

promised their aid in case of emergency, but he found them reluctant. Issuing thence into the country, he saw many signs of the enemy's approach. Women and children were escaping across the fields; men were hurrying their teams along the road in mental dread of having them impressed. Once or twice, in open spaces, he had seen from afar the bright uniforms of the advance guard. There was enough to base a report upon, and he returned to St. Denis.

The village was in an uproar. Many families fled during the night; those that remained took measures to place themselves under shelter, for Nelson had decided to make a stand on the outskirts of the village itself, not daring to trust his small band otherwise than under cover. He had only about 800 men, only 120 of whom were provided with muskets, the rest being armed with pikes, pitchforks, and clubs.

At length the morning of the 23rd dawned, and the British column appeared in sight. Nelson made his dispositions for battle. He threw a picked force into a large stone-house, belonging to Madame St. Germain, which stood out a little from the centre of the village, on the water's edge. Those who had fire-arms were stationed in the upper story, while those who had no muskets kept guard below. This was a great mistake, for if Gore had been able to surround the house, every man in it would have perished. As it was, the first solid shot directed against it scattered the masonry in every direction and killed five men. The rest hastily retreated. The troops advanced steadily, firing from behind the houses, but the insurgents rallied after their first discomfiture and presented an unbroken front. Gore was irritated. He ordered forward his single field-piece, but owing to some mismanagement, it did scant execution. He likewise directed Captain Markham to carry a distillery that was annoying his flank, but Markham was wounded in the charge, and his men badly repulsed. Martin distinguished himself in this encounter, for it was he who commanded the fifteen or twenty Canadians who held the distillery. Though wounded in the shoulder by a portion of a wall of the stone-house which fell upon him, he moved about incessantly wherever his services were needed. It was he picked up poor Ovide Perrault when he was shot down in the streets. Lussignan was killed at his side.

During this part of the engagement, the women and children had taken refuge in the large central residence of the parish priest. Some were in the cellar; others in dark rooms. Messrs. Demers and Lecur moved among them with words of cheer, whenever they were not engaged in attending the wounded that were brought to them from the field of action. Children, unconscious of danger, though the balls fell thick on the tin roofs of the Church and presbytery, climbed up into the garrets to see the battle. One little girl, five years of age, knelt on the window-sill and prayed that the Lord would not allow the soldiers to kill her, because she had not lived long enough.

"Life is sweet!" said the little creature.

In the early part of the afternoon, reinforcements came to Nelson from the surrounding country, and he immediately resolved on assuming the offensive. Slowly but surely the troops were dislodged from behind fences and houses, and a body of them entrenched in a barn were driven off with loss.

The contest raged with great severity for two hours, after which Gore massed his men on the high-road and ordered a retreat, leaving his ammunition and many of his wounded behind him. He was anxious to carry off his cannon, so as to abandon no material trophy with the victors, but the roads were heavy, and a couple of artillery horses having been shot down, he was compelled to relinquish that too. Nelson was too prudent to pursue any distance.

Captain Martin was one of those deputed to drag the captured smooth-bore into the village, where it remained only a few days, when it was retaken by the victorious troops.

An event of some importance to the development of our story should not be omitted here. On the day following the battle of St. Denis, and preceding that of the fight at St. Charles, intelligence was received at Nelson's camp that several bureaucrats had been arrested and were then held in custody at St. Marc. One of these was Samuel Varny. For several weeks previous he had been the object of many petty persecutions. His sheep had been killed by dogs purposely set on them. Two of his horses had been ham-strung, and several of his cows had mysteriously strayed away. His barn had twice been set on fire, and he himself had been threatened with bodily harm. These annoyances were the work of Bavard and a gang of worthless fellows who profited by the excitement of the period to wreak their personal spite under colour of patriotism. We need scarcely say that the insurgent chiefs not only disavowed but reprobated such rowdism.

When Edgar Martin heard of the arrest of Mr. Varny, he immediately repaired to Nelson's quarters and demanded his release. It was granted at once. Martin could not be spared to perform this welcome service himself, but an orderly was despatched in his place.

Mr. Varny never knew or suspected to whom he was indebted for his speedy deliverance, but Rosalba always thought it was Edgar that had intervened.

Nelson's victory over Gore was an important one. Not a doubt of it. If Brown could do the same by Wetherall, the cause was gained. But there was uncertainty in this. Wetherall had come up very slowly from Chambly, owing to the destruction of bridges over the creeks on his route, but he was known to have a strong force and two heavy pieces of artillery. The works at St. Charles consisted of a quadrangle, fenced in with felled trees and covered with earth. The river lay in front, a wooded mound in the rear, and the garrison was further protected by Debartzch's house and barn. The men were poorly armed,