

## THIRTY YEARS AGO



CORRESPONDENT who joined the Queen's Own Rifles about 1865, just when Capt. Murray, of No. 5, was about to resign, sends the following account of the regiment while at Ridgeway, June 2nd, 1866. He says:

I was the youngest private on the field that day, not being quite 16, and carried a rifle, accoutrements

and ammunition without flinching all through the campaign, although many older men were left on the roadside done up.

Being a Canadian, of the third generation, my parents and grandparents having been born in Canada, I was full of patriotism and the only thing I have to complain of is the want of commissariat. Being afraid that my parents might object to my going along with my comrades on account of my youth, I left home about daylight without a cent in my pocket, or without taking as much as a drink of water or a crust of bread in my stomach, expecting that the military authorities would supply the necessary food, etc., but I was doomed to disappointment. After manoeuvring us in the drill shed for a couple of hours we were addressed by General Napier, who impressed us with the idea that we would have every provision made for our welfare, etc. We were then marched on board a steamboat and started across Lake Ontario in the teeth of a fresh breeze. No commissariat showed up, consequently towards noon, or long before it, your correspondent began to feel the pangs of hunger. On arrival at Port Dalhousie we were kept waiting an hour or so until some box cars could be got together to haul us to Port Colborne. Passing through St. Catharines we got a newspaper extra, stating that some 1,000 or 2,000 Fenians had crossed from Buffalo into Canada, but this news did not disconcert us at all as we were beginning to feel the pangs of starvation, which attracted our attention more than the presence of the enemy. Upon reaching Port Colborne, at the mouth of the Welland Canal on Lake Erie, we noticed that the butchers, bakers and storekeepers were excited, and their shops were mostly locked up, and the owners running around with rifles, shot guns, etc., and the chances for getting food appeared to be very distant. After a couple of hours more manoeuvring a squad of us were finally billeted upon a third-class hotel keeper, who was gloriously drunk, probably celebrating the occasion. But the chances of getting bread and beef to feed us appeared slimmer than ever. It was now getting towards evening and about six o'clock a light meal of fried potatoes and tea was served out to us. Your correspondent felt in better spirits and was then in a position to be imposed upon, which was done soon after, in this way: Altogether his name begins with M, and there were names beginning with all the letters in the alphabet upon the roster of our company; a sergeant warned him for picquet that night. The enemy were supposed to be approaching the town, which contained valuable Government works, large canal locks, etc., and the picquets were obliged to keep upon the alert all night in order, if necessary, to alarm their comrades, who slept soundly. Next morning at daylight, without breakfasting, we were moved towards Ridgeway, where we met the Fenians, and had two hours hot skirmish with them. Nine or ten of our men were killed and thirty or forty wounded. All that eventful day was, of course, one of hard work and excitement and when evening came we found ourselves once more having passed a day without proper nourishment. Next day we marched the whole day and in the evening found ourselves

camped at Fort Erie, remaining there two or three days. No proper commissariat arrangements were forthcoming. We remember when we arrived in Stratford, after enduring such hardship for four or five days, that we thought we had been transferred to a paradise. In my youthful ignorance I thought that we had just left a barren country, and had dropped into a land overflowing with milk and honey. After this we were all right, but we endured as much hardship for five or six days, probably through want of management, as the brave boys who went to the Northwest in 1885 could possibly have done. We have not the first scrap of anything to show to our families that we took part in the defence of our country upon that occasion, but we feel that we are as much entitled to some mark of recognition for our services as were our comrades of 1885, because many of us still belong to the force, but in a rural battalion who, although ready, were not called out in 1885.

The recent visit of a delegation headed by Col. MacMillan to Ottawa, it is to be hoped, will terminate with good results for the veterans of 1866 and 1870.

## THE SEVENTH FUSILIERS' INSPECTION.

THE 7th Batt., of London, according to Lieut.-Col. Otter, the inspecting officer, will have to improve greatly before it can take its place alongside the other battalions in the country. The inspecting officer, in the course of his remarks at the close of the inspection, commented upon the weak state of the battalion and the lack of military enthusiasm shown by the fact that there was only one officer per company and the battalion reduced one-third. No doubt, there is a great lack of enthusiasm on the part of the men, and many improvements could be made in the battalion, but when it is known how little encouragement is given, the cause of this want of enthusiasm may be accounted for in no small degree. At all the chief centres the troops have comfortable quarters, easy of access and with every modern convenience for the comfort of the men and for the promotion of efficiency. In London this is not so. The drill shed is not centrally located and is not a convenient place to get at. It was erected when London was half the size it is now, and is not by any means fitted as a modern armory should be. The late Government spent money on property which should have been spent for the good of the active militia in that city, and for five years spent money in repairing an old building which was supposed to have been used for a military store. Thus money was spent needlessly, and the corps to-day have to pay the penalty of the Government's policy in directing militia affairs. There is no reason why a battalion like the 7th should not be able to hold its own with any other battalion, but certainly until the Government take steps to treat them properly, this cannot be accomplished. The regiment requires new life and vigor to bring it up to anything like what it should be. It should be reorganized and placed on a proper footing. London should have a crack corps, for the material is there for one.

## BY THE WAY.

It was in the year 1932 that I was strolling across the magnificent bridge which spans the St. Lawrence at Quebec, watching the fast Atlantic line steamers rushing to and fro at express train speed, when I met a man who was obviously an old soldier.

"Ah," said he, "it takes brains to do all these things, brains, sir, and it was brains that saved Canada from the invader in the war of 20 years ago."

"Why, how was that?" I asked, for I was a stranger in the country, and hadn't heard anything about it.

"Well," said the old man, "it must have been about the year, 1906 that they disbanded the militia. You see, the force wasn't any use, for it was made up of a whole lot of chumps, who spent their own time and money on it; so the only troops left in the country was Gen. Herbert's Own Patent Permanents, and a fine corps they was, too. I belonged to 'em. You see, they was different from any other corps. There was a man up at headquarters