



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. V.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 1871.

No. 50.

THE AUTUMNAL MANOUVRES OF THE BRITISH ARMY.—NO. IV.

(From the Broad Arrow.)

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 16TH.

A few minutes before eight o'clock this morning, the Duke of Cambridge and his Staff left the Pavilion, and took the road to Hog's Back, through Tougham. The morning was misty; a kind of a grey warm fog, suggesting "blight" in the air, obscured the landscape and rendered binoculars of very little value, and the eye searched in vain on the skyline of ridges opposite, and on the slopes of the hills, for any sign of an enemy, hidden by the undulating ground, and in full march against us. The Duke of Cambridge and his Staff remained some time at the cross road, which was also the rendezvous of the foreign officers and some hundred spectators, among whom was Mr. Cardwell on horseback *en bourgeois*. For nearly an hour nothing could be seen of the enemy; but at 8.30 there came in sight indubitably the enemy, videttes and coy Staff officers taking stealthy observations of clumps and suddenly retiring, and soon after, the outposts towards Seale below began to fire at intervals. But all doubts as to the proximity of the force was dispelled in a few minutes by the appearance of a column of infantry below Crooksbury Hill, which threw out skirmishers, and at the same time a battery, admirably placed opened from a clump of trees on a commanding hill over Seale. At 10.30 while the enemy's artillery were annihilating De Horsey's Guards, from under the cover of a wood on their right at the other side of the road below, appeared the head of a regiment advancing in excellent order, which as soon as it had cleared the wood, deployed and advanced across the sloping fields down to the road as if intending to cross it and attack the heights, and close behind them came another regiment, which sent out skirmishers to occupy a covert on their left. The Guards might have had a splendid and *eclatant* revenge, but they had now received orders to retire. They retired very leisurely Colonel De Horsey directing them to the left along the ridge, and Colonel Burnaby (mounted officer) assisting at the military execution with an air that would have been magnificent in battle, the enemy all the time commanding their line of march by its artillery, and their retreat being on a line parallel to the advance of their enemy below. Staveley's attack was pressed briskly, but seeing how feeble the resistance was, his leading regiments might have been pushed on rapidly. The force which attacked

here—consisting, it would seem of Brownrig's Brigade—had formed in two lines as soon as it had taken up ground below Crooksbury, and a detachment of cavalry (7th Hussars), obliged to follow the leading column, would have fared badly in real warfare from the fire of the retreating force. There was great wonderment at the retreat of the Guards and guns from the western end of the Hog's Back, and for some time the foreign and other officers thought Grant's right had been turned without a struggle, and that he had made some false dispositions, expecting the attack elsewhere. The general expression on all faces, home and foreign, was one of and disappointment, surprise when Hog's Back was abandoned and all firing ceased on the part of the defenders, who fell back in hot haste on Fox Hill. Up came the 102nd Regiment, the old Madras Fusiliers swarming after them, pressing on from Seale, and up the fields against the steep, and darting across the road, on the summit of the Hog's Back, on which there was not a bristle left. They looked about as if at the other side of the hedge they thought there must be an unpleasant surprise; but their officers led them on right through the fence, and in a few seconds their leading skirmishers opened fire on Poyle Farm, and advanced across it followed by the rest of the regiment, and supported by the 4th Battalion 60th Rifles (Major Williamson) and another battalion on their left. As Staveley's advance cleared the park and got out on the road, there was a glimpse here and there of the retreating enemy falling back on their position, but still no one knew where Sir Hope Grant would show fight. All that could be said was that he had twenty-four guns up there on Fox Hill over the road, but his men were well under cover if there at all. Thus before eleven o'clock the Hog's Back belonged to the enemy. Those who were not in the secret were much surprised at the weak defence till now, but when it was seen that a brigade of Staveley's force had been allowed to carry the position, it was evident that the Sir Hope Grant's plan of defence had not been developed, and everyone asked, "What can Sir Hope be at?" Nor was there less curiosity to know what Carey was doing. "Where can Baker be? The Prince's Brigade are at some dodge, depend on it." The battalions of Prince Edward's brigade engaged on the Hog's Back, meanwhile were skillfully withdrawn by the devious roads between Tougham, and Ash, across the midways at Ash Green and Ash, and so up to Fox Hill, lining the hedges with skirmishers as they retreated, and were close to the base of the

hill. As the last of the Grant's division crossed the railway bridge over the Ash cutting, a pretence of blowing the bridge up was effected by Colonel Laffan's officers, and the passage was supposed to be debarred to the enemy till his Engineers could repair it by an ingenious fiction which was not agreeable to the enemy. For presently up comes General Staveley at the head of his division, and wants to cross the very obnoxious bridge before him; but it was not to be. There was Sir L. Simmons guarding the pass—"You cannot go over. The bridge is destroyed." Colonel Lennox was quite ready to repair damages, and make a practicable passage, but the umpire was inexorable and laid it down that for one hour and a quarter that bridge was to be regarded as an insurmountable obstacle to Staveley's advance across the railway in that direction. The other bridges leading over the railways were similarly destroyed, (morally), and tabooed to the force, and there was a lull in the battle at noon, which led many persons to renew their conjectures that Sir Hope Grant had been outwitted, and that he had placed the bulk of the defending army in some out of the way place, where they were not attacked, and had been turned off the Hog's Back against his will, and that Carey and the Prince were also deceived by false dispositions, and were fighting shadows to the side of the Basingstoke Canal. In the midst of these doubts the report of a gun made us prick up our ears, and turn towards the ridges over the camp near Beacon Hill. Again and again! It was Carey attacking the force posted on Hungry Hill from the ridge which commands it. A cloud of dust arising at the other side of the ridge indicated the march of the Prince of Wales's Cavalry sweeping round on his left flank. But Hungry Hill did not fight resolutely for any great length of time. A spray of skirmishers went fitting through the brushwood which clothes the steep ascent to Gravel-pit Hill, where Prince Edward's brigade were holding their own against Staveley's pursuing columns. The Gravel-pit Hill is a projection from the elevated plateau which may be considered as a continuation of the Chobham ridges southwards over the valley of the Blackwater. It is clothed with fir trees, at the top, and is accessible from the road below only by one steep zig-zag path, bordered by heath, scrub and gorse. From the summit there is a wide view of Aldershot on the right, and of the valley between it and the Hog's Back in front, and on the left the eye takes in the wooded country towards Warpleston. The roads by which they can be approached are partially concealed by trees till they converge on the main road which