Wacousta

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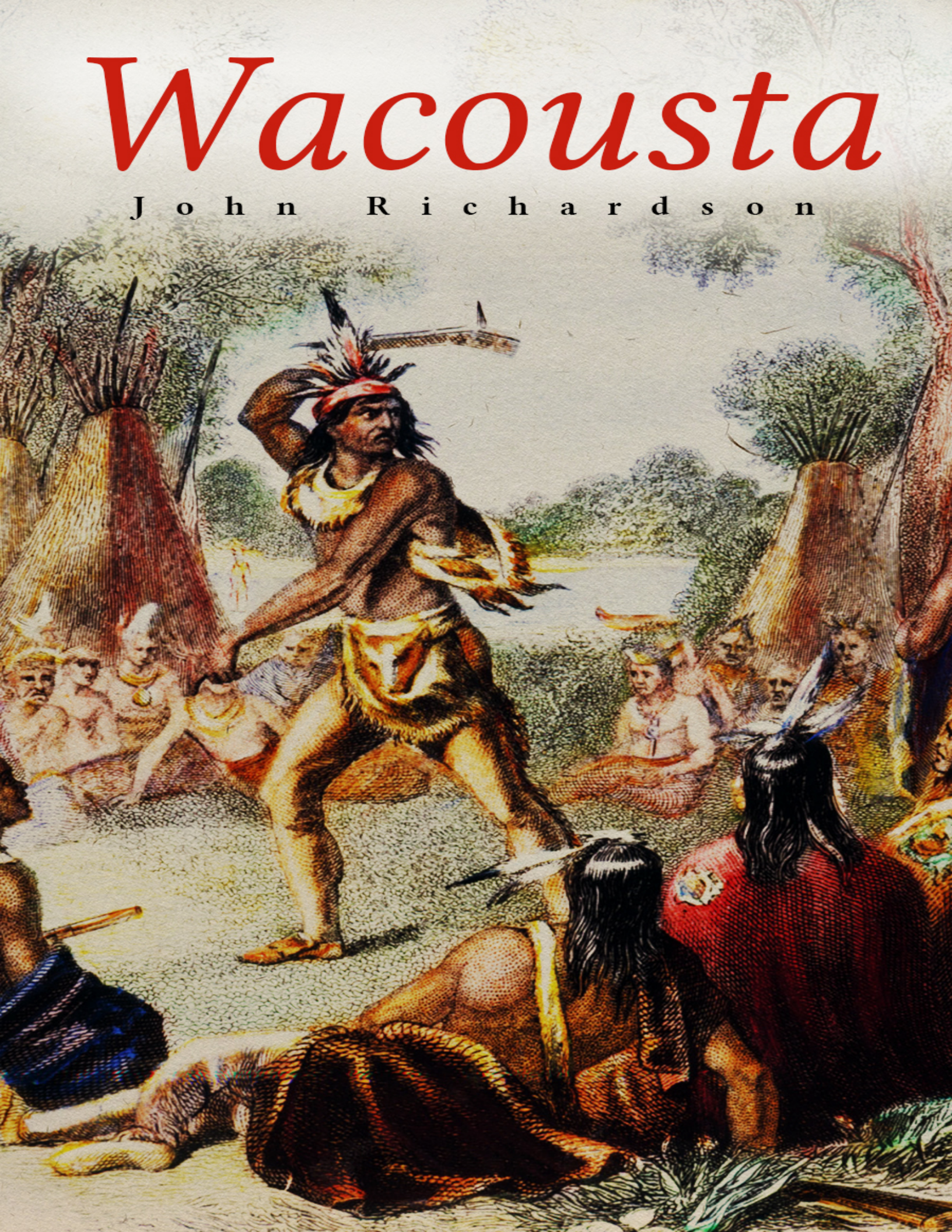

John Richardson

Wacousta

Historical Novel: Tale of the Pontiac Conspiracy

e-artnow, 2022
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EAN 4066338126511

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Preface

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It is well known to every man conversant with the earlier history of this country that, shortly subsequent to the cession of the Canadas to England by France, Ponteac, the great head of the Indian race of that period, had formed a federation of the various tribes, threatening extermin ation to the British posts established along the Western frontier. These were nine in number, and the following stratagem was resorted to by the artful chief to effect their reduction. Investing one fort with his warriors, so as to cut off all communication with the others, and to leave no hope of succor, his practice was to offer terms of surrender, which never were kept in the honorable spirit in which the far more noble and generous Tecumseh always acted with his enemies, and thus, in turn, seven of these outposts fell victims to their confidence in his truth.

Detroit and Michilimaclcinac, or Mackinaw as it is now called, remained, and all the ingenuity of the chieftain was directed to the possession of these strongholds. The following plan, well worthy of his invention, was at length determined upon. During a temporary truce, and while Ponteac was holding forth proposals for an ultimate and durable peace, a game of lacrosse was arranged by him to take place simultaneously on the common or clearing on which rested the forts of Michilimackinac and Detroit. The better to accomplish their object, the guns of the warriors had been cut short and given to their women, who were

instructed to conceal them under their blankets, and during the game, and seemingly without design, to approach the drawbridge of the fort. This precaution taken, the players were to approach and throw over their ball, permission to regain which they presumed would not be denied. On approaching the drawbridge they were with fierce yells to make a general rush, and, securing the arms concealed by the women, to massacre the unprepared garrison.

The day was fixed; the game commenced, and was proceeded with in the manner previously arranged. The ball was dexterously hurled into the fort, and permission asked to recover it. It was granted. The drawbridge was lowered, and the Indians dashed forward for the accomplishment of their work of blood. How different the results in the two garrisons! At Detroit, Ponteac and his warriors had scarcely crossed the drawbridge when, to their astonishment and disappointment, they beheld the guns of the ramparts depressed--the artillerymen with lighted matches at their posts and covering the little garrison, composed of a few companies of the 42nd Highlanders, who were also under arms, and so distributed as to take the enemy most at an advantage. Suddenly they withdrew and without other indication of their purpose than what had been expressed in their manner, and carried off the missing ball. Their design had been discovered and made known by means of significant warnings to the Governor by an Indian woman who owed a debt of gratitude to his family, and was resolved, at all hazards, to save them.

On the same day the same artifice was resorted to at Michilimackinac, and with the most complete success. There

was no guardian angel there to warn them of danger, and all fell beneath the rifle, the tomahawk, the war-club, and the knife, one or two of the traders--a Mr. Henry among the rest--alone excepted.

It was not long after this event when the head of the military authorities in the Colony, apprised of the fate of these captured posts, and made acquainted with the perilous condition of Fort Detroit, which was then reduced to the last extremity, sought an officer who would volunteer the charge of supplies from Albany to Buffalo, and thence across the lake to Detroit, which, if possible, he was to relieve. That volunteer was promptly found in my maternal grandfather, Mr. Erskine, from Strabane, in the North of Ireland, then an officer in the Commissariat Department. The difficulty of the undertaking will be obvious to those who understand the danger attending a journey through the Western wilderness, beset as it was by the warriors of Ponteac, ever on the lookout to prevent succor to the garrison, and yet the duty was successfully accomplished. He left Albany with provisions and ammunition sufficient to fill several Schnectady boats--I think seven--and yet conducted his charge with such prudence and foresight, that notwithstanding the vigilance of Ponteac, he finally and after long watching succeeded, under cover of a dark and stormy night, in throwing into the fort. the supplies of which the remnant of the gallant "Black Watch," as the 42nd was originally named, and a company of whom, while out reconnoitering, had been massacred at a spot in the vicinity of the town, thereafter called the Bloody Run, stood so greatly in need. This important service rendered, Mr.

Erskine, in compliance with the instructions he had received, returned to Albany, where he reported the success of the expedition.

The colonial authorities were not regardless of his interests. When the Ponteac confederacy had been dissolved, and quiet and security restored in that remote region, large tracts of land were granted to Mr. Erskine, and other privileges accorded which eventually gave him the command of nearly a hundred thousand dollars--enormous sum to have been realized at that early period of the country. But it was not destined that he should retain this. The great bulk of his capital was expended on almost the first commercial shipping that ever skimmed the surface of Lakes Huron and Erie. Shortly prior to the Revolution, he was possessed of seven vessels of different tonnage, and the trade in which he had embarked, and of which he was the head, was rapidly increasing his already large fortune, when one of those autumnal hurricanes, which even to this day continue to desolate the waters of the treacherous lake last named, suddenly arose and buried beneath its engulfing waves not less than six of these schooners laden with such riches, chiefly furs, of the West as then were most an object of barter.

Mr. Erskine, who had married the daughter of one of the earliest settlers from France, and of a family well known in history, a lady who had been in Detroit during the siege of the British garrison by Ponteac, now abandoned speculation, and contenting himself with the remnant of his fortune, established himself near the banks of the river, within a short distance of the Bloody Run. Here he continued

throughout the Revolution. Early, however, in the present century, he quitted Detroit and repaired to the Canadian shore, where on a property nearly opposite, which he obtained in exchange, and which in honor of his native country he named Strabane--known as such to this day--he passed the autumn of his days. The last time I beheld him was a day or two subsequent to the affair of the Thames, when General Harrison and Colonel Johnson were temporary inmates of his dwelling.

My father, of a younger branch of the Annandale family, the head of which was attainted in the Scottish rebellion of 1745, was an officer of Simcoe's well-known Rangers, in which regiment, and about the same period, the present Lord Hardinge commenced his services in this country. Being quartered at Fort Erie, he met and married at the house of one of the earliest Canadian merchants a daughter of Mr. Erskine, then on a visit to her sister, and by her had eight children, of whom I am the oldest and only survivor. Having a few years after his marriage been ordered to St. Joseph's, near Michilimackinac, my father thought it expedient to leave me with Mr. Erskine at Detroit, where I received the first rudiments of my education. But here I did not remain long, for it was during the period of the stay of the detachment of Simcoe's Rangers at St. Joseph that Mr. Erskine repaired with his family to the Canadian shore, where on the more elevated and conspicuous part of his grounds which are situated nearly opposite the foot of Hog Island, so repeatedly alluded to in "Wacousta," he had caused a flag-staff to be erected, from which each Sabbath

day proudly floated the colors under which he had served, and which he never could bring himself to disown.

It was at Strabane that the old lady, with whom I was a great favorite, used to enchain my young interest by detailing various facts connected with the seige she so well remembered, and infused into me a longing to grow up to manhood that I might write a book about it. The details of the Ponteac plan for the capture of the two forts were what she most enlarged upon, and although a long lapse of years of absence from the scene, and ten thousand incidents of a higher and more immediate importance might have been supposed to weaken the recollections of so early a period of life, the impression has ever vividly remained. Hence the first appearance of "Wacousta" in London in 1832, more than a quarter of a century later. The story is founded solely on the artifice of Ponteac to possess himself of those two last British forts. All else is imaginary.

It is not a little curious that I, only a few years subsequent to the narration by old Mrs. Erskine of the daring and cunning feats of Ponteac, and his vain attempt to secure the fort of Detroit, should myself have entered it in arms. But it was so. I had ever hated school with a most bitter hatred, and I gladly availed myself of an offer from General Brock to obtain for me a commission in the King's service. Meanwhile I did duty as a cadet with the gallant 41st regiment, to which the English edition of "Wacousta" was inscribed, and was one of the guard of honor who took possession of the fort. The duty of a sentinel over the British colors, which had just been hoisted was assigned to me, and I certainly felt not a little proud of the distinction.

Five times within half a century had the flag of that fortress been changed. First the lily of France, then the red cross of England, and next the stars and stripes of America had floated over its ramparts; and then again the red cross, and lastly the stars. On my return to this country a few years since, I visited those scenes of stirring excitement in which my boyhood had been passed, but I looked in vain for the ancient fortifications which had given a classical interest to that region. The unsparing hand of utilitarianism had passed over them, destroying almost every vestige of the past. Where had risen the only fortress in America at all worthy to give antiquity to the scene, streets had been laid out and made, and houses had been built, leaving not a trace of its existence save the well that formerly supplied the closely beseiged garrison with water; and this, half imbedded in the herbage of an enclosure of a dwelling house of mean appearance, was rather to be guessed at than seen; while at the opposite extremity of the city, where had been conspicuous for years the Bloody Run, cultivation and improvement had nearly obliterated every trace of the past.

Two objections have been urged against "Wacousta" as a consistent tale--the one as involving an improbability, the other a geographical error. It has been assumed that the startling feat accomplished by that man of deep revenge, who is not alone in his bitter hatred and contempt for the base among those who, like spaniels, crawl and kiss the dust at the instigation of their superiors, and yet arrogate to themselves a claim to be considered gentlemen and men of honor and independence--it has, I repeat, been assumed

that the feat attributed to him in connection with the flag-staff of the fort was impossible. No one who has ever seen these erections on the small forts of that day would pronounce the same criticism. Never very lofty, they were ascended at least one-third of their height by means of small projections nailed to them for footholds for the artillerymen, frequently compelled to clear the flag lines entangled at the truck; therefore a strong and active man, such as Wacousta is described to have been, might very well have been supposed, in his strong anxiety for revenge and escape with his victim, to have doubled his strength and activity on so important an occasion, rendering that easy of attainment by himself which an ordinary and unexcited man might deem impossible. I myself have knocked down a gate, almost without feeling the resistance, in order to escape the stilettos of assassins.

The second objection is to the narrowness attributed in the tale to the river St. Clair. This was done in the license usually accorded to a writer of fiction, in order to give greater effect to the scene represented as having occurred there, and, of course, in no way intended as a geographical description of the river, nor was it necessary. In the same spirit and for the same purpose it has been continued.

It will be seen that at the termination of the tragedy enacted at the bridge, by which the Bloody Run was in those days crossed, that the wretched wife of the condemned soldier pronounced a curse that could not, of course, well be fulfilled in the course of the tale. Some few years ago I published in Canada--I might as well have done so in Kamschatka--the continuation, which was to have been

dedicated to the last King of England, but which, after the death of that monarch, was inscribed to Sir John Harvey, whose letter, as making honorable mention of a gallant and beloved brother, I feel it a duty to the memory of the latter to subjoin.

GOVERNMENT HOUSE, FREDERICTON, N.B.,

Major Richardson, Montreal.

November 26th, 1839.

"Dear Sir;--I am favored with your very interesting communication of the 2nd instant, by which I learn that you are the brother of two youths whose gallantry
and merits--and with regard to one of them, his suferings--during the late war, excited my warmest admiration and sympathy. I beg you to believe that I am far from insensible to the affecting proofs which you have made known to me of this grateful recollection
of any little service I may have had it in my power to render them; and I will add that the desire which I felt to serve the father will be found to extend itself to the son, if your nephew should ever find himself under circumstances to require from me any service which it may be within my power to render him."

"With regard to your very flattering proposition to inscribe your present work to me, I can only say that, independent of the respect to which the author of so very charming a production as 'Wacousta' is entitled, the interesting facts and circumstances so unexpectedly
brought to my knowledge and recollection would ensure
a ready acquiescence on my part."

"I remain, dear sir your very faithful servant"

"(Signed) J. HARVEY. "

The "Prophecy Fulfilled," which, however, has never been seen out of the small country in which it appeared--Detroit, perhaps, alone excepted--embraces and indeed is intimately connected with the Beauchamp tragedy, which took place at or near Weisiger's Hotel, in Frankfort, Kentucky, where I had been many years before confined as a prisoner of war. While connecting it with the "Prophecy Fulfilled," and making it subservient to the end I had in view, I had not read or even heard of the existence of a work of the same character, which had already appeared from the pen of an American author. Indeed, I have reason to believe that the "Prophecy Fulfilled," although not published until after a lapse of years, was the first written. No similarity of treatment of the subject exists between the two versions, and this, be it remembered, I remark without in the slightest degree impugning the merit of the production of my fellow-laborer in the same field.

THE AUTHOR.

New York City, January 1st, 1851.

Chapter I

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As we are about to introduce our readers to scenes with which the European is little familiarised, some few cursory remarks, illustrative of the general features of the country into which we have shifted our labours, may not be deemed misplaced at the opening of this volume.

Without entering into minute geographical detail, it may be necessary merely to point out the outline of such portions of the vast continent of America as still acknowledge allegiance to the English crown, in order that the reader, understanding the localities, may enter with deeper interest into the incidents of a tale connected with a ground hitherto untouched by the wand of the modern novelist.

All who have ever taken the trouble to inform themselves of the features of a country so little interesting to the majority of Englishmen in their individual character must be aware,--and for the information of those who are not, we state,--that that portion of the northern continent of America which is known as the United States is divided from the Canadas by a continuous chain of lakes and rivers, commencing at the ocean into which they empty themselves, and extending in a north-western direction to the remotest parts of these wild regions, which have never yet been pressed by other footsteps than those of the native hunters of the soil. First we have the magnificent St. Lawrence, fed from the lesser and tributary streams, rolling

her sweet and silver waters into the foggy seas of the Newfoundland.--But perhaps it will better tend to impress our readers with a panoramic picture of the country in which our scene of action is more immediately laid, by commencing at those extreme and remote points of our Canadian possessions to which their attention will be especially directed in the course of our narrative.

The most distant of the north-western settlements of America is Michilimackinac, a name given by the Indians, and preserved by the Americans, who possess the fort even to this hour. It is situated at the head of the Lakes Michigan and Huron, and adjacent to the Island of St. Joseph's, where, since the existence of the United States as an independent republic, an English garrison has been maintained, with a view of keeping the original fortress in check. From the lakes above mentioned we descend into the River Sinclair, which, in turn, disembogues itself into the lake of the same name. This again renders tribute to the Detroit, a broad majestic river, not less than a mile in breadth at its source, and progressively widening towards its mouth until it is finally lost in the beautiful Lake Erie, computed at about one hundred and sixty miles in circumference. From the embouchure of this latter lake commences the Chippawa, better known in Europe from the celebrity of its stupendous falls of Niagara, which form an impassable barrier to the seaman, and, for a short space, sever the otherwise uninterrupted chain connecting the remote fortresses we have described with the Atlantic. At a distance of a few miles from the falls, the Chippawa finally empties itself into the Ontario, the most splendid of the gorgeous American

lakes, on the bright bosom of which, during the late war, frigates, seventy-fours, and even a ship of one hundred and twelve guns, manned by a crew of one thousand men, reflected the proud pennants of England! At the opposite extremity of this magnificent and sea-like lake, which is upwards of two hundred miles in circumference, the far-famed St. Lawrence takes her source; and after passing through a vast tract of country, whose elevated banks bear every trace of fertility and cultivation, connects itself with the Lake Champlain, celebrated, as well as Erie, for a signal defeat of our flotilla during the late contest with the Americans. Pushing her bold waters through this somewhat inferior lake, the St. Lawrence pursues her course seaward with impetuosity, until arrested near La Chine by rock-studded shallows, which produce those strong currents and eddies, the dangers of which are so beautifully expressed in the Canadian Boat Song,--a composition that has rendered the "rapids" almost as familiar to the imagination of the European as the falls of Niagara themselves. Beyond La Chine the St. Lawrence gradually unfolds herself into greater majesty and expanse, and rolling past the busy commercial town of Montreal, is once more increased in volume by the insignificant lake of St. Peter's, nearly opposite to the settlement of Three Rivers, midway between Montreal and Quebec. From thence she pursues her course unfed, except by a few inferior streams, and gradually widens as she rolls past the capital of the Canadas, whose tall and precipitous battlements, bristled with cannon, and frowning defiance from the clouds in which they appear half imbedded, might be taken by the imaginative enthusiast for

the strong tower of the Spirit of those stupendous scenes. From this point the St. Lawrence increases in expanse, until, at length, after traversing a country where the traces of civilisation become gradually less and less visible, she finally merges in the gulf, from the centre of which the shores on either hand are often invisible to the naked eye; and in this manner is it imperceptibly lost in that misty ocean, so dangerous to mariners from its deceptive and almost perpetual fogs.

In following the links of this extensive chain of lakes and rivers, it must be borne in recollection, that, proceeding seaward from Michilimackinac and its contiguous district, all that tract of country which lies to the right constitutes what is now known as the United States of America, and all on the left the two provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, tributary to the English government, subject to the English laws, and garrisoned by English troops. The several forts and harbours established along the left bank of the St. Lawrence, and throughout that portion of our possessions which is known as Lower Canada, are necessarily, from the improved condition and more numerous population of that province, on a larger scale and of better appointment; but in Upper Canada, where the traces of civilisation are less evident throughout, and become gradually more faint as we advance westward, the fortresses and harbours bear the same proportion In strength and extent to the scantiness of the population they are erected to protect. Even at the present day, along that line of remote country we have selected for the theatre of our labours, the garrisons are both few in number and weak in strength, and evidence of

cultivation is seldom to be found at any distance in the interior; so that all beyond a certain extent of clearing, continued along the banks of the lakes and rivers, is thick, impervious, rayless forest, the limits of which have never yet been explored, perhaps, by the natives themselves.

Such being the general features of the country even at the present day, it will readily be comprehended how much more wild and desolate was the character they exhibited as far back as the middle of the last century, about which period our story commences. At that epoch, it will be borne in mind, what we have described as being the United States were then the British colonies of America dependent on the mother-country; while the Canadas, on the contrary, were, or had very recently been, under the dominion of France, from whom they had been wrested after a long struggle, greatly advanced in favour of England by the glorious battle fought on the plains of Abraham, near Quebec, and celebrated for the defeat of Montcalm and the death of Wolfe.

The several attempts made to repossess themselves of the strong hold of Quebec having, in every instance, been met by discomfiture and disappointment, the French, in despair, relinquished the contest, and, by treaty, ceded their claims to the Canadas,--an event that was hastened by the capitulation of the garrison of Montreal, commanded by the Marquis de Vaudreuil, to the victorious arms of General Amherst. Still, though conquered as a people, many of the leading men in the country, actuated by that jealousy for which they were remarkable, contrived to oppose obstacles to the quiet possession of a conquest by those whom they

seemed to look upon as their hereditary enemies; and in furtherance of this object, paid agents, men of artful and intriguing character, were dispersed among the numerous tribes of savages, with a view of exciting them to acts of hostility against their conquerors. The long and uninterrupted possession, by the French, of those countries immediately bordering on the hunting grounds and haunts of the natives, with whom they carried on an extensive traffic in furs, had established a communionship of interest between themselves and those savage and warlike people, which failed not to turn to account the vindictive views of the former. The whole of the province of Upper Canada at that time possessed but a scanty population, protected in its most flourishing and defensive points by stockade forts; the chief object of which was to secure the garrisons, consisting each of a few companies, from any sudden surprise on the part of the natives, who, although apparently inclining to acknowledge the change of neighbours, and professing amity, were, it was well known, too much in the interest of their old friends the French, and even the French Canadians themselves, not to be regarded with the most cautious distrust.

These stockade forts were never, at any one period, nearer to each other than from one hundred and fifty to two hundred miles, so that, in the event of surprise or alarm, there was little prospect of obtaining assistance from without. Each garrison, therefore, was almost wholly dependent on its own resources; and, when surrounded unexpectedly by numerous bands of hostile Indians, had no other alternative than to hold out to the death. Capitulation

was out of the question; for, although the wile and artifice of the natives might induce them to promise mercy, the moment their enemies were in their power promises and treaties were alike broken, and indiscriminate massacre ensued. Communication by water was, except during a period of profound peace, almost impracticable; for, although of late years the lakes of Canada have been covered with vessels of war, many of them, as we have already remarked, of vast magnitude, and been the theatres of conflicts that would not have disgraced the salt waters of ocean itself, at the period to which our story refers the flag of England was seen to wave only on the solitary mast of some ill-armed and ill-manned gunboat, employed rather for the purpose of conveying despatches from fort to fort, than with any serious view to acts either of aggression or defence.

In proportion as the colonies of America, now the United States, pushed their course of civilisation westward, in the same degree did the numerous tribes of Indians, who had hitherto dwelt more seaward, retire upon those of their own countrymen, who, buried in vast and impenetrable forests, had seldom yet seen the face of the European stranger; so that, in the end, all the more central parts of those stupendous wilds became doubly peopled. Hitherto, however, that civilisation had not been carried beyond the state of New York; and all those countries which have, since the American revolution, been added to the Union under the names of Kentucky, Ohio, Missouri, Michigan, &c., were, at the period embraced by our story, inhospitable and unproductive woods, subject only to the dominion of the

native, and as yet unshorn by the axe of the cultivator. A few portions only of the opposite shores of Michigan were occupied by emigrants from the Canadas, who, finding no one to oppose or molest them, selected the most fertile spots along the banks of the river; and of the existence of these infant settlements, the English colonists, who had never ventured so far, were not even aware until after the conquest of Canada by the mother- country. This particular district was the centre around which the numerous warriors, who had been driven westward by the colonists, had finally assembled; and rude villages and encampments rose far and near for a circuit of many miles around this infant settlement and fort of the Canadians, to both of which they had given the name of Detroit, after the river on whose elevated banks they stood. Proceeding westward from this point, and along the tract of country that diverged from the banks of the Lakes Huron, Sinclair, and Michigan, all traces of that partial civilisation were again lost in impervious wilds, tenanted only by the fiercest of the Indian tribes, whose homes were principally along the banks of that greatest of American waters, the Lake Superior, and in the country surrounding the isolated fort of Michilimackinac, the last and most remote of the European fortresses in Canada.

When at a later period the Canadas were ceded to us by France, those parts of the opposite frontier which we have just described became also tributary to the English crown, and were, by the peculiar difficulties that existed to communication with the more central and populous districts, rendered especially favourable to the exercise of hostile intrigue by the numerous active French emissaries

every where dispersed among the Indian tribes. During the first few years of the conquest, the inhabitants of Canada, who were all either European French, or immediate descendants of that nation, were, as might naturally be expected, more than restive under their new governors, and many of the most impatient spirits of the country sought every opportunity of sowing the seeds of distrust and jealousy in the hearts of the natives. By these people it was artfully suggested to the Indians, that their new oppressors were of the race of those who had driven them from the sea, and were progressively advancing on their territories until scarce a hunting ground or a village would be left to them. They described them, moreover, as being the hereditary enemies of their great father, the King of France, with whose governors they had buried the hatchet for ever, and smoked the calumet of perpetual peace. Fired by these wily suggestions, the high and jealous spirit of the Indian chiefs took the alarm, and they beheld with impatience the "Red Coat," or "Saganaw," [Footnote: This word thus pronounced by themselves, in reference to the English soldiery, is, in all probability, derived from the original English settlers in Saganaw Bay.] usurping, as they deemed it, those possessions which had so recently acknowledged the supremacy of the pale flag of their ancient ally. The cause of the Indians, and that of the Canadians, became, in some degree, identified as one, and each felt it was the interest, and it may be said the natural instinct, of both, to hold communionship of purpose, and to indulge the same jealousies and fears. Such was the state of things in 1763, the period at which our story commences,--an epoch fruitful

in designs of hostility and treachery on the part of the Indians, who, too crafty and too politic to manifest their feelings by overt acts declaratory of the hatred carefully instilled into their breasts, sought every opportunity to compass the destruction of the English, wherever they were most vulnerable to the effects of stratagem. Several inferior forts situated on the Ohio had already fallen into their hands, when they summoned all their address and cunning to accomplish the fall of the two important though remote posts of Detroit and Michilimackinac. For a length of time they were baffled by the activity and vigilance of the respective governors of these forts, who had had too much fatal experience in the fate of their companions not to be perpetually on the alert against their guile; but when they had at length, in some degree, succeeded in lulling the suspicions of the English, they determined on a scheme, suggested by a leading chief, a man of more than ordinary character, which promised fair to rid them altogether of a race they so cordially detested. We will not, however, mar the interest of our tale, by anticipating, at this early stage, either the nature or the success of a stratagem which forms the essential groundwork of our story.

While giving, for the information of the many, what, we trust, will not be considered a too compendious outline of the Canadas, and the events connected with them, we are led to remark, that, powerful as was the feeling of hostility cherished by the French Canadians towards the English when the yoke of early conquest yet hung heavily on them, this feeling eventually died away under the mild influence of a government that preserved to them the exercise of all

their customary privileges, and abolished all invidious distinctions between the descendants of France and those of the mother-country. So universally, too, has this system of conciliation been pursued, we believe we may with safety aver, of all the numerous colonies that have succumbed to the genius and power of England, there are none whose inhabitants entertain stronger feelings of attachment and loyalty to her than those of Canada; and whatever may be the transient differences,--differences growing entirely out of circumstances and interests of a local character, and in no way tending to impeach the acknowledged fidelity of the mass of French Canadians,--whatever, we repeat, may be the ephemeral differences that occasionally spring up between the governors of those provinces and individual members of the Houses of Assembly, they must, in no way, be construed into a general feeling of disaffection towards the English crown.

In proportion also as the Canadians have felt and acknowledged the beneficent effects arising from a change of rulers, so have the Indian tribes been gradually weaned from their first fierce principle of hostility, until they have subsequently become as much distinguished by their attachment to, as they were three quarters of a century ago remarkable for their untameable aversion for, every thing that bore the English name, or assumed the English character. Indeed, the hatred which they bore to the original colonists has been continued to their descendants, the subjects of the United States; and the same spirit of union subsisted between the natives and British troops, and people of Canada, during the late American war, that at an

earlier period of the history of that country prevailed so powerfully to the disadvantage of England.

And now we have explained a course of events which were in some measure necessary to the full understanding of the country by the majority of our readers, we shall, in furtherance of the same object, proceed to sketch a few of the most prominent scenes more immediately before us.

The fort of Detroit, as it was originally constructed by the French, stands in the middle of a common, or description of small prairie, bounded by woods, which, though now partially thinned in their outskirts, were at that period untouched by the hand of civilisation. Erected at a distance of about half a mile from the banks of the river, which at that particular point are high and precipitous, it stood then just far enough from the woods that swept round it in a semicircular form to be secure from the rifle of the Indian; while from its batteries it commanded a range of country on every hand, which no enemy unsupported by cannon could traverse with impunity. Immediately in the rear, and on the skirt of the wood, the French had constructed a sort of bomb-proof, possibly intended to serve as a cover to the workmen originally employed in clearing the woods, but long since suffered to fall into decay. Without the fortification rose a strong and triple line of pickets, each of about two feet and a half in circumference, and so fitted into each other as to leave no other interstices than those which were perforated for the discharge of musketry. They were formed of the hardest and most knotted pines that could be procured; the sharp points of which were seasoned by fire until they acquired nearly the durability and consistency of

iron. Beyond these firmly imbedded pickets was a ditch, encircling the fort, of about twenty feet in width, and of proportionate depth, the only communication over which to and from the garrison was by means of a drawbridge, protected by a strong chevaux-de-frise. The only gate with which the fortress was provided faced the river; on the more immediate banks of which, and to the left of the fort, rose the yet infant and straggling village that bore the name of both. Numerous farm-houses, however, almost joining each other, contributed to form a continuity of many miles along the borders of the river, both on the right and on the left; while the opposite shores of Canada, distinctly seen in the distance, presented, as far as the eye could reach, the same enlivening character of fertility. The banks, covered with verdure on either shore, were more or less undulating at intervals; but in general they were high without being abrupt, and picturesque without being bold, presenting, in their partial cultivation, a striking contrast to the dark, tall, and frowning forests bounding every point of the perspective.

At a distance of about five miles on the left of the town the course of the river was interrupted by a small and thickly wooded island, along whose sandy beach occasionally rose the low cabin or wigwam which the birch canoe, carefully upturned and left to dry upon the sands, attested to be the temporary habitation of the wandering Indian. That branch of the river which swept by the shores of Canada was (as at this day) the only navigable one for vessels of burden, while that on the opposite coast abounded in shallows and bars, affording passage merely to

the light barks of the natives, which seemed literally to skim the very surface of its waves. Midway, between that point of the continent which immediately faced the eastern extremity of the island we have just named and the town of Detroit, flowed a small tributary river, the approaches to which, on either hand, were over a slightly sloping ground, the view of which could be entirely commanded from the fort. The depth of this river, now nearly dried up, at that period varied from three to ten or twelve feet; and over this, at a distance of about twenty yards from the Detroit, into which it emptied itself, rose, communicating with the high road, a bridge, which will more than once be noticed in the course of our tale. Even to the present hour it retains the name given to it during these disastrous times; and there are few modern Canadians, or even Americans, who traverse the "Bloody Bridge," especially at the still hours of advanced night, without recalling to memory the tragic events of those days, (handed down as they have been by their fathers, who were eye-witnesses of the transaction,) and peopling the surrounding gloom with the shades of those whose life-blood erst crimsoned the once pure waters of that now nearly exhausted stream; and whose mangled and headless corpses were slowly borne by its tranquil current into the bosom of the parent river, where all traces of them finally disappeared.

These are the minuter features of the scene we have brought more immediately under the province of our pen. What Detroit was in 1763 it nearly is at the present day, with this difference, however, that many of those points which were then in a great degree isolated and rude are

now redolent with the beneficent effects of improved cultivation; and in the immediate vicinity of that memorable bridge, where formerly stood merely the occasional encampment of the Indian warrior, are now to be seen flourishing farms and crops, and other marks of agricultural industry. Of the fort of Detroit itself we will give the following brief history:--It was, as we have already stated, erected by the French while in the occupancy of the country by which it is more immediately environed; subsequently, and at the final cession of the Canadas, it was delivered over to England, with whom it remained until the acknowledgement of the independence of the colonists by the mother-country, when it hoisted the colours of the republic; the British garrison marching out, and crossing over into Canada, followed by such of the loyalists as still retained their attachment to the English crown. At the commencement of the late war with America it was the first and more immediate theatre of conflict, and was remarkable, as well as Michilimackinac, for being one of the first posts of the Americans that fell into our hands. The gallant daring, and promptness of decision, for which the lamented general, Sir Isaac Brock, was so eminently distinguished, achieved the conquest almost as soon as the American declaration of war had been made known in Canada; and on this occasion we ourselves had the good fortune to be selected as part of the guard of honour, whose duty it was to lower the flag of America, and substitute that of England in its place. On the approach, however, of an overwhelming army of the enemy in the autumn of the ensuing year it was abandoned by our troops, after having been dismantled and reduced, in its