

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 plagiarized 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 McVannell!"
"Present."

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

"Baldy McVannell, step forward from the ranks!" was the sharp command of the armed officer. There was no 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 for 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 nor under the aadge, 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 wants ta lah, let her have awl 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 discommodate 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 McVannell 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 mah'n to risk himself in a bit shallop like that, an' a storm comin' up. Yer ma preeoner, an' ye'll be a dead mah'n 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 about 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 what 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 what I tell ye. Then in this shot-gun at ma feet there's a load of slugs, that'll 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 of the pier, an' nice an' comfortable fur the night."

"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 partecular 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 Angus'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 south."

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' believed 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.

TWENTY GLASSES OF TEA A DAY.

That is Not an Unusual Number for a Russian Peasant to Drink.

Among the few things for which Russia deservedly enjoys a creditable and universal reputation, Russian tea doubtless occupies a prominent place, both on account of its quality and mode of preparation and consumption. In the first place there is no such thing as Russian tea in the literal sense of the world. It is entirely an article imported from China, which country will probably continue for a long time to be chief source of tea supply for the Russian markets. Tea in Russia is very dear, but that is due to the heavy expenses of transport and custom duties. The Russians drink enormous quantities of tea, sufficient to frighten any foreigner.

The poor people—and, alas! the Russian people are the poorest in existence—use the so-called "brick" tea. This is the cheapest sort, being mixed with the stems and compressed by some adhesive gum into dry cakes of various sizes, resembling in its outward appearance plug tobacco. This tea, which would probably prove poisonous to anyone else, is consumed by the Russian workman at the average rate of about twenty stakans, or tumblers, a day; the Russian stakan being quite equal to five of the little thimbles of cups used at our afternoon teas. Indeed, a Russian won't be satisfied until "the seventh perspiration breaks out," according to the popular saying. Taking into consideration that black, sour or bitter, brick-like bread, raw onions, garlic, dried leather-like fish and strongly salted herrings are usually

CHIEF ARTICLES OF FOOD

of the people at large, one must not wonder at the enormous quantity of hot tea needed to still a Russian thirst and help on his digestion.

Of course, it is not the "brick" tea as used by the poor moujik that enjoys a world-wide reputation, but that in use among the middle and upper classes. In such households tea at the price of \$1 per pound, 0.90 of the English pound avoirdupois, is quite an ordinary thing, while in wealthier families \$2 per pound is frequently paid. There are choice sorts of teas which are sold even at \$15 per pound, but of these only a few leaves are used to add an extra delicious aroma to the ordinary tea. Thus the high quality of the tea itself brought overland and most carefully packed, is the chief reason of its superiority over the teas in use in Western Europe.

But apart from the tea itself, the Russian method of preparing it goes a long way to contribute to the fine taste of the beverage. In this process the famous "samovar" plays the principal part, and a word or two of explanation will not be amiss. The "samovar" is the utensil used only for boiling the water. They are usually made of brass or copper, but there are also silver samovars, the inside being lined with another metal. In the middle there is a kind of chimney or fire receptacle, around which fresh cold water is poured into the samovar. Burning charcoal or wood is thrown into the chimney, and it usually takes about a quarter of an hour before the water begins to boil, this being announced by a volume of steam from under the cover. Then the boiling water is poured upon the tea in the pot, and the latter placed on the top of the samovar to keep warm, as tea-coseys are unknown in Russia. The infusion is made very strong, but only about a fifth or quarter of a glass is filled with it, the rest being filled up with boiling water. A slice of lemon or milk is added according to taste.

CHINESE TEACHERS.

A Chinese teacher in a private school receives about 1 cent a day for every pupil in his class.

IN MERRY OLD ENGLAND.

DOINGS OF THE ENGLISH PEOPLE REPORTED BY MAIL.

A Record of the Events Taking Place in the Land of the Rose—Interesting Occurrences.

The newest cry of the London waiters is that they are being ousted by girls.

The value of the estate of Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild has been estimated at £1,488,128.

Lord Kitchener has been offered £5,000 for any volume he cares to write on the Soudan campaign.

About 20,000 English ships entered the nineteen free harbours of China in 1896. They carried only English goods.

It is calculated that the people of the United Kingdom last year spent the enormous sum of £154,480,934 on intoxicants.

The Queen was much distressed to hear of the damage by recent gales to the Frogmore Mausoleum, where Prince Albert is buried.

The worn-out uniforms of the British army, when sold, bring back into the War Office treasury close upon \$150,000 a year.

Careful estimates show that each year there are interred within the limits of the county of London, about 103,000 human bodies.

The British Congregational year-book for 1899 shows that there are now 4,815 churches in the British isles and 3,122 ministers, of whom 288 are temporarily without charge.

The Queen's wedding cake was an extraordinary work of art and ingenuity. Its weight was about 300 pounds; it was 14 inches in depth, and three yards in circumference.

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.

When Sir Rudolf Statin visited Queen Victoria at Windsor Castle, it is said that he presented to her a piece of the wooden post to which he had been chained when a captive in the Soudan.

According to the Publishers' Circular, 6,008 new books were published last year in England, 236 fewer than in 1897. The decrease is almost entirely in the class of novels and juvenile works.

Lord Delamere has presented the British museum with a selection of the collection of sporting trophies and skins obtained by him during his recent expedition to Lake Rudolf and Baringo, in British East Africa.

Lord Rosebery has written to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, felicitating him on the skill with which he is leading the Opposition in the House of Commons, and the ready loyalty with which his leadership is acknowledged.

In a recent treatise on alcoholism by Trull, it is stated that in England 75 per cent. of all classes of pauperism are due to drink, and in Germany 90 per cent. In Germany drink leads to 1,600 cases of suicide a year, and supplies the insane asylum with 3,000 victims.

The floor of the rotunda at the London Coal Exchange, where the merchants gather is very unique. It is composed of inlaid woods, arranged in the form of a mariner's compass, within a border of Greek fret. Upwards of 4,000 pieces of wood are employed. Almost every British variety is included in the scheme of decoration.

Queen Victoria has been quite outdone by Emperor Francis Joseph in the matter of the bestowal of titles, orders and decorations, at a jubilee.

In three days Austria's ruler gave away 4,500 of these, and for weeks past the only two firms in Vienna which make them have been working night and day in order to catch up with the demand.

A deputation from the Miller's Union and Bakers' Operatives' Society recently asked the General Purpose Committee of the London County Council to establish municipal bakeries, and in support of their request urged that such bakeries would not only be an advantage to the public, but also a source of profit. The committee's reply was that they would think it over.

When Elizabeth Walford, of Halstead, took up a morning cup of tea, with toast, to Mrs. Marlar, the wife of a chemist, her mistress noticed that the toast was very bitter. Strychnine was afterwards found upon it, and this was the servant's revenge for a "talking to" given respecting her love affairs. At the Essex Assizes she was sentenced to eight months' hard labour.

A large number of distinguished people attain the age of 80 this year. Among the royalties are the Queen and the Duke of Cambridge. In the church there are the Bishop of Gloucester and Dean Gregory. At the universities there is Mr. Bellamy, the president of St. John's, College, Oxford. One of the last survivors of the Arctic expeditions of the early part of this century is represented by Sir Leopold MacClintock, who finally cleared up the fate of Sir John Franklin. Among the new lords are Lord Lingen and Lord Hobhouse. Economics are represented by Lord Farner. Mr. Ruskin has also become an octogenarian. In addition to these are two earls—the Earl of Harlech and the Earl of Stair.