

Friday, the 24th, was a beautiful day. A sharp frost made the roads good. Having more men than I could lodge in the camp, I proceeded with one hundred, and billeted them in farm-houses up the river; the advanced posts being at a small stream two miles up, where I directed the bridge to be destroyed and the passage disputed, and on a bank in rear, where I directed a barricade of fence rails to be erected. All were ordered to skirmish with any coming enemy by firing on the advance and falling back.

Still suffering from my old bruises, fitted for a hospital rather than for a camp, I had hardly got to sleep, about midnight, when I was awakened by a messenger from Desrivières at the barricade, to say he had made a good work and he wanted more men. I could hardly make a reply, when it appeared as if the whole picket was back in camp with a report that an enemy was upon us. It proved a false alarm, but only a portion returned to their posts. There was evidently a scare.

On the morning of Saturday, 25th, I inspected our forces; for, being collected from the neighboring parishes, their attendance was, somewhat irregular. There turned out in camp precisely one hundred and nine fire-locks, or, I should say, flint-locks, for many of them refused to fire, when essayed a few hours after. Just at this time, a man riding up delivered a letter from St. Mathias, opposite Chambly, informing me that Col. Wetherall had orders to fall back to Montreal, and was retreating. The after story was that Col. Wetherall did not retreat, because these people had stupidly stop the order from Sir John Colborne to that effect; and, moreover that I, who was eighteen miles distant, with Wetherall halfway between, was in command of them. Most of all, the man who was said to borne the order, told me in Montreal, seven years afterwards, that he was ready to make oath that he was not detained by my orders. He did not see me, but knew my voice! Such are the materials of history! Had Wetherall retreated, our weakness would have been undiscovered, and we should have remained masters of the south side of the St. Lawrence.

Anticipating no danger for the day, I set about improving our camp, and then rode down to the village, to make arrangements for grinding wheat. While consulting with Bunker, the hotel-keeper, at his door, a messenger rushed up to inform me that the troops were approaching; and, returning to the camp, I found that my pickets, already reduced to about twenty-five men, had all come back to bring the news. Putting myself at their head, I went up about two