

With The Midland Battalion To Batoche

By R. H. Roy

IN THE EARLY SPRING of 1885 the people of Eastern Canada were startled by the news that Louis Riel, together with his Metis and Indian followers, had taken up arms against the authority of the Dominion of Canada in the North-West Territories. It became apparent immediately that a military expedition would have to be sent to crush the rebels since neither the North-West Mounted Police nor the few local militia units in Western Canada had the capability to deal with the problem. Major-General F. D. Middleton, the British officer who commanded the Canadian Militia, was sent by the Prime Minister to Winnipeg late in March. He assumed command of the military forces which were raised locally as well as the reinforcements which were ordered sent from Eastern Canada. Among the many units which volunteered for service was the Midland Battalion. It was composed of about 370 officers and men drawn from existing military infantry and rifle companies in Belleville, Lindsay, Port Hope and Kingston.

Among the young men in Belleville who signed up to go to the North-West was Charles Salyer Clapp. He had joined the 15th Battalion, Argyll Light Infantry, in 1880 and had just celebrated his twenty-first birthday when the rebellion broke out. A descendent of a well respected United Empire Loyalist family, a Liberal in politics and a Methodist in religious persuasion, he served as a private during the Rebellion, later being promoted to sergeant. In 1890 Clapp was commissioned in the 15th Battalion and served with that unit as a lieutenant until 1902.

In 1893 Clapp wrote an account of his service with the Midland Battalion which he called "Reminiscences of '85".* The account which follows is a very good description of the campaign as seen through the eyes of a private soldier of more than average intelligence. Written only eight years after the Rebellion, Clapp assumes that the reader (or perhaps his audience?) is familiar with the major events he describes. Thus he does not go into the reason for the Rebellion, the problems of mobilizing and equipping the enthusiastic but poorly trained militia, nor the post-Rebellion arguments between Middleton and a number of senior Canadian militia officers over the conduct of the campaign. His account is more valuable for his view of the Rebellion from the ranks of the private soldier. He has no knives to grind, no political favours to ask, no reputation to seek. His patriotism and sense of duty, both when he was campaigning and later as a young businessman in Belleville, were taken for granted. Victorian England was still "home" to many of the descendants of Loyalist families, despite the fact that they had resided in Canada for over a century. Clapp's quotations from several patriotic poems tells something of the spirit of the age just as his own account of the fighting reveals much of his own feeling.

The paper which follows is told in Clapp's own words. Some obvious spelling errors have been corrected, a few punctuation marks have been added and an

attempt has been made to sort out paragraphs. Certain people, places and events mentioned in the text have warranted additional information in footnotes for the modern reader.

The year 1885 will be ever memorable in the annals of Canadian history as the year of the North West Rebellion, and will become a historical landmark by which other events will be determined. During the brief but eventful period the volunteers who were so fortunate as to be called into active service had ample opportunity of proving themselves to be worthy sons of worthy sires, and that the British pluck, perseverance, bravery and powers of endurance so characteristic of our ancestors of old have not degenerated in the sons of the land of the maple leaf and beaver, and their conduct on the battlefield has shown that here in Canada

We have still the same breed of man and the steel
That wore nobly our Waterloo wreath's
We have more of the blood that formed Inkerman's floods
When it poured in its whirlpool of death
And the foeman will find neither coward or slave
Neath the Red Cross of England, the flag of the brave.

It is not my intention to rehearse before you the details and circumstances in connection with the outbreak of the Rebellion, as they are matters with which most of you are familiar. Suffice to say that the breaking out of hostilities practically began by the conflict at Duck Lake on March 26th. The story of the engagement has been read, told, and repeated so many times that it is well nigh impossible to get at the exact facts. Whatever they may be we have sufficient evidence of the fatal results, eleven of Major Crozier's¹ command were killed and eleven wounded, while the rebel loss was only four killed and three wounded. The news of the fight soon flashed over the length and breadth of this broad Dominion and was read everywhere on the 28th and with the news came the call to arms.

Wherever a call was made there was a prompt patriotic, loyal and hearty response; in fact, in a great many cases, a rivalry as to who should fill the ranks. Belleville had the privilege and honour of furnishing her quota of volunteers (one company each from the 15th and 49th Battalions known as A and H Companies respectively of the Midland Provisional Batl. under the command of the late Lt. Col. A. T. H. Williams, M.P.²) and right worthily did they uphold the honour of their city and the credit of their regiment. I have not time nor is there need to dwell upon the scene in our fair city of the Bay from the time of the call to arms of our local volunteers, to the day of their departure. The citizens were fairly wild with excitement and it must have recalled to mind, to a great many, a similar scene nineteen years previous when the 15th Batl. was called out and departed for Prescott to guard the frontier and repel the Fenian horde³ who at that time were attempting to invade our fair land.

The response was none the less loyal and hearty here than elsewhere, and our citizens were just as enthusiastic as were the citizens of Montreal, Toronto, and other places. As we left Belleville on April 1st, it was prophesied by a great many that we would have an All Fool's trip to Kingston, remain there a couple of weeks and return home again; subsequent events, however, proved "that prophets are not without honour save in their own country." On the occasion of our departure the enthusiasm of our citizens was simply unrestrained, and in the words of Will Carleton

They cheered us as we walked the streets,
They marched us to and fro,
And those who stayed spoke loud of us
How brave it was to go.

During our stay in Kingston, which lasted five days, we were fully equipped for the field. Sunday evening, the 5th, the welcome orders came for us to proceed at once to the front. The following morning we bade adieu to the old Limestone City replete with all its old historic and military associations, and embarked on our special train for Renfrew, via the Kingston and Renfrew Railway,⁴ taking with us 21,000 rounds of ammunition, 1,128 blankets, and 58 tents.

After a very tedious ride of 105 miles, through a rocky and mountainous country, Renfrew was reached at which place we changed cars and embarked on the C.P.R. Nothing occurred to vary the usual monotony of railway travel from the time we left Renfrew until our arrival at the "Gaps"⁵ with the exception of the following exciting incident — on Tuesday morning the 7th about 9 o'clock, the news flashed through the train that a man had jumped overboard. As quickly as possible, the engine was reversed and the train backed along slowly until we arrived at the scene of the "jump off." We found that he left quite an impression and considerable blood in the snow where he alighted and his tracks were in the direction of the adjacent forest. A number got out and followed his tracks to the woods, where after half an hour's fruitless search they gave up the chase, and retraced their steps to the train. The only wonder was that he wasn't killed as our train was running at the rate of 25 miles per hour at the time, and he literally dived out, breaking the double windows of the car. Afterwards he turned up in Brockville pretty well shaken up and looking generally demoralized. He was a member of C. Co. and hailed from Bowmanville. The only reason his comrades were able to assign for his rash act was that his fears of having to fight had so worked on his mind as to cause temporary insanity. Evidently the poor fellow's sentiments were not those contained in the lines:

We all must die, then better far
For home or country's weal
The bullet in the thick of war,
The sharp quick thrust of steel
In cowards ease, and better fame
Adown the ages rung
Than only an unhonoured name
unknown, unwept, unsung.

Dalton, the end of the track, was reached Wednesday morning, the 8th at eleven o'clock, and here began our first experience of crossing the "Gaps". Fifty teams were awaiting our arrival to convey us across the first gap — a distance of 50 miles. Camp Desolation⁶ was reached at one o'clock the following morning, after a cold tedious ride during which the men suffered terribly. We bivouacked for the night around a huge crackling log fire. Such a bitter cold night I never before or since have experienced and the very memory of it almost sends cold chills through me.

Thursday morning, the 9th, we embarked for the first time on the construction trains or open cars. I will describe, briefly, them — They were ordinary flat cars, boarded up about four feet on either side with seats around the same and one through the centre, while straw was strewn on the bottom, and stoves were conspicuous by their absence.

There was one redeeming feature about them, however, being open they afforded us an excellent opportunity for viewing the rugged and picturesque scenery

through which we passed. After a cold and cheerless ride of 125 miles we arrived at the end of track, disembarked and had supper in a small log shanty and remained for the night at the C.P.R. Camp on the shore of Lake Superior. The next day, Friday the 9th, we performed our first march across the ice of Lake Superior, a distance of 23 miles, through a blinding storm of sleet, snow and rain, and at McKellar's Harbour took the construction train again and proceeded to Jack Fish Bay, 15 miles distant, where we remained until Sunday morning, the 11th, recuperating our lost strength occasioned by the fatigue and exposure of our trying march.

During the stay at this place, Col. Williams issued the following commendatory order: —

Jack Fish Bay, Lake Superior

April 11, 1885.

To the Officers and Men of the Midland Batl.

The words of confidence in you which I uttered in the Barracks Square, Kingston, and which I placed on record in the Batl. Orders were not misplaced. During the last few days hunger, fatigue and exposure have been borne without a murmur. Discipline and order have been most severely tested and I thank you for the noble response given by all ranks; no irregularity even of the most trifling nature has occurred desiring even a reprimand. There has been a readiness and alacrity on the part of all to discharge the various duties assigned to them. The march of 23 miles across the ice of Lake Superior yesterday during a severe and blinding storm of sleet and snow, and the plucky endurance and steadiness evinced by all the Batl. on the march, and as it stepped from the ice to the shore with ranks so well locked up, as well as the night passed in the open and snow, before the bivouac fire must be forever impressed upon our memories and as soldiers we can always refer to them with feelings of pride. The honour of our Queen and the integrity of our Country are safe in the hands of such men as you have shown yourselves to be, and I feel inspired to say that when duty calls, be it on the line of march, on parade, or in front of the enemy, the response will be such as to enable us to adopt as our motto "Nulli Secundus" (Second to None).

signed "A.T.H. Williams"

Lt. Col. Commanding.

We proceeded Sunday morning in sleighs across the third gap, and if the night which I mentioned a few moments ago was the coldest one I ever experienced, this ride was the same. What must have been the sufferings of the Queen's Own,⁷ [The] Grenadiers,⁸ and other Regiments who passed over the gaps a week previous when the weather was even colder than when we crossed them, only those who have passed through the trying ordeal know. A great many people at home were wont to treat the reports in the papers of the intense cold, and the sufferings of the men in crossing the gaps and in the open cars, as well nigh incredible and believed them to be grossly exaggerated, but I want to state here that any I ever heard were not exaggerated in the least and only those who have been there know of the terrible hardships, privations, cold, hunger, and fatigue that had to be endured. And I will venture further and say that they were borne with an uncomplaining spirit and heroic devotion that would reflect no discredit on the heroes of Peninsular, Crimean, Indian and Egyptian fame.

But we must proceed. Arriving at Wincett's Dock⁹ after covering twenty-eight miles, the third gap was accomplished and here we embarked for the third time and last time on the flat cars. On our way we passed through two long tunnels cut through the solid rock, also one huge rock cut which when completed we were

informed cost the enormous sum of \$300,000.00. The further we proceeded and the more I saw, the more I was impressed with the fact that building the C.P.R. was indeed a gigantic undertaking, and those who have never seen, or been over it, can form no conception of the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that have been overcome. That monstrous rock whose very heart was blasted out to allow trains to pass through, to and fro, through which we passed and from whose towering summits trains must look like toys, stands a silent but eloquent monument to the indomitable perseverance and energy of man.

We disembarked at 7 in the evening after travelling a distance of 65 miles and proceeded on our march over the ice, across the fourth and final gap. This, although not a very long one, was the most trying march of all. The night was very dark, the snow deep and full of holes. We had gone only a couple of miles when the left half got separated from the right half of the Batl. which caused considerable delay. The powers of endurance of the men were tested to a wonderful degree and not a few were compelled, through fatigue, to fall out and resort to the sleighs. All were glad when we arrived at Nipigon, where we embarked once more on the passenger train which conveyed us through to Winnipeg, at which place we arrived Tuesday morning, the 14th.

Here we expected to go into camp and to that effect had disembarked and were proceeding on our way to Fort Osborne marching to the martial strains of our bugle band, when, just as we had turned down Portage Avenue, we were called to a halt. Fifteen minutes later we wheeled to the right about and marched back to the Depot, the Colonel having received a despatch ordering us on to Qu'Appelle¹⁰ This news was hailed by all with joy as we were proud of the distinction of being a chosen corps. As soon as a train was made up for us we bade adieu to the Metropolis of the West and were soon speeding across the boundless prairie. What contrast the weather in Manitoba presented to that which we experienced a couple of days previous when traversing the North Shore. Not even the slightest signs of snow, frost or rains were visible and the agriculturalists of the Prairie Provinces were busily engaged all along the line in putting in their spring crops. Portage la Prairie was passed during the afternoon and Brandon reached at six in the morning.

Our train had no sooner stopped at Brandon then it was captured by the ladies of that beautiful and enterprising city. The invading host were not belligerent, however, their ammunition a plentiful supply of Coffee, Cakes, Sandwiches and Pie, and in the place of the crash of great guns of war to repel them, there was only the resounding huzzas of goodwill to welcome. This kind and generous act of the ladies was highly appreciated and as our train rolled out from the depot three rousing cheers from nearly 400 soldiers rent the evening air.

While at Brandon, Col. Williams received another despatch ordering us on to Swift Current¹¹ which was still further west of Qu'Appelle and distant from Winnipeg, 512 miles, at which place we arrived Wednesday afternoon at three o'clock, having passed Regina, Qu'Appelle and Moose Jaw on our way, and, at which latter place we breakfasted. Our arrival at Swift Current was marked by a cold and terrific storm of wind and rain and it was with difficulty our tents were pitched.

Guard was at once mounted and sentries posted. I was one of the number that composed that highly important body and also one of the first to be placed on sentry. Sentries were served with two rounds of ammunition (ball Cartridge) each and every precaution was taken to guard against an attack, as only a few days previous to the



North-West Rebellion Transportation

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arrival of troops a band of fifty Indians entered the Town and in a threatening manner demanded of the inhabitants provisions and ammunition, but upon hearing of the approach and proximity of troops they beat a hasty retreat. The storm prevailed all night, the heavens were black with clouds and neither moon or stars were visible. The wind raged, the rain poured and froze as it fell, I must confess a feeling of timidity during my hours of weary sentry go in the night which was from 12 o'clock until 2, the wind was so strong that I was blown from my beat several times and glad was I when the Corporal came around with relief, but gladder still when the grey streaks of dawn were visible in the East.

Camped to the west was a portion of the 35th Batl.¹² of Infantry under Lt. Col. O'Brien, M.P., the remainder of the Regiment being stationed at Qu'Appelle whither the former proceeded a day or two after our arrival. Six days were spent at Swift Current during which no time was lost in perfecting the drill and discipline of our corps, while one day was spent in target practice at which some excellent scoring was made. Pursuant to orders the right half of the Batl. marched out of Swift Current Wednesday morning the 22nd, at 8 o'clock, proceeding to the Saskatchewan Ferry¹³ a distance of 35 miles, accomplishing the distance in 12 hours, having arrived there at eight in the evening.

This was one of the longest, if not the longest, march performed by any corps during the North-West Rebellion and one that will never be forgotten by those who were called upon to perform it. The men and officers marched every step of the way and although there was considerable suffering from want of rest there were no complaints to be heard. Thirty teams of supplies, ammunition and baggage accompanied the column as well as a company of Field Hospital Corps. The trail was dry, dusty and zig-zag, making the track tedious to march over. A number of

Alkali Beds were passed which looked like snow drifts in the distance. The water along the line of march was unfit for man or beast, but we drank it only to suffer the consequences. The country was a rolling prairie but as we approached the Saskatchewan Valley it became mountainous, several steep declivities being seen hundreds of feet in height. Several short halts for rests, while longer ones for dinner and tea, were made at which military soup and tea made from Alkali water taken from a bog-hole, the best that could be procured, were partaken of. It was here seen what hunger could drive men to. They drank the horrid stuff readily and clamoured for more.

The advance being sounded we proceeded, some marching in their sock feet with boots hanging around their necks, some sang, others whistled, some smoked and some wrestled with a hardtack. The mule drivers grumbled at having to pass through so quickly. Badger holes, gopher holes and buffalo trails were the only things that relieved the monotony of the prairies. The wind was very high and blowing from the north, directly in our faces, and as we marched we became as dark as Indians, the ashes of the prairie grass which had been burned, blowing in our faces in black clouds. We kept marching wearily on wondering as we went when we would reach the long looked for Saskatchewan Valley, darkness came upon us and still we were on the march.

That we were getting worn out with fatigue was sufficiently evident from the fact that singing was no longer to be heard in the ranks. Something was needed to revive the drooping spirits of the men. That something came and came at a very opportune time. A flame was seen to shoot up and leap along the ridge of hills away to our front, this inspired us with new courage and the march became brisker, someone struck up a familiar song which was taken up and re-echoed down the column. Soon we were descending through the passes and valleys towards the river and ere long were met by Major Smith,¹⁴ two other officers, and a few men from the companies of our Regiment stationed there. They informed us it was they who lit the grass on the hill tops and that we were only a mile distant from the river. We pressed on anxiously, but wearily, and ere long the desired goal was reached. Yes, reached but not a moment too soon, as I very much doubt if any of us could have marched another mile.

As for myself I was completely exhausted, and while going on board the Steamer "Northcote"¹⁵ was about to faint and would have fallen in the River had it not been for two comrades of "E" Company who, noticing my weakness, hurried to my assistance grasping my rifle and knapsack and with one on either side they escorted me safely on board. As soon as I stepped on the Steamer I dropped my knapsack, sank upon it and was unable to rise for half an hour, when I mustered up strength enough to drag my weary frame, rifle and knapsack upstairs; here in the fore part of the cabin I threw myself upon the floor with about twenty-five others and tried to sleep, but very little of that blessing was received that night as we were so crowded and too tired.

The pale faces, stiffened joints and sore limbs of the men the following morning plainly indicated that they had suffered great physical fatigue. Some were laid up for several days afterwards, but all recovered from the effects of our justly celebrated forced march. "E" and "F" Companies of the Midland were stationed at the crossing guarding the supplies, having proceeded there from Swift Current three days previously to our leaving the latter place. The Steamer "Northcote", like all steamers which ply these waters, was built upon the manner of the Mississippi Boats, i.e.,

flat-bottomed, entirely open between the decks and with a huge paddle-wheel at the stern. She was of moderate dimensions substantially built, with powerful engines and cabin fitted up very nicely. Lashed on either side of her were two large barges in which supplies were stowed, as well as in the hold. They consisted of corned-beef, hardtack, baled hay, oats, flour, sugar, beans, fat pork, tea, dried apples and ammunition. Accompanying us were the Field Hospital Corps composed of eight surgeons and four assistants, Lt. Col. Van Straubenzie, D.A.G.,¹⁶ Capt. Kirivan,¹⁷ also Capt. Howard¹⁸ of the 201 Conn. Nat. Guard who was in charge of the Gatling Gun.

At eleven o'clock Thursday morning the 23rd of April began the perilous and difficult undertaking of descending the South Saskatchewan River and the old Northcote, with the right half of the Midland Batl. on board, has now the honour of being the first steamer that attempted and accomplished that difficult feat. It was certainly a perilous undertaking because we knew not what moment we would be attacked by Indians from both shores, in fact we expected it and were fully prepared to give them a warm reception should they have done so. Fortunately, however, we proceeded to our destination unmolested by the redskins. The difficult part of the undertaking will be readily understood as we proceed. The same morning Col. Williams issued the following order and caused it to be read to all:

On Board Steamer Northcote
South Saskatchewan River,
April 23, 1885.

Lt.-Col. Williams commanding the Midland Batl. desires to place in Batl. Orders the achievement of yesterday. In pursuance of Brigade orders the right wing marched out of Swift Current at 8 a.m. and reached the Saskatchewan Ferry at 8 p.m. accomplishing the distance of over thirty-two miles in twelve hours, deducting rest by the way, at the rate of 3 and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles per hour. The pluck and endurance as well as the discipline and general steadiness displayed on the line of march could not have been excelled and the commanding officer desires to thank all ranks for the magnificent result of yesterday's effort which they had been called upon in an emergency to perform, viz. the forced march of over thirty-two miles in order to start from the ferry by boat at the earliest hour via the South Saskatchewan River to join Gen. Middleton now in the immediate front. The Commanding Officer desires the express the future confidence in his command that in the advance down the river the strictest discipline and watchful steadiness will be evinced and if called upon to meet the enemy as a probable all will stand shoulder to shoulder and the utmost steadiness and calmness exhibited in carrying out such orders as may be issued.

By Order Signed
E.G. Ponton, Capt. and Adjt.

The descent of the river was by no means rapid. We were thirteen days in accomplishing a distance of 200 miles. Our progress was greatly impeded by the presence of numberless sandbars which characterized that branch of the Saskatchewan, and we were delayed fully two-thirds of the time in endeavouring to get loose after having ran aground on them. The depth of the river had to be poled all the way and to this effect two men were stationed, one on the bow of the steamer and the other at the bow of the large barge, with sounding poles in their hands, on each of which was marked a scale of feet, and which they continually dipped in the river, drew them out and from the height of the water mark knew how deep the water was. Notwithstanding these precautions, we amiably succeeded in running aground on from two to half a dozen sand bars daily. Every time they drew the pole from the river they would roar out, in stentorian tones, the depth of the water to the mate

*Peters Album, Public Archives of Canada**Northcote before Batoche*

who, seated on the hurricane deck, passed it on to the Captain in the Wheelhouse. Six feet — four and a half — no bottom — two feet — three feet — one foot. Being so accustomed to call out “feet” after every number it became quite habitual and when it came to one foot they would roar it out in a louder tone, for, of course, it meant grounding. Now a scraping, grating sound of the boat’s keel upon the sand and she was fast. Then the spars would be set to work to try and push and raise her off. The engines were put back, the steamer throbbed from stem to stern, the steam hissed and roared in the escape pipe, the sand was stirred up from the bottom of the river until the water grew thick and yellow, and if she was not very hard aground, after a few minutes of this kind of thing she was loose, but if unfortunately, as in the great majority of cases we were high and almost dry on a bar, the tow line was thrown out and the services of the Midland were called into requisition when they generally made short work of it.

On many occasions of this sort the strength of the gallant Midlanders was fully tested and before we reached our destination patience had well nigh ceased to be a virtue. I have a distinct recollection of one occasion on which we ran on a bar which caused a delay of twenty-four hours. The barges had to be poled ashore and relieved of their loads, brought back to the steamer and her cargo transferred to them and she then being light floated off easily. The work of the reloading being concluded we resumed our trip. Two or three times each day we had to stop and “wood up” when about thirty men with axes would be detailed to chop while the remainder of the detachment carried on board the wood.

The Valley of the Saskatchewan abounds in scenery, stern and wild, and many excellent views would have delighted the most fastidious artist; while the forest and the prairie would prove a veritable paradise for the sportsman as every variety of

game is plentiful from the moose to the gopher and from the eagle to the prairie chicken.

Saturday night, May 2nd, we anchored near the shore when the guard was doubled and extra sentries posted, as we were then in the vicinity of White Caps Reserve where the Indians first applied the war-paint and took the war path.

Although the night passed quickly there were very few of us slept as soundly as usual as we had been ordered to have our clothes and accoutrements convenient to don in case of a sudden attack. We arrived at Saskatoon Monday morning, May 4th. Here was located the Brigade Hospital. The Medical Staff disembarked and we left some supplies, and all the medical stores. A number of the wounded ¹⁹ came down to the landing to see us, some with crutches, some with heads bandaged, others with their arms in slings, while one young fellow, a mere boy, belonging to "A" Battery was minus his right arm. They seemed bright and cheerful and all expressed a desire to have another round with the rebels before the campaign closed.

Clark's Crossing was reached at half-past two in the afternoon of the same day, here "B" and "D" Companies disembarked and remained guarding supplies until they joined us two days after the capture of Batoche. The same night a strong picquet was posted on the shore and in the morning following we arrived at Camp Middleton, after having worked our passage for thirteen days. The 90th Batl.²⁰ band were at the landing awaiting our arrival and escorted us into camp amid the cheers of the soldiery. Our Batl. was now divided into four sections as follows — "A" and "C" Companies were with Gen. Middleton's Brigade; "B" and "D" Co's were at Clark's Crossing; "E" and "F" were at the Saskatchewan Ferry; while "G" and "H" were at Maple Creek, one hundred miles west of Swift Current. When Gen. Middleton observed the fine physique and soldierly bearings of our detachment, he expressed his regrets to Col. Williams that we had been so separated.

We now heard all the facts and details regarding the recent engagement at Fish Creek which battlefield lay only three quarters of a mile southeast of our camp. The brave lads who were killed in that engagement were buried within the confines of our camp in the north-east corner and when we arrived we found a large number of the men erecting with willing hands and loving hearts a huge stone cairn over their graves.

The recollection of my visit to that sacred spot on the afternoon of our arrival is still fresh in my memory. Beneath that pile of stones peacefully reposed in their last sleep ten of Canada's bravest sons who had sacrificed their young lives in defence of the country and flag they so dearly loved and cherished. We approached the hallowed precincts with reverence and sadly and silently gazed upon the sacred spot. On that occasion what words could have been more appropriate than those contained in the following beautiful lines by Theodore O'Hara, that brilliant poet, soldier, and journalist of the Southern States as he wrote of his comrades killed in the Mexican War —

The muffled drums sad roll has beat
The soldier's last tattoo
No more on life's parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few
On Fame's eternal camping ground
Their silent tents are spread
But glory guards, with solemn rounds
The bivouac of the dead.

After viewing the spot for some minutes we retraced our steps to camp with sad

and sympathetic hearts not knowing but what some of us, ere another week passed, would be sleeping beneath the prairie sod, for we knew that within a few days we would engage the rebels at Batoche.

Being now fully located at the seat of war we had to submit to that severe discipline necessary for the safety of an army in the field. Drill was pursued by all corps incessantly and with persistence. While here the slow going and inoffensive looking old "Northcote" was placed in a state of defence as she was to drop down the river with a portion of "C" Company, Infantry School Corps, under Major Smith, on board and cooperate with our army at Batoche.

It was while here that we received our initiatory experience on outpost duty. Our camp was completely surrounded by a chain of sentries thrown out from the outlying picquets, beyond and surrounding which were scouts, familiarly known as the mounted patrol, riding two by two and patrolling the bush and prairie for a mile or so beyond the picquet line. Thus it will be seen that nothing was left undone to ensure the safety of the camp. The second night after our arrival at Camp Middleton twenty-four men from "A" Co. were detailed for duty on outlying picquet and as usual I was one of the number; Lieut. Halliwell²¹ was the officer in command of our detachment and we took up our position, at dusk, on the south-west side of the camp when sentries were at once posted and given their instructions. My hours on sentry were from twelve to two o'clock. The night was very dark; consequently [we] had to be all the more alert and vigilant. All went well until about half past one when the report from a discharged rifle rang out upon the still midnight air. In less time than it takes to tell it all the camp was alive. Now could be heard from all quarters the voices of wary sentinels calling upon their guards and picquets to turn out. For a while, too, "there was mounting in hot haste." Aides-de-camp and orderlies dashed to and fro while scouts were dashing here and there endeavouring to ascertain the cause of the alarm, but shortly quiet was restored and the watchful soldiers paced their rounds the remainder of the night undisturbed.

It seems a sentry away on the east side of the camp saw, or imagined he saw, an Indian or half-breed approaching his beat and upon challenging the object and receiving no reply, fired. Having been there to some extent myself I can easily understand how far imagination will carry a young and inexperienced soldier. I have on many occasions when on sentry duty in the night challenged horses, cattle, bushes, stones, shadows of clouds, etc. It is one of the humorous phases of outpost duty; at all events it shows that one is watchful, and was it not far better to challenge every object that excites one's suspicion than to have run the risk of letting the enemy pass inside the lines unobserved. While speaking of the humorous side of guard and picquet duty recalls to mind a couple of amusing incidents that occurred at Swift Current during our stay there, in fact it was the same night of our arrival at that place.

The first one is in connection with myself. As I said before, a perfect hurricane prevailed all night. There was a pile of empty barrels which had contained hard-tack, just at the north of my patrol and a heavy gust of wind swept down and upset them and sent one rolling across my pathway only a few feet away. It was so dark I couldn't see but I called out at the top of my voice — "Halt, who goes there" — but received no reply. This incident caused considerable amusement for the guard who, knowing what it was, laughed heartily. The second incident which I am about to relate caused considerable amusement to those who heard it and I am told our gallant Colonel, who was lying awake in his tent at the time, could not suppress

an outburst of laughter upon hearing it. Each sentry was numbered and as near as they could judge were to call out every half hour their number, and, providing everything was all right, all's well. The sentry [was] No. 3 and in the deep stillness of the night, Nos. 1 and 2 called out and when it came to No. 3 he yelled — No. 3, All's well and everything is mag-nif-icent.

But I am diverging. To return to our camp. As we were to be on the march the following morning (Thursday), we deserted our picquets, arrived at our private parade and were dismissed as Reveille was sounding at 5 o'clock. We at once breakfasted, after which knapsacks and blankets were packed, tents struck and we were on the march at half-past seven o'clock.

Although ours was a comparatively small one, still it was something new for us to see an army advance, especially in an enemy's country. Col. Williams, who always took such a deep interest in soldiers in general and his own regiment in particular, called upon us to witness the movements of the advancing columns and explained to us the minutest detail in connection therewith.

A troop of scouts formed the mounted advance guard and extended in detachments to the front, right, left and rear, each section being 40 to 50 yards apart, the rear one forming a connecting link to the infantry advance guard, which was composed of a company from the 10th Royal Grenadiers²² who extended in a similar manner with either an officer or sergeant in charge of each section. Following them came the balance of their regiment. "A" Battery, R.C.A.;²³ 90 Rifles; Winnipeg Field Battery and a portion of "C" Company School Corps;²⁴ the Gatling Gun with Capt. Howard in command, followed by fifty or sixty teams of supplies, ammunition and hospital stores. Next came "A" and "C" companies of the Midland, behind which were 150 more teams with camp equipment, etc., while another troop of scouts brought up the rear.

We passed over the battlefield of Fish Creek shortly after leaving camp, nothing was to be seen but a few dead horses and cattle lying about the ravine, otherwise there was no traces left of that heroic struggle of a few days previous in which so many young lives paid the price of their devotion. We halted for dinner and after an hour's rest, resumed our march when at half-past four we halted and pitched our tents for the night. Guards and picquets were at once mounted and sentries posted. We had just nicely got our tents pitched and were lying about in the grass in front of them when we received orders to be in readiness, at a moment's notice, for action, as some of our scouts had been fired upon by rebel scouts down near the river which was only a short distance from our camp. We at once buckled on our accoutrements and were soon in readiness but our services were not called into requisition and the night passed away quietly.

The next morning, Friday the 8th, we were on the March at 7 o'clock sharp and after accomplishing fourteen miles, halted and camped for the night within nine miles of Batoche. Our camp was pleasantly situated on a plateau overlooking the Saskatchewan in the distance and was, of course, protected by guards, outlying picquets and mounted patrols. Twenty-four men from our company were again warned for duty on outlying picquet and I was once more one of the number. Lieut. (C.E.) Kenny had command of the detachment.

All sorts of rumours were afloat regarding Riel and the rebels at Batoche, and groups of soldiers might be seen scattered here and there through the camp seriously discussing the situation, for all we knew "that with the morning would come the fight." While pacing my weary patrol during the night I realized more than ever

before the great responsibility of single sentry and in my own weak way endeavoured to exhibit that "eternal vigilance" which "is the price of liberty". The moonlight was uncertain, numerous small clouds drifted across the sky, and as they veiled the moon the darkness was intense. My mind was filled with sombre thoughts, and my ears were open to even the slightest sound, while my eyes watched sharply the perplexing shadows that chased each other over the prairie like wanton Indian boys at play. Yet ever watchful, ever listening, my mind found leisure to fly back to home and friends and in fancy I visited the scenes of my childhood. As memory was fondly surveying "those scenes the heart can ne'er forget", an object seemed to move across the prairie to my left which brought me suddenly from my musing back in the north-west with my heart fluttering like a bird in a cage. My ready Snider²⁵ was at once lowered to the "port" but only for a moment. It was only a shadow of a cloud passing behind a clump of bushes, yet it seemed strange how much it resembled a human being to my highly strung vision. Within camp all was silent as a hermit's cell. The only noise that broke the stillness of the night was at intervals the sharp challenge and prompt reply which plainly indicated that the sentries were on the alert and the outpost officer was going his lonely round. During the night it was reported that Big Bear²⁶ was marching to re-inforce Riel and the combined forces would attack us that night, but this report, like many others, was groundless and the night passed in quiet.

The following morning, Saturday, the 9th, the camp which was placed under a strong guard, was left standing and at 6:30 we advanced cautiously towards Batoche. When within three miles of Batoche we halted and one of the guns was placed on a slight knoll near by and a blank shell fired as a signal for the "Northcote" to proceed. We then proceeded and arrived without hindrance to a spot within about 800 yards of the Catholic Church in which some rebels were concealed, but they soon dispersed on the buildings being shelled and some rounds from the Gatling fired at them. The buglers were now ordered to distribute ammunition and each man received fifty rounds extra, making one hundred in all which added considerably to the weight of our haversacks. The 90th and Grenadiers were now extended and the rebels [pushed] back until the crest of the hill was reached where our men took cover and opened a steady fire. The first day we "A" and "C" Companies of the Midland, were in reserve, a most unsatisfactory position to be in, and at the same time acted in the capacity of rear guard and were supported for a while by a couple of guns of the Winnipeg Field Battery²⁷. The bullets were whizzing about and dropping around us in a desultory sort of way all the forenoon and as this was our first baptism of fire we, of course, like all young and inexperienced soldiers, indulged in ducking and dodging our heads in all directions in instinctive fear of those avant-couriers of death and wounds. The guns of the batteries were posted in advantageous situations and were thundering forth death sentences in a manner that made one feel glad he was in the rear of them. The Gatling kept up a rattling fusilade, under the supervision of Capt. Howard, who, by the way, won the esteem and admiration of the men by his coolness and bravery. He was ever willing to go where directed and never flinched even before the hottest fire.

The din of musketry was now intense, the houses and stables that were shelled in the morning were now lying in smoking ruins at our rear. We remained horribly inactive all the forenoon and I can truthfully say we were glad when Col. Williams rode up and gave us the order to advance. This was about half-past one o'clock. We advanced to a little hollow within a few yards of the church only to halt and remain

inactive again for some time. Our dead and wounded were temporarily placed in the church where they were attended to by the medical men assisted by R.C. Sisters who did all in their power to help the doctors, their services being rendered cheerfully and willingly.

Having received permission during the course of the afternoon, I visited the church and found there one poor fellow lying cold in death. He was a gunner of "A" Battery and was killed by a gunshot wound. There were also five or six wounded lying on stretchers with wounds bandaged and suffering intensive pain. It was a sad sight, but there were still sadder ones in store for us before Batoche was taken.

About the middle of the afternoon Col. Williams, who had hitherto been riding over the field near the skirmish lines taking in the situation, having received orders from the General, rode up and taking with him "C" Company advanced down a coulee to the left where they poured in a steady fire for some minutes, so as to distract the attention of the enemy from the spot where a wounded man lay while some men from the Garrison Artillery were sent with a stretcher to rescue him, which they did most creditably and without any further casualties, but the poor fellow himself was dead.

Mr. C. G. Henty,²⁸ special war correspondent of the "London Standard" in writing to the Toronto Mail after his return home to the Old Country, speaks thus concerning this action of which I was an eye witness —

On the first day of the fight the palm must be given to the Midland, the manner in which they, led by Col. Williams, marched into the coulee to the left of the church on the occasion of their covering the men who rescued the body of one of our poor fellows, must be fresh in the mind of every man who watched, as I did, the two movements.

By his coolness and intrepidity the General set a fine example for the men. He was as cool as the proverbial cucumber and instead of commanding an army in the field while under the fire of a determined and well entrenched enemy, one would almost have thought, by the cool and unconcerned manner in which he rode about the field and smoked his Havana cigar, that he was only superintending a brigade at field manoeuvre.

As the shades of evening began to fall, the General ordered the advance parties to be gradually withdrawn, which was done in a creditable manner. It was the duty of our detachment and the Gatling [gun] to cover the retiring force which we did in very commendable style. Some of the enemy followed us up a short distance thinking, no doubt, that our force was retreating, they were soon forcibly impressed with the fact that such was not the case, by receiving a heavy fire which arrested their progress and we made our way to the Zareba without any further firing.

Just here let me state that during the course of the afternoon, the General had despatched one of his transport officers with all the available teams to bring our camp and equipage to the front, which they did in a short time and with their wagons formed a zareba inside of which was room enough for our whole brigade and all the horses. We had just nicely got inside the zareba when two or three hot volleys were poured in upon us from short range, no doubt a number of the more desperate half-breeds had climbed to the top of the river bank on our left, only about 50 yards distant, and emptied the contents of their Winchesters and their fire was rather high to do much injury but one man was wounded having been shot through the leg while on the top of a wagon looking for his knapsack, and two horses were killed.

Col. Straubenzie, who had commanded one of the Infantry Divisions, at once ordered Col. Williams to advance his command in skirmishing order around the crescent-shaped crest of the hill from whither had come such a withering volley, which he immediately did. We advanced and extended in rather a confused style at first, I remember as so many of the Officers were giving orders we could scarcely hear our Col. distinctly. Besides this, we were receiving a heavy fire from our front. However, we soon succeeded in taking up our positions and began pouring in a hot fire upon them which had the effect of silencing theirs considerably. Still they kept up a harrassing fire until nearly midnight and we returned the compliment until they abandoned it altogether. They must have returned to Batoche, for in the deep stillness of the night we could distinctly hear some person, Riel, I presume, addressing them in French. At any rate whoever it was held his audience in rapt attention as only the one voice was audible until he would complete some eloquent or inspiring clause in the course of his harangue when they would give vent to their blood-curdling warwhoops by way of applause, I suppose.

The whole force, with the exception of our detachment, bivouacked inside the zareba where a picquet was mounted and sentries posted. Each side of the zareba was under the charge of a Field Officer with so many sentinels on each patrol who kept watch while the force slept. We occupied the position around the edge of the hill, each man acting as a sentry and in this way we put in the night. A heavy dew had fallen during the night, but a more charming morning than the 10th of May never dawned. Our force partook of an early breakfast after which Gen. Middleton advanced the Infantry, with the exception of the Midland, to a position as far in advance as possible and opened fire upon the rebels. They had not, however, been idle during the night and their forces had augmented rather than diminished as they were out in greater force than the previous day, and almost the very spot where the Gatling had been in position the day before. They had constructed rifle pits during the night and now held them, as well as the ground near the cemetery.

While all this was going on, and while the prayers from thousands of homes and churches throughout the length and breadth of our Dominion, were ascending to the Great Creator, Perservor and Saviour of Mankind, for the preservation of the volunteers and victory for our arms, what were the Midlanders doing? Were we remaining inactive? — No. We had been directed by Col. Williams to throw up entrenchments and dig rifle pits as a means of protection from the harrassing fire from the opposite bank. With pick-axes and shovels we began our work but were not allowed to proceed unmolested as we would frequently receive a heavy volley from the front and sometimes from the right flank which rendered it necessary for us to abandon, for a time, our implements and resort to our firearms; when we would drop down behind our half-constructed entrenchments and direct a heavy fire against the desperate and defiant rebels. It continued this way until we had our rifle pits completed. Fortunately no one was wounded during our operations. The teamsters, who numbered about 200, lost no time in rendering the zareba well nigh impregnable as they were chiefly engaged during the day in throwing up formidable earth-works so in case of our being driven to extremity, the whole force could occupy and retain it against the whole rebel force.

During the forenoon "A" Battery was engaged chiefly in shelling houses and bluffs on the opposite bank where the enemy were visible and in the afternoon the two guns of the Winnipeg Field Battery shelled the cemetery which was in possession of the halfbreeds and some rifle pits on the right front of the zareba. Like

the previous evening, the advance parties were withdrawn and detachments from the Midlands were directed to advance and cover the retiring force on the extreme right, which we did. We were again followed by the enemy for some distance who, no doubt, thought we were retreating and who gave vent to their bloodcurdling warwhoops as they advanced. I have often wished I could accurately describe a genuine Indian Warwhoop, but cannot; it must be heard in all its terror to be appreciated. The surrounding circumstances have a great deal to do with one's feelings and had it not been dark, it would not have sounded half so fiendish. But darkness was upon us and every half minute a furious yelp, half human, half beastly in its sound, told us they were in close pursuit, which made one feel as though his hair was standing on end and his blood running cold. I can safely say that only those who have heard the dread original can imagine the sensation of horror they produce.

Notwithstanding all this, we retired in a deliberate and dignified manner as we were becoming accustomed to this mode of war-fare. Their advance was impeded by a heavy fire from a party of infantry who occupied a line of shelter trenches, which had been constructed during the day, some 200 yards in front of the zareba, also from a party of the 90th Batl. occupying some pits on the right front and nearly flanking the enemy's advance. They did not attempt to withstand the unexpected fire and speedily retreated to their stronghold.

We were re-inforced during the afternoon by the Land Surveyor's Scouts,²⁹ 50 strong, under Capt. Dennis. We had a quiet night of it, the Midland again acted as picquet and held the crest of the hill where we took up our position on the first night. General Middleton, in his Official Report, says this of the two days operations — "We had rather lost than gained ground as compared with yesterday. I still feel it was good practice and training for my men, who were being taught, by somewhat painful experience, the necessity of using their enemy's tactics, and keeping themselves under cover."

That "Fortune favours the brave" was certainly a truism in our case or I might rather say "Old Probabilitist" as the weather was charming and all that could be desired for bivaoucing. The days were warm and the nights cool and the blue sky cloudless. As usual the parties of Infantry advanced to their old positions and the Midlands, of course, holding theirs. With Bolton's Scouts³⁰ and the Gatling under Capt. Howard, the General reconnoitered the Prairie ground to our right and upon finding there were a series of rifle pits in the bushes below the bluffs held by the enemy, he ordered some of Bolton's Scouts to dismount and line the crest of the ridge, which they did and soon drew a sharp fire from their occupants. This little piece of strategy on the part of the General had the effect of drawing a considerable number of the enemy from the right to repel what they feared was a general attack. Col. Williams, with a portion of our detachment, was in possession of a bluff overlooking the river in the rear of the cemetery and taking advantage of the General's feint on the enemy's left, dashed down beyond the cemetery, drove the Indians who had been left to hold the rifle pits on the right, out of them, captured and brought back to camp, amidst the cheering of those who were left there, pick-axes, shovels, pots, kettles, blankets and a dummy which had been used to draw our fire, and which was riddled with bullets.

We had now regained all our lost ground but as it was getting dusk we had to return to the zareba which we did in good order and we were not pursued at all neither was there any firing after we had retired. During the morning "A" Battery

shelled the cemetery and some pits beyond the church. In the afternoon the two guns of the Winnipeg Battery shelled some houses on the opposite bank in which rebels were seen, and were speedily dispersed and took refuge in the bushy slopes some distance beyond the river. The Midland detachment were the recipients of some sharp volleys during the day but the enemy's fire was kept under and silenced by them.

Having now been three days and three nights in succession without any sleep, the Midland began to feel the need of a well earned rest. It was rather hard work performing the duties of "a soldier by day and sentinel all through the night" for that length of time so we petitioned our Captain to lay the matter before the Colonel, which he did and we were granted our request. Accordingly a picquet was posted in our stead and we lay down in the rifle pits to try and sleep. We were almost too tired to sleep but "wearied nature asserted her rights" and ere long we were in the embrace of Morpheus. We slept so soundly that some of us had to be awakened the following morning by the D.A.G., Col. Straubenzie, himself.

Of all the events in connection with the Rebellion that of the 12th of May was the most memorable; Batoche being captured and the Rebels completely routed. In the morning the General took the whole of the mounted force consisting of 150 men, with one Gun of "A" Battery and the Gatling, and took possession of the piece of ground to our extreme right, the same position which they held the previous afternoon, extending his force and engaging the rifle pits in front, and at the same time firing shell and the Gatling. It seems the General's intention was to try and convince the Rebels that he intended attacking them on their left flank and he succeeded admirably in convincing them thus. About noon he gradually withdrew the mounted force and returned to camp in good order. In the morning about 9 o'clock, the Midland were formed up on parade and awaited final orders as we were informed we would be called upon to attack the enemy on their right, which was the Key of the position.

On the General's return to camp, he was much annoyed owing to a misconstruction of his orders, that the infantry had not, as he had ordered, been advanced to hold the regained position and push forward, as he drew the enemy from their right by his feint.³¹ He afterwards thought and so expressed himself that it was fortunate they had not, as no doubt the absence of fire from our left tended to strengthen the belief of the Rebels that he intended to attack them from the prairie ground to our right.

We immediately partook of our dinners and I might say, by way of parenthesis, that I relished it more than any dinner I ever ate, if it only consisted of hardtack, corned beef, pork and beans. After which Col. Williams addressed us briefly. His remarks were firm, kind and encouraging. He wanted us to follow him, listen to his commands, obey them, all of which we afterwards did. We then advanced and extended to the left and moved up to the cemetery. The Grenadiers followed and prolonged the line to the right, while the 90th were in support. With a cheer we dashed into the ravine to our left. By a series of impetuous rushes, cheering as we went, and led by our gallant Colonel with cap and sword in hand, we succeeded in completely driving them from their pits on the river slope. With ringing British cheers, which re-echoed through the wooded hillside, we forward dashed, but were met by such a withering volley from our front that compelled us for a time to lie down and seek cover as best we could. The bullets were now cutting the bark and

branches from the trees, while the dead leaves on the ground were being torn up all around us.

While speculating as to where these bullets were coming from I raised my head from behind a dead log, which I had sought for cover, to see if any of the Grenadiers on the bluff were firing on us by mistake, when I was ordered by Lieut. Halliwell to keep down or I would be shot. Unfortunately a few minutes afterwards both he and his brother were wounded, the former, seriously. As soon as a stretcher could be brought up, the Lieut. was carried to the rear and left to the tender mercies of the surgeons. All this time the roll of musketry was incessant, the shells from the cannon were thundering forth their awful sentences, while the Gatling kept up a steady whirring sound which resembled the buzz and roar of machinery.

During all this time also, a heavy fire was kept up from the other side of the river which caused us much annoyance. As soon as it slackened up we rose and dashed along the river slope until we reached the crest of the hill, when the whole line advanced, the 90th prolonging the line of attack on the right. While rushing across the open field the most of the casualties occurred. Finally the mounted infantry dismounted and still further prolonged the line on the right. The Gatling was now pushed forward in front of the 90th and the houses on the flank were gallantly taken after which some rounds were fired and a general advance was made. Like autumn leaves before a gale, the confused and dispirited mass of half-breeds and Indians were swept before the onset of disciplined valour. With ringing cheers we forward dashed and the whole of the houses were taken and the prisoners released. A white flag was now hoisted on a house across the river and the "Retire" was sounded and we returned to the village for we knew our fighting was over for the Rebels were beaten from their stronghold and Batoche was won.

"Chas. S. Clapp"

Lieut. 15th Batl. A.L.I.

Belleville, Ontario

1893

FOOTNOTES

*The original MS is in the possession of his nephew's wife, Mrs. William Nightingale of Belleville, Ontario.

¹Superintendent L.N.F. Crozier was born in Ireland in 1846. After some service in the militia, he joined the North-West Mounted Police in 1874. He is remembered mainly for his abortive attack on Gabriel Dumont and his Métis followers at Duck Lake on 26 March 1885. Crozier's force suffered about two dozen casualties, half of whom were killed. Crozier retired from the N.W.M.P. after the rebellion.

²Lt.-Col. A.T.H. Williams was born in 1830 in Upper Canada. During the Fenian Raids he commanded the 46th Battalion. An M.L.A. for East Durham from 1867 to 1875, he became Conservative M.P. from 1878 until his death on board the steamer "Northwest" on July 4th, 1885, on the Saskatchewan River, N.W.T. He raised and commanded the Midland Battalion during the Rebellion.

³A reference to the Fenian invasions of 1866. Lt.-Col. Williams commanded the 15th Battalion at that time, and saw duty on the frontier during the period when the Fenian scare was at its height.

⁴Kingston and Renfrew R.R. Probably means the Kingston and Pembroke Railway which went to Renfrew. There the battalion would take the Canadian Central Railway to Callander where it connected with the Canadian Pacific Railway.

⁵The Gaps. At this time the Canadian Pacific Railway was still under construction. Along the northern shore of Lake Superior there were four uncompleted sections or gaps in the railway between Lochalsh and Red Rock. These had to be crossed by foot or by using horses and sleighs provided by the C.P.R. "The Gaps" were completed by the end of the rebellion.

⁶Camp Desolation — the appropriately named site of the C.P.R. construction camp at the beginning of the next stretch of railroad which went westward to Port Munro on Lake Superior.

- ⁷The Queen's Own Rifles, from Toronto, were commanded by Lt. Col. A.A. Miller.
- ⁸Possibly the 10th Royal Grenadiers from Toronto. Lt. Col. H.J. Grasett was the Commanding Officer.
- ⁹Wincett's Dock. The actual name was Winston Dock, sometimes termed Winston's Landing. It was the western end of the gap from Jackfish.
- ¹⁰Qu'Appelle. Nearest point on the railway to Batoche. It would be the base for Maj. Gen. Middleton's column which, on April 6th, had started on its way north to strike at the heart of the rebellion at Batoche.
- ¹¹Swift Current. The point on the C.P.R. nearest to the South Saskatchewan River and the base of the centre column, commanded by Lt. Col. Otter, which would strike against Riel. When the river was navigable, Swift Current would become the major supply base for Middleton's forces.
- ¹²35th Battalion. The York and Simcoe Rangers, formed from the 12th and 35th Battalions, were commanded by Lt. Col. W.E. O'Brien, M.P. O'Brien was born in 1831 at Thornhill, Upper Canada. Educated as a lawyer, he was a newspaper editor and farmer at the time of the rebellion, as well as the Conservative M.P. in the House of Commons representing Muskoka.
- ¹³Saskatchewan Ferry. After waiting for almost a week at Swift Current, and annoyed by the delay in being provided with team transport, Lt. Col. Williams decided to make a forced march to reach the steamer which would carry his men down the river to Clark's Crossing where he would meet with Middleton's main column. Williams had sent two of his companies to Saskatchewan Ferry several days previously.
- ¹⁴Possibly Major Henry Smith who commanded the detachment of "C" Company, Infantry School Corps, which was with Middleton's column.
- ¹⁵"Northcote". A Hudson's Bay Company steamer commanded by Captain James Sheets. It was hired by the Department of Militia and Defence to help transport both troops and supplies during the rebellion. Later it was to be used in an unsuccessful attempt to attack the rebels along the river front at Batoche.
- ¹⁶Lt. Col. B. Van Straubenzie was born in England in 1829. When 18 years old he joined the British Army and saw service in various parts of the Empire, as well as the Crimean War, until he retired in 1868. He entered the Canadian service in 1876, was Deputy Adjutant General in several military districts, and during the rebellion was the commander of the infantry brigade in Middleton's column.
- ¹⁷Captain Kirivan — possibly Major M.W. Kirwan, an Irish soldier of fortune who had served with the British and French Armies. He was a Transport Officer.
- ¹⁸Captain A.L. Howard, an American, had served during the American Civil War and in the U.S. Army for five years following the end of the war. In 1885 he was with the Gatling Machine Gun Co. of Hartford, Conn. when the Minister of Militia, Adolph P. Caron, ordered two of the guns. The company sent Howard to instruct and train the Canadian gun crews. Howard volunteered to serve in the campaign with the guns — surely an unusual and unique example what might be termed the "hard sell".
- ¹⁹Presumably wounded from the engagement fought at Fish Creek on April 24th. During this fighting Middleton's force suffered fifty-five casualties including ten killed. The rebels, led by Gabriel Dumont, lost five men killed in action and probably some wounded.
- ²⁰The 90th Battalion of Rifles from Winnipeg, Manitoba was commanded by Lt.-Col. Alfred MacKendand.
- ²¹Lt. J. Halliwell was the senior subaltern in "A" Company. He was wounded in the battle of Batoche. Some years later he was to command the 15th Battalion, "Argyll Light Infantry".
- ²²The 10th Royal Grenadiers was a Toronto battalion commanded by Lt. Col. H.J. Grasett.
- ²³"A" Battery, Regiment of Canadian Artillery, was one of the few regular force units available to Maj.-Gen. Middleton. Stationed at Quebec, it was commanded by Lt. Col. C.E. Montizambert.
- ²⁴"C" Company, Infantry School Corps, was based in Toronto. It was commanded by Major Henry Smith.
- ²⁵Snider — most of the militiamen were armed with the breach-loading single shot Short Snider rifle.
- ²⁶Big Bear — Chief of the Cree band near Frog Lake. It was this band which was involved in the massacre at Frog Lake and the surrender of Fort Pitt. At this moment, Big Bear was still at Fort Pitt.
- ²⁷The Winnipeg Field Battery was commanded by Major E.W. Jarvis.
- ²⁸The author is referring to Mr. G.A. Henty, who was a special correspondent for the "Evening Standard" in London. Henty is remembered as the author of a large number of adventure books for young boys.
- ²⁹The Dominion Land Surveyor's Intelligence Corps was commanded by Captain J.S. Dennis. The unit is also referred to as a "mounted corps" and as "Scouts". Captain Dennis, who had been in Western Canada since 1872, formed this 50-man unit from land surveyors working for the government in the North-West.
- ³⁰Boulton's Mounted Infantry was another small unit raised by Major C.A. Boulton. A Canadian, he served in the British Army and later in the Canadian militia. He had been a surveyor and had been taken prisoner by Riel in 1869-70. In 1885 he was ranching about 200 miles north of Winnipeg when his offer to raise 60 men for service was accepted by the Minister of Militia.
- ³¹The advance was to be made when the officer in charge of the infantry units, Colonel Van Straubenzie, heard the fire from cannon which Maj.-Gen. Middleton had with his group some distance to the east. The noise from the firing would be a signal that the Métis were engaged defending the eastern end of their line, thus weakening their western end. Owing to a change in the wind, the sound of the artillery was not heard and consequently the main body of the infantry did not move. This accounts for the general's ill-temper. When, after their mid-day meal, the Midland and other battalions did advance, they charged far deeper into the enemy's defences than Middleton anticipated!