

The Canadian Pictorial & Illustrated War News.

PART II.

TORONTO, SATURDAY, 29TH AUGUST, 1885.

RETROSPECT.

At the end of Part I. of this History, it will be remembered we had left Colonel Otter marching towards Battleford, General Strange nearing Edmonton, General Middleton waiting at Fish Creek, and had followed the *Northcote* through the greater part of her journey from Medicine Hat, towards the General's headquarters. We will here pick up the thread of the narrative by following the fortunes of

COL. OTTER'S COLUMN.

The trail distances from Swift Current to Battleford are as follows:—

Swift Current.....	0.0
Marshy Lake.....	10.8
Marsh.....	21.9
Small creek in Saskatchewan valley.....	31.3
Another small creek.....	31.5
Saskatchewan river, south bank.....	32.3
Saskatchewan river, north bank.....	32.5
Top of hill, north side.....	34.3
First water from river.....	39.7
Last water, southern edge of dry plains.....	50.2
Cross valley of Devil's Lake (no water).....	58.3
Large swamp (first water).....	66.8
Small creek.....	109.9
Another small creek.....	110.1
Cross old trail.....	110.6
Marshy creek.....	112.5
Eagle Hill creek.....	112.8
Beginning of bluffs.....	139.3
End of bluffs.....	142.8
Valley of alkaline lakes.....	159.1
Beginning of woods on Eagle Hills.....	185.4
Battleford.....	200.0

The march was magnificently accomplished. On the evening of the 23rd of April, Colonel Herchmer arrived within three miles of the fort, driving before him the besieging Indians as he approached. On the following morning, early, he rode into Battleford, and was followed on the day after by Colonel Otter, with two guns, the Queen's Own Rifles, B. Battery, one Gatling gun, and part of C Company of the Infantry School. They took with them 190 teams, rations for twenty-five days, and forage for twenty days.

The inhabitants naturally hailed the arrival of the troops with unbounded joy. Battleford was now said to be perfectly safe—a consummation which had been devoutly wished for for many long weeks.

The rebels meanwhile had decamped in the direction of Poundmaker's Reserve, taking their loot with them.

Poundmaker's reserve is about thirty-five miles from Battleford on the south side of Battle river, and nearly due west. For ten or twelve miles from the village the trail leads through a partially settled country, after that there is no settlement. For the entire distance the country is rough and full of bluffs. The reserve itself is situated in one of the most fertile spots in the country and in a very picturesque location. The reserve is five or six miles square and contains many bluffs and rising hills. It is well timbered with large poplars. The trail runs through the northern part and villages are scattered through it. There would be from thirty to sixty houses and fully one hundred teepees. Poundmaker had about three hundred fighting men alone, not to mention the forces of Red Pheasant, Strikehim-on-the-Back, Mosquito, Lucky-man, and Little Pine in the same locality. Their combined strength would easily reach 600 or 700 men. They are armed with every conceivable style of weapon, from the war club and bowie knife to the rifle. The probability is that they occupied every vantage point in the bluffs and fought in Indian style. Nearly all the looted stock and plunder from Battleford was stored on Poundmaker's reserve.

Colonel Otter's force consisted of the following, of whom he left about 400 to garrison Battleford.

Mounted Police, 90, commanded by Colonel Herchmer; 35th Battalion, Colonel Tyrwhitt, 2 companies 80; Ottawa Sharpshooters, 40; one half of Winnipeg Field Battery, 50; Queen's Own, Toronto, 250; one half of Toronto Infantry School, 40; "B" Battery, Kingston, 120; Local Company, 40. Total force, 710 men.

Hearing that Poundmaker was holding high carnival with the plunder from settlers and storekeepers at and around a forked trail west

of Battleford, the Colonel proceeded to surprise the camp and punish the Indians, in the full expectation of cutting up and dispersing the whole band. The troops were in high spirits, in the full belief that they were to have a walk over, as it was not believed that Poundmaker had upwards of 130 braves, badly armed. The flying column, with less than two days' rations, proceeded about nineteen miles before touching the enemy. The firing of the redskins issued first as if from detached and distributed knots from behind scrub and knolls at considerable distances. These tactics rather disconcerted the troops during the first hour of the fight, but the Indians finally concentrated and took the defensive.

The behaviour of the volunteers after the engagement became general, was cool and intrepid, and this although they felt the overwhelming disadvantage of being exposed to a concealed enemy. About four hours after the engagement opened, a flag was suddenly raised in rear of a point near the centre of the rebel position. At first it was supposed to be a flag of truce, but the later impression is that it was a feint to create the impression that white prisoners were there endangered. Poundmaker had with him about a hundred of his own warriors strengthened by strong forces from "Sweet Grass," "Thunder Child's" and "Moosomin's" reserves, although some of these have been professing loyalty to the Dominion. It is said Riel fully expected the Battleford relief column to attack Poundmaker being promised large tracts in Saskatchewan in case of victory.

Unknown to Colonel Otter the Indians had prepared for them a sort of ambush. Unfortunately, also, owing to the early hour at which the troops arrived on what was to be the scene of conflict, the scouts which preceded the main body were unable to detect this manoeuvre of the enemy's. Indeed, the first intimation which the attacking force received of the presence of the enemy was the appearance of the scouts galloping back towards the column. The first volley was delivered by the police, who, on reaching the summit of the hill, in skirmishing order, lay prone and fired at the foe. They were supported by B Battery and the Gatling gun, which reached the summit about the same time, as also did the Garrison division. The Indians meanwhile appeared in large numbers, and, undaunted by our heavy fire, came on irresistibly till scarce a hundred feet separated the combatants. This was the first occasion upon which Colonel Otter's division had been brought face to face with the enemy, and the recklessness of the latter was more than surprising. As the rebels still continued to advance, Major Short, in command of B Battery called for volunteers for a charge. Men from the Mounted Police, the batteries, C Company, and Queen's Own promptly responded, and, with a cheer advanced at the double on their opponents. The effect was instantaneous. The conflict for a few moments was actually hand to hand, but in an incredibly short time the Indians finding the onslaught irresistible, turned their backs and made for the *coulee*, hotly pursued by a small body of our men; the remainder returned to the top of the ridge to protect our position; the Indian retreat being covered by such of them as lay under cover. This in reality was the crisis of the fight, but throughout the day the troops were occupied in keeping up a harassing fire upon the enemy. Both sides took advantage as far as possible of the cover which the locality afforded. And of this there was abundance, our position was little more than 400 yards in extent, and abundantly surrounded with scrub. The enemy was in very strong force. Their attacking line, if it may be so described, was of great length. Throughout the battle they indulged in a variety of manoeuvres, moving from place to place as opportunity afforded; while Poundmaker himself regulated to a great extent, their movements from the eminence on which he had taken up his position.

During the first hour the battle raged hottest in front. Dummies were constantly exposed by the Indians to draw our fire, after which they would pour in a volley, and utter wild shouts of derision, at the same time charging in force on our advanced lines. Lieut. Pelletier, of Quebec, while repulsing one of these charges from the top of the left flank, fell. During the fight the ambulance corps were everywhere, looking after the killed and wounded, and members constantly attracting the rebel fire. Scout Ross, with C Company, portion of the Battleford men and the Queen's Own, succeeded in alarming the *coulee* on the right after four hours' hard work. The left flank, except at the top, was then occupied by the remaining wings of the Battleford volunteers, the Queen's Own

and the Guard's sharpshooters. During the fight, the Indian boys who were too young to handle a gun, used arrows.

At length the guns, which had done admirable service, were found to be somewhat disabled. They had fired an enormous number of rounds, and with this important part of the force useless, it was considered that a further renewal of fighting at close quarters would be rash. At a quarter to one, therefore, the order to withdraw was given. The dead and wounded were secured, and the troops crossed the creek and set their faces towards Battleford, being protected in the rear by skirmishers in alternate lines, slowly retreating and keeping the enemy at a distance by constant firing. The enemy harassed the retreat as much as lay in their power, but by means of the Gatling gun and the seven-pounder they were driven off, the column meanwhile retiring in an orderly manner towards Battleford without further incident. The news of this battle created everywhere intense excitement. The interruption of telegraphic communication with Battleford, and the difficulty experienced in receiving despatches giving details of the fight, only added to the uneasy feeling which on all sides was evinced. The Indians, it was known, fought with the utmost coolness and intrepidity, and it was feared that the list of killed and wounded which was first received would, ere long, be indefinitely augmented. Fortunately, however, the loss on our side, though not trivial, was far from being as great as might have been expected and as was feared. Appended is a full list of killed and wounded:—

KILLED.—*North-West Mounted Police:*—Corporal Laurie, Corporal Sleight, Bugler Burke. *Guard's Sharpshooters:*—Private Osgood, Private Rogers. *C Company, Infantry School, Toronto:*—Private Dobbs, Bugler Faulkner.

WOUNDED.—*Mounted Police:*—Sergeant McLeod. *B Battery, Kingston:*—Lieut. Pelletier, Sergeant Gaffney, Corporal Morton, Gunner Reynolds. *C Company, Infantry:*—Sergeant-Major Jackson. *Guard's Sharpshooters:*—Color-Sergeant Winter, Private McQuilken. *Battleford Volunteers:*—Mr. Gilbert. *Queen's Own Rifles:*—Sergeant Cooper, Private Nary, Private Watts, Private G. E. Lloyd.

Arthur Dobbs, of the Battleford Rifles, who was killed, was about forty-four years of age. He came from Prince Albert last year, and had been employed as a cook in the Industrial School. He leaves a wife and two children. He originally came from England.

Corporal Sleight, mounted policeman, was one of the men who escaped from Fort Pitt. He was about twenty-seven years of age.

Bugler Burke was formerly a member of the British army and served in India. He married a half-breed and has a family. He had been living at Battleford five or six years. He was about forty-five years of age, and a fine soldierly-looking man.

Private Geo. E. Lloyd, of the Queen's Own, wounded, was a divinity student at Wycliffe College. He came from Brighton, Eng., about three years ago, being a native of that place. He was a school teacher there and a lieutenant in the 10th Middlesex volunteers. He got himself attached to the Queen's Own, and was appointed chaplain while the corps was on service. He has married since his return.

Private Charles Vary, of the Queen's Own, also wounded, was an ex-member of the corps and went as a substitute for a friend. When the rebellion broke out he was out of employment. Last Summer he acted as surveyor's assistant in the North-West.

The above is a mere epitome of the skirmish at Cut Knife Creek. Appended is a detailed description by a correspondent of a Toronto daily:

"It was past three o'clock on Friday afternoon when the long column of teams, forty in number, with the Mounted Police and scouts under Col. Herchmer and Capt. Neale in advance moved out of the camp on the south side of the Battle River in the direction of Poundmaker's. Following the police came the artillery with the Gatling and two seven-pounders, under Major Short, Captains Farley and Rutherford, and Lieutenants Pelletier and Prower. After them came in succession "C" Company Infantry School, under Lieut. Wadmore and Lieut. Cassels (attached from Q. O. R. during the expedition); Ottawa Foot Guards, under Lieut. Gray; No. 1 Company, Queen's Own, under Capt. Brown, Capt. Hughes, and Lieut. Brock; ammunition teams, forage and provision teams, and the Battleford Rifles, under Capt. Nash and Lieuts. Marigold and Baker, bringing up the rear.

"As the column moved out the men who had been left behind gave a parting cheer, and in a

few minutes the intervening woods shut out the sight of the camp ground. Rain was dribbling, but the sky soon cleared. The trail ran through an uneven country, with high hills covered densely with poplar and underbrush on the left and the river on the right in a north-westerly direction. It was just such a tract as the Indian delights most to fight in. Coulees or ravines were crossed in endless succession, and the poplar and underbrush that grew thickly up to the trail in many places was impenetrable for any considerable distance with the eye, and in it might lurk a thousand redskins within fifty yards of us without being seen, despite all the care and sharpness of the scouts, who scoured the country, wherever it was possible, for half a mile on either side. The distance to Poundmaker's was thirty-five miles, and by seven o'clock we had made half the journey, and halted to await the rising of the moon. The teams were corralled in an open piece of ground surrounded with underbrush at a distance of probably 300 yards on all sides. Fires were lit, and the men got twenty-four hours' rations of canned corned beef, hard-tack and tea. About the fires they whiled away the time till eleven o'clock, chatting about the chances of surprising the Indians in the morning. They were all unquestionably eager for a brush with them, a fact which was plainly evidenced by the impetuosity with which they set upon the foe in the morning when the engagement began.

"The clouds had cleared almost entirely from the sky when the moon began to peep over the horizon. But it had grown chilly and the fires were kept blazing brightly for the warmth they gave. At half-past eleven the teams were all harnessed and shortly afterwards strung out in a long column, winding at a quick walk over the trail to Poundmaker's. The men made themselves as comfortable as possible in the waggons, but the rugged nature of the trail made any attempt at sleep futile. The scouts still kept well to their work, for the moon, just beginning to wane in a clear sky, rendered it almost as bright as day. A large number of the men, in order to keep themselves warm, walked alongside the waggons during the night. The trail was running through a more open country, at intervals there being some long stretches of flat, grass-covered land with only here and there a clump of red willow. The glow in the east was observable long before the almanacs ascribed to the sun any intention of rising. At length it rose redly, and just as it tipped the horizon we came upon the hollow where the Indians had been encamped, according to the reports of our scouts, three days previously. The place gave every indication of having been very recently vacated, and it was thought by many that, learning of our approach, they had "skinned out" (to use a familiar expression here) of that portion of the country. There was strong disappointment expressed, for the boys were spoiling for a fight.

"The column advanced through this hollow, and the trail then led them through a deep gully, several hundred yards wide, densely wooded with poplar and willow underbrush, through which the Cut Knife Creek wound its tortuous course. The Creek is probably eight or ten yards wide, two and a half feet deep, with a swift current. Into this gully the column passed without hesitation. We knew we were in the heart of the enemy's stronghold, and might expect to come in view of them at any moment. That was just what we wanted. There was not long to wait. Immediately that we got into the gully we could see to the left, on the slope of one of the high-rolling hills that led up from the gully, two or three dozen head of cattle calmly grazing. The Indians were known to have driven away some hundreds of them from the settlers, and it was even thought that in the haste of their flight they had left those we saw behind. The column as it went through the winding path in the gully was somewhat straggling.

"The scouts went along considerably in advance up a long, but not precipitous incline, which carried the trail to the head of the Cut Knife Hill, on the opposite side. While passing through the gully a glimpse could be got of the tops of the Indians' teepees or wigwams on the summit of a high hill, removed a considerable distance to the left. There was now no doubt about the presence of the Indians, and the word went along the column, "There they are."

"One or two mounted Indians also now could be seen on the top of a hill to the left. The creek which we had crossed is called by the Indians Cut Knife Creek, and the hill upon which we made our stand, Cut Knife Hill, in commemoration of the defeat by the Crees of