



FORT RICHELIEU.

THE WERWOLVES.

BY H. BEAUGRAND.

WITH PICTURES BY HENRY SANDHAM.

I.

A MOTLEY and picturesque-looking crowd had gathered within the walls of Fort Richelieu to attend the annual distribution of powder and lead, to take part in the winter drills and target practice, and to join in the Christmas festivities, that would last until the fast-approaching New Year.

Coueurs des bois from the Western country, scouts, hunters, trappers, militiamen, and habitants from the surrounding settlements, Indian warriors from the neighboring tribe of friendly Abenakis, were all placed under the military instruction of the company of regular marine infantry that garrisoned the fort constructed in 1665, by M. de Saurel, at the mouth of the Richelieu River, where

it flows into the waters of the St. Lawrence, forty-five miles below Montreal.

It was on Christmas eve of the year 1706, and the dreaded Iroquois were committing depredations in the surrounding country, burning farm-houses, stealing cattle and horses, and killing every man, woman, and child whom they could not carry away to their own villages to torture at the stake.

The Richelieu River was the natural highway to the Iroquois country during the open season, but now that its waters were ice-bound, it was hard to tell whence the attacks from those terrible savages could be expected.

The distribution of arms and ammunition having been made, under the joint super-



"A MOTLEY AND PICTURESQUE-LOOKING CROWD."

vision of the notary royal and the commandant of the fort, the men had retired to the barracks, where they were drinking, singing, and telling stories.

Tales of the most extraordinary adventures were being unfolded by some of the hunters, who were vying with one another in their attempts at relating some unheard-of and fantastic incidents that would create a sensation among their superstitious and wonder-loving comrades.

A sharp lookout was kept outside on the bastions, where four sentries were pacing up and down, repeating every half-hour the familiar watch-cry:

"Sentinelles! prenez garde à vous!"

Old Sergeant Bellehumeur of the regulars, who had seen forty years of service in Canada, and who had come over with the regiment of Carignan-Salières, was quietly sitting in a corner of the guard-room, smoking his Indian calumet, and watching over and keeping order among the men who were inclined to become boisterous over the oft-repeated libations.

One of the men, who had accompanied La Salle in his first expedition in search of the mouths of the Mississippi, was in the act of reciting his adventures with the hostile tribes that they had met in that far-off country, when the crack of a musket was heard from the outside, through the battlements.

A second report immediately followed the first one, and the cry, "Aux armes!" was soon heard, with two more shots following close on each other.

The four sentries had evidently fired their muskets at some enemy or enemies, and the guard tumbled out in a hurry, followed by all the men, who had seized their arms, ready for an emergency.

The officer on duty was already on the spot when Sergeant Bellehumeur arrived to inquire into the cause of all this turmoil.

The sentry who had fired the first shot declared excitedly that all at once, on turning round on his beat, he had seen a party of red devils dancing around a bush fire, a couple of hundred yards away, right across the river from the fort, on the point covered with tall pine-trees. He had fired his musket in their direction, more with the intention of giving alarm than in the hope of hitting any of them at that distance.

The second, third, and fourth shots had been successively fired by the other sentries, who had not seen anything of the Indians, but who had joined in the firing with the idea of calling the guard to the spot, and scaring away any enemy who might be prowling around.

"But where are the Indians now?" inquired the officer, who had climbed on the parapet, "and where is the fire of which you speak?"

"They seem to have disappeared as by enchantment, sir," answered the soldier, in astonishment; "but they were there a few



"AN OLD WEATHER-BEATEN TRAPPER."

moments ago, when I fired my musket at them."

"Well, we will see"; and, turning to Bellehumeur: "Sergeant, take ten men with you, and proceed over there cautiously, to see whether you can discover any signs of the presence of Indians on the point. Meanwhile, see to it that the guard is kept under arms until your return, to prevent any surprise."

Bellehumeur did as he was ordered, picking ten of his best men to accompany him. The gate of the fort was opened, and the drawbridge was lowered to give passage to the party, who proceeded to cross the river, over the ice, marching at first in Indian file. When nearing the opposite shore, near the edge of the wood, the men were seen to scatter, and to advance carefully, taking advantage of every tree to protect themselves against a possible ambush.

The night was a bright one, and any dark object could be plainly seen on the white snow, in the clearing that surrounded the fort.

The men disappeared for a short time, but were soon seen again, coming back in the same order and by the same route.

"Nothing, sir," said the sergeant, in saluting the officer. "Not a sign of fire of any

kind, and not a single Indian track, in the snow, over the point."

"Well, that is curious, I declare! Had the sentry been drinking, sergeant, before going on post?"

"No more than the rest of the men, sir; and I could see no sign of liquor on him when the relief was sent out, an hour ago."

"Well, the man must be a fool or a poltroon to raise such an alarm without any cause whatever. See that he is immediately relieved from his post, sergeant, and have him confined in the guard-house until he appears before the commandant in the morning."

The sentry was duly relieved, and calm was restored among the garrison. The men went back to their quarters, and the conversation naturally fell on the peculiar circumstances that had just taken place.

II.

AN old weather-beaten trapper who had just returned from the Great Lakes volunteered the remark that, for his part, he was not so very sure that the sentry had not acted in perfect good faith, and had not been deceived by a band of *louis-garous*, — werwolves, — who came and went, appeared and disappeared, just as they pleased, under the protection of old Nick himself.

"I have seen them more than once in my travels," continued the trapper; "and only last year I had occasion to fire at just such a band of miscreants, up on the Ottawa River, above the portage of the Grandes-Chaudières."

"Tell us about it!" chimed in the crowd of superstitious adventurers, whose credulous curiosity was instantly awakened by the promise of a story that would appeal to their love of the supernatural.

And every one gathered about the old trapper, who was evidently proud to have the occasion to recite his exploits before as distinguished an assemblage of dare-devils as one could find anywhere, from Quebec to Michilimackinac.

"We had left Lachine, twenty-four of us, in three war-canoes, bound for the Illinois country, by way of the Ottawa River and the Upper Lakes; and in four days we had reached the portage of the Grandes-Chaudières, where we rested for one day to renew our stock of meat, which was getting exhausted. Along with one of my companions, I had followed some deer-tracks, which led us several miles up the river, and we soon succeeded in killing a splendid animal. We

divided the meat so as to make it easier for us to carry, and it was getting on toward nightfall when we began to retrace our steps in the direction of the camp. Darkness overtook us on the way, and as we were heavily burdened, we had stopped to rest and to smoke a pipe in a clump of maple-trees on the edge of the river. All at once, and without warning of any kind, we saw a bright fire of balsam boughs burning on a small island in the middle of the river. Ten or twelve renegades, half human and half beasts, with heads and tails like wolves, arms, legs, and bodies like men, and eyes glaring like burning coals, were dancing around the fire, and barking a sort of outlandish chant that was now and then changed to peals of infernal laughter. We could also vaguely perceive, lying on the ground, the body of a human being that two of the imps were engaged in cutting up, probably getting it ready for the horrible meal that the miscreants would make when the dance would be over. Although we were sitting in the shadow of the trees, partly concealed by the underbrush, we were at once discovered by the dancers, who beckoned to us to go and join them in their disgusting feast. That is the way they entrap unwary hunters for their bloody sacrifices. Our first impulse was to fly toward the woods; but we soon realized that we had to deal with *loups-garous*; and as we had both been to confession and taken holy communion before embarking at Lachine, we knew we had nothing to fear from them. White *loups-garous* are bad enough at any time, and you all know that only those who have remained seven years without performing their Easter duties are liable to be changed into wolves, condemned to prowl about at night until they are delivered by some Christian drawing blood from them by inflicting a wound on their forehead in the form of a cross. But we had to deal with Indian renegades, who had accepted the sacraments only in mockery, and who had never since performed any of the duties commanded by the Church. They are the worst *loups-garous* that one can meet, because they are constantly intent on capturing some misguided Christian, to drink his blood and to eat his flesh in their horrible *fricots*. Had we been in possession of holy water to sprinkle at them, or of a four-leaved clover to make wadding for our muskets, we might have exterminated the whole crowd, after having cut crosses on the lead of our bullets. But we were powerless to interfere with them, knowing full well that ordinary ammunition was useless, and that

bullets would flatten out on their tough and impenetrable hides. Wolves at night, those devils would assume again, during the day, the appearance of ordinary Indians; but their hide is only turned inside out, with the hair growing inward. We were about to proceed on our way to the camp, leaving the *loups-garous* to continue their witchcraft unmolested, when a thought struck me that we might at least try to give them a couple of parting shots. We both withdrew the bullets from our muskets, cut crosses on them with our hunting-knives, placed them back in the barrels, along with two *dizaines* [a score] of beads from the blessed rosary which I carried in my pocket. That would surely make the renegades sick, if it did not kill them outright.

"We took good aim, and fired together. Such unearthly howling and yelling I have never heard before or since. Whether we killed any of them I could not say; but the fire instantly disappeared, and the island was left in darkness, while the howls grew



LA-LINOTTE-QUI-CHANTE.

fainter and fainter as the *loups-garous* seemed to be scampering in the distance. We returned to camp, where our companions were beginning to be anxious about our safety.

We found that one man, a hard character who bragged of his misdeeds, had disappeared during the day, and when we left on the following morning he had not yet returned to camp, neither did we ever hear of him afterward. In paddling up the river in our canoes, we passed close to the island where we had seen the loup-garous the night before. We landed, and searched around for some time; but we could find no traces of fire, or any signs of the passage of werwolves or of any other animals. I knew that it would turn out just so, because it is a well-known fact that those accursed brutes never leave any tracks behind them. My opinion was then, and has never changed to this day, that the man who strayed from our camp, and never returned, was captured by the loup-garous, and was being eaten up by them when we disturbed their horrible feast."

"Well, is that all?" inquired Sergeant Bellehumeur, with an ill-concealed contempt.

"Yes, that is all; but is it not enough to make one think that the sentry who has just been confined in the guard-house by the lieutenant for causing a false alarm has been deceived by a band of loup-garous who were picnicking on the point, and who disappeared in a twinkling when they found out that they were discovered?"

III.

A MURMUR of assent greeted these last remarks of the speaker, and a number of *coureurs des bois* were ready to corroborate the absolute likelihood of his story by relating some of their own experiences with the loup-garous.

One of them, however, in his dislike for anything connected with military discipline, ventured to add some offensive remarks for the young officer who had ordered the sentry to be placed in confinement.

"*Halte-là!*" growled the sergeant. "The first one who dares insinuate anything con-

trary to discipline, or show a want of respect for any of our officers, will be placed in the dungeon without further ado. Tell as many stories as you please, but as long as you are under my orders you will have to remember that you are not roaming at large in the wilderness, and that you are here in one of the forts of his Majesty the King of France."

This had the effect of producing an immediate silence, and the sergeant continued:

"I am not ready to gainsay the truthfulness of the story that has just been told, because I am myself inclined to believe in loup-garous, although I have never met one face to face; but I will not suffer any one to speak disrespectfully of my superior officers. I will,

however, if you desire it, tell you the experience of one of my old *copains*, now dead and gone these many years, with a female loup-garou, who lived in the Iroquois village of Caughnawaga, near Montreal."

At the unanimous request of the crowd, the sergeant went on:



"BAPTISTE HURRIEDLY SAID GOOD-BY."

"Baptiste Tranchemontagne was a corporal with me, in the company of M. de Saurel, in the old regiment of Carignan-Salières. We had come from France together, and he and I made a pair in everything connected with the service, having fought side by side in many an encounter with the redskins. The poor fellow fell into the hands of the Iroquois at Cataracoui, and he was tortured at the stake in the village of the Mohawks. He died like a man, smiling when they tore the flesh from his body with red-hot tongs, and spitting in the faces of his tormentors when they approached him to cut off his lips and to pull out his eyes. May God have mercy on his brave soul!"

And the sergeant devoutly crossed himself.

"Baptiste, in one of our expeditions on the south shore of Lake Ontario, had made the acquaintance of a young Indian maiden who was known as *La-linotte-qui-chante* among the

warriors of her tribe. An intimacy sprang up between Baptiste and the young squaw, and they were married, Indian fashion, without much ceremony, the father's consent having been obtained by the gift of an old musket. The girl followed us back, and joined the tribe that had settled at Caughnawaga, under the protection of the guns of Fort St. Louis, opposite Lachine, where our company was stationed for nearly a whole year. Everything went well as long as we remained at Fort St. Louis, although, Indian-like, the young squaw was fearfully jealous of Baptiste, and at times would threaten him with acts of direful vengeance if he ever became unfaithful to her.

"One day our command was ordered to Fort St. Frédéric, on Lake Champlain, and our captain gave the strictest order that no camp-follower of any kind, men, women, or children, should be allowed to accompany us in the expedition. We started in the middle of the night, and Baptiste hurriedly said good-by to his Indian wife, telling her that he would return to see her in a short time. The squaw answered sulkily that she would follow him anywhere, and that, in spite of the captain or any one else, she would reach the

fort before we did. We knew the Indian character too well to doubt that she would do as she promised, and when we marched over the drawbridge of Fort St. Frédéric, five days afterward, we were not too much astonished to see, among the throng of Indians who had gathered to see us arrive, the face of Baptiste's squaw, half concealed under her blanket. Baptiste was slightly annoyed at her presence, because he feared that the officers might think that, contrary to orders, he had encouraged her to follow the company. But we had no time to reflect on the situation before our company was ordered to embark in canoes, to proceed at once to Lake St. Sacrament (now Lake George). Baptiste did not even have the chance to speak to his squaw before we

got under way, with three more companies of our regiment, under the command of Colonel de Ramezay. We were away for three months, engaged in an expedition against the Mohawks; and we gave the red devils such a thrashing that they pleaded for peace, and we returned victorious to enjoy a few weeks of well-earned repose in the garrison of Montreal. Baptiste had lost sight of La-linotte-qui-chante, and he supposed that she had either returned to her tribe or else formed new ties with some of the trappers who regularly visited the forts to sell their furs and squander the proceeds in riotous living.



"A PRETTY GIRL WHO LIVED AT LAPRAIRIE."

"The Indians having buried the tomahawk, there came a period of peace, when the governor-general at Quebec offered a grant of land to any soldier who would quit the regular service, and a dowry of eighty pistoles in money to any woman, provided that they got married and settled in the country. I never had any taste for wedded life or for the career of a *pékin*, but Baptiste was not slow in casting his eyes upon a pretty girl who lived at Laprairie, across the river from Montreal. He told me confidentially that he had made up his mind to leave the service and to profit by the lib-

eral offers of the government. I attempted to dissuade him from his project, because I hated to part with my best friend; but he was smitten, and I had to make up my mind to bow to the inevitable when strange and unexpected occurrences soon took place that upset all his plans. One day, when we were both lounging about the market-place, Baptiste suddenly found himself face to face with La-linotte-qui-chante, whom he had last seen some six months before at Fort St. Frédéric. To say that he felt embarrassed would be putting it very mildly; but he assumed a bold countenance, and spoke words of welcome that were received with apparent indifference by the Indian girl. She had returned to Caughnawaga, where she was now living, and she had come to Montreal with

some Indian hunters who had brought their furs to market. She spoke not a word, but looked reproachfully at her old lover with her piercing black eyes, and disappeared in the crowd. Baptiste was seriously annoyed at this unexpected meeting, but as the girl had left without uttering any reproaches, he took it for granted that she had become reconciled to the idea of a final separation between them. My chum had applied for his discharge, and was to be married on the coming Easter Monday, and, as a matter of course, I was to act as his best man—his *garçon d'honneur*. Preparations were being made for the wedding, and there was hardly a day that Baptiste did not cross over the river to go and see his fiancée. Ten days before the date appointed for the ceremony, Baptiste returned one night in great trouble. His intended had been taken ill, seriously ill, with a violent fever, and no one at Laprairie seemed to understand the nature of hersickness. He would ask the post surgeon to go and see her in the morning. And besides, on leaving Laprairie, that very night, he had met La-linotte-qui-chante at the cross-road that led to Caughnawaga. No words had been exchanged between them, but her presence there at such a time was sufficient to give him food for presages of no pleasant nature. Accompanied by the surgeon, he repaired to Laprairie on the following morning, and he was horrified to learn that his fiancée had been stricken down with the smallpox, that was then raging among our Indian allies encamped about Fort St. Louis. Baptiste insisted at once that he should nurse his sweetheart through her dangerous illness, and the doctor returned to Montreal after having prescribed the necessary treatment. It was useless, however, for five days later my friend returned to Montreal with the sad news that his fiancée was dead. The poor fellow, in despair, réinlisted at once in our company, and declared that he would end his life in the ranks. He then took me aside and related to me the following incidents that had occurred on the night before the death of his betrothed. During the day he had been

astonished, on entering the large family living-room, to find La-linotte-qui-chante sitting by the fireplace, as the Indians are wont to do, coming and going oftentimes without asking permission of any kind from the inmates, and even without speaking a single word. Suspicious of her presence at such a place and under such circumstances, he immediately went to her and asked her what she was doing there.

"I have come to offer you help in your trouble and consolation in your sorrow. The white maiden whom you love so much will be dead before morning, if I do not come to the rescue. I will go back to Caughnawaga, and ask for a potion that will cure her from our medicine-man. Meet me to-night, at twelve o'clock, at the first turn of the road, among the pine-trees on the riverside."

"And before Baptiste could answer she had left the house, going in the direction of the Indian village. Although he did not half like the mysterious ways of the squaw, Baptiste said to himself that no harm could come of trying the de-

coction as a last resort, because the dreadful disease had made such progress that it was evident that his sweetheart was likely to die at any moment.

"Shortly before midnight Baptiste took his musket and went out to the rendezvous. He had been waiting for some time, and was getting impatient, when he heard a noise behind him, and in turning round perceived a pair of eyes glaring at him from a small distance in the underbrush. It could not be the squaw, and he supposed that it was some wild animal prowling about, probably a bear, a wolf, or a wild-cat. He instinctively shouldered his musket, and although he could not take a good aim in the dark, he fired, missing the beast, who sprang at him with a terrible growl.

"It was a wolf of enormous size, and for the first time Baptiste thought of a loup-garou. He was too well accustomed to danger to lose his presence of mind, and throwing his empty musket in the snow, he seized his hunting-knife, and made a lunge at the beast; but the blade bent on the hide of the animal as if it had been thrust into a side of



"MEET ME TO-NIGHT."

sole-leather. Baptiste now bethought himself of the only way of getting at the wolf, by drawing its blood in cutting a cross in its forehead. The wolf seemed to realize the

by an adroit stroke of his weapon, always as sharp as a razor, he completely cut off one of the fore paws of the animal, who uttered a terrible yell resembling the scream of a



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"THROWING HIS EMPTY MUSKET IN THE SNOW, HE SEIZED HIS HUNTING-KNIFE."

fact, and fought at paw's length with its powerful claws, tearing Baptiste's flesh into shreds, and trying to strike at his face so as to blind him, if possible, while keeping its own head out of the reach of the gleaming knife. The fight had lasted for some time, and Baptiste was getting exhausted, when

woman, and fled through the woods, where it disappeared in an instant.

"Baptiste now understood the situation in a moment. La-linotte-qui-chante, who had been baptized and duly received in our holy religion, having afterward relapsed into idolatry, had been turned into a loup-garou,



“‘LIGHTS OUT!’”

condemned to roam by night, while keeping her usual appearance during the day. Jealousy and revenge had induced her to attack her former lover, hoping to take him unawares, and to kill him in the woods, while his new love was lying on her death-bed, a victim to the terrible scourge that the squaw had brought to the house. Baptiste learned that La-linotte-qui-chante had been a frequent visitor for some time past, having succeeded in ingratiating herself with the poor dead girl, undoubtedly bringing to her the germ of the disease that was raging at the Indian village. Such was the savage re-

venge of the young squaw to punish the faithfulness of Baptiste to his former vows of love and affection. It was also learned afterward that a human arm, evidently that of an Indian woman, had been found in the snow by some children who had strayed in the woods, at the very spot where the fight had taken place between Baptiste and the loup-garou. It was undoubtedly the fore paw of the wolf, which had resumed its former shape as the arm of the renegade squaw.

“I have already told you,” continued Sergeant Bellehumeur, “that poor Baptiste was later on taken prisoner by the Iroquois at

Cataracoui, and that he was burned at the stake by the Mohawks. One of the prisoners who escaped from the redskins, and returned to Montreal, told me that he had remarked a one-armed squaw, who seemed to take special pleasure in inventing the most abominable devices to add to the sufferings of poor Baptiste. It was she who pulled out his tongue by the root, and who crushed in his skull with a tomahawk when he fainted from pain and loss of blood.

“Now,” summed up the sergeant, so as to cut short any more story-telling, “this is a real loup-garou story that I can vouch for, and that I would not permit any one to gainsay; and I now would call your attention to the fact that I will order the *couvre-feu* to be sounded, and that I shall expect every one of you to be snoring at the bugle-call, so as to observe the rules of this garrison.

“Lights out! and silence in the barracks!”