

# Incidents in the Early Military History of Canada, III.

With Extracts from the Journals of the Officer commanding the Queen's Rangers During the War—1755 to 1763.

A Lecture delivered on the 12th January, 1891, by Lieut.-Col. R. Z. ROGERS, 40th Battalion—  
Lieut.-Col. W. D. OTTER, President, in the Chair.

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The list of killed in this action shows 1 captain, 3 lieutenants, 3 ensigns, 5 sergeants and 113 men. Captain Buckley's Company lost its captain, lieutenant, one ensign and 47 men.

It is probable that it was on this occasion that the Major made his escape by the rock that has since borne the name of "Rogers' Slide."

It is a bold promontory on the west side of the lake, and in the vicinity of where this fight with the Indians took place, and rises almost perpendicularly from the water more than 600 feet.

Although no mention of it is made in his journal, the story is currently told that being pursued by a number of Indians, he followed the high land to the very brink of the precipice, where he untied his snow-shoes, and without moving them turned himself round and fastened them in the reversed position, and after throwing his accoutrements over the rock, he walked back to where by a ravine he could with safety descend to the ice.

When his pursuers came up they thought by the tracks that two men had gone over the cliff, and seeing the Major escaping on the ice they were convinced that his reputed protection by supernatural powers must be a fact, and gave up the chase.

In July, '58, Abercromby's whole army, 16,000 strong, with 600 of Rogers' Rangers as the advance guard, moved down Lake George and landed about five miles from Ticonderoga. In the first collision with the enemy's advance guard, Lord Howe was killed, and this brave young officer's death seemed to have a most disastrous effect on the whole army, although he held but a subordinate position. Such distrust and confusion ensued that more than a day was lost before a further advance was made. This time was profitably spent by Montcalm, who was in command of the French garrison. He constructed a barrier of logs and trees upon a ridge a short distance from the fort, with an abatis of trees felled with the tops outward for a hundred yards in front.

The next day Abercromby, by what appears to have been a great want of judgment, made a direct attack upon this position by an assault with fixed bayonets.

The result was most disastrous, and though the charge was gallantly renewed several times, no advantage was gained, and in the evening they had to retire with a loss of 1,944 officers and men.

Had the attack been renewed the next day by a judicious use of his artillery or by a flank movement, the result must have been successful on account of the disparity in numbers, but to the astonishment of all the General ordered a retreat, and the whole force again embarked on Lake George, leaving a large quantity of provisions and ammunition behind.

With this disaster a change seems to have come to the fortune of the British arms, for about that time Generals Amherst and Wolfe succeeded in taking the stronghold of Louisbourg, and Col. Bradstreet, by a brilliant dash with 3,000 men from the Mohawk Valley, crossed the lower end of Lake Ontario and captured Fort Frontenac on the 25th of August.

The expedition of General Forbes from Philadelphia with Col. George Washington, second in command, was also successful in reducing Fort du Quesne, which they named Pittsburgh, after the British Prime Minister, whose energy seemed to infuse new life into the whole army.

General Amherst superseded Abercromby and the winter was spent in preparation for a determined effort to bring the war to a close by a concerted attack by General Wolfe on the St. Lawrence, and Amherst by Lake Champlain.

We will next read of a midwinter 'scout' and a forced march on snow-shoes by the Rangers.

On the 3rd March, '59, Major Rogers received instructions to make such arrangements as to enable an Engineer officer, who was sent with him, to make a thorough obser-

vation as to the enemy's position and the strength of their forts, and also, if possible, to capture one or more prisoners.

The party was to be made up of Rangers and Indians, and, as the order expressed it, "to insure success, a body of regulars is ordered to join you and be under your command."

Accordingly the journal on the 4th reads:

"I marched with a party 378 strong to within 1½ miles of Lake George, then halted till evening to continue the march more secretly, which was resumed on the ice at 2 o'clock in the morning, and halted at the first narrows. On the evening of the 5th, we marched to Sabbath Day Point where we arrived at 11 o'clock, almost overcome with the cold. At 2 a.m. we continued our march, and reached the landing-place at the foot of Lake George about 8 in the morning. I sent out a small party to observe if any of the enemy's parties went out from the fort. They returned and reported that on the east side of the lake two parties were at work. It now appeared a suitable time for the Engineer to make his observation."

"I left Captain Williams to remain at this place with the regulars and 30 Rangers, while I, with the Engineer officer, 49 Rangers, and Captain Lotridge with 45 Indians, went to the isthmus that overlooks the fort, where he made his observations. We returned, leaving a small party to observe what numbers crossed the lake in the evening from the east side to the fort, that I might know the better how to attack them the next morning. At dark Lieut. Brehm went again with a guard of ten men to the intrenchments and returned at midnight without opposition, having completed his plans to his satisfaction; on which I ordered Captain Williams with the regulars back to Sabbath Day Point—the party being extremely distressed with the cold, it appeared to me imprudent to march his men any further, especially as they had no snow-shoes. I sent Lieut. Tute and 30 Rangers with him, with instructions to kindle fires on the aforesaid point."

"At 3 o'clock in the morning I marched with three Lieutenants, 40 Rangers, one Regular and Captain Lotridge with 46 Indians, in order to be ready to attack the enemy's working parties on the east side of the lake early in the morning. We crossed South Bay, 8 miles south of the fort. From thence, it being about 6 o'clock, we bore down right opposite the fort and within half a mile from where the French were cutting wood. Here I halted and sent two Indians and two Rangers to observe their situation. They returned in a few minutes and reported that the working parties were close to the banks of the lake and opposite the fort, and were about 40 in number; upon which we stripped off our blankets and ran down upon them, took several prisoners and destroyed most of the party as they were returning to the fort, from whence, being discovered, about 80 Canadians and Indians pursued us closely, being backed by 150 French regulars, and in a mile's march they began to fire in our rear. As we marched in a line abreast our front was quickly made. I halted on a rising ground resolving to make a stand against the enemy, who appeared at first very resolute, but we repulsed them before their reinforcements came up, and began our march again in a line abreast. Having advanced about half a mile further they came in sight again. As soon as we could obtain an advantageous post, which was a long ridge, we again made a stand on the side opposite the enemy. The Canadians and Indians came very close, but were soon stopped by a warm fire from the Rangers and Mohawks. They broke immediately and were pursued and entirely routed before their regulars could come up. After this we marched without any opposition. In these several skirmishes we had two Rangers and one regular killed, and one Indian wounded, and we killed about 30 of the enemy. We continued our march till 12 o'clock at night, and came to Sabbath Day Point, fifty miles distant from the place we

had set out from in the morning. Captain Williams and his men received us with good fires, and nothing could have been more acceptable to my party, several of which had frozen their feet, it being excessively cold and the snow four feet deep."

The result of the winter's preparations was that on the 21st July, '59, the army embarked at the head of Lake George, 12,000 strong, to try another attack on Ticonderoga. It was both well planned and well executed, and, though vigorously resisted by the French, they finally, on the evening of the 26th July, blew up the fort and withdrew by boats to Crown Point, which next became the chief object of attack.

The entry in this journal, under date, July 26, is as follows:

"I this day received orders from the General to attempt to cut away a boom which the French had thrown across the lake opposite the fort, which prevented our boats from passing by and cutting off their retreat. For the completion of this order I had 60 Rangers, in one English flat-bottomed boat and two whaleboats, in which, after night came on, I embarked and passed over to the other side of Lake Champlain opposite to our encampment, and from that intended to steer my course along the east shore and privately saw off their boom, for which I had taken saws with me, the boom being made of logs of timber. About nine o'clock, when I had got about half way across, the enemy, who had undermined their fort, sprung their mines, which blew up with a loud explosion, they being all ready to embark in their boats and make a retreat."

"This gave me an opportunity to attack them, with such success as to drive several of them ashore, so that next morning we took from the east shore ten boats with a considerable quantity of baggage and upwards of fifty barrels of powder and a large quantity of ball. About 10 o'clock I returned and made my report to the General."

As an evidence of the earnest manner in which this campaign was prosecuted I will read a rather peremptory order given by the General on the 11th of August:

"TO MAJOR ROGERS. Sir,—You are this night to send a Captain with a proper proportion of subalterns and 200 men to Crown Point, where the officer is to post himself in such a manner as not to be surprised, and to seize on the best ground for defending himself. If he should be attacked by the enemy he is not to retreat with his party, but keep his ground till he is reinforced from the army."

"I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,  
JEFF. AMHERST."

The army followed on the 12th August and found that fort also destroyed and the French in full retreat.

On the same day that Quebec was taken by Wolfe, Major Rogers received the following order from General Amherst, dated Crown Point, Sept. 13th, 1759:

"You are this night to set out with 200 men under your command and proceed to Missisquoi Bay, from whence you will march and attack the enemy's settlements on the south side of the St. Lawrence in such a manner as you shall judge most effectual to disgrace the enemy and for the success and honour of His Majesty's arms."

"Remember the barbarities that have been committed by the enemy's Indian scoundrels on every occasion when they had an opportunity of showing their infamous cruelties on the King's subjects, which they have done without mercy. Take your revenge, but don't forget that though those villains have promiscuously murdered women and children of all ages, it is my orders that no women or children are killed or hurt."

"When you have executed this service you will join me in camp wherever the army may then be."

"JEFFERY AMHERST."

This chastisement of the St. Francis Indians was considered a just and necessary retribution for a long series of cruel depredations they had been guilty of, and for a recent violation of a flag of truce taken to them by Captain Kennedy, with a proposal of peace. He and his whole party were taken prisoners and detained in captivity.

To reach the Indian town of St. Francis involved a lake trip of 900 miles and then a march of 80 miles all through the enemy's country. The party set out the same evening by water and ten days were spent in paddling to the north end of Lake Champlain. Much difficulty and delay was occasioned in avoiding the enemy's armed vessels which were found to be cruising in considerable numbers on that part of the lake.

(To be Continued.)