

THE CANADIAN NORTH-WEST REBELLION, 1885.

(Continued.)

The next morning most of the troops were sent out to occupy the same positions as the day before, in front of the enemy's rifle pits. With the remainder we cut down the bushes, strengthened our parapets, putting up three large mounds (parados) to protect the camp from the enemy's fire. One place sloped towards the front, and could not be defiladed, so we arranged three rows of wagons behind each other to stop the bullets. The guns we put into the angles. That evening, after the troops had retired on the camp, the enemy fired into us again from the woods around, but only hit three horses. That day passed without any important incident, but the men were getting seasoned, and uncommonly good at skirmishing. In the afternoon I rode out with a small escort of scouts to the right, found that a mile or so away was open ground, and so the third day the General conducted a reconnaissance in that direction, after the troops had been sent to the same positions as previously. The open prairie was traversed by the main trail to Batoche, by which we should have advanced, but our guides missed the way. We were fired on at long range from rifle pits in the wood edging the prairie, and we chased two mounted patrols, who escaped, but we captured a man on foot, who threw away his rifle and said he was not fighting. We found plenty of cattle and ponies, and ran in what we wanted like freebooters. As we were sitting on our horses at the near edge of the wood, some of the enemy crept up to some broken ground and fired a volley at us. Our scouts had been dismounted skirmishing in the bushes, and one of these, who was really invisible to the enemy, was the only one hit. The bullet struck him fair in the centre of the upper lip, and passed out at the back of his head. He never made a sound. We carried the poor fellow back to camp on a gun-carriage. Now we concluded that our steamer "Northcote" had escaped, for we had been six or seven miles below Batoche, and had seen the whole of the river for eight or nine miles, but she was not visible. This, though cheering, made her absence to us at the time still more unaccountable.

The decision was now come to for an advance on the morrow to carry the rifle pits, and the General directed me to make as good a plan as I could of the enemy's pits. To verify my idea of the positions of the enemy, I got a ladder and climbed to the top of a church, which commanded as good a view as could be got from anywhere. I was quietly marking what I saw, when a bullet striking the wooden shingles of the roof showed me that they had seen me, and I could only complete my work by hurried peeps. It was fortunate for us that they were such bad shots, for the distances between the opposing forces were only from 150 to 200 yards, and our losses in the three days' fighting had been small, viz., only about 35 hit.