

## REMINISCENCE OF THE LAST WAR.

BY AN EYE-WITNESS.

THE battle of Chippewa was fought on a plain, bounded by a deep creek, on the opposite side of which the British occupied a fort. After being signally defeated in that brilliant engagement, they hastily retreated to their fortress, destroying the bridge behind them; and presently after evacuated their fort, and retired rapidly towards Fort George. They halted at Queenston Heights, but finding that General Brown had thrown a bridge across the creek, and was eagerly pursuing them, to improve his victory, they again resumed their march.

Our army soon came opposite the great cataract of Niagara, whose roar they had heard for several days, and whose foam they had seen resting in a light cloud on the horizon. The noble exhibition, which has attracted so many thousands of visitors, was not discernable from the road pursued by our columns, the view being intercepted by the forest trees that skirted the river; and many of the young officers, unwilling to pass without a glance at the cataract, eagerly applied to their commanders for leave to quit their posts for a few moments. To a small number this privilege was granted, among whom was the writer, who, after hastily clambering down the bank, stood on the lone shore, from which the dangers of war had driven all human beings but those attached to the armies, and which was now as deserted as it had been before the settlement of the country. The contrast between the solitude of the spot at that time, and the gayety now exhibited in the surrounding buildings and the throngs of fashionable visitors, would be striking to one who had seen this celebrated place under both aspects.

On reaching Queenston Heights, a splendid landscape was presented. Here the gently undulating surface over which we had passed, was suddenly terminated by an abrupt descent of several hundred feet. We stood on the verge of a precipice which commanded a boundless prospect. Below us was a long, flat peninsula of fertile land, bounded on the right hand by the Niagara, whose impetuous current rolled majestically along a deep, narrow, serpentine channel, until its waters were poured into the bosom of Lake Ontario, whose broad expanse bounded the prospect on the left. At the point, formed by the junction of the river and the

lake, stood Fort George, and on the opposite shore, Fort Niagara, whose massy bulwarks and numerous buildings, presented at this distance, an unshapen, but extensive and formidable pile, surmounted by waving banners, trembling in the breeze. At our feet was the village of Queenston, composed of a few stone buildings, beautifully clustered in a little valley on the margin of the river, on the opposite shore of which a few solitary stacks of chimneys, blackened with smoke, and crumbling into ruins, marked the deserted site of Lewiston, which had been burned by the British. The American shore of the Niagara was covered with a boundless forest, yielding to the eye a rich but unvaried surface of deep, shadowy green. The Canadian side was much more interesting. Here, too, the forest formed, as it were, the ground of the picture; but this fertile peninsula had been thickly settled, and the farms, now deserted, and trodden by succeeding armies, were scattered over the lovely region, which lay developed in rich beauty before its conquerors. Extending the eye along the river, a moving streak of crimson, gilded with bright gleams, and partly concealed by clouds of dust, betrayed the retreating columns of the enemy, whose gay uniforms and glittering arms contrasted strongly with the deep green of the surrounding foliage; while, now and then, the low, wild notes of the bugle, calling in the scouts and stragglers, fell pleasantly on the ear. Beyond all this were the blue waves of Ontario, a mighty expanse of waters, bounded only by the distant horizon.

It is seldom that such a scene, under circumstances so exhilarating, is presented to the eye and the imagination. A brilliant landscape, glowing with the luxuriance of summer, seen from a commanding eminence, under a clear sky, in the hour of victory, by young soldiers whose imaginations were heated, and whose hearts were panting for higher honors, afforded one of those intellectual feasts that mortals seldom enjoy. There is, perhaps, in the life of every man, an occasional hour, when a coincidence of happy circumstances produces a sense of exquisite enjoyment, which for the moment seems to be perfect, and which remains indelibly impressed, a bright spot upon the memory, to be recurred to in after life, with undiminished pleasure. Such was that hour to some of those young warriors.

The enemy having eluded pursuit, the army descended to Queenston, and encamped. Here we remained two days; the chiefs earnestly engaged in council, in reconnoitering the enemy's

works, and in preparing for further operations—the troops in drilling, burnishing their arms, and brushing up their uniforms.

While here, one of those adventurous exploits was performed, which were common in this division of the army. It having been understood that the British general, Rial, sometimes slept beyond the defences of the fort, but within the line of picquets, Lieut. R. matured a plan for his capture. To effect the object, it was necessary first to capture a picquet guard, which occupied a house on one of the roads leading to the fort. This house he secretly approached, during an extremely dark night, with a small party. The guard were all within, except the sentinel on post. Leaving his party, Lieut. R. advanced alone, along the road towards the sentry, in such a manner as rather to attract than avoid attention. The sentinel, never suspecting that it was an enemy thus carelessly approaching, challenged in the usual form: "Who comes there?" "A friend." "Advance and give the countersign." Lieut. R. advanced, placed his breast to the point of the soldier's protruded bayonet, leaned forward as if to give the word, and suddenly knocking aside the musket, plunged a dagger into the bosom of the soldier. His party rushed forward, entered the house, and surprised the guard sleeping round the fire. The officer commanding it instantly surrendered; but while in the act of delivering up their arms, one of the British soldiers singled out a Mr. Wadsworth, a gentleman who held the commission of Brigadier General in the militia of New York, and who had accompanied this party as a volunteer, and shot him dead. For this base act of treachery, his life was forfeited by the laws of war, but he was pardoned by General Brown. The report of this gun created an alarm, and it is said that General Rial, who was actually in a house close by, retired to the fort in haste, and by no means in full uniform. The prisoners were all brought in, and military funeral honors rendered to the remains of the lamented General Wadsworth.

The next day the army was under march for Fort George. Arrived in sight of this fortress, the American troops encamped just beyond the reach of cannon shot from its ramparts, and active preparations were making for carrying the place by assault. But these preparatory measures, like all the designs of the judicious leader of this army, were conducted with such secrecy, as to afford to the enemy no indication of immediate hostilities. Few even of our own troops were aware of them. Within the lines, the

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men were seen washing, cooking, drilling, or cleaning their arms; every thing presented the repose and security of a permanent encampment; while at a secret and strongly guarded spot, scaling ladders were made, and arms repaired, for the contemplated enterprise. Our young soldiers, who had so gallantly subdued the enemy on the open field, now burned with ardor to prove their valor on a new scene, in the daring peril of an escalade.

An unforeseen event changed the fortune of war. The recent conclusion of the war in Europe, had enabled the British government to send large reinforcements of disciplined veterans to America. A body of these troops had reached Quebec, and pushing forward, under favorable auspices, had arrived on Lake Ontario before the American General could possibly have received intelligence of their being in the country; and they were now about to land at a point from which a short march would place them in the rear of our army. The American troops amounted at this time to about 2,000; the vanquished army of General Bial, with the garrisons of Forts George and Niagara, equalled that number, and the reinforcements advancing under Sir William Drummond, amounted to 5000 men; so that General Brown found himself in danger of being hemmed in, by more than thrice his number. His only choice was to retrograde up the river; or by crossing the Niagara to abandon the war, or carry it into our own country. A more timid man would have adopted the latter course. With the honors already achieved by this army, it might have recrossed the border with credit; and its high character might probably have drawn around it a sufficient number of brave volunteers to have repelled invasion. But General Brown adopted the former plan—the most daring, arduous, but the most generous, and, under the circumstances, the most prudent. He threw himself in the Thermopylæ between his country and a powerful foe, recently beaten, and thirsting for revenge, and, by a generous act of self-devotion, saved his native land from the polluting footstep of invasion, the miseries of war, and the desolation of the tomahawk and firebrand.

To accomplish this plan, it was necessary to reach and surmount the heights of Queenston, before the British army under Drummond, who was marching in a direction at right angles with our own, should be enabled to intercept us at that point. Had Drummond arrived first at Queenston, resistance would have been fruitless, and escape impossible. The reader will recollect that we

were in a triangular peninsula, with the lake on one side, a deep river on another, the third, occupied by a steep ridge, might be guarded by a handful of troops, and that the armies were marching on the two sides of a right angle, whose point terminated at that ridge. The passage of Queenston Heights, before their occupancy by the enemy, was therefore an object of intense interest.

It was not expected that our army would be permitted to retire, without an attack on its rear by General Rial, whose policy it should have been to detain us, at all hazards. General Scott, therefore, the senior Brigadier, with his choice brigade, occupied our rear; the leading column was composed of the brave New-York volunteers, led by General Porter, (the late Secretary of War,) and the centre was formed by General Ripley's brigade.

Arrived at a small eminence, which bounds Queenston on the lower side, every eye in the leading platoons was raised to the precipitous heights beyond the village, and every bosom was filled with dismay, on beholding a long line of red tinging the broken line of horizon, and shewing that the heights were already guarded by British troops. General Porter halted the column. In a few moments the commander-in-chief rode up, and not having yet discovered the enemy, who were concealed from all except a few of the most advanced of our troops, inquired of General Porter, "Why do you halt, sir?" The gallant general silently pointed to the hill; the wary eye of Brown, following the indication of his finger, rested for a moment on the rocky promontory, by whose single path alone his onward march could be pursued, then turning to Porter, he said in a calm, but emphatic tone, "Push on, sir, and never pause until you reach the top of that hill!" The halt had been so momentary as probably not to have been observed by the enemy. The order was obeyed with alacrity. The mounted volunteers dashed up the winding road; the infantry, clinging to the bushes, rushed up the hill; the artillery followed leisurely; and before the main body of the army had passed the village, Porter was in possession of the heights without having fired a gun. It turned out that the troops in our advance were a collection of militia, who had probably lined the brow of the hill out of curiosity to watch our motions, and whose numbers, thus dispersed, were greatly magnified in our eyes. Still they were sufficiently numerous to have held this strong position for some time—perhaps long enough to have enabled General Rial to attack our rear, and to have held us at bay until the arrival of Drummond. The

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promptness which formed a strong feature in the character of Brown, was finely displayed on this occasion. Had he hesitated, had a moment been lost in council, trifled away in preparation, or wasted in doubt, the enemy would have made a stand, this difficult pass would only have been carried at a great expense of blood, and the delay might have been fatal.

### BLUFFDALE.

" Ever charming, ever new,  
 " When will the prairie tire my view ?  
 " Or craggy bluff, so wild and high,  
 " Rudely rushing on the sky ?"

THE settlement of Bluffdale, in Greene county, Illinois, presents, more than any other place I have yet seen, a union of all that is peculiar and striking in the Western landscape. A description of its scenery has appeared in some of our papers, but it would not be improper to give, in your interesting work, additional sketches of that interesting spot.

Almost hanging over the houses of this little settlement, are the bluffs, in many places a solid, perpendicular wall of calcareous rock, rising to the height of two hundred feet. Immediately back of this wall, and not unfrequently commencing at its very edge, rises a chain of hills, in the shape of cones, from one to two hundred feet still higher. The bluffs are occasionally broken by ravines, which afford an easy ascent to the highlands. In the warm season of the year, these beautiful cones are covered, to their summits, with the richest verdure, presenting a fine relief to the sterile brownness of the cliffs below.

From the bluffs, but more especially from the hills behind them, the prospect is beautiful, beyond the powers of the most vivid imagination to picture. Standing at an elevation of three or four hundred feet above the surrounding country, the eye ranges over an almost boundless prospect. The immense prairie on the West, without a single tree, or even shrub, to intercept the view—level as a floor—covered with luxuriant grass, intermingled with flowers of every hue; the Illinois river, winding for miles along its western border, and appearing in the distance no wider than a ribbon; the blue hills beyond, almost faded into the haze of distance;