

assembled most of the members of the company who were in town—a few having gone on with the main body of the battalion in the morning, the majority, however, had left Toronto immediately after the termination of the Examinations, so that our number was reduced to 27 men. At 2 p.m. the steamer 'City of Toronto' took us across the Lake to Port Dalhousie, whence we proceeded by the Welland Railway to St. Catharines. Here we were billeted at the Murray House, and about 9 o'clock turned in, but sleep was out of the question. At midnight we were summoned by Captain Gardiner (of the Highland Company, No. 10, Q.O.R.) to 'fall in,' and in fifteen minutes were all under arms in the Market Square. After an hour or more we were again on our way to the front, and arrived at Port Colborne, about 2 a.m., where we found the main body of the volunteers, consisting of 400 men of the Queen's Own, 300 of the 13th Battalion (Hamilton), and the York and Caledonia Rifle Companies, about 50 strong, awaiting orders to advance.

As I judged from appearances, these men had had as little sleep as ourselves. All was excitement, and anxiety to meet the enemy. Long before sunrise the troops were in the cars, ready to start for the scene of action. About half-past four o'clock the train proceeded slowly on its way to Ridgeway Station, which was reached, if I remember rightly, about six o'clock. In the village of Ridgeway we were formed in column and halted for a short time. Here poor Mewburn bought with his own money a box of biscuits, which he distributed among us, and which were the only food we of the University Rifles tasted before going into action. We then proceeded to march up the Ridge Road, expecting to form a junction with the 16th Regiment under Col. Peacocke. This gallant Regiment bore upon its banners the names of some of the most glorious actions engaged in by the British Army, but unfortunately for us, this was the Second Battalion of the Regiment which already bore the unenviable epithet of the 'too late' Battalion, having on several occasions been just 'too late' to obtain a share in memorable actions. As we afterwards learned, while we were hastening to the front, they were—sleeping; and later on, while we were fighting, they were quietly—breakfasting. Along this road we marched in a column of fours, the Queen's Own leading, Lt.-Col. Booker of the 13th Battalion being in command of the whole force, Major Gillmor commanding the Queen's Own. The Highland Company (No. 10.), formed the rear Company of the latter Battalion, and was the last to extend, the University Rifles (No. 9.), being immediately in front of them, and in rear of the Trinity College Company (No. 8.). As we advanced along the winding road, we kept looking at every turn for our friends, the regulars, on the one hand, and our foes, the Fenians, on the other. After marching about three miles, the advance-guard signalled the enemy in sight, and the column was at once halted, and ordered to extend in skirmishing order. This spot was about a quarter of a mile south of the Garrison Road (line LM on the map). The configuration of the ground will be seen from the accompanying plan. To the right, to the left, and in front were thick woods, in which a very large force might have been lying in ambush for us; and here and there in the otherwise open space between, were patches of wood, orchards and houses.

In my account of the ensuing engagement I shall confine myself almost entirely to the fortunes, the advance, and alas! the retreat of the University Rifles, as being the only portion of the fight of which I have personal knowledge. A few remarks on the general engagement will, however, first be necessary. The Fenians had marched southward along the Ridge road, the head of their column having arrived at B (see plan), when they became aware of our approach from the south. They advanced to the cross-roads at AA, where they constructed a rude barricade (extending about 60 or 70 rods) by removing the fences on the north side of the road, and placing them, points down, over the fence opposite, and having thrown out some picquets in advance, awaited the attack. The advance companies of the Queen's Own first came into action with these picquets upon the road, distant about 400 yards in front of their position. After these had been driven in, the main body of the Fenians was dislodged with little or no difficulty from its position at AA, but made a second stand at the brick house and orchard marked in the plan, as Anker's house and E respectively. Here No. 6, the youngest company of the Regiment, and hence called the 'Babies,' won their laurels, under the command of Captain Adam and Lieutenant Campbell, the latter of whom was severely wounded. The struggle at this point was close and hard, and the fire very hot, this being, perhaps, the heaviest part of the fighting during the advance. The Fenians now fell back, firing from cover at the points D E F G H, their rear guard being in this point the charge appears to have been made which, being preceded by a mounted officer (and tradition says also by a cow) was mistaken for an advance of cavalry by the commanding officer, and led to the disastrous finale.

Having thus given a brief and very perfunctory account of the general features of the engagement (which my readers may supplement for themselves by consulting Col. Denison's book, or the other account contained in the University Library), let me return to our own men, who were halted on the Ridge Road at N, in intense suspense. The Companies in advance, as already remarked, had been extended, and for what seemed an eternity, the rear Companies, still halted in close column, awaited the first shot. At last the sharp crack of a rifle was heard; we knew that it was a shot fired in anger, and that at last we were in for it. Soon we too received the order to extend to the right, Lieut. Whitney, of the Trinity College Company, commanding us in the absence of our own officers. The advance of the University Rifles is marked by the dotted line on the plan, from P to our most advanced position at R. The first halt was made after reaching the top of the limestone ridge (from which the battlefield takes its name). It was here that we first noticed the unpleasant proximity of the foe. I well remember now hearing for the first time the sharp 'ping' of a rifle-ball, and seeing the stones sent flying about a foot or two from me. Still the danger seemed to be the last thing seriously thought of, the advance the first. And in a few minutes the officer's voice was heard again, 'Ad-vance!' and on we went, passing the projecting spur of wooded swale (Q), where the comparative shelter invited us to linger, and so without faltering to the road AA. Here the fire became so hot that we lingered willingly behind the shelter of the rail-fence on the north side. Here I can plainly recall a bullet splintering a rail so very near the head of my left-hand man, that he sung out 'Go slow! I don't like that tune!' Again, and for the last time, the word to advance was given. A solitary tree stood close to the fence, between us and the enemy, and never a man failed to observe strictly and with alacrity the injunction of the Drill Book to skirmishers, to take advantage of all available cover. All else was open field, and we were now completely exposed to a sharp fire from the Fenians who were comfortably ensconced at D, and potting at us in comparative security from behind the trees. Notwithstanding this advantage, the diligent target-practice of Corporal D—and others of our men told heavily on the Fenian skirmishers, and four of their dead were found here afterwards, as indicated on the map. One of them was picked off by the Corporal as he stepped from behind a tree, animated with similar good intentions towards the latter. We advanced into the middle of this field, within fifty yards of the Fenians according to one account, and here it was, before the retreat began, as I have always understood (though I did not see the occurrence), that our first loss was sustained.

Malcolm McKenzie, whose name is first in our memorial window, was the first to fall, shot through the heart. The Fenian firing must have been very wild, or most of us must have been picked off, exposed as we were, at that short distance. Lieut. Whitney was himself, I believe, the farthest in advance, bravely showing himself to the foe, though he must have known that he, as an officer, would be singled out before the men. During the whole of this advance, the Highlanders (No. 10.), who had been ordered to support us, were firing not only on our flank, but also over our heads, mistaking us for the enemy. In order to understand what followed, let us return again to the centre of the field, and the movements of the Fenians at B. Driven back from one point after another, and seeing the red-coats moving forward—really the Hamilton Battalion, but mistaken by them for regulars—their officers felt that the only chance lay in a bold advance. In order to animate his half-beaten followers to charge, Col. O'Neill rode out from the bushes in front of his men, mounted on a white horse. I do not know whether any other mounted officers accompanied him—nor can I vouch for the cow or cows which tradition says helped to magnify these few mounted riders in the eyes of the excited officer in command of our forces into a troop of cavalry; but at all events, the order was given to 'form square to receive cavalry.' Those who heard the order obeyed it, even under the heavy fire, and formed square in the road at the point indicated in the plan. Here, of course, they formed an excellent mark for the enemy's fire; and as soon as the Fenian Commander had recovered from his surprise at this extraordinary turn of affairs, he ordered his men to charge—and on they came, with a tremendous yell. In the meanwhile the square had been thrown into great confusion by the running in of skirmishers and relieving troops in order to join the square. The doubling to the rear of relieved skirmishers behind the supports, even on parade, is a helter-skelter race, and it takes many precious minutes before they are again in rank and file. In action of course the chances of confusion, among untried troops, are still greater. What wonder then, if this compact body of men, not yet recovered from this confusion, subjected to a galling fire, and with a charge impending, were infected with a panic, especially as the order to retire was given before the square could be properly formed? Now the retreat began. Many of the officers and men still kept their presence of mind, Major (now Col.) Gillmor and Capt. (now