

thought could be avoided by a flank movement. Dense bush and swamps made attempts to turn the barricades on their north side impracticable but by sending a column along the southern bank of the river it could cross at Morrison's ford, and so take all the lines of defence in their rear, except the main one under De Watteville, whom Hampton counted on retreating on seeing his front defences had been turned. The drawback to the plan was that it involved a march through a dense bush, broken by swamps, hollows formed by creeks full of water from the recent rains, and, worst of all, to cover such ground in the dark, for to be effective in carrying the ford the movement must be a surprise. The difficult task was entrusted to Colonel Purdy, who was in command of the 1st brigade. At dark on the evening of the 25th he led a regiment of the line and the light corps down to the ford, where the Ormstown grist mill now stands, and waded to the south bank of the Chateauguay. His troubles began at once. To lead a body of soldiers in daylight through an untracked forest, cumbered with fallen trunks and thick with underbrush, is difficult, but to do so in the dark is to attempt the impossible. The men straggled, and ever and anon, there were cries for help from those floundering in marsh or pool. To aggravate the situation, it began to rain. Purdy blamed his guides, but without cause, for it was so dark they could not recognize landmarks. A halt had to be called before two miles were travelled, and the little army shivering from wet and cold, for they dared not betray their presence to the enemy by starting camp-fires, passed the night soaked by the rain that now fell heavily. When their weary vigil was broken by sunrise the march was resumed. It being now light Purdy knew he could not take the ford by surprise, but pushed on in the hope of forcing a passage by assault. Fourteen hours had been spent in traversing six miles. On stragglers from his column approaching the river-bank they were recognized, and the alarm given that the Americans were at hand. Macdonell ordered part of his force to cross the river to meet them. They found the invaders' advance in a thick cedar swamp. The Beauharnois sedentary militia fled at the first volley, but the two supporting companies the Americans found to be of different metal and there was, for a few minutes,