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### THE FENIAN RAID OF 1866.

BY MAJOR GEORGE T. DENISON, JR.

[CONTINUED.]

It seems that Lieut.-Col. Dennis prevailed upon Lieut.-Col. Booker to decide upon moving at once to Fort Erie by rail to attack the Fenians at Frenchman's Creek. The troops were all put under arms about 12 or 1 o'clock that night, and were loaded upon the cars, and a message sent to Col. Peacock by Col. Booker, informing him that he had given orders to attack the enemy at Fort Erie, subject to his approval. Col. Peacock did not answer this knowing that Captain Akers would be there before his answer could arrive, with orders for their guidance. Capt. Akers arrived at Port Colborne about 1:30 a. m. on Saturday morning and found the whole force under arms and in the cars. On his arrival, Lieut. Col. Dennis was anxious to move off at once to the attack, and Lieut. Col. Booker was prepared to carry out the proposal if properly authorized. Whether any of the three had reflected on the propriety of moving a large force by rail, through a wooded country, at night, and through a section not properly reconnoitered, and in close proximity to an active enemy, does not appear in the official reports.

The result was, however, that the three decided upon a plan that may best be told in Captain Akers' words: "The plan was as follows: Lieutenant-Colonel Booker was to proceed by rail to Erie, with the greater part of his force, to arrive at Fort Erie at 8 a. m. Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis and myself to go round the coast in a steam tug, taking a company of Volunteer Artillery to reconnoitre the shore between Fort Erie and Black Creek, and to return to Fort Erie in time to meet Colonel Booker at 8. Should Colonel Peacock approve of this he would march by the river road from Chippawa, and make a combined attack with Col. Booker at some point between Fort Erie and Black Creek, cutting off the enemy's retreat by the river,—the tug to be employed in cruising up and down the river, cutting off any boats that might attempt to escape, and communicating between the forces advancing from Chippawa and from Fort Erie. I communicated this proposed change to Col. Peacock both by letter and telegram.

The plan was merely a modification of that proposed by Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis, who wished to move at once with the Volunteers, without arranging a junction with Colonel Peacock. Before receiving an answer from Colonel Peacock, I went off in the tug with Colonel Dennis and the Company of Artil-

lery, leaving word with Lieutenant-Colonel Booker to take care and obtain Colonel Peacock's approval to the proposed change before acting on it, and explaining the plan previously determined on, in case Colonel Peacock should desire him to adhere to it."

The above official account by Capt. Akers shows at once the position Colonel Peacock was placed in, the difficulties he laboured under, and the little chance he had of succeeding when his orders were disobeyed, as the report, above quoted from, shows. In the first place, there was the commanding officer's plan changed by his subordinates, almost at the moment of execution. The three officers whom he had charged with the execution of his orders, even including the staff officer who carried them, coolly forming themselves into a mimic council of war, aided by a customs officer, and unitedly deciding upon a plan which has been previously shewn to be absurd, a plan of cutting off their retreat to the east, but leaving the whole country open to them to the west, as well as uncovering the canal they were sent to protect.

Again, Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis' instructions were to wait further orders before any attack was made, and yet Captain Akers says he was anxious to move with the Volunteers at once, without arranging a junction with Colonel Peacock. Captain Akers was sent to go with Lieutenant-Colonel Booker, and consult and advise with him on Colonel Peacock's plan, and assist him in carrying it out. Col. Dennis was sent to command the "Queen's Own," and yet, before receiving any answer from Colonel Peacock, both these officers, in disobedience of orders, went off in the tug to carry out their own plan.

The only way in which their conduct can be accounted for is, that they were so confident that Colonel Peacock would at once fall in with their plan of operation in lieu of his own, that they never, for one moment, calculated that his answer would be in the negative. Being imbued with this idea, it can readily be imagined that Captain Akers would not be very particular in going into details, and explaining minutely to Lieut.-Colonel Booker the plan which they both looked upon as virtually abandoned, it can also be conceived, even if Captain Akers did enter minutely into the details of the plan laid down by Colonel Peacock, that Lieut.-Colonel Booker, believing that it was a useless precaution, would not give so close attention to it, or be able so clearly to remember it, as if he felt when he heard it that he was about setting out to put it into execution.

It also happened, unfortunately, that Captain Akers, fearing the delays which

often occur in the movements of a large number of men, as a matter of precaution, directed them to start an hour earlier than they should, and to be an hour earlier at Stevensville, thinking that in all probability at least no time would be lost in setting off or on the march, and that if they were before time they might be kept back a little on the way. If he had staid with them to have kept them back, it would have been all right, but unfortunately he was away when he was wanted.

Lieutenant-Colonel Dennis and Captain Akers, as stated in the report, without receiving any answer from Colonel Peacock, left Port Colborne about 4 a. m. in the tug "Robb," which had at that time arrived, taking with them the Welland Garrison Battery under command of Captain Richard S. King, and a few men of the Dunville Naval Company under command of Captain McCallum. The particulars of this expedition will be described in a later chapter.

After they had left Port Colborne, Lieut.-Colonel Booker received in answer a telegram from Colonel Peacock, directing him to adhere strictly to the first plan, the particulars of which had been carried to him by Captain Akers. Lieutenant-Colonel Booker therefore had to set out upon his march, without the assistance it was intended he should have received from Captain Akers, and without the opportunity of referring to him for enlightenment on those parts of his instructions which he did not clearly understand.

Having his men all ready to start in the cars, and having heard that the railway was clear as far as Fort Erie, he decided to go by train as far as Ridgeway and to keep his men in the cars, or at least under arms, for the short time he had to delay before starting. Having his men thus all ready to start there occurred none of that delay which Captain Akers had anticipated, and to provide against which, he had named an earlier hour for starting. Being all ready in the cars to start, and only waiting for a particular hour to arrive, it can readily be believed that he would be likely to start a little before the time, rather than after it. However this may be, there is no doubt that Lieutenant-Colonel Booker started at least as early as 5 a. m., an hour or more earlier than necessary. Immediately after the force had left, a telegraph arrived from Colonel Peacock, directing Lieut.-Colonel Booker to delay his march for one hour, which would make his time of arrival at Stevensville between 11 and 12, cautiously feeling his way in the direction of the rendezvous. Mr. Stovin, of the Welland Railway, seeing the importance of the message, took a hand car and followed Lieutenant-Colonel Booker as fast as he could. On getting near Ridgeway

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