



# The Volunteer Review

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### THE INVASION OF CANADA IN 1874.

WRITTEN IN 1900 BY A RETIRED MILITIAMAN.

*Concluded from page 171.*

He evaded capture, however, by retreating down the bank of the Ottawa River, being deterred from crossing the country by the swamps lands in Prescott and Russell; Blundering along, with little or no knowledge of the country, he was pursued and many prisoners taken. The main body, however, evaded capture till near Alexandra where being confronted with a hasty levy of the hardy Highlanders of Stormont and Glengarry, he laid down his arms on the 23rd inst., without showing fight.

Our force being no longer immediately required in that neighbourhood, marched for Montreal, reaching that place with 6000 prisoners on the 30th inst. There for the present we must leave them to return to operations in Ontario.

During nearly the whole of July we lay idle, or rather we did no fighting. It was busy idleness otherwise. On the 23th intelligence was received from Collingwood that a large flotilla of gunboats and transports had passed the straits of Mackinaw, supposed to be an expedition to operate on Toronto from the rear. Our two Lake Huron gunboats had left Goderich with a view to intercept them, but too late, for on the 30th they effected a landing at Penetanguishene. Our Collingwood force at once retired to Barrie.

On receipt of this information our General hurried to Toronto, without, however, weakening the forces on the Erie Frontier. It was well he did not do so, for on the 31st the enemy landed in force at Fort Erie, Chippewa, Port Maitland, Windsor and Sarnia, driving in our outposts, and capturing two Regiments of the 1st Brigade at Port Colborne and Port Robinson. So well had they kept their secret, and so completely were we lulled to security, that the latter were taken literally without a shot being fired, the outpost at Chippewa being surprised, and their uniforms worn by the enemy to deceive our sentries. Marching rapidly on St. Catharines, our forces were obliged to re-

tire to Jordan destroying the Bridge at that place. This gained them a little time for the enemy were close on their heels. The 1st Division was moved to Caledonia, the junction of the Hamilton and Port Dover and Grand Trunk Railways; sending a Brigade to Jarvis, the crossing of the Canada Southern. Outposts were pushed forward to the Grand River at Cayuga, and other points where the river was bridged, with instructions to hold them if possible; and, if not, to destroy them. During this time the enemy was receiving strong reinforcements until at last they must have been 40,000 or 50,000 strong. This force was divided into three columns. On the 5th August they commenced to move, one on the east side of the Grand River, another on the lines of the Grand Trunk and Great Southern Rail roads, and the third on the line of the Great Western and the table land which forms the old lake ridge.

Our outposts retired before them, destroying the bridges as they crossed, and falling back on Hamilton. Here we were joined by the first Brigade. A hasty council was held, in the absence of the General commanding, and it was determined that Hamilton was indefensible; so the Desjardins canal was crossed, the Bridges destroyed, and a strong position taken up on the Flamboro side of Burlington Bay. Meantime we had heard with the deepest regret, that the enemy landing at Sarnia, having driven back the 1st Brigade 2nd Division on the line of the Grand Trunk towards Stratford, had divided into two columns, one pursuing our retreating forces, the other marching on London direct encountering the 3rd Brigade, 2nd Division hastily assembled from its outposts at Port Stanley, and Burwell and forcing them to retire towards Stratford. Here they joined the 1st Brigade, and Reserve Militia some 5000 strong, there assembled, and resolved on the defence of the place.

Meantime, the 2nd Brigade were not so fortunate, being cut off by the occupation of London. On finding out their situation the Brigade disbanded, many of the men finding their way to their homes in the vicinity, and concealing their arms and clothing till a future opportunity; the remainder,

some 500 strong, being taken prisoners, with all the baggage and stores. The guns of the battery had been thrown into the Thames, and a large quantity of ammunition secreted in the woods. After this capture the magnitude of which was increased an hundred fold in the American papers, the enemy's column landing at Wind-or reached London, joined forces with the column already there, and marched on Stratford, arriving before that place on the 5th August. On that day the 2nd Division, finding themselves greatly outnumbered, and fearing to be cut off, retired on Guelph. This retreat was conducted in a masterly manner, and with great success. Thus it will be seen that the enemy had possession of the entire Western Peninsula, while our Army had not been able to strike a decisive blow.

We were now established on a good defensive line, stretching from Burlington Bay to Guelph, our forces consisting of the 1st, and 2nd Division Active, 3 Divisions of Reserve Militia, and one Division of Regulars, in all numbering some 25,000 men. In front, on the Hamilton side, the enemy numbered about 35,000, at Guelph 10,000, and at Paris 5000. As we were operating on interior lines, however the disparity was not so great as it seems.

On the 11th we heard that the enemy's force operating on the north of Toronto, being met near Barrie by our troops, had retired towards Penetanguishene, and were being hard pressed, our forces outnumbering them. It was evident that their attempt was premature, as their force was too small to make head against numbers. To our great joy, our General joined us on the night of the 11th, having been delayed at Toronto arranging for fresh lines, and forwarding supplies. On that night the enemy made a demonstration in front, to cover an attack on our batteries on the heights guarding the Burlington Canal.

We were well prepared, and gave them a warm reception. At daylight they abandoned the attempt, and retired. Their loss at the Beach was frightful, the passage being narrow and difficult, and thoroughly covered by our guns.