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Our Young Soldier: Lieutenant Francis Simcoe 6 June 1791-6 April 1812

Mary Beacock Fryer

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Francis Simcoe was the eldest son of John Graves Simcoe and Elizabeth Gwillim. his father is celebrated as the first lieutenant governor of Upper Canada; his mother for her Canadian diary and watercolour sketches. Francis was one year old when his family arrived at Newark (Niagara-on-the-Lake) in 1792, and almost six when they returned to England.

Letters written by his mother, sisters, and himself reveal his childhood at Eton. At sixteen, he was an ensign in the 27th Inniskilling Regiment. From the beginning of his military career, he kept journals and wrote many letters preserved by the family. His service began in ireland and ended under Wellington - he died leading a storming party in the Trinidad breach at Badajoz, Spain, a thoroughly bloody, costly battle in the Peninsular war.

The army had lost a talented young officer. As a warrior, Francis possessed the qualities that had carried his father from ensign to lieutenant general. Letters and journals disclose a soldier who was also an intelligent, loving human being. Of special interest are Francis' associates who spent time in Canada - the Duek of Richmond, Edward Littlehales, James Kempt, and Julia Somerville (more than a friend?) who became Mrs. Francis Bond Head four years after young Simcoe's death.

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