


The Defence of Frogtown

N the Western coast of Prince Edward Island some ten or twelve miles distant from North Cape lies Frogtown. It is a typical fishing village consisting of a score or more of families with their dwelling, two large fishing establishments and a restaurant, where Aunt Sally, famed for her masculine habits and appearance, caters to the thirsty fishermen by serving generous potions of home-brewn ale. Little is known of Frogtown's early history or whence it derived its somewhat opprobrious title, but there is a tradition amongst the inhabitants that in the days of the early settlers, a famine had come upon the land, crops and fishing had failed, and the poor people, in sore distress, were driven to seek subsistence on frogs, which were to be found in great numbers in the nearby ponds and marshes. Of course, this explanation may be taken "cum grano salis," but it is a well known fact that the term "frog-eaters" is still applied with much effect as a word-missile in reference to Frogtown citizens, and is deeply resented by the present generation of thrifty and intelligent fisher-folk.

The inhabitants of Frogtown are, for the most part, of Acadian origin, and still retain many of the quaint and interesting customs of their ancestors. In summer they toil early and late in the prosecution of the cod and lobster fishing, whilst in winter, with a well stocked larder, an abundant supply of fuel and several caddies of their favorite "black twist," and happy in the security of their cosy little homes, they enjoy a well earned rest. The young men spend the winter months in dancing, playing cards, "sparking the girls" and getting married, the latter amusement being a never failing specialty for the celebration of Mardi Gras. The old folks gather around a common fireside, load and smoke their pipes with great deliberation, swap yarns, and listent to wonderous tales of deeds performed by some imaginary hero, such tales

being generally told by a professional story-teller, invited for this special purpose from some neighboring locality. To this simple, peaceful people in this quiet little fishing Village the probability, or even possibility, of danger or disaster seemed very remote indeed, but alas, for the uncertainty of all things earthly, Frog-town's hour of trial was fast approaching.

It was about the close of a beautiful day in August—that memorable August when the clash of arms resounding throughout the world, stirred anew the pulses of men and awakened nations to a sense of imminent peril, when the challenge flung down by the insolent Hun was taken up by Great Britain, and her war-dogs, long held in leash by the restraining bonds of peace, were loosed in all their power and majesty, to battle for a just and noble cause.

All day long vague and threatening rumors had filled the air. On the previous night, Abner Haggard whose reputation for veracity was unquestioned, and whose statement was emphatically verified by Sandy Shores, had heard an Aeroplane or Zeppelin soaring high in the heavens. The local Detective, ever keen, alert and active, had arrested two German spies, who, under the innocent pretense of catering to defective eyesight, had taken maps of all important strategic points along the coast, and had gathered much information of value to the enemy. Plans for scaling the heights of the Black Marsh, for reducing the forts at Skinner's Pond, and for blowing up the destroyer "Ferrett" in Peabody's Harbor, besides other equally incriminating documents were found upon the prisoners and, after a speedy trial, ending in conviction, they were delivered for execution to "The Goat" who from his imperial master had learned well the skillful art of decapitation. A strange craft, supposed to be engaged in mine laying, had been observed frequently in coastal waters, and had been given chase on several occasions by Captain Barleycorn of the aforesaid destroyer, but, owing to the reckless daring and superior seamanship of her elusive Commander, she always had managed to escape capture. To cap the climax of all those accounts of hostile operations, came the astound-

ing assertion of Jola Mob, that on the very morning in question he had been awakened by the terrific booming of cannon, and, with the aid of his telescope, had descried, far away on the Eastern horizon, off Sea Cow Pond, two mighty fleets engaged in action. But, as Jola occasionally saw fairies, snakes and other strange creatures at untimely seasons, and in improbable places, his report lost much of the weight it otherwise would have carried. It was not surprising therefore, with such dread rumors afloat, and the public mind in such a state of agitation, that, when on this calm still evening, a large and formidable looking steamer, grim and weather beaten, and carrying in her foreign appearance a message of evil portent, was sighted directing her course straight toward Frogtown, that the inhabitants were panic stricken and consternation reigned supreme.

All recognized that flight was useless, owing to the supposed long range guns of the enemy, and the only alternative was to remain hidden until darkness might cover a more orderly and a safer retreat. Behind the protecting walls of Myrick's fish stage a Council of war was held, and it being unanimously decided to hold the fort, various plans for opposing and destroying the enemy were discussed. George Philos, by virtue of his military bearing and wide experience in shooting wild geese, was chosen as Commander in Chief, and Cleophas Lemong, the noted eel destroyer, was chosen as Chief of Staff, with headquarters in a fish puncheon, from the bung-hole of which he could best observe the movements of the enemy. It was suggested that the big guns of Bytown—those self-proclaiming saviours of the Country—be requisitioned into the service, but, upon mature consideration, it was decided that as no concrete platforms had been erected to withstand the shock of such terrific explosions, it would be impossible to use them to advantage.

In the meantime, Cleophas, from his position as bung-hole operator, reported that the mighty ship was clearing her decks for action, and Joe Alec. big and brawny, who had participated somewhat unwillingly in the Council, could stand the terrible suspense no

longer. Throwing all discretion to the winds, he sought safety in flight, leaping over fences, wading through brooks and rushing inland as fast as his long and well-seasoned legs could carry him, spreading far and wide the dread news of Frogtown's peril, what information was lacking in his disjointed utterances being amply supplied by the terror stricken expression on his countenance, which bore eloquent testimony to the grim reality of the danger.

Meanwhile, darkness had settled upon the land, and Frogtown usually, with bright lights shining, so gay and happy, now presented a gloomy and sombre aspect, not even the faintest glimmer of a light penetrates the inky darkness, no sound, except the gentle plashing of the waters on the beach, broke the uncanny stillness, no living mortal was exposed to view, and even in a lowly cottage, where the Angel of Death had taken away the only child, a mother's sobs were low and stifled.

The Council of war having decided to defend their historic birthright the heroes resolved to sacrifice their lives, if necessary, in defence of their homes, their families and their countless puncheons of pickled cod. A vast collection of arms, ranging in variety and usefulness from the Commander Chief's trusty breech loader to Aunt Sally's bread knife, were collected and distributed amongst the gallant defenders. Sentries were posted at various positions and Cleophas was summarily dismissed in disgrace, having been found asleep at his post, or rather, in his puncheon.

No tongue can fittingly describe, nor pen portray the agony of that awful night. An unceasing vigil was maintained, the volunteers were drawn up in battle array, and Nicholas Gilbane, armed with a pitchfork, guarded the entrance to the precious palace of pickled cod. But, as night wore on, and dawn approached without any sign of attack by the enemy, the feeling of fear gradually gave place to one of calm confidence and a feeling of security, it being secretly whispered among the rank and file, that the big ship was afraid to give battle, and would not risk the dire consequences

of encountering such a well equipped and determined force.

Day broke at last, and, when Jimmy Jackson, who had succeeded Cleophas as Chief of Staff, announced from the puncheon that the warship was steaming at full speed seaward, a shout of joy and triumph arose from the brave defenders, who brandishing their weapons high in air, and rejoicing in the retreat of the enemy, swore eternal vengeance on those German marauders, who dared even to contemplate an attack on their beloved Frogtown.

All work was suspended for that day, bells were rung, horns tooted, and a general holiday was proclaimed. And as the Steamer engaged in the innocent and laudable occupation of a trawler, steered her course for the fishing grounds, the crew commented most favorably upon those quiet, industrious fisher folk, who went to bed at nightfall, and from whom there issued no sound of "revelry by night."

And Joe Alec to whom the gladsome tidings were wafted away inland, and who still suffered from the effects of his flight, painfully admitted that he never got such a "geezler" of a scare" in his life.

The Editor disclaims all responsibility as to the reality of the incident so graphically told by our correspondent. However, such a manifestation of intense patriotism is inspiring and worthy of emulation.—ED.



Those friends thou hast and their adoption tried,
Grapple them to thy soul with hoops of steel ;
But do not dull thy palm with entertainment
Of each new-hatched, unfledged comrade.



A modest confession of ignorance is the ripest and last attainment of philosophy.