

DRI AND I

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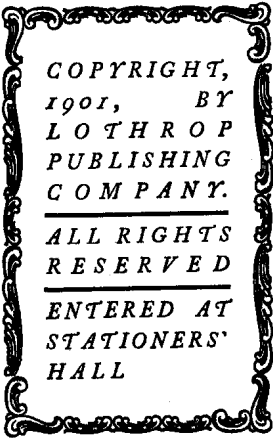
A TALE *of* DARING DEEDS *in the*
SECOND WAR *with the* BRITISH.
Being the Memoirs of Colonel Ramon
Bell, U.S.A.

By IRVING BACHELLER, author
of "Eben Holden."

Illustrated by F. C. YOHN



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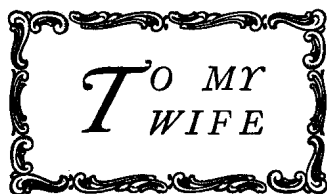
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PREFACE

THIS is a tale of the adventurous and rugged pioneers, who, unconquered by other foes, were ever at war with the ancient wilderness, pushing the northern frontier of the white man farther and farther to the west. Early in the last century they had striped the wild waste of timber with roadways from Lake Champlain to Lake Ontario, and spotted it with sown acres wide and fair; and still, as they swung their axes with the mighty vigor of great arms, the forest fell before them.

In a long valley south of the St. Lawrence, sequestered by river, lake, and wilderness, they were slow to lose the simplicity, the dialect, and the poverty of their fathers.

Some Frenchmen of wealth and title, having fled the Reign of Terror, bought a tract of wild country there (six hundred and thirty thousand

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acres) and began to fill it with fine homes. It was said the great Napoleon himself would some day build a château among them. A few men of leisure built manor-houses on the river front, and so the Northern Yankee came to see something of the splendor of the far world, with contempt, as we may well imagine, for its waste of time and money.

Those days the North country was a theatre of interest and renown. Its play was a tragedy ; its setting the ancient wilderness ; its people of all conditions from king to farm hand. Château and cabin, trail and forest road, soldier and civilian, lake and river, now moonlit, now sunlit, now under ice and white with snow, were of the shifting scenes in that play. Sometimes the stage was overrun with cavalry and noisy with the clang of steel and the roar of the carronade.

The most important episodes herein are of history, — so romantic was the life of that time and region. The marriage is almost literally a matter of record.

A good part of the author's life has been

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spent among the children of those old raiders — Yankee and Canadian — of the north and south shores of the big river. Many a tale of the camp and the night ride he has heard in the firelight of a winter's evening; long familiar to him are the ruins of a rustic life more splendid in its day than any north of Virginia. So his color is not all of books, but of inheritance and of memory as well.

The purpose of this tale is to extend acquaintance with the plain people who sweat and bled and limped and died for this Republic of ours. Darius, or "D'ri" as the woods folk called him, was a pure-bred Yankee, quaint, rugged, wise, truthful; Ramon had the hardy traits of a Puritan father, softened by the more romantic temperament of a French mother. They had no more love of fighting than they had need of it.

INTRODUCTION

FROM a letter of Captain Darius Hawkins, U. S. A., introducing Ramon Bell to the Comte de Chaumont :—

“MY DEAR COUNT: I commend to your kind offices my young friend Ramon Bell, the son of Captain Bell, a cavalry officer who long ago warmed his sword in the blood of the British on many a battle-field. The young man is himself a born soldier, as brave as he is tall and handsome. He has been but a month in the army, yet I have not before seen a man who could handle horse and sword as if they were part of him. He is a gentleman, also, and one after your own heart. I know, my dear count, you will do everything you can to further the work intrusted to him.

“Your obedient servant,

“DARIUS HAWKINS ”

From a letter of Joseph Bonaparte, Comte de Survilliers, introducing his friend Colonel Ramon Bell to Napoleon III of France :—

“He has had a career romantic and interesting beyond that of any man I have met in

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America. In the late war with England he was the master of many situations most perilous and difficult. The scars of ten bullets and four sabre-thrusts are on his body. It gives me great pleasure, my dear Louis, to make you to know one of the most gallant and chivalrous of men. He has other claims upon your interest and hospitality, with which he will acquaint you in his own delightful way."

ILLUSTRATIONS



"We were both near breaking down"

Frontispiece

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*"I could not for the life of me tell which of the
two charming girls I loved the better"* . . .

Page 110

Louise Page 122

*"He would have fought to the death then and
there if I had but given him the word"*

Page 167

*"Come, now, my pretty prisoner; it is disagree-
able, but you must forgive me"* . Page 183

*"D'ri, shaking a bloody, tattered flag, shouted:
'We'll tek care o' the ol' brig!'"* . Page 243

"Then I leave all for you" . . . Page 355

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POET may be a good companion, but, so far as I know, he is ever the worst of fathers. Even as grandfather he is too near, for one poet can lay a streak of poverty over three generations. Doubt not I know whereof I speak, dear reader, for my mother's father was a poet—a French poet, too, whose lines had crossed the Atlantic long before that summer of 1770 when he came to Montreal. He died there, leaving only debts and those who had great need of a better legacy—my mother and grandmother.

As to my father, he had none of that fatal folly in him. He was a mountaineer of Vermont—a man of steely sinews that took well to the grip of a sword. He cut his way to fame in

the Northern army when the British came first to give us battle, and a bloody way it was. I have now a faded letter from Ethan Allen, grim old warrior, in which he calls my father "the best swordsman that ever straddled a horse." He was a "gallous chap" in his youth, so said my grandmother, with a great love of good clothes and gunpowder. He went to Montreal, as a boy, to be educated; took lessons in fencing, fought a duel, ran away from school, and came home with little learning and a wife. Punished by disinheritance, he took a farm, and left the plough to go into battle.

I wonder often that my mother could put up with the stress and hardship of his life, for she had had gentle breeding, of which I knew little until I was grown to manhood, when I came to know also what a woman will do for the love of her heart. I remember well those tales of knights and ladies she used to tell me as we sat together of an evening, and also those adventures of her own knight, my good father, in the war with the British. My love of arms and of a just quarrel began then.

After the war came hard times. My father