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NIAGARA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NO. 20

Reminiscences of the Fenian Raid 1866
By Charles Hunter.

Reminiscences of Niagara and St. Davids
By Mrs. J. G. Currie

Canadian Confederation in the Making with
some Glimpses at the Confederators
By Rev. A. F. MacGregor, B. A.

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Thomas de Boucherville

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PREFACE

In presenting our twentieth pamphlet to our members and the public generally we wish to thank the writers who have enabled us to give glimpses of Canadian life extending over a full century. We are pleased to give the picture of the Monument on Queenston Heights and of Mrs. Currie chiefly by whose earnest solicitation the grant of $2,000 was given. The inscription on the Monument reads thus: "This Monument has been erected by the Government of Canada to Laura Ingersoll Secord, who saved her husband's life on these Heights, 13 Oct., 1812, and who risked her own in conveying to Col. Fitzgibbon information by which he won the victory of Beaver Dams July 24th, 1813"
City companies, while the Barrie, and Whitby companies, again became independent.

Early in 1864 I left the Barrie Grammar School and became a law student in the firm of Messrs. Ardagh & Ardagh, Barristers, etc., in Barrie, while in the firm of Messrs. Boulton & McCarthy, a few doors away were two close chums and schoolmates, Willie Irwin, son of the Head Master of the Barrie Grammar School, and Walter Keating, son of an Irish gentleman settled in Barrie. As at this time the newspapers were printing most disturbing rumours as to all possible and impossible Fenian doings, which stirred the townspeople greatly, while creating a distinctly warlike spirit, it is not surprising that the tone of our frequent meetings was of a like character. This soon brought about a visit to a popular Barrister, Lieutenant William O'Brien of the Barrie Rifles, (now Colonel O'Brien of Shanty Bay), expressing our desire to join, and who, though at first refusing to entertain the proposition, at last consented if our families agreed, which they finally did, greatly to his surprise, and only upon his promise to look after us closely. So soon as the fact that we had joined the company became known, the Rector's nephew, James Anderson, another close friend insisted on going also, greatly to the distress of the Rector and other relatives, as he was inclined to be delicate, he also had his way. This was too much for another schoolmate, Harry Ardagh, of Orillia, who also joined, while other boys were urging their parents for permission to do so. This time Lieutenant O'Brien called a halt, and would have no more of our friends, saying he already had too many of us. I may say that the eldest of our party was not yet 18 years of age.

Christmas Day fell on a Sunday in 1864, and I shall never forget the gloom that overshadowed the Christmas festivities in Barrie homes, or the Rector's sermon, with the deadly stillness, the broken voices and stifled sobs of those we loved. We were only lads, and in our excitement at being selected had not counted the cost, but now we learned "that war has its darker side." The last days in Barrie fairly dragged along, notwithstanding frequent strenuous drills and watching crowds, as Captain McKenzie was very proud of the Barrie Rifles, and a glutton for work.

We were to leave early in the morning of the 28th December, and with what loving care were our knapsacks packed for us, with little luxuries slipped in, that we would not see, but later had to be removed before inspection was made for just such articles. Irwin and myself living out of Town, said our last good-bye, and who can tell the sadness of those partings, then drove in together to the Armoury, and marched to the station. The hour was early, but the whole town and surrounding country seemed there. The Company "fell out," and mingled with their waiting friends, each dark coated Rifleman, the centre of sad and troubled groups, to whom in the peaceful quiet of their daily life, war had no thought or place, and its sudden call for their sons left them broken hearted facing unknown sorrows. The train whistled in the distance, the bugle sounded hurried farewell greetings, there was little cheering as the train pulsed out, it was like the passing of a funeral, as friends and relatives alike were sure we should not return alive; and though we could not see it then the partings had also an amusing side, as this fear caused the farewells to be of an unusually friendly nature, and upon the company's return later, with no casualties, there were people who had indistinct recollections of the event.

With what saddened hearts and lowered spirits we entered the train, but few hours had passed before youth had sway, and the glamour of war again possessed us, while laughter and jest prevailed, though the set and still saddened faces of those who left wives and children behind, were seen bravely covering their grief.

We went through to St. Catharines by rail, where we were billeted for the night about the town, though I have no recollection of where we put up—And the next morning in heavy marching order we walked the twelve miles to Niagara. The country is low and level, while the weather was cold and raw, with a wintry wind that fairly ate its way through overcoats, while the "Gravel Road"—save the mark—never in those days, was at this time in a bad state, frozen mud cut into deep ragged ruts that made terrible walking, altogether the march was an experience that will never be forgotten by those who participated, so later experience, and I have had many strenuous ones, quite equalled this, and it must be remembered the men were mostly new recruits and uncustomed to such a strain. Captain McKenzie was a splendid soldier, as he afterwards proved himself in the "North West," he never spared himself or his men, but in this instance he was surely ill-advised as to conditions of the road at that time. However there was little grumbling, though much suppressed bad language when an occasional heavy fall tried the temper of a man beyond endurance. It was afterwards said, that what the Barrie Rifles thought of that tramp could not be fittingly expressed by appropriate English language, though it is admitted that many did their utmost to explain to their friends, but not for publication.

Upon entering the suburbs of Niagara I was at once among familiar scenes. The spire of St. Andrew's Church, an old friend was the first in view. Then the Niagara Grammar School, where
under Reverend T. D. Phillips, some ten years before, an elder brother and myself spent two happy years. I saw little change in the building or surroundings at that time. We marched through the Town to Butler’s Barracks, arriving at 1.30 p.m. December 29th, when Captain McKenzie reported to Colonel Durie, commanding the 2nd or Central Administrative Battalion, in which the Barrie Rifles were placed as No. 6 company. As Butler’s Barracks were not then ready for our accommodation, we were for a few days billeted in hotels and private houses through the town, in all cases received a most cordial reception, were treated like heroes, and lived on the fat of the land.

The day after our arrival, eight companies of the Battalion assembled for inspection by Lieutenant Colonel Durie as follows:

- Two companies of the Queen’s Own Rifles.
- One company of the Kingston.
- One company of the Simcoe.
- One company of the Collingwood.
- One company of the Barrie.
- One company of the Whirby.
- One company of the Scarboro.
- One company of the Lacolle.
- One company of the Hemmingford.

The two last companies being stationed at Niagara Falls.

For many succeeding days it was a continual grind of drill, but the men were of good material, and Colonel Durie was soon well pleased with the Battalion. On the 9th of January we were marched to Butler’s barracks; the various buildings by this time being repaired and cleaned. The Barrie Rifles were allotted to two story buildings immediately in rear of the present “Officers Quarters,” and were given “orders” upon the “Quarter Master” for supplies and stores. And what a rough and tumble affair it was. At least four companies engaged in the struggle for household effects and supplies of every description, it was impossible to preserve order, the strong despoiled the weak — there were a few “mix ups” — with some bad language. Members of the companies fortunate enough to be already in Barracks stood about enjoying the fun, and greatly adding to the noise. It was amusing to the onlooker to see one man staggering under a load of furniture, another with an armful of straw for his canvas mattress and pillow, a third with supplies for the cook’s department, jostling and crowding each other in their eagerness to safely house their belongings. The men were as a rule even tempered and took their troubles in good part, though, with the despoilers and their victims it remained a never ending matter of violent controversy.

Our barrack room accommodated 20 men, 10 each side with large open space between for tables, stores, etc., with two windows at ends; each man had a small cot, with three feet of space upon each side. Through the kindness of Lieutenant O’Brien our party of five were together in one end, while in the next cot was the Sergeant in charge, a tall, hard headed Presbyterian, with a hasty temper and great strength, who, notwithstanding all opposition ran that small contingent upon Sunday School lines to the last. At half past six in the morning the bugles would bring us to the floor, and with no delay allowed — ablutions in ice cold water after windows had been open all night for ventilation, was a new experience, “no hot water heaters in those days.” Floors had to be swept and beds made before breakfast, for which we always had a keen appetite.

Our great objection was to Sentry duty, and in after years we agreed that “Sentry go” about “Butler’s barracks” or “Fort Mississaugas” on stormy winter nights in zero weather was our most trying experience, and an invention of Satan to provoke bad language. The pay of privates at Niagara camp was 50c per day, with rations, the rations did not impress us greatly, for though the food was good, it was plain, very plain, with little variety, but still we grew fat upon it. The 50c per diem, however, seemed a good deal to us, as we had not previously any great surplus in our pockets.

Before leaving Barrie, through the kindness of Mr. Darcy Boulton, Barrister, we were given letters to his numerous friends in Niagara, who showed us much kindness. Foremost among these were the Judge and Mrs. Lawder, whose house was always open and as it was only a short distance from the barracks we were frequent guests. But this was not all, a few days after our arrival, Alma and Harvey Lawder, with their small sister appeared at the barracks drawing a hand sleigh loaded with delicacies sent by Mrs. Lawder, and which during our stay in those quarters became a regular and much looked for visit; not only by ourselves, but by our mess-mates, who participated in this welcome addition to our food.

During January it was not all work, and the men found plenty of time to enjoy themselves; by those who possessed, or could borrow skates, “the Slip” was much frequented, and in mild weather snow-balling between companies was the great frolic, and a source of much amusement to the men, I remember seeing Brig. Genl. Otter, at that time a subaltern in the “Queens Own,” looking on with other officers at an unusually strenuous engagement and enjoying the fun.

Towards the close of January the Barrie Rifles were ordered to
vacate Butler's barracks, and to occupy Fort Mississauga, greatly to
our dismay, as we were well settled and could see no reason for the
change, we also knew that "Mississauga" was a very exposed posi-
tion for winter habitation, however, there was no help for it, so we
unwillingly packed our belongings, were marched to the Fort and
allotted quarters in the barracks under the embargo, where we
soon made ourselves more comfortable than we had hoped for.
During this period the whole of Canada was disturbed by numberless
disquieting reports as to Fenian movements, which kept the entire
Country, as well as our troops on Frontier duty, in a state of nervous
tension, and it was supposed that the occupation of Fort Mississauga
was connected with these rumours. Fort Mississauga was at this
time in good defensive condition, the Palisades that surrounded the
Fort including the outside kitchens, were intact, as was also the
high breakwater guarding the water front. The old double gate was
solid and strong, while the Fort, built in 1814, showed no sign of
decay, and easily accommodated some 20 of our men in its two vault
like rooms, which with blazing logs in the fireplaces made an attrac-
tive resort on cold evenings. The roof was at that time open,
cannon mounted in each corner, with shot ready for use, the walls
running up five feet on all sides for protection of the gunners.
These walls are very wide, and during sunny days in spring were the
great lounging place for the men, but only when officers were away
as it was strictly forbidden.

Our barrack rooms were not so large as at "Butlers," but
stronger, being made bomb-proof, by layers of square cedar logs.
As expected these barracks proved very cold at night, winds from
the north and east swept over the bastion heavy with spray, and so
raw and penetrating as to make us shudder under our blankets and
overcoats, whilst before spring opened the roofs were a mass of solid
ice and snow level with the earthworks. The constant gabble of the
"Cowees," which at that time flocked in countless thousands to the
Niagara river during winter months, was also a sleep disturber.

During our residence in the Fort the outside brick kitchens,
showing signs of decay were not used, as a smaller kitchen inside
the defenses, said to have been for officer's use in former days, served
our purpose well, and saved the cooks much trouble. The food
supplied was also good here, but as the cooks were usually applicants
for the position by soldiers, who desired an easy life, the result of
their work was discouraging, and as a rule our meals were quite un-
worthy of the healthy appetites with which we attacked them.
Here again we were aided by the kindness of Mrs. Lawder, as al-
most before we were settled in our new quarters, the young Lawders
turned up with the usual hand sleigh and supplies, which was
continued at intervals during our stay. Referring to this, Walter
Keating, now Master of Titles at Fort Francis, in a recent letter
writes, "The one thing I especially remember about "Niagara was
the great kindness shown us by Judge Lawder and his family."

Mr. and Mrs John L. Alma also showed us great kindness, one
evening four of us dined with them, afterwards while playing cards
with some young ladies a party of officers dropped in, greatly to our
embarrassment, as officers and privates cannot meet on the same
plane, so we proposed to leave, but our hosts would not hear of it,
and Mrs. Alma took us into another room, and the officers looked
everingly on while we spent a most enjoyable evening.

I regret to say that in the move to Fort Mississauga our party
lost "Keating," he wrote an unusually fine hand, which with other
qualifications, obtained his promotion as Lance Corporal, and a
position as clerk in the Quarter-Master's Department. I also
obtained my first stripe about the same time, but for what reason
neither my friends nor myself could state, but of which I was
proud.

It was now occasionally my duty to take a squad of our sick to
the Hospital, which then stood in the centre of Fort George Com-
mon, exactly where the 16th hole of the N. G. C. now holds pos-
session. The Chief Medical Officer was a local practitioner of great
shrewdness and ability, and up to all "tricks of the trade," and as
he also provided medicine, was especially keen to see it was not
dispensed without a good reason. It was rare fun to see him pick
out the schemers, who feigning sickness to shirk their duties were
quickly turned down with a sharp reprimand, to those with trifling
ailments he made caustic comment, while instructing the "Orderly
Sergeant" to see they had light diet for a few days. To those with
sore throats, colds, etc., a hot bran poultice, with the light diet, was
his certain remedy, and it was marvellous how quickly such men
recovered and appeared at parade while privately abusing the
Doctor to their friends. In cases of real sickness there was no one
more careful and attentive, and the Hospital was well managed.

On the South East corner of the fort a lightning rod ran up
the wall, held in place by bands of iron, and one day in an idle
moment I suggested the top of the wall could be reached by it, but
the idea was laughed at. My coat was off at once and the climb
 commenced, when fairly started the men called me back, but though
doubtful about the rod I still kept on, when within a short
distance of the top Lieutenant O'Brien's voice shocked me by
shouting "come down there"; the return was no easy matter, though
it was managed. The rating received was a thing to be remembered, but afterwards I realized it was better than a broken neck, which would probably have resulted.

"At this time of writing Fort Mississauga and its surroundings are fast falling to ruins, and it is unfortunate that the Dominion Government is so little interested in the preservation of this fort, one of Canada's most historic possessions; this indifference being in direct contrast to the careful attention given by the American Government to the preservation of their Fort Niagara, a few hundred yards away."

Towards the end of February orders were issued by the Militia Department disbanding the Frontier Battalions, greatly to our delight, and on the 1st March after bidding farewell to our friends the Battalion boarded the train to our various destinations. Our company arrived late at night and received a great reception, then hastily slipped away to our homes.

I may say this call to arms at Niagara has been relevant to some particular happenings to myself, as I then formed relations that at a later period bound me to Niagara with unbreakable ties.
REMINISCENCES
OF THE
"FENIAN RAID"

PART II.
"DUNNVILLE"

Shortly after our return from Frontier duty at Niagara in the spring of 1865, Irwin, Keating and myself were again hard at work in the offices of our respective Law firms who gave us cordial welcome, and appeared pleased to have us back. For some days we could do little but relate our experiences to a numerous circle of friends, but as this seriously interfered with the office routine it was promptly stopped, and we then settled down to our duties in earnest.

It may easily be understood how greatly we enjoyed and appreciated returning to the comforts and luxuries of home life after some months in barracks with strenuous work. We had, however, acquired the military fever and were constant in attendance at all drills and parades, which Captain MacKenzie continued with unfailing regularity, and apparently with good reason, for so soon as our Battalions were recalled from the Frontier, sinister rumours of Fenian movements were again abroad disturbing the country.

With a judicious mixture of hard-work and amusement, the summer of 1865 and the winter months of 1866 passed rapidly away, when without previous warning, on the 8th March, 1866, the Barrie Rifles were ordered to proceed at once to Dunnville for protection of the border. While we had perhaps anticipated such a call, it was disturbing, and the response was not so ready, the allurements of barracks life had been roughly dispelled, and a further term of perhaps months of monotonous life in an inland town did not appeal to our volunteers, the more so, that there was little hope of actual warfare, while the necessity of again applying for leave of absence to employers was distasteful. However, there was little time for thought, it was a peremptory call, and in my case there was no choice, as I was now Colour Sergeant of the Company. Messrs. Ardagh & Ardagh were again most kind, and though short-handed, at once gave ready consent to my going. And I should mention here, that employers generally showed a most generous and patriotic
spirit in keeping open the positions of their employees until their return, and in numberless instances at a great personal sacrifice. My comrades Irwin and Kesting could not join us, as they had attended the Military School at La Prairie for three months during the previous summer, while Anderson was not in good health, and with Ardagh of Orillia had resigned from the Company. Their places were taken by other Barrie boys—Charles Locke, afterwards Doctor Locke of Hamilton, Frank Astley, afterwards Doctor Astley of Ottawa, and Claude Holt, now enjoying in Vancouver well earned rest after a busy life.

On the evening of the 8th of March a special train was waiting, and the townspeople were in a body at the Station to see us off, but it was in no way the sad event as upon the call to Niagara. The cry of "Wolf" had been so frequent during the past year that the danger of a Fenian invasion was not taken so seriously, as a consequence a lighter spirit prevailed, and the train moved out amid hearty cheering.

Officers of the Barrie Rifles were at this time, Captain MacKenzie, Lieutenant O'Brien, and Ensign Graham, a recent appointment. The Collingwood Company under Captain Moberley joined us at Allendale. There were no sad faces this time, and I have only recollections of a rather riotous journey to Toronto. We remained over night in the City, and on the morning of the 9th were forwarded by rail to Dunnville with three other Companies under command of Colonel Dennis, the Collingwood Company being sent on to Port Colborne.

While in Toronto we learned that the occasion of this sudden call was the ominous gathering of Fenian Forces in Buffalo, and on the 9th of March Lord Monck wrote Mr. Cardwell that he had definite information as to the intentions of Fenians to invade Canada, and that the hour had come to prepare for anything that might occur and that eight thousand Canadian volunteers were ready for immediate action, this was on the 12th increased to ten thousand called for active service.

After many delays our detachment arrived at Dunnville quite late at night, tired, and with a cold rain falling. Although the town authorities had received instructions to arrange accommodation for four companies of volunteers, they were unprepared, and for some hours we suffered great discomfort. Our party of four were sent with others for temporary shelter to a small tavern near the station until arrangements could be made for us. A number of the men were already billeted there, and in possession and comparative comfort; the rest of us were in a bad way, packed in a small room, wet and cold, and with no food available. Presently Lieutenant O'Brien appeared and said he had explained our case to the Collector of Customs at Dunnville, Mr. W. S. Macrae, who had kindly offered to take us in until other arrangements could be made. Our satisfaction was very great, we had looked forward to a night of much discomfort in a crowded smoke-filled room, and the relief at knowing we would be housed in comfort was extreme. Mr. Macrae hastened with us to his house, where Mrs. Macrae gave us a most kind welcome, and took us at once under her wing. We were given rooms and in a short time were sitting at a bountiful table, near a bright wood fire, and made so much of, that we surely thought we had touched "Aladdin's Lamp." The next morning after a good breakfast we prepared with regret to move to other quarters, when Mr. Macrae came in and announced he had interviewed Captain MacKenzie and arranged that we could remain with them for the present. I need scarcely say we were most grateful and endeavored to give as little trouble as possible to show we appreciated such disinterested kindness. I should add that when suitable quarters were afterwards found us, the Macrae's would not hear of our leaving, and we were permitted to remain with them during our stay in Dunnville. None of us could ever forget or speak too highly, of the unusual kindness shown to us by all members of this family.

About this time the Militia Department supplied Colonel Dennis with 20 "Spencer repeating rifles," a recent improvement. Men were then selected from among the best shots to be armed with these rifles and to form a company of sharpshooters, among whom I was pleased to find myself enrolled. Our days were spent in constant drills, varied by long marches into the country until the detachment was brought to a high state of efficiency.

Dunnville may scarcely be termed a lively town in winter, though, in summer delightful, and with many interesting features. One in particular I remember that was notable, an old graveyard—long disused—and unique in the way of cemeteries, situated upon the north bank of the Grand River at a point where a small stream adjacent to the graveyard finds its exit in the river, and which in the passing of years had encroached upon the cemetery grounds, carrying off sections of its land, and it is even said of its dead. Gruesome tales were told our men by "old timers" that in the spring freshets coffins of the buried dead, have from time to time been torn from their last resting places and hurried away by the turbulent waters. It bears rather heavily upon these old residents that after their "shades" had once crossed "the styx", their poor remains
should be compelled to cross the Grand River with no "Charon" to see them safely over.

The time passed heavily, and our stay at Dunnville was not enlivened by many stirring events. I can recall only one episode of sufficient importance to be mentioned, but that furnished us with conversational matter for some time after. One night towards the end of March between 11 and 12 o'clock when all good soldiers were asleep in their beds, the bugles rang out sharply the "Assembly Call," and soon the men were running to the "drill hall" from all parts of the town, and in more or less disorder. We were told that word had come in of a large party of Fenians having left Buffalo in barges to take possession of Port Maitland at the mouth of the Grand River, and our instructions were to hasten there at once with all speed and hold the harbour, as there were no defensive works at this point it was the most likely place of attack, and we felt we should now surely see fighting.

We were soon on the way in heavy marching order and with extra ammunition. It was four miles to Port Maitland by the shortest route which followed windings of the river, and at this season in a dreadful state, as our road passed through marshy peat lands, filled in at very bad places with rough corduroy, while the night was dark with a raw wind and occasional sleet, so the outlook was not promising for rapid travel. Dunnville men carrying lanterns acted as guides. There was no picking of steps, we ploughed through mud and mire, and splashed through water at what we considered racing speed, but upon arriving at Port Maitland were surprised to find we had taken two hours and a half to cover the four miles. We soon aroused the villagers sleeping in blissful ignorance of the invasion, all lights were ordered to be put out, and the companies posted in positions covering landing places; absolute silence was to be preserved; and for four miserable hours we stood, soaked and shivering awaiting the expected attack which never came. When day broke there were still no signs of the enemy, so we marched back to Dunnville sore and angry. There were some who thought this alarm and fatiguing march was merely arranged by Colonel Dennis to try our metal, but it was not so, the attack had been planned by the Fenians, and only given up when their plans became known to the Canadian Government.

During our stay in Dunnville the anger and patriotism of Canadians was being stirred to fever heat by the constant strain of impending invasion, and the public sentiment was most ably voiced by Chief Justice Draper, who at Toronto, when opening the spring Assizes in April delivered a charge that created a profound sensa-
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OF THE
"FENIAN RAID"
1866

PART III.

No sooner were the Frontier Battalions removed from the border in the early spring of 1866, than the gathering of Fenians in large numbers was reported at Buffalo, also that they were well equipped and armed. This was soon followed by feverish rumors of Fenian activity in both Upper and Lower Canada.

The feeling of Americans at this time was not too friendly. A Buffalo newspaper only voiced popular sentiment in saying, “We don’t wish Canada any ill but a little healthy scaring won’t do them any harm.” “It is very pleasing in the face of such unfriendliness that we may truly say, Canada and the United States now understand each other better, while a very cordial feeling prevails between these countries, and which is unlikely again to be disturbed.

It was on Thursday the 31st of May, that the Militia Department began to take seriously the alarming reports that came in as to immediate Fenian invasion of Canada, and that no dependence could be placed on the United States to prevent such an outrage. On the afternoon of the 1st of June, the Barrie Rifles received orders from the Militia Department to proceed with all haste to the Niagara Frontier. Captain McKenzie was ready to leave at once as he had been hourly waiting instructions, unfortunately the call to arms was so general that resources of the railways were being taxed far beyond their capacity by the immediate demand for rapid transit of large bodies of men, so it was after midnight before a train could be given us.

It was soon abroad that the Company was again called to the front, and the townspeople flocked to the railway station crowding the platform and street, the long hours of waiting for the train seemed to our soldiers interminable while the strain upon the silent waiting people is kept at fever heat by the circulation of sensational newspaper bulletins constantly arriving. At last the train comes in, farewells are said, and even the Soldiers’ partings are not free from emotion. We were joined at “Allandale” by the Collingwood Company, under Colonel Stephens, who took command of the detachment, and at Cookstown by the Cookstown Company, under Captain Ferguson; each Company being full strength of sixty-five men. Keating, Irwin, Astley, Holt, Thompson and Lock, were again with the Company, the principals of our law firms giving a ready consent, and were at the train to see us off.

The journey to Toronto was in distinct contrast to previous ones, there being an entire absence of noise, or horseplay, the men were disturb’d and anxious, realizing, that it was a moment portentous to Canada, perhaps the turning point in her history, as should the Fenians once gain a foothold on Canadian soil they were likely at once to receive overwhelming support.

We reached Toronto in early morning of the 2nd of June, and marched to the Drill Shed, where we were told breakfast awaited us. Unfortunately this interesting statement proved as unstable as other rumors, and was not based upon fact, as we only found long tables cleared of everything but scraps by a detachment just sent on by boat to Port Dalhousie. We were also soon on our way to that Port, and after further delay were carried by train to St. Catharines, where our famished men were anticipating a good meal. Railway travel was demoralized, and it was dusk when we reached St. Catharines. We were now desperately hungry, having had almost no food since leaving Barrie, and confidently expected to satisfy our craving appetites upon arrival, and again were disappointed, troops had centered at St. Catharines from early morning, and though the generous citizens had done their utmost to meet the occasion, the demand had proved too great for the supply, and when our contingent rushed for the tables there was little found to satisfy three hundred and fifty men, and those were lucky who found a scrap of meat or a crust of bread.

Colonel Stephens’ instructions were to join Colonel Lowry at St. Catharines, but through some change of plan he had gone through to Clifton, leaving orders for Colonel Stephens to follow at once with his Battalion. It was between ten and eleven o’clock at night when we reached Clifton, and joined Colonel Lowry’s command, increasing his force by three hundred and fifty men.

At Clifton, all was turmoil and confusion, with the townspeople in a wild panic of fear raised to fever heat, as message after message came in by wire advising as to the defeat of Colonel Booker’s command, the slaughter of his soldiers, and annihilation of the Queen’s Own at Chippawa, and that the Fenian Army was at Chippawa recently joined by large reinforcements from Buffalo, and on the way to capture the Suspension Bridge, while every rumor that nervous
and frightened imaginations could invent was spread broadcast. It was Canada’s darkest hour, and there were many homes in mourning.

Colonel Lowry had already sent an engine down the line towards Chippawa to feel the way, and shortly after our arrival a hastily made up train of mixed cars was ready and the Collingwood, Barrie, and Cookstown Companies were ordered to occupy them, the other Companies were to follow so soon as cars could be provided. About midnight our train moved slowly towards the Falls, the conductor and engineer having instructions to use great caution, the management fearing the tracks would be destroyed by Fenian sympathizers. After passing the Falls and about where the Loretto Convent now stands, our train stopped for some reason unknown, and it was fully an hour before we moved. Our next stop was at Chippawa, where the pilot engine passed us on its return to Clifton to report the road was clear; we then went on to Black Creek, where we found Captain Johnstone of the 60th Rifles with two hundred men, and Captain Hogge of the 15th Regiment with one hundred and forty men, who had just marched in from New Germany, where they had spent the night. Colonel Lowry upon the 2nd section of our train overtook us here with the other Companies of our Battalion, and four guns of the Royal Horse Artillery. The trains were then moved on to Frenchman’s Creek near Lower Ferry, where Fenians had enamped; the troops detained as the day was breaking. Scouts were at once sent forward and the detachment moved out towards the “Lower Ferry” at Fort Erie, by this time we were a total mixed force of one thousand men.

A tall Lieutenant of the 60th Rifles, with a squad of men, and Lieutenant O’Brian of the Barrie Rifles with some of our Sharpshooters, to which I was attached, formed the advanced guard. This long legged officer of the 60th, had evidently decided there should be no time lost upon the way for he started off at a terrific pace. A squad of his men were in front, and being close behind him with some of our men, his voice could be heard urging them on. Soon word was passed up to moderate the pace, but the order was unheeded and the speed again as before. Presently a mounted officer galloped up re-monstrating, and for a little the pace slackened; but only a few moments and we were again racing along, there was no further objection; the officers and men were of one mind. A decisive battle was either progressing, or close at hand and we must be there. In that early morning bone and muscle were racked, with one’s whole body crying out for rest, as it will be remembered that our battalion had travelled constantly without sleep, and with little food for thirty-six hours, but the metal of the men was good, and we encouraged each other along. During the march our road passed between Apple orchards just in bloom, and their beauty and fragrance must have refreshed and calmed many a mind unsettled and disquieted with the terrible disaster that had befallen our Volunteers, particulars of which we had recently learned.

The severe strain of the march was noticeable as the men staggered along the dusty road, and it speaks well for Canada’s vitality and determination that only one man dropped from the ranks during this strenuous march, he was a volunteer officer and his feet gave out, but no envious glance was cast his way as he sat by the roadside with his boots beside him.

We were very glad to see the waters of the Niagara River shining through the trees, and could see as we reached its brink, the deserted Fenian Camp a short distance below to which attention was drawn by dense columns of smoke that shot up from several large piles, accompanied by continuous explosions, which we learned later were the various supplies, muskets, accoutrements, ammunition, etc., which the Fenians destroyed, before attempting to cross the river that morning. A day or two after, I visited their late Camp and from which I beat a hasty retreat, as the ground was covered with the dead bodies of numerous horses and cattle stolen from the townspeople, and farmers, and which the Fenians had wrently destroyed before leaving, and that a fatigue party of our men were busy clearing away. It was indeed a worn out, dust covered, body of men that flung themselves on the grass by the river side as the order to “fall out” was given, while others made for the water to bathe their sore or bleeding feet. The river was beautiful in the early morning, and its cool breeze was grateful.

In a few minutes Lieutenant O’Brien hurried up and called for Volunteers from his Company, as he had been ordered to search the woods adjoining the Camp at Frenchman’s Creek for a party of Fenians that our Scouts had reported were in that vicinity. The whole Company would have readily responded, but many had come in from the march with bare and torn fest, and he would only have sound men. This Officer soon returned disappointed to find the reported Fenians were stragglers from our own detachment coming in, and who had been mistaken for Fenians by a Scout.

While we were resting on the river bank, an incident occurred that left a deep impression upon those who witnessed it. We heard a band playing in the distance, “The Wearing of the Green.” At first, it was supposed to be from the Buffalo side, but presently a tug was seen coming down the river towing a Barge crowded with men waving banners and small flags, and hoisting at our soldiers;
they passed directly in front of us, apparently in Canadian waters; our soldiers looking on in silent wonder. Captain Crow's battery of four guns was just below us, suddenly we saw the Artillery men spring to the guns with the evident intention of destroying the Barge, and were it not that the Officers rushed in and with the backs of their swords drove them away, a grave international complication might have resulted. Presently the march was resumed to Fort Erie some two miles up the river, many of the men were noticed with articles in their possession acquired at the Fenian Camp, which had been visited in the meantime; these were mostly Rifles, though other souvenirs were in evidence, but the Officers did not interfere. Residents along the River road were evidently glad and relieved to see our force come in; many with their families stood in doorways and gates cheering as we passed.

Shortly after entering the village of Fort Erie, a gruesome incident gave us an insight to the horrors of warfare; two dead Fenian soldiers being carried along the street on stretchers, the sheet had fallen away from the face of one who had been shot through the forhead, a horrible sight—this was the most disquieting of our Military experiences, and its effect was marked.

Another pathetic happening, was the removal by Lieut. O'Brien and a fatigue party a few hours later of the Fenian wounded at Ridgeway from the temporary Hospital in Fort Erie to the Ferry for transfer to Buffalo; a great crowd of townspeople and soldiers looked silently on; many of those in Fort Erie at this time will recall these incidents.

Our Battalion was directed to the crest of a hill overlooking the town where camping ground was staked for us, and the Companies were marched to their various stations and the work of erecting tents was at once proceeded with, there was no rest for any one. After the tents were up, our next serious concern was the obtaining of food, as by this time we were starving. A car load containing provisions, comforts, and luxuries, had been forwarded to our Company at Fort Erie immediately after we left, but had not yet arrived. Nothing was to be expected from the "Commissariat Department" which was utterly disorganized, so knew we must look out for ourselves; soon of our men were sent into the village, and to farms, to buy or beg provisions; however, the result was not satisfactory, nearly all returned empty handed, and those of us were fortunate who had a cold potato or a dry biscuit for lunch or supper, though such food was inadequate either to sustain, fortify, or console our craving appetites, and to add to our discomfort, heavy rain came with the night. In the search for food our men were surprised to learn from those visited, that while the Fenians had practically cleaned the village of food, and appropriated all horses and cattle they could lay their hands upon, they yet treated the inhabitants with a consideration that was unlooked for.

When the Battalion paraded in the afternoon, I was annoyed to find myself slated for Orderly service at Headquarters that night, having anticipated a much needed rest. However, there was no help for it, so before 8 o'clock I found the "Headquarters," a small one and a half story frame building, when I arrived there was apparently no one in the place; the hall and stairway were narrow; being tired out and knowing I could not keep awake, I threw myself at the foot of the stairs with my head on the lower step thinking to be aroused by the first person that came in, the next thing I knew was the being awakened by a hand on my head, I looked up in amazement, and self reproach to find the small hall filled with Orderlies, and men, and self reproach to find the small hall filled with Orderlies and men. The Officer who had followed my example, and were still asleep. The Officer smiled noticing my surprise, motioned me to silence so as not to awake them, and said to report at once to the Commanding Officer. I followed him to a small room under the roof where Colonel Lowry sat at a table, he looked up and then gave me four notes to deliver three were for Artillery commands, the other for a Battalion of Volunteers. It was ten o'clock when I left Headquarters and as the various commands were scattered, with both mud and rain heavy midnight was close at hand when I delivered replies to Colonel Lowry, who himself looked tired and worn. He read the notes and looked up at the travel stained Orderly, "What Battalion do you belong to, and how old are you," were the questions, "altogether too young for such work as this, go to your quarters as soon as you can," was his kindly comment. I thanked him, saluted and passed out, grateful that with his load of anxiety, and responsibility, he yet found time to think of others.

Those sleeping Orderlies 1 left, were now out upon various errands, so fortune favored me in being first called. Upon arrival at the Camp, my comrades were sleeping soundly, and notwithstanding the ground under the straw was soaking, I threw myself beside them in thankfulness; no camp beds, or wooden floors in those days.

The work of the small army at Fort Erie, some three thousand five hundred men, was at this time strenuous; my own duties were constant, to be up with the dawn at sounding of bugles, and to see to the changing of the guards. Visiting the outpost on dark or cloudy nights was not always a pleasant duty, but generally interesting, each sentry had something to report, and the imaginations of
many were fertile, but all would tell of random bullets from the American shore singing over their heads, and there is little doubt of the Fenian soldiers in Buffalo amused themselves in this way.

About midnight on Sunday, June the 3rd, our sleeping troops were quietly aroused by orders from Headquarters for immediate parade. The various Battalions hurriedly assembled, many of the men only half awake, some in undress, and all eager to know "what was doing." It was whispered about that a night attack upon Fort Erie by the Fenian Army in Buffalo had been reported through the "United States Secret Service Department," and which it was feared they might not be able to prevent.

The prospect of a midnight battle is not apt to exhilarate the feelings of any man, but to be awakened from sound sleep upon a dark night with a conflict in sight is likely to unsettle the nerves of even old soldiers, so I freely admit it was in no happy frame of mind that I passed down the opened ranks of the Barrie Company between Captain McKenzie, and Lieutenant O'Brien dropping steel ramrods into the barrels of the old "Muzzle loader" for the Officers to be sure it was clear, while the light clink of the steel as it struck the Breech seemed to our strained nerves in the quiet of the night like a "Fire Alarm." In comparing notes afterwards, others told me that the strain of standing rigidly in the silence was far greater to them than to those of us in active motion.

Hour after hour passed away under great nervous tension, and in absolute silence, the men were allowed to "stand at ease," and as the day broke were dismissed, after learning that the anticipated crossing of the Fenians had been suppressed by the Americans of which advantage was taken to return to their owners, clothing, boots, etc. mistaken for their own in their hurried dressing. Captain Akers, R.E. in command at Port Colborne, was also advised of the proposed landing of Fenians at some point along the Lake Shore between Fort Erie and Port Colborne, and likewise kept his force under arms all that night.

We could obtain no information as to our Car load of provisions from Barrie and about which we were anxious, as the Commissariat Department could not bring in supplies sufficient to meet the demand, Railways being still paralyzed, and the Officials at their wits' end, so our Officers took the matter up and after numerous telegrams it was learned that a car load of provisions forwarded to Port Colborne for the "Queen's Own," only arrived after that Regiment had left for Fort Erie; in the meantime, our car of provisions reached Fort Erie, and when the "Queen's Own" came in hungry they unfortunatley mistook the Barrie car for their own, making short work of its contents, and before we learned of their mistake their own car arrived and was disposed of. However, the "Queen's Own" had done good work and no complaints was made, but belts in the Barrie Company were drawn a hole closer.

At this time the President of the United States issued a Proclamation, just a week too late to be of service, instructing all American Officers to prevent further attack upon Canada.

On the evening of June the 4th, Colonel Lowry reported to the "Minister of Militia" that all appeared quiet on the Frontier.

This inglorious war with a rabble mob, in which we had all to lose and nothing to gain had proved a critical moment in the history of Canada, as had the Fenians made good their splendid dreams for the conquest of Canada, or even held their ground for a few days, they would surely have received strong support from American sympathizers.

The Simcoe Battalion was held at Fort Erie for two weeks later until all danger of another raid had passed away, therefore, our camp life was still strenuous, yet furnished much amusement. In our tent Walter Keating had great social qualities and a contagious laugh, while Xavier Thompson of Penetanguishene, was gifted with a fine voice and gay humor that made light of all hardships, and kept us in good spirits.

Some battalions were now withdrawn from the Frontier, while those remaining were hourly expecting orders to return home, when rumours of an attempt to destroy the Welland Canal resulted in the Barrie and Collingwood companies being sent to Port Colborne, greatly to their annoyance. After a further stay of three weeks, we received with tumultuous joy orders to return to our homes.

This final return was an occasion of great rejoicing to the good people of Barrie, who welcomed with grateful hearts the return of their volunteers for the third time from warfare without a wound, or the loss of a man.

So ended the Fenian Raid which in a few short years will sink into oblivion.

All through these Campaigns we were greatly indebted to Lieutenant William O'Brien for his ever watchful care and extreme kindness to us under all circumstances, and which we will always hold in grateful remembrance; He represents the best type of a soldier.

Wm. O'Brien, Barrister at Barrie, was afterwards Colonel of
the "Simco Forresters," is now Honorary Colonel of that Regiment, and resides at Shanty Bay near Barrie.

In the years that had passed since we first left our homes, there had been great changes in the lads fresh from school, who had perhaps gone out with the thought of a V. C. in their minds; they had seen no brilliant battles, won no medals, but who under strenuous Military training had acquired the bearing and manners of men, in that they had striven to play their part like men upon the world's stage. Though it must be said that the greatest change our relatives could see in us was the development of abnormal appetites.

Colonel Lowry in his report from Fort Erie to the Minister of Militia, states that he was much indebted to Mr. Nicol Kingsmill, and Mr. Allister Clarke of Toronto, for much valuable information and assistance. Mr. Kingsmill was an old Niagara Boy, and familiar with every section of the Niagara District, and as "Honorary Aid" to Colonel Lowry, was in a position to give reliable advice. But this report, said nothing of the midnight gallop later on of a party from Fort Erie to Clifton, and how recklessly "Mine Host Roslye" produced his rarest vintages in a royal celebration of Canada's victory.

In January 1867, I passed through the Military School at Toronto, and ten years later in 1877 when a Lieutenant in the St. Catherines Garrison Battery of Artillery, another Military experience was only just escaped. There had been rumours of an attempt to blow up Locks of the Welland Canal, and the Battery received orders to be in readiness to man a small vessel that was to be sent up: this for a time caused some excitement. We were under arms for a week, but nothing came of it, the preparedness of the Government probably avoiding the danger.