

# INTERESTING RECOLLECTIONS OF THE MONTREAL VOLUNTEER MILITIA FORCE.

REMINISCENCES OF THE VETERAN COLONEL  
DYDE.

To the Editor of the Montreal Herald:

SIR,—Having been requested by some of my numerous military friends to give an outline of the history of the Montreal Volunteer Force, from 1837 to 1868, which I promised at the first leisure moment to do, I now beg leave to enclose you this sketch, which I will feel obliged by your publishing. I may hereafter give you a little sketch from 1812 to 1838—having a full knowledge of all that occurred, and taken part in many of the events.

Your obedient servant,  
JOHN DYDE,  
Colonel, Volunteer Militia.

SIR,—It is refreshing and must be very gratifying to the active forces of Montreal to receive such high and well-deserved commendation from the Lieut.-General Commanding, in his recent General Orders. As to the appearance and efficiency of the various corps which took part in the celebration of the Queen's Birthday and the force which was recently called out in aid of the civil power at Quebec, there can be no doubt that the encouragement and consideration now bestowed on the Volunteer Militia is far greater than it has been since the insurrection of 1837-1838, when loyal men did noble service—although not what it ought to be—when the sacrifices made by both officers and men are taken into account, for we have almost always had to content ourselves and be thankful for very small favours. When the boundary line survey took place, two or three battalions were partially raised, but were disbanded on its settlement; and after the Oregon difficulty in 1845, two fine strong corps having been raised in three weeks, the Garrison Artillery and the Montreal Light Infantry by Lieut.-Colonels Maitland and Dyde (and Montreal Rifles commenced under Lieut.-Colonel Breckenridge). The force dwindled down to comparative insignificance: from 1838 to this time, there had been three Adjutant-Generals—Colonel Plomer Young, Colonel Guay and Colonel Taché—who all successively resigned; but when Colonel de Rottenburg was appointed Adjutant-General in 1855, under a new law, the volunteer militia was somewhat resuscitated. Two troops of Cavalry, the Field Battery and foot company of Artillery and several strong companies of Rifles were organized, and I was placed in command of the latter as Lieut.-Col., and in time they formed a splendid battalion of ten companies, numbering in the aggregate 800 men. I retained the command for some time, and was then appointed Commandant of the whole force, Lieut.-Col. Wilby succeeding me. On my appointment as Commandant the officers of the Rifles presented me with a sword and a complimentary address. The new law only allowing one paid staff (the Inspecting Field Officer), my Brigade-Major, Captain Geo. Smith, during a service of four years, never received any emoluments, providing his own office and furnishing the necessary stationery. After the appointment of Colonel de Rottenburg to the command of the 100th Regiment, Sir Edmund Head took upon himself the duties of Adjutant-General. Lieut.-Cols. Dyde, Sewell, and Denison were indebted, at this time, to Sir Edmund's sense of justice, as a recognition of long and faithful services, for promotion to the rank of Colonel (at this time a fine battery of the Garrison Artillery and a strong company of the Light Infantry were raised), and he did everything the law could possibly allow for the welfare of the active force, and to enable it to make a good appearance on the arrival of the Prince of Wales in 1860, which it did, and furnished all the escorts, guards, &c., during his stay, and when His Royal Highness reviewed the whole force, on Logan's Farm, he was pleased to express himself in very kind and complimentary terms, and, before his departure, H. R. H. was graciously pleased to allow the Montreal Rifles to bear his name. At the Agricultural Exhibition at Point St. Charles a parade and sham fight took place, in which the whole organized force took part.

The Adjutant-Generals, after Col. de Rottenburg, were Colonel de Salaberry, Colonel P. L. Macdougall (now Lieut.-General commanding the forces at Halifax), and Col. Robertson Ross. During this decade, the interchange of military courtesies between the United States and Canada were frequent and gratifying. The Bimberger Guards, of New York, in 1853; the Boston Fusiliers in 1857; a company of the N. Y. 8th Militia in 1858; the Portland Light Infantry in 1859, and again the Boston Fusiliers during the visit of H. R. H. the Prince of Wales, were all received in a cordial and proper manner, and entertained with the utmost hospitality. Our Field Battery, under Captain A. A. Stevenson, visited St. Albans in 1857, New York in 1858, during the Cable celebration, and were honoured by being placed on the right and carrying the British flag, the first time it had waved over British soldiers in the United States since their Independence; and Boston and Portland in 1859. The Montreal Rifles, 203 strong, under Lieut.-Col. Wilby, accompanied by the Commandant and many officers of other corps, and ladies, went to Portland on invitation in 1858 and were received with a most hearty welcome by all. In the afternoon the Rifles were reviewed by the

American General in command of the Militia, in presence of a great concourse. Afterwards a great banquet was given to both officers and men in honour of the occasion. Next day a picnic and grand chowder feast took place among the Islands—a most enjoyable affair. The *entente-cordiale* between the soldiers—American and British—was perfect. In the evening the Mayor gave a splendid ball, which was attended by all the principal people, visitors and officers of both forces.

Within four years the active force had been called out three times in aid of the civil power, and the conduct of both officers and men was admirable, especially during the civic election for the Mayoralty between Rodier and Holmes. A formidable and vicious mob was committing assaults of a most brutal character. The police were powerless; and Mr. Justice Coursol, who acted as the magistrate on this occasion, with his characteristic promptness and decision, called upon me for assistance to disperse it. A requisition had been made on me the night before. The rioters were principally French-Canadians, and, when the troops made their appearance, headed by the cavalry, under Lieut.-Col. David, they were assailed by the mob with the most threatening abuse, taunts and all sorts of missiles. I ordered the cavalry to advance, which they did, straight through for 200 or 300 yards, using the flats of their sabres, and scattering them in all directions, the Rifles following. It so happened that the two French companies of the Prince of Wales' Rifles had to take up the most critical position. No troops could have behaved better under the circumstances. They evinced, throughout, coolness, determination, and forbearance. 25 or 30 of the ringleaders were seized at once and marched off to jail by the police, protected by a party of the second troop—also French-Canadians. In half an hour the whole was put down. I may add that two guns of the Field Battery were placed in position to command the main approaches to the polling place.

On another occasion, during the election in the East Division between Cartier and Dorion, the whole force was again under arms, and the Lachine troops were brought in to act with the Montreal cavalry. The mob was completely overawed and peace preserved throughout. The conduct of volunteers was most praiseworthy. About this time—1861—a rifle match took place between H. M. 47th and the Montreal Rifles—50 picked men from each—which, after a close contest, resulted in favour of the latter. Other matches took place at the same time. Among other prizes was a liberal purse by the Hon. Mr. Justice Dunkin, formerly Lieut.-Colonel of the Light Infantry, and a gold medal by myself as Commandant.

In 1862, when the Trent imbroglio occurred after the departure of Sir Edmund Head, who was succeeded by Lord Monck, and war appeared almost certain, the force was augmented, from less than 1,000, to nearly 4,000, in the space of three months. The corps raised or augmented under my auspices and supervision were:—The Governor-General's Body Guard or Royal Guides, Captain D. L. Macdougall; The Garrison Artillery, Lt.-Col. Tylee; Engineers, 1st Company, Captain Kennedy; 2nd Company, Captain Forsyth; The Montreal Light Infantry, Lt.-Col. Ross; The 3rd Volunteers, Lt.-Colonel Smith; The 4th Chasseurs Canadiens, Lt.-Col. Coursol; The 5th Royal Infantry, Lt.-Colonel Hibbard. All these officers and those under their command were equally entitled to and deserve the greatest credit, for coming forward as they did at such a critical period and at great cost to themselves of time and money. The officers, from the Commandant downward (with the exception of the Brigade-Major who then only received \$600), had no remuneration whatever, and the men were only paid six dollars per annum. The Government at this time, merely furnished the overcoat and arms—the fur caps, mitts, &c., were provided by the officers or the men themselves. At the first blast the bankers, merchants, &c., were prodigal of their offers of assistance, but when discretion proved the better part of valor, and Mason and Slidell were given up, it is astonishing how indifferent they became:

"When war comes on and danger's nigh  
God and the soldier's all the cry.  
When danger's past, and wrongs are righted,  
God is forgotten, the soldier slighted."

The finest Montreal Volunteer Force, fully armed and equipped and ready for service, that ever mustered, as to numbers and physique, paraded in brigade, on Good Friday, the 9th of April, 1862, strength 3,325, according to Brigade statement made by Brigade-Major Macpherson, and forwarded to headquarters. This force was kept up with little falling off until 1863, and was often out, and always on the Queen's Birthday in division with Her Majesty's regular troops, forming the Second Brigade. My eldest son, Major Robert Dyde, commanded the Light Infantry at the parade on Good Friday, the last time he ever turned out, having died on the 8th September, 1862, from disease contracted while on service; another, a younger son, who had been in the 14th Light Dragoons, had previously perished in India.

The first grand rifle meeting, open equally to regulars and volunteers, took place in 1863, inaugurated by the Commandant and Field Officers of the Volunteer Force, under the nominal patronage of Lord Monck, and was a great success, and continued 12 days; it was opened with much *éclat*, a Guard of Honour, with the colours and band of the Montreal Light Infantry under Captain James Taylor, received Sir Fenwick Williams, who opened the tournament

by firing the first shot, and, of course, making a "Bull's Eye." A grant was voted by the Corporation, and the citizens subscribed liberally, enabling the Committee to offer numerous and most valuable prizes. Complimentary guards of 50 men under command of an officer were daily furnished by Her Majesty's Guards and other regular regiments during the whole time. Strangers were most hospitably entertained during the meeting by the Committee, and the proceedings were closed with a grand spread on the ground to all who had attended the meeting. After this the 5th Royal Light Infantry had several rifle matches with the Guards and other regiments and were uniformly successful; these matches were under the management of Lieut.-Col. John Grant. The 5th were peculiarly successful in two matches with the 4th Battalion 60th Regiment of Rifles, in which they fired against two public teams from that gallant corps—one selected by the Musketry Inspector, the other by Colonel Hawley himself.

On the 11th March, 1863, a grand parade and sham fight took place in honour of the Prince of Wales's marriage. The whole force was out and mustered over 3,000—every officer and man wearing a white favour in his cap. After the salute and *feu de joie* the mountain was stormed—the defenders being the Field Battery and foot company, who were on the top, etc.

During the election in the East Division between Cartier and Lanctot, the force was again called out in aid of the civil power, but there was little or no rioting. The volunteers, as usual, behaved well.

This decade was famous for raids—first that on the St. Alban's Bank, by the Southerners who had taken refuge here; and, in fact, they had done so, more or less, in all parts of Canada, and to prevent a repetition in other places and to give our friends south of 45° no cause of complaint, detachments from the Montreal force were sent in different localities to prevent it—four companies to Windsor and to Sandwich, opposite Detroit, under Lieut.-Colonel Smith; two to Prescott, under Captain J. Taylor, and one to the Niagara frontier, under Captain Cinq-Mars. A considerable force, under Lieut.-Colonel Hill, was stationed at Windsor and Sandwich some time after Lieut.-Col. Smith's recall with his command. Then commenced the Fenian raids, more or less alarm in; when the force was kept constantly on the *qui vive*; but the most serious of all was in 1866. The commandant, staff, and 2,500 officers and men were on service and strong detachments were sent to the front in different directions. The Royal Guides, under Captain Macdougall, were at St. Armands attached to a brigade of regulars under Colonel Elrington of the Rifle Brigade. The Guides, on that occasion, were fired upon by a lot of Fenians from behind a barricade; they returned the fire, charged them, scattered them, and drove them across the lines, where they took refuge behind the U. S. troops, having time only to secure one prisoner. The Cavalry, Field Battery and Royals were at Hemmingford under Lieut.-Colonel Grant. The Prince of Wales (Lieut.-Colonel Devlin), and the Victorias (Lieut.-Colonel Heward) were at Huntingdon under command of Lieut.-Colonel Smith. A detachment of the Garrison Artillery and the Prince of Wales were at Stanstead under Captain Dowker. The right wing of the Hochelagas was at Cornwall under Lieut.-Col. Hawkes. The left wing of the same corps was at Isle-aux-Noix, under Lieut.-Colonel Isaacson. The Chasseurs Canadiens, under Lieut.-Colonel Coursol, were sent to St. John's to do duty with the regulars, where they remained ready for service. The Home Guards—three battalions—were formed at this time, and the senior Lieut.-Colonel—the Hon. James Ferrier—placed the whole under my command, making the force, altogether, close upon 4,500 strong. Out and in-lying pickets were detailed every night for the tête-du-pont, gas works, banks, and all the principal approaches to the city, and all the thoroughfares were patrolled by the Royal Guides and Montreal Cavalry, in turn, from dusk to dawn. These precautions were considered imperatively necessary, as it was believed—in fact, known—that there were large numbers of Fenians and their sympathisers in the city and scattered through the country. At this time 18 or 20 Fenian prisoners were brought in from St. Armands, and the streets were so crowded, I was obliged to give a strong extra guard from the Garrison Artillery, to convey them down to gaol, where they were kept for months, fattened up, and in the end, received very slight punishment. It would have been better, instead of bringing them in, to have tied them to the cart's tail, given them the cat and kicked them over the lines.

On the Queen's Birthday, 24th May, 1867, I was presented by the officers of the force with a most gratifying address, alluding to my services of 54 years, in presence of the whole brigade.

The last order I had the honour of issuing to the force was on the occasion of the funeral of the late lamented D'Arcy McGee, who was assassinated 7th April, 1868, at Ottawa. The obsequies took place at Montreal, on the 13th, with great pomp, military and civil.

By Sir George Cartier's Militia Act—the present one, which came into operation in 1868—the Commandant and staff were deposed, without even the compliment of a general order,—a most ungenerous, shameful and inexcusable omission after such long, faithful and gratuitous service, having given their time, energy and means without stint, the Assistant Ad-

jutant and Quartermaster-Generals, Lieut.-Col. G. Smith and J. Lyman, having served in '37-'38 and since then, with slight intermission, and the Commandant constantly, for upwards of half a century. In no other part of the world would such glaring injustice have been perpetrated. My youngest son A. D. C.—Captain J. Dyde—also suffered by the action of the same Bill. In time, the force began to fall off gradually, but very materially in numbers. The Royal Guides and Second Troop of Cavalry became extinct; the First Company of Artillery became extinct; one of the Engineer Companies also. The Montreal Light Infantry, four Companies of the Prince of Wales' Rifles, the 4th Chasseurs Canadiens, and the 5th Royal Light Infantry, ceased to exist, and the 6th Hochelaga Light Infantry lost two companies. Now, the Montreal active force proper, though small in numbers, is, as a whole, very efficient. The officers, with few exceptions, are zealous and well up to their work, and there is great *esprit de corps* and laudable emulation existing throughout, and, it has been proved beyond doubt, they can be depended upon to do their duty, and at all times. Instead of an active force of 1,400 or 1,500, Montreal ought to have at least 3,000.

With regard to the staff, I would say that although it is altogether anomalous and unprecedented that a staff officer should be in command of a military district, it is without the slightest reflection on, or disparagement to, my friend the D. A. G., who served under me just forty years ago, and whom I know by long intimacy and experience to be eminently qualified for the office which he has so well earned. It is the law, not the man, I take exception to. I would do, and take pleasure in doing so, that the Brigade-Major who served with me before I was relegated to an inactive position is, from his aptitude and knowledge of the duties of his office, hardly to be surpassed.

On the 25th May, 1870, after my cessation from active duty, by the action of Sir George Cartier's Militia Bill, the officers of the force presented me, in presence of an immense concourse of my fellow-citizens, with a full length portrait of myself and an address expressing their regret at my disconnection with the force, with which I had been so long associated; the kind terms of which and the manner of its presentation, almost recompensed me for the injustice I had suffered at the hands of the Minister of Militia.

I may mention in conclusion, that since 1838, I have been out 19 times in aid of the civil power, either as a magistrate in charge of regular troops or in command of volunteers. On four or five occasions the mobs were very large and the riots so very dangerous and serious, that it was found necessary to use force to put them down, which was always done as humanely as possible, fully meeting with the approval of the authorities. More anon from 1812.

Your obedient servant,  
JOHN DYDE,  
Colonel Volunteer Militia

## LITERARY.

MATTHEW ARNOLD is very near-sighted.

MR. SPARKES, of the South Kensington School of Art, is engaged upon a Life of Flaxman.

THE national library at Paris consists of over 1,300,000 volumes. That is four times as large as any in this country.

VICTOR HUGO has made a present of the pen with which he wrote the "History of a Crime," to Senator Bonier Ortiz, to be placed in the museum.

MRS. SARAH HELEN WHITMAN, the poetess, recently deceased, was one of Poe's sweethearts. His first meeting with the lady is narrated in a poem entitled "To Helen."

A GUSHING Scotch gentleman, on being presented to the English Poet Laureate, exclaimed with rapture as he clasped his hand and gazed upon him: "Eh, mon, you've a fine Rob Roy head!"

JOHN R. BARTLETT thinks the long-sought quotation: "Though lost to sight, to memory dear," was originated by George Lindley of Braham, a song writer, who published the song containing it in 1848. But it has been traced to an earlier date than this, and Mr. Bartlett will have to try again.

A COPY of the great Mentz Bible, printed by Gutenberg in 1445, being the first book ever printed, was sold at auction recently in Paris for \$10,000. It was printed on vellum, but is an imperfect copy, having one leaf and several portions restored in facsimile by M. Pullinski. At the famous Perkins sale in England, in 1873, a copy of the same work was sold for \$17,000.

GUSTAVE DROZ, better known as "Gustave Z," so famous among French writers for his knowledge of women and children, that women for a long time declared his name must be a nom de plume for one of their sex, is a hardened bachelor, who lives in a studio redolent of tobacco smoke, and never sets foot in a drawing-room because he hates dress-coats.

DR. JOYCE, the author of "Deirdre," proposes to continue the interesting story of the great Celtic mythical period, which was admirably introduced in his first book, and is at work upon a new volume. He is actively engaged in his profession, and is accustomed, as Wordsworth was, to compose his poetry, three or more pages at a time, while he is about the streets, and then write it down at his earliest leisure.

OF Charles Dickens' personal letters, Mr. G. A. Sala says: "Charles Dickens was one of the best letter-writers of his age; his epistles are strong, flowing, nervous and incisive in style; as carefully indited as any of his literary work, yet wholly unaffected. The letters of Dickens (so far as I have any acquaintance with them) rarely contained any literary criticism, or indeed, any reference to literature at all. But he wrote about the most sensible 'business' letters and the finest lessons of argument and advice that I ever read. He went straight to the point, and said what he had to say, sometimes in a quaintly humorous, sometimes in a grave and earnest manner, but always logically and exhaustively. Thackeray's and Shirley Brooks' letters were, on the other hand, full of scholarly allusions, anecdotes, quotations *bons mots* and polished persiflage."