

the Blackfoot Chief Cut Knife and his braves, which took place there.

"When the scouts reached the summit of Cut Knife Hill, over which the trail ran, they were seen to draw back, and take shelter behind some willows on the brow of the hill. The Mounted Police, Col. Herchmer, leading, came up almost at once, followed by the Artillery, C Company, the Guards, and Queen's Own close behind, but the rest of the teams still well down the incline and the rear teams with the Battleford Rifles not yet half way over the gully. The scouts, Mounted Police and artillery advanced immediately.

"In a moment the rattle of rifle shots was heard. The fight had begun by the Indians firing on the police and scouts. Those on the incline could not see the enemy, but their presence was no longer in doubt. The artillery pushed at once to the front, and brought their guns into position. The bulk of the enemy engaged was not more than 150 yards away, sheltered in the underbrush of a coulee on the left slope of the hill we had ascended. The garrison division of B Battery, under Capt. Farley and Lieuts. Pelletier and Prower, were instantly extended in skirmishing order on the brow of the hill, and began to reply to the enemy's fire, dropping flat on their faces, only their heads appearing over the crest as marks for the enemy. The police at once took up similar positions, having dismounted and placed their horses in a slight hollow on the incline up which they had come. They were no sooner extended in this position than 30 or 40 Indians made a rush up the hill on to the guns. The danger of the position was tremendous. Had they gained that hill top and captured the guns they could have dealt certain destruction to the column advancing up the hill. Major Short saw the danger instantly, and called on the men about him to repel the charge. They responded without a moment's hesitation, Major Short, revolver in hand, leading the way. The Indians rattled into them as soon as they appeared on the hilltop. The distance was thirty yards, and some of the more daring redskins had got to within half that distance. One of these the Major shot at once. The Indians kept the fire up for two or three rounds and then retreated pell mell to their cover. They left four dead on the slope. The Indians as they rushed for the guns would throw their blankets high over their heads to draw our fire, then dropping down would deliver a volley, and repeat the same antics every time. Besides the fire of the attacking party, the bullets were whistling in scores from a cover 200 yards off. Before our men could get back to cover again, Corp. Sleight of the Mounted Police lay dead on the field, Lieut. Pelletier had been shot through the thigh, and Sergeant Gaffney and Sergeant Ward wounded. Major Short had a close call, with a bullet hole through his wedge cap. Immediately that the firing was heard by those behind they rushed up the hill. The order was given to extend in skirmishing order. The men were in line in a moment. The Queen's Own and Ottawa Foot Guards went to the left until the enemy came in view. Dropping down they narrowly escaped a hot volley from the enemy, sent in as soon as they appeared. The main body of C Company were turned to the right to cut off the fire of the Indians, which was beginning to come in hotly from over a deep ravine that ran only about twenty yards from the trail, and for distance almost parallel with it. The Battleford Rifles had jumped from the teams at once when the firing began, and started on a run up the incline. Most of them were called back to protect the rear teams going up to the slight hollow on the trail, when they were drawn up in a bunch. No sooner had the teams got up than the Indians appeared on the trail in the gulley below. Thus in five minutes after the first shot was fired we were completely surrounded and being fired on from all sides. It was evident we had run into a trap. The situation began to look desperate. On all sides the action was hot. The intention of the enemy was to cut off our retreat, and if possible stampede the horses. The little hollow on the face of the hill into which the teams were drawn, afforded them some protection, but from the rear they could easily be reached if the enemy were advanced a little further than they were up the slope. The great hope of success at this juncture was the grand display of coolness under fire being shown by all our men. The artillery occupied the top of the hill furthest advanced. The Gatling gun had opened fire on the enemy first, at a range of about 200 yards on the left slope of the hill, into a cluster of brush. The Indians got out of that cover and beat a hasty retreat round to the hill on the other side of the hollow, where they again got an underbrush cover. After the first rush it was impossible to see more than two or three of the Indians at once, so that the Gatling was not so destructive as it would have been under other circumstances. But it was kept going for a time almost continuously, and created a terrific din. The two seven-pounders were placed on either side of the Gatling at a distance of perhaps fifty yards. The first three shells were put into the tepees on the hill to the right front. They were admirably aimed, and created consternation. The tepees were ripped over and the people scattered in every direction. Both guns soon were throwing their deadly shells into the cover the Indians had retreated to after their rush. The range was about 1,500 yards. Wherever a shell fell its effects could be seen by a scattering of the enemy in all directions. The firing on us grew hotter and closer. Volley after volley from friends and foe on all sides, the booming of the cannon, the rapid rattle of the Gatling and the rifles, mingled with the wild whooping of the Indians, made up a furious tumult that no

description can give an adequate idea of. But never for a moment did our men swerve. Officers and men were as cool and determined as if the day was already theirs. About an hour after the engagement was begun, the order was passed from Col. Otter to Capt. Nash of the Battleford Rifles, that the rear must be cleared. The men of the ununiformed company did not wait to hear the order twice. With a loud cheer they dashed down the incline and into the wood of the deep gully, over which the column had crossed. The Indians under cover stood the attack a few moments and then began to fall back. The Battleford boys reached them up the gully to the right, firing whenever an Indian head appeared. It took half an hour to clear the back, and then Lieut. Marigold turned his men to clear the gully on the other side of the trail. The Indians posted there also gave way and ran back to their former position. It was a grand charge, valorously executed. The rear was entirely cleared of the enemy, and our men remained in command of the position. But the Indians were again coming down into the gully into the position on the right side of the trail, from which Capt. Nash had previously dislodged them. Charlie Ross, the famous Mounted Police scout, who had been all over the field during the action, saw the position, and stepped into the breach. Calling for volunteers, some of the Queen's Own, "C" Company, and Ottawa Guards, were at his side in an instant, and they started to intercept the Indians' advance. The reds cleared out at once up the gully and into a ravine from the covered sides of which a number of them had been firing on the men of "C" Company, who were replying across the ravine near where the teams were stationed. Ross and his followers pursued them hotly. The Guards could not understand why the enemy they had been watching across the ravine had silenced their fire so suddenly. But the Guards didn't know that Ross and his daring followers had got round in the rear of the enemy and were engaged in hot pursuit of them. The Indians had a number of horses there and were attempting to ride off. A volley from our men emptied four of the saddles, the redskins dropping dead to the ground, where they were shot. The horses were captured, and the pursuit stopped. Ross immediately cleared up the side of the ravine, and the instant he reached the summit, where the Indians had previously been firing from, the skirmishers of "C" Company mistook him for one of the enemy, and in an instant a dozen rifles were brought to bear on him. But he had tied a white handkerchief to the muzzle of his rifle and waving it about his head, the rifles were lowered. One man standing among the teams raised a rifle and fired at Ross, the bullet providentially going wide. Col. Otter saw the white flag waved, and not recognizing Ross standing as he was on the ground only a few minutes before occupied by the enemy, evidently mistook the flag as a signal of truce from the Indians. He walked over to the edge of the ravine as if to parley, but Ross was recognized by this time and in a moment the red coats of his men came up from behind the hill riding the ponies they had captured.

"It was now half-past eight o'clock, and the fight had lasted about three and a half hours. The enemy had been driven from the right flank and rear, and the vital position of the field where the horses stood was comparatively safe. The backbone of what was undoubtedly the Indian plan of attack was broken. They had failed to keep us surrounded. With the rear and right flank clear, the enemy was now pretty well in front of us. They must be kept there. Nobly did the men stick to their positions, and continued in the aggressive all the time."

"The cannons and Gatling were belching incessantly, but the trail of one of the seven-pounders shortly gave out; the carriage, rotten with age, fell to pieces and the gun was silenced. A number of "C" Company had come over to the left flank, and fell into the skirmishing line up to this time held by the Queen's Own, Guards, Police, and Garrison Artillery. A' were lying flat on their faces peeping over the side of the hill and across a hollow into the underbrush on the summit of the opposite hill, where the enemy were keeping up a constant fire at a range of from 600 to 750 yards. If one of our men unlucky rose up into view a dozen puffs of smoke would come out of the underbrush and he had to drop again instantly to get under cover, while the bullets would whistle fiercely but harmlessly over. This position was held with little change for an hour and a half. The Indians were constantly playing their old game to draw our fire. Up would go a hat on the muzzle of a rifle, or a blanket would be thrown up, and as our men took aim at the decoys the enemy would fire on their uncovered heads. Our fellows "got on to the dodge" at length, and played similar pranks. The enemy were shooting with remarkable accuracy, and it was believed that many Halfbreeds were among their number."

"At 10 o'clock the guns had about silenced the fire of the enemy directly in front, but they had worked round to the left near the gully, and were beginning to pour in a dangerous flank fire on the skirmishers on the side of the hill. This had to be stopped. Capt. Rutherford directed a shell into the gully. It burst almost over the heads of the Battleford Rifles, who were hotly holding the position they had been ordered to. The shelling of the gully caused them to fall back, but the word was soon sent along that no more shells would be fired there and they resumed their position. Col. Otter ordered Capt. Brown to send the left half of the Queen's Own to occupy a small hill over which the flank fire was coming. The order was passed to Lieut. Brock, who was in charge of the left half. The object was to

drive the Indians farther back, and the Battleford Rifles going up the gully would prevent them again taking cover there. It was a hazardous venture. About 20 men, some of them guards and police, responded to Lieut. Brock's call to charge for the hill. Away they went on a quick run, ducking down to escape the bullets. Brock, revolver in hand, was leading by half a dozen yards. The men in the skirmishing line behind let out a loud cheer as they saw the plucky fellow dashing up the hill-side, right into the line of the enemy's bullets over the top. More than half the men dropped flat just as the summit was reached. Brock and the remainder passed right over out of view. A thrill ran through every spectator. The men got over the hill and started down in full view of the Indians a little over a hundred yards away. The men opened fire, Brock with his revolver, but it was useless. The enemy sent up a withering fire, and the men were forced back again over the top of the hill and dropped into cover, five of them having felt the bullets of the enemy. "Honour the wild charge they made," Brave Lieut. Brock and his brave followers, Col. Sergt. Cooper and Privates Valey and Watts of the Queen's Own, and one of the Guards were more or less seriously wounded, and Col. Sergt. McKill's forehead was grazed by a ball. Col. Otter forwarded orders that the hill should be held, and they kept it until the final withdrawal, in order to protect the teams on the way out."

"The Indians were making a great fight of it, and when chased out of one position resumed the fire in another. Their tenacity is perhaps unexampled in Indian fighting. Their losses must have been severe. It looked as if they intended keeping it up all day, and it would have been certain disaster to our force to have been left at nightfall in the position into which we had been entrapped, without the assistance of the guns, one of which was now perfectly useless and the other almost so. The only safety was in a withdrawal, and for this, Col. Otter began to lay his plans. The Scouts, Battleford Rifles, and Capt. Rutherford and his men, with one of the seven pounders, were ordered to proceed through the gully and occupy the high banks on the opposite side, through which the trail ran. The position commanded the whole line of retreat. The order was obeyed in splendid style. In a quarter of an hour they were all in position, the rifles and artillery on a cut bank 40 or 50 feet high, and the scouts on the top of a high sandhill. The trail out of the gully passed right between these positions. The teams were the first to descend through the gully, and the Indians then became aware that our force intended to withdraw. This was shortly after twelve o'clock. At that time the enemy had almost ceased firing, and it is the belief of many who knew the Indians pretty well, that they were just on the point of getting away themselves when they saw us leaving. None of our men left their positions on the field till every wagon and horse had safely passed through the gully. Then came the real danger of the situation. The men had to retire down the long incline leading to the gully always with their faces to the enemy, who were following them up over the ground they had just left. The firing from both parties was hot, and appeared, from the position of the party who were occupying the hills, to protect the retirement, much more deadly than it afterwards turned out to be. But it was a moment of supreme danger. A large body of Indians poured down into the gully a considerable distance up, with the object, no doubt, of coming up with our men as they were crossing the gully, and cutting them off from the teams and the party on the other side. If this could have been done, the chances would have been in favour of the whole brigade being slaughtered. But the foresight of Col. Otter had provided against such a chance. From the gun on the bank Capt. Rutherford sent a couple of shells directly into the horde of mounted redskins who were coming down the hill over the field where our men had fought all day. Numbers of them must have been killed, for when the smoke cleared away again, the Indians were turned right about and going in the opposite direction. The Indians who had got down into the gully further up came on, but the scouts posted on the sand hill kept them in check. After all our men had got down to the bottom land in the gully they were thoroughly covered by the men posted on the bank, and came right through leisurely enough. The Indians had got just as much as they wanted of it, and their losses must have been very heavy. Once out on the open land beyond the gully, the danger was over, at least for the present. It was simply a case of a military force running into a trap, staying there long enough to try every means of forcing it, and this being found impossible, through the collapse of the guns, fighting their way out again. The plan of the retirement was perfect, and it was perfectly executed."

"The whole column immediately took to the waggons and returned to Battleford, arriving at 10 o'clock that night. The Indians did not attempt to follow us up, a certain indication that they had lost heavily in the day's action."

"There would have been a different tale to tell of the result of this day's action if the seven-pounder guns had held out. Before three shots had been fired out of one of them, the gun flew out of the trunnion holes and rolled down the incline. It had to be carried up and placed on the carriage each time till about 15 rounds had been fired, when the trail was smashed and the gun became entirely useless. The second seven-pounder was also badly disabled, having to be roped on to the carriage after every shot. It was with difficulty that the last shots were got off from the embankment to cover the withdrawal. Taken in this way, it would not

have been wise to follow up the decided advantage we had gained in silencing the enemy at the time of the withdrawal. The guns were really our most powerful force in driving the enemy before us."

"Artillerymen will appreciate the difficulties of our gunners in directing the fire. The guns being right on the brow of the hill, and in a line with the enemy's fire, the gunners, therefore, had to do all their work, loading and firing while lying on their backs, and with their guns jumping off at every shot, the difficulties were vastly increased. The guns were run into buffalo wallows, which were plentiful on the hill, and these wallows prevented the recoil from sending the whole carriage backward down the hill."

"On the day following the fight the funeral of the victims took place with military honours. The entire command, besides the local volunteers, turned out. The bodies were interred near the Queen's Own lines, between the fort and the new town, near the graves of Fremont and Smart, who were killed by Indians some time ago. The Rev. Father Bigonnesse, the Roman Catholic priest, and Rev. Mr. Layton, the Episcopal clergyman, officiated, the services at the graves being very impressive and imposing. "C" Company, who acted as the firing party, fired volleys over the graves. The ceremony was witnessed by all the women and children in the town, and there was scarcely a dry eye visible in the large assemblage. The band of the Queen's Own played the 'Dead March' and other funeral airs."

This was the first and only engagement in which Col. Otter's brigade had the pleasure of taking part. The advisability of thus taking out a flying column from Battleford, making a dash at the enemy, and as suddenly returning, has been questioned by many. It is not necessary here, however, to enter into any discussion of the question. Our troops acquitted themselves admirably, and the enemy was shown with what description of force he was now opposed. To our own men the battle was not without its lessons, though perhaps somewhat dearly bought."

At this point we shall leave Colonel Otter and his gallant men at Battleford, making camp life as pleasant as the exigencies of the occasion would permit, and shall proceed to enquire what is being accomplished by General Middleton in the task he set out to perform.

## AFTER FISH CREEK.

We left General Middleton and his force just having defeated the rebels at Fish Creek. If fighting all day was hard work, the duties that succeeded that battle necessitated still harder work. It rained all night; the camp was excessively crowded; there were not tents enough to accommodate all the men who had crossed the river to take their share in the combat; and hosts of men either crowded into the already full tents or spent the night lying on the cold, wet ground. The Grenadiers, who had come over and joined the 90th in their assault upon the rebels, came over hurriedly and unprovided with overcoats. The weather was cold and the suffering great. The enemy were supposed to be in close proximity, and at any moment a night attack might have been made. A very heavy picket was posted round the camp, and the mounted patrol all night kept a sharp lookout from every side. When dawn broke scouts were sent out towards the scene of conflict. The first thing to be done was to get possession of the body of Batterman Demanally, which had fallen out of sight. Then followed the burial of the dead soldiers. A sad duty. Pioneers were told off to dig the graves. The ambulance carried their dead comrades, who were followed slowly by a long procession. An impressive burial service was read, and the General made a short and telling speech. "He knew," he said, "that his men would help him to avenge the death of those who had died fighting for their country." Their friends inscribed names upon rude memorials and placed at the head of the graves. In the afternoon of the same day came the sad and painful duty of performing operations upon the wounded. Four long tents were pitched on one side of the camp, and these were filled with those who had received wounds the day before. From these the men were brought one by one upon stretchers to the operating tent, where all the chief surgeons were ready with their instruments. The operations were carefully and skilfully performed, and owing to the good constitutions of the men and the wonderful atmosphere of the prairie all admirably succeeded."

On the 1st of May all the wounded were removed to Saskatoon. The cattle which had been seized were slain and flayed and their hides dried, and with them comfortable beds were made for the transportation of the sick men. The skins were stretched to the sides of the boxes of the waggons; over them boughs were bound covered with canvas; pillows of hay were made, and everything that ingenuity and skill could devise was done for the comfort of those who had so severely suffered at the battle of Fish Creek. Drs. Orton and Ralston took charge of the wounded, and an escort of Boulton's scouts accompanied the expedition. At a slow pace they marched over the prairie, not without fears of an attack. Ever and again upon the opposite banks of the river were seen rebel scouts keeping a keen watch upon the slowly moving force. At every few yards were encountered the buffalo runs which sadly jolted the wounded men. On nearing Clarke's Crossing, a large body of men was espied approaching. Whether they were enemies or friends it was impossible to know. A halt was called; the scouts collected; rifles were got ready; but the approaching force was happily discovered