide seemed fruitless but Miss Dixon pluckily set the pace for Mr. Smith in struggling against it. All the while Miss Bosence sat innocently in the canoe, little thinking of the danger she was in until Mr. Smith, addressing his paddle mate said:

"Bertie don't you think we had better start straight for shore?"

His voice though calm and low was full of earnestness.

Without further word the canoe was headed straight for the shore. As luck would have it the front end of the craft struck a projecting rock and grounded, for

there was no beach whatever, simply a waste of boulder rock and rank underbrush.

"Now jump for your life!" was Mr. Smith's startling command to Miss Bosence.

All hands jumped into the maze of rock and brush and managed to secure footing. Then the real seriousness of their situation while in the stream dawned upon them. They watched the unswerving tide in its terrible might and could hear quite distinctly the swish and swash of the fatal rapids below.

Climbing along the precipitous bank for a short distance they towed the canoe. Then all hands thought of re-entering it and running the risk of paddling back to the starting point. This they did, but the fight against the swift running water was a desperate one and disembarkation was necessary again. The canoe was towed along shore once more to a point within two hundred yards of the landing. Finally the party pushed the canoe into a quiet niche of a huge boulder near the shore and decided to get aboard again and have one more try at paddling to their destination up stream. Miss Bosence and Mr. Smith managed to get safely into the canoe, but in stepping aboard Miss Dixon lost her footing and fell headlong into the tide. She screamed for help and Mr. Smith jumped out on the shore again to try and catch her as she drifted past a certain point below, for the current had caught right hold of her.

Miss Bosence, the solitary occupant of the canoe was terror stricken. She thought of the rapids below and saw her friend only a few feet away drifting to her doom. With a frenzied cry she jumped deliberately into the river and face to face with Miss Dixon floated speedily down the stream. Neither of the young ladies could swim, but as with animal instinct they trod water, thus keeping themselves partially above the tide. A side current swept Miss Bosence toward shore where she grasped an overhanging twig and was saved by Mr. Smith, but Miss Dixon drifted hopelessly on.

Both Mr. Smith and Miss Bosence ran along the shore to try and save their friend but all efforts were unavailing.

In jumping ashore Mr. Smith had fallen on his back upon a rock and was maimed, suffering great pain. With unusual heroism the Fairville young lady did her utmost to reach her drowning friend, who after her first cry had never uttered a sound. Miss Dixon sank in full view of Miss Bosence about a quarter of a mile from the spot where she fell overboard.

Then the sad return to the landing raft where Miss Dixon's mother was anxiously awaiting her return. That mother's cry of grief when the awful news was broken to her, and the gloom of all over the sad occurrence.

Several days were spent in a fruitless search for Miss Dixon's body, until a young Frenchman, who claimed to have dreamed the exact spot at which the body lay, grappled alone for it. He found it just where he said it was, and the funeral was one of the largest seen at Grand Falls, for many a year.

Miss Dixon was a beautiful specimen of healthy young womanhood, a well educated and very refined person. Her untimely death has called forth many regretful expressions, while Miss Bosence is receiving the serious congratulations of her friends on her miraculous escape.

An Unwelcome Change.

Old Friend—"Your husband used to be so rough and profane, and now he's so gentle and refined, and courtly, I hardly know him."

Mrs. Minks—"Yes, I've noticed the change. 'I'll bet a cookie he's got a type-writer girl in his office."

"No, I guess we'll not take the paper this year," said Mr. Meddgergrass to the editor of the Bowersville Clarion. "Maw hasn't had all the diseases the almanac gives symptoms of, an' it 'ud kind 'o worry her to try an' keep up with the medicine advertisements in your paper."

House agent—"Rush around to 126 Bark street, quick, and get last month's rent."

Bookkeeper—"What's up?"

Agent—"As I passed there this morning I heard a baby. There won't be any spare cash around that house for six weeks at least. I've had 'em myself."

"Have you no sights here that you show to visitors?" asked the stranger.

"Notin' but buildin' sites," answered the native of the boom towns.—Baltimore American.



EXAMINING HER PRESENTS.