

passed a more agreeable or satisfactory evening. Colonel Love was the soul of the party, and infused his animation into all around him.

Being desirous of communicating the earliest intelligence of the Windsor affair to Sir John Colborne, I applied for and obtained permission to convey the despatches from Sir George. Furnished with these, I left Toronto for Kingston in the armed steamer Traveller, but, the day of my arrival at this last place being Sunday, there was no immediate conveyance downwards, and I was compelled to wait nearly twenty hours before I could resume my journey. To make me agreeable compensation for this delay, I had the pleasure of dining with the agreeable family of the Town Major Fitzgerald, an old soldier who had seen much service, and who well knew how to exercise the hospitality of "auld lang syne." Dearly, and with the ineffable gusto of a connoisseur, did he love his glass of port wine, and nothing disconcerted him so much as to see his guest commit the sin of neglecting to put the stopper in the decanter when the wine remained with him. He is gone, peace to his memory.

My delay in Kingston was fatal to the object for which I had requested to be entrusted with the despatches. Captain Arthur, the son and Aide-de-Camp of Sir George, and to whom I have already alluded, had also given me a note for Colonel Dundas, commanding at Kingston, conveying to him the substance of the intelligence contained in the despatches, and, as I subsequently understood from Major Fitzgerald, that officer had immediately sent off an express from himself to Sir John Colborne. Pressing my arrangements for departure, I got into the mail about four o'clock on Monday morning, the weather being bitterly cold. Some snow had fallen within a day or two, but this was so partial for the first ten miles of the road out of Kingston, that the bumping upon the frozen ruts and the uncovered rocks was as good a substitute for the punishment of purgatory as well could be imagined. This distance passed, the snow became deeper, and the roads consequently better, while my persuasions with the driver were so effectual, that when we had got about two thirds of the way down to Montreal, I found that the express (which, as there were many relays on the road, had been frequently changed) was little more than half an hour in advance of me. I confess I was extremely desirous of anticipating Colonel Dundas' communication, and therefore urged the drivers to renewed exertion. There was no lack of inclination or of the whip on their parts; but such were the execrable arrangements of the Post-Office Department, that the delay in delivering the mails was great beyond credibility. The smaller the hamlet too, the more protracted was the period of exchange. At Brockville, Prescott, and Cornwall, we experienced little comparative detention, but I remarked that wherever we stopped at a pitiful village where an apology for a post-office had been established, and in which there were not half a dozen houses, or rather cabins, altogether, the delay was invariably greater and more disproportionate. It seemed to me that they must have been in the practice, as they opened the bags, of emptying them of their contents and feeding their curiosity, by looking at the superscription of every letter, if not of examining the newspapers for the latest intelligence. I was annoyed beyond measure on two or three occasions, for although I told these officials calling themselves postmasters that I was charged with important papers for Sir John Colborne which admitted not of delay in the delivery, nay, although my name appeared on the way-bill in the character of a bearer of Despatches, there was not the slightest disposition manifested to depart from their accustomed system; and indeed the only thing I found efficient was a threat to report the unnecessary detention of the mail to the heads of the Post-Office Department. Not less than five hours of the time occupied in the route from Kingston to Montreal—altogether performed in forty—were consumed in the way I have described; and indeed this very journey formed the basis of a communication to the Post-Office Commissioners which I subsequently, at their request, addressed to them, and which appears in pages 47, 48, and 49 of the "Post-Office Enquiry for British North America."

Thwarted and balked as I was by these village post-masters, it may be presumed I did not gain much on the express.—He was always half an hour before me, and when I at length arrived in Montreal, about 9 o'clock on Tuesday evening, and jumping from the sleigh, hastened to Government House, I found that my news had been half an hour anticipated by the communication from Colonel Dundas. This, although not unexpected, was mortifying enough, for I had taken all possible trouble in the matter, and had borne with the obstacles offered to my rapidity of progress in any other than a spirit of philosophy. I explained the cause of my detention to Sir John, throwing the whole blame, of course, upon the Post Office. He saw that I was annoyed and disappointed, and I presume with a view of putting me in good humour with myself, observed that, after all, the despatch happened not to be of a nature that made its early delivery to him a matter of very much importance.

The next day I dined at Government House, and as Sir John did me the honor to request me to take my seat next to him, we had full leisure when the conversation turned on the subject, to enter upon the condition of Upper Canada. He seemed to be of opinion, (and this proved to be correct,) that the late attempt of the sympathizers, at Windsor, would be found to be their last effort, for although he did not absolutely express his sense of the

summary course pursued by Colonel Prince, (this I think was not alluded to in the despatch, but communicated from myself,) it was obviously his impression that the severity exercised by that officer would—putting aside all considerations of propriety or humanity—have a direct tendency to check the infamous spirit of brigandage which had been manifested to such an alarming extent, by the more reckless citizens of the United States. From the affair of Windsor, we adverted to that of Prescott, and I naturally recapitulated the circumstances of the interview I had had on my way up with the leader, Von Schoultz,—following up the account with an eulogium on the military skill I thought he had displayed in the selection, as a place of temporary defence, of the Windmill.

Sir John however expressed a different opinion, quoting, in support, the fact of the mill being within the range of the guns of the Fort at Prescott, and the building itself so constructed as not to admit of offensive operations being carried on from it, while the stone houses by which it was surrounded, instead of affording cover to the besieged, would if forced (as they necessarily must be in the end,) be converted into shelter for their assailants. This was certainly putting the matter in a new light. The objections offered by the gallant veteran were such as could not well be refuted, had the Windmill actually been within effective range of, and commanded by the guns of Fort Wellington, and had it been the object or design of the invaders simply to entrench themselves and fortify the position. But neither of these were the facts, and I ventured to point out to Sir John that, as the Windmill had been almost unharmed by the shot thrown against it, at almost musket range, from the steamers which had conveyed the troops from Kingston, it was not likely that metal from guns of even a heavier calibre would have made much impression upon it if thrown from so great a distance as the Fort at Prescott; and, that, moreover Von Schoultz had not expected to be in the country more than twelve hours without having such an accession of force as would render a position of defence unnecessary. Then again, their near proximity to the river afforded the brigands every facility for obtaining supplies and reinforcements from Ogdensburg—an American town nearly opposite—under cover of the darkness of the night, or, if unsuccessful in the object of the invasion, for effecting their escape.

Sir John was not at all inclined to be convinced of the solidity of my argument, nor did he abandon his own original impression. I had not, of course, the presumption or vanity to put my military experience and judgment in competition with that of so distinguished a soldier, but nevertheless I could not think I was wrong in ascribing to Von Schoultz a good deal of military tact in the selection he had made of a place of landing, where he was not subject to the disadvantage of fighting his way to a position; but where, on the contrary, he found one already formed to his hands without moving fifty yards to occupy it.*

One astounding piece of information I received from Sir John Colborne on this occasion, and while alluding casually to the distribution of the troops along the frontier—particularly to the extraordinary desertions which were daily taking place in the 15th Regiment stationed at St. John's, and in a state of utter disorganization. It was this—that from the close of the last war with the United States in 1815, up to the period at which he was speaking, not less than five thousand men had deserted from the several British corps serving in Canada! I scarcely thought I heard aright, but when I put the question to him, Sir John repeated the number. What an army of deserters to be sure! and who could have imagined the British soldier to be so wanting in honor and principle! But, while on the subject of desertion, I must not overlook facts which have come to my knowledge through other official channels, and which every commanding officer bringing his men to Canada should transcribe from this volume into the regimental order book.

The three principal posts in Upper Canada from which desertions take place, are Amherstburgh, Niagara, and Kingston. The 34th and 89th Regiments lost a great many men from the former garrison; and the 43rd—the gallant and crack 43rd—were, while occupying Drummondville, near the Falls of Niagara, so much infected by the mania—a mania which is repented almost as soon as indulged in—that Colonel Booth, the then commanding officer of the regiment, has been known to shed tears before his men, conjuring them not to continue to bring disgrace on themselves and upon him who had shared their glories and dangers from boyhood, by persevering in the guilty and disreputable course. At Kingston, however, the facilities for gaining the American shore are so many, that this post may be said to be the head quarters for desertion. The 14th, 23rd, and 24th, lost, during the period of their being quartered there, a vast proportion of their strength.

* It has been asserted by some that his original intention was to have seized upon another windmill at Mattland, some six or seven miles above Prescott, where equal advantages were not offered to him; and by others, that the fort at Prescott itself was his object. But, that he had been foiled in his view, in consequence of his vessels being carried by the current lower down the river than he expected, when the alarm having been given, he was compelled to throw himself into the position he actually did occupy. This may, or may not be the case, but if it was so, it in no way derogates from his decision and military tact. It is when the plans of an able leader are discovered by influences over which he can have no control, that he profits most by those means which are set within his reach.