

THOUGHTS ON DEFENCE.

From a Canadian point of view.

BY A CANADIAN.

(Continued.)

They would be confident in the strength of a position protected in front, looking towards the foe, by the wide St. Lawrence, and in the rear by a labyrinth of streams; interrupted in some places by rapids, impassable at all seasons, in others by shoals and tortuous channels, which compel approaches to be made in open boats, exposed to a commanding fire, while these channels could be further strengthened by gunboats and floating batteries. From the head of the Lachine rapids to below St. Helen's Island, the front of the city and island are unapproachable, except in the face of difficulties such as these. Like means of defence apply to the rear of the island which is safe from hostile attack so long as the river below Montreal, and the Lake St. Louis above, and the lake of the Two Mountains on the north-west, are occupied and protected by a sufficiency of armed vessels.

But to the men of the city, to the citizens themselves, the incentive to resistance would be stronger still. Their arms would be nerved by the knowledge that a system of defensive works has been projected, which reinforce those supplied by nature, and which, if bravely held, will protect their wives and their children, their homes, their stores, and their industries, from the very aspect of the foe. The revolutions of the age have revolutionized the arts of defence, the days of fenced cities have passed away. In the time of Vauban, curious intricacies of earthwork, and ditch, and stonework, surrounded the body of the place; fires and cross fires of infinite variety enfiladed its approaches; massive casemates protected the soldiers; but in despite of all their ingenuity the houses of the citizens stood up in the rear, exposed to bombardment and cannonade. Every shot which missed the rampart, wounded women and children, and destroyed property, until the citizens exasperated by a defence which destroyed all that they cared to defend, muttering curses on friend and foe alike, rose in their mad night, and forced the garrison, as phrased in that day "à battre la chamade." The story of the campaigns which preceded the French Revolution, multiplies these instances of enforced surrender, and this inevitable consequence, constantly recurring, suggested the remedy. The modern or German system of defence, a principle both philosophical and practical, removes the points of defence—the actual scene of conflict—so far from the central point to be defended, that the defender fights, cheered by the knowledge that he risks his life to protect and save, and not to drag down destruction on all around him. This object is reached by a system of detached works connected, as occasion offers, by trenches, and so placed as to be mutually supporting, and yet, covering at a safe distance, the body of the place. So long as these works or lines are maintained, the city in the rear is safe from shot and shell, or foot of foe. This system has been illustrated at Lintz on the Danube, at Coblenz on the Rhine, in the fortified *enceinte* of the city of Paris, and in the series of detached works which surrounded the city of Washington during the late Confederate war.

Upon this principle have been designed the lines of St. Lambert, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence opposite to Montreal. The width of the river, proof against an attack "de vive force," is no protection against a bombardment, or the long range of the artillery of the present day. A mischievous enemy planted on the southern shore, might, in the very spirit of mischief, do much harm to the town, with but little good to himself. The lines of St. Lambert have been devised to intercept all approach to the city on its most exposed side, and to act as a *tete du pont* to the Victoria Bridge. The besiegers of Montreal must break ground in front of these advanced works, out of cannon shot of the city, and until these works are subdued, the city itself is unassailable. So long as they are maintained, and the river remains under our control, both city and the island are safe from attack, in front and rear. A work of smaller dimensions but of equal importance has been designed as a *tete du pont* to the Grand Trunk Railway bridge between Isle Perrot and Vaudreuil. These works indicate, if they do not complete, the scheme of defence projected for the *insula* of Montreal; only under one conceivable circumstance can they be turned, and that will be adverted to hereafter.

But nature has bestowed upon Montreal an inner line of defence of greater strength and, though more contracted in area, still more defensible by smaller numbers. The main features of this inner line of defence are St. Helen's Island, Nun's Island, and the St. Lawrence in front, and Mount Royal in the rear. Upon this line, nature has constructed redoubts and bastions of her own, which, strengthened by human labor and human skill, brave men can hold as long at least as the Southerners held Charleston, long enough to receive help from without, and to teach an enemy to calculate the cost of empty conquest.

It should be observed also, that the lines of St. Lambert like the lines of Point Levi, although constructed for defensive purposes, facilitate offensive operations. The lines of Point Levi can

pour forth its defenders to re-inforce River du Loup or to occupy Melbourne, and to destroy, on retreating, the railway communications of an enemy advancing from the west. Combined with the proposed defences of Sorel, a hostile movement on the line of the Richelieu would be exposed to an attack in flank from the lines at St. Lambert. The very power to attack will operate as a check for when known to exist, it will compel caution, create delays, demand increased forces and increased expenses, and augment the difficulties of aggression by a constant appeal to the real *ultima ratio* of the present day, the practical *pabulum belli*—moucy. The defence of this Dominion of Canada depends on the patriotism of its people, and the support of two powerful auxiliaries, the navy of England and the severity of its climate. Of the first, something has been already said and more remains to say; of the second, something may be said at once, and not inopportune, in relation to the defence of Montreal. The winter in Canada may be held to commence on the 1st November, and to terminate on the 1st May. Within that interval no military operations of any magnitude could be undertaken safely. Indeed it may be questionable if an army with its *impedimenta* could penetrate our country before the first of June. No preconcerted or combined movements at distant points could be relied upon before that time. Between the 1st November and the 1st January the flat country is submerged, the ice takes imperfectly, and yet forms in sufficient masses to make navigable waters impassable. From April, often, until far in May, masses of ice impede navigation, and the St. Lawrence, obstructed by ice-dams or dykes, floods the surrounding country for many miles. The period of pleasant fighting, on civilized principles, would not exceed five months. Before May and after November the weather is often open and fine, but always uncertain. Men in masses do not, like the beasts of the field, change their coats to suit the climate, overlaid one day, and underlaid the next, they would be tempted to exposure, and be exposed to transitions suggestive of medical comforts and enlarged hospital accommodation. Then with sudden gripe, comes stern, unmitigated winter. The snow roads of this country are at this time unimaginable to the unsophisticated mind; narrow tracks with deep ditches on each side filled to the level, and snow beyond, waist high, through which neither man, nor horse, nor vehicle, can pass unaided by the snow shovel. Those tracks too are filled in by every successive snow-storm or snow-drift, and require to be opened afresh. When the river "takes," or freezes, with sufficient strength for traffic, the cold has become intense, and the ice "takes" in solid, rugged up-heaven masses, many feet in thickness and many more in height. Through these ice dykes a road, when made, has to be chopped out with the axe, an operation slow, laborious, and trying, with the glass at ten below zero, and would be still more so in the face of resistance. The sky may be bright and clear, but the breath congeals in the very nostril. Men move about rapidly in fur coats and mits, and overshoes, fortified with all sorts of under clothing, and run into houses, and warm their fingers, and talk fast, as if to warm their tongues, and roused by the occasion, enjoy it, rather than otherwise; but under such conditions of climate and communications no organized force, of the dimensions, or pretensions, of an army, could move and live. Shelter for such a force would be unattainable, and exposure is death.

These characteristics of climate prevail with many sudden and eccentric variations as, for example, take the 15th February last (1870) Register, "bright sun, genial weather, glass ten above zero"; 16th, "the same, bright and more genial perhaps, most inviting for a *promenade militaire*, even without overcoats"; 17th, "soft, with a moist atmosphere and heavy sky, during the day the glass rose rapidly, about midnight it rained heavily." In the morning, 18th, "the whole country was converted into a heavy, sodden mass, impracticable to man or beast. At noon came on a blinding whirlwind of snow and sleet which continued until night, 18th 19th, when it was succeeded by sidden and intense cold; the glass fell as rapidly as it had risen to fifteen degrees below zero. Any force of men and animals exposed in such a night as this, would, in the morn be as the host of Sennacherib.

Such is the climate which extends on the course of the St. Lawrence, from Montreal, easterly to the Baie des Chaleurs, and slightly modified by marine influences, to Halifax, Nova Scotia; Westerly to Lakes Ontario, and Erie and Huron, and to the great Peninsula, bounded by these waters; but westerly, the climate measurably improves, and it must be always borne in mind that campaigning may, under a favorable conjunction of circumstances, be adventured in the west a month earlier than in the east, but not with overweening confidence. *Tempestas melior, via pejor*, the weather may be better, but the ways worse.

Having traced and followed the frontier of the Dominion from the ocean, on the east, to Montreal, in Central Canada, we will now pursue the same line above Montreal westerly. Above the Lachine Rapids, and at the mouth of the Lachine Canal, we find the Lake St. Louis, an expansion of the River St. Lawrence, 12 miles long by 6 miles in breadth, which covers the Island of Montreal up to the foot of the Cascades Rapids and to the *Tele du Pont* designed at the head of Isle

Perrot. Gunboats, which would find winter harborage in the Lachine Canal, could most effectually defend this part of the coast, and maintain the communication with the mouth of the Beauharnois Canal.

This, the first link in that series of canal communication which connects the great lakes with the St. Lawrence, the east with the west, by some act of engineering perversity, not unintelligible, but most reprehensible, has been constructed on the wrong side of the River St. Lawrence. This canal, the result of a political necessity, was built in 1842, in defiance of the best military authority and the all but unanimous opinion of the country for the benefit of the Seigneur of Beauharnois, then the Hon. Edward Ellice. A line of country far better suited to the purpose, was well known to exist on the opposite or north shore of the St. Lawrence, superior in a military and commercial, in an economic and national aspect, but Lord Sydenham required Parliamentary support and the price of that support was the Beauharnois Canal. It is twelve miles in length and surmounts three dangerous rapids, the "Cascades," the "Cedars," and those of the "Coteau." It debouches into Lake St. Francis, 25 miles long by 5½ wide, whence the navigation is uninterrupted, and continues to St. Regis and Cornwall.

There can be no question, but that, in the event of a war, one of the first efforts of American strategy would be directed to obtain possession of the Beauharnois Canal, and to employ it as an aggressive point against the Island of Montreal. In self-defence, therefore, we may be compelled to dismantle, or to destroy it, but to reach it the Americans must traverse the olden field of Chateauguay, and before this sacrifice is made from the lines of St. Lambert an opportunity may be seized to repeat the far famed feat of de Salaberry, but while preparing for the worst, we will make the best use of this misplaced canal, by putting through it, in time, the steam gunboats requisite for defence on our upper waters. Coming events pregnant with war, cast their shadows a long way before, we shall always be sufficiently fore-warned to admit of rapid preparations for defence, if we are sufficiently fore-armed, if we have provided, in peace, to meet the sudden emergencies of war.

(To be continued.)

OUR AGENTS.

- HENRY MALOTT, Kingsville, Ontario.
- WILLIAM PARKHILL, Kerg, Ontario.
- SOUTH SIMCOE NEWS, Bradford, Ontario.
- J. EDWARD, N. Vold-o, St. John, N.B.
- JAMES BROWNING, St. John's, Newfoundland.
- MALCOLM MATHESON, Rosevale, Prince Edward Island.
- JOHN CLAWSON, Aylmer, P. of Q.
- JOHN HENDERSON, Princess Street, Kingston, Ontario.
- JOHN MACARTHY, Queen Street, Ottawa, Ont.
- THOMAS McKIM, Almonte, Ontario.
- O. FITZ WILKINS, St. Catharines, Ontario.
- JAMES McMILLAN, Enterprise, Ont.

ELDON L. O. L., No. 304.



An EMERGENCY Meeting, of this Lodge will be held on the Evening of TUESDAY, the 21st March, inst., at 8 o'clock, on important business.

DUNBAR BROWNE, W. M.

INSOLVENT ACT OF 1869.

CANADA, Province of Quebec, District of Montreal, } IN THE SUPERIOR COURT.

IN THE MATTER OF

WILLIAM JOHNSON,

An Insolvent.

On Monday, the seventeenth day of April next, the undersigned will apply to the said Court for a discharge under the said Act.

WILLIAM JOHNSON, By J. & W. A. BATES, His Attorneys, ad litem.

Montreal, 7th March, 1871.

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1st March, 1870.

Orange Lodge Directory.

Montreal Lodges meet at 81 St. James Street

DUKE OF YORK L. O. L., No. 413.

The Regular Monthly Meeting of this Lodge will be held in the Lodge Room, on WEDNESDAY, the 8th March, at 8, p.m.

THOS. PORTER, W.M.

DERRY L. O. L., No. 224.

This Lodge will hold its next Regular Meeting on THURSDAY, the 9th day of March, at 8, p.m.

VICTORIA L. O. L., No. 350.

The Regular Monthly Meeting of this Lodge, will be held on WEDNESDAY, the 15th March, in the Lodge Room, at 8 o'clock, p.m.

BOYNE L. O. L., No. 401.

The Regular Monthly Meeting of this Lodge, will be held on FRIDAY NEXT, the 17th inst., at 8, p.m. in the Lodge Room.

ELDON L. O. L. No. 304.

The next Regular Monthly Meeting of this Lodge will be held on TUESDAY, the 4th day of April, at 8, p.m.

DUNBAR BROWNE, W.M.

DOMINION L. O. L., No. 1263.

The next Regular Monthly meeting of this Lodge, will be held on THURSDAY EVENING, the sixth day of April, at 8 p. m.

PRINCE OF WALES L. O. L., No. 364.

This Lodge will hold its next Regular Monthly Meeting on FRIDAY, the 7th day of April, at 8, p.m.

WANTED.

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