

C BATTERY AFIELD.

INCIDENTS OF THEIR DEPARTURE FOR THE SKEENA RIVER DISTRICT.

Novel Substitute for their Regulation Equipment.—The Plan of Campaign.—Past History of the Skeena Indians.

(From a Special Correspondent.)

On Monday, the 16th July, at 10.30 a.m., "C" Battery, R.C.A., marched out of their barracks and embarked on H.M.S. "Caroline" for the mouth of the Skeena river. The force consisted of Lieut.-Col. Holmes, Major Peters (with camera), Captain Benson, Lieutenants Ogilvie and Gaudet, Surgeon Duncan, and Lieut.-Col. Prior, of the B.C.B.G.A. (who volunteered as supply officer), Master Gunner Cornish, Sergeant-Major Mulchaity, two sergeants, and 84 men.

It appears that a force of provincial police constables and a number of white settlers are hemmed in at Hazelton by hostile Indians, who threaten to murder the whites and burn the Hudson Bay post at that place. The civil authorities therefore requisitioned the militia in aid of the civil authority to put down this disturbance, and "C" Battery were selected by the D. A. G. for the service.

The route to Hazelton from the coast has not yet been adopted. The ship will convey them to the mouth of the Skeena, and if that river is found impracticable by reason of high water, then on to the Naas river. Both rivers are extremely rapid and dangerous. Many portages must be made, and in places the canoes can only be got up the river by tracking. If the Naas river is adopted, it will be necessary to canoe 80 miles, and then take the trail 130 miles to Hazelton. If the Skeena is found practicable, then the whole route from the mouth of the Skeena to Hazelton—160 miles—can be done by canoe. The country is very rough, mountainous, and but little known, these figures are therefore merely approximate, but will give an idea of the distance.

The men, as they passed through the streets of Victoria, amidst much cheering, looked very workmanlike. They had discarded their white belts, valise-equipments, cleaning rods and sword bayonets. Each man, in addition to his rifle and a short hunting knife, carried 40 rounds in a canvas cartridge belt about his waist, a haversack, and his field kit, which consisted of the "hold-all" complete, i.e., knife, fork, spoon, comb, etc., one shirt, one pair socks, one pair boots, cape, greatcoat, one blanket, and 60 rounds of cartridge, the whole wrapped up neatly in a waterproof sheet, tied together by a piece of white cotton cord, while the ordinary barrack room bed-strap was made to do duty for shoulder straps.

Amongst the crowd at Esquimalt to say "au revoir" were Lieut.-Col. Wolfenden, Captains Nicholles, Snowdon, Irving, Jones, Lieutenant Mowat, and many of the n.c.o. and men of the B. C. Brigade.

(Victoria, B.C., Times, 16th July.)

On Sunday morning, "C" Battery were busily engaged packing kits and cleaning arms preparatory to a parade in marching order, which took place at 10.40 o'clock. The idea of a campaign amidst the wilds of British Columbia did not appear to strike terror to the hearts of the members of "C" Battery. Everything indicated bustle and excitement, and between the jokes indulged in the men would strike up some popular song which would almost shake the shingles off the roof of their quarters. One soldier informed his comrades that he had fought the Apaches and always found that a brave had no use for and would never shoot a white man whose hair was cut short. The hair on the speaker's head had been cut very close on the previous night. Another announced he had purchased a pistol which cost \$17.50. The tailor of the battery made a verbal will, leaving his goose and shears to Bandmaster Agius, and the reporter was informed that the men would be very much disappointed if they returned without firing a shot. At 10.30 the bugle sounded "fall in." The men then proceeded to the grounds outside the hall, and were placed in three squads for inspection. The inspecting officers were Colonel Holmes, D.A.G., Major Peters, Colonel Prior, B.C.G.A., Capt. Jones, and Lieut. Ogilvie. After a critical examination the force was dismissed.

During the whole of this morning all was bustle and confusion at the barracks preparing for the journey. At 10.15 the bugle again sounded for the parade, and a photograph was taken by Mr. Edgar Fleming. The men were then inspected by his Honour Lieut.-Governor Nelson, accompanied by Colonel Holmes. The packs were taken off and placed in waggon for conveyance on board the Caroline. At 10.45 the battery marched out of the gates, the band playing "The Girl I left

behind me." As the fine body of men marched through Government street the ladies waved adieus with their handkerchiefs, the band playing a lively martial air. Government street was crowded with people, the unusual scene attracting nearly the whole of the residents of the city. During the morning Colonel Prior was busily engaged forwarding supplies to the war-ship. Provisions for a campaign of two months' duration were sent on board. At the Adelphia corner the special constables joined the battery and proceeded with them to Esquimalt. Superintendent Roycraft will go to Essington on the steamer Barbara Boscowitz this evening.

Shortly before noon the battery arrived at Foster's Pier, when the boats belonging to H. M. S. Caroline conveyed the men on board. A large number of ladies and gentlemen were present to bid the soldier boys good-bye. Amongst the assemblage were Hon. John Robson, Hon. F. G. Vernon, Col. Wolfenden, Mrs. Prior, Mrs. Holmes, Rev. J. E. and Mrs. Starr, Lieut. P. Æ. Irving, Capt. Jones, and others. When the last boat left the wharf three cheers were given, and were responded to by the officers and men. Amongst the last to leave the wharf were Hon. J. H. Turner, Colonel Holmes, Major Peters, and Lieut. Ogilvie. The war-ship will be absent about two weeks. On the voyage up, the Caroline will anchor during the night, and will reach Essington on Friday. The number of officers and men in the battery is eighty-five, and with the specials will bring the force up to about 100 men. The battery will be taken to Kitalass Canyon, and will await a report from Supt. Roycraft and his specials. The Superintendent will take his men up the river in canoes, and if resistance is offered will drop down the stream to the encampment. The military will advance on both sides of the stream, protecting the provisions, which will be taken in canoes. At one o'clock the Caroline sailed out of Esquimalt with the band playing and cheering from the ship and the shore.

THE SKEENA INDIANS.

The Skeena outbreak may be still regarded as incipient, but the best authorities on the district and its inhabitants agree that it presents serious aspects. The Indians of that region, unlike the red men of the plains, are a savage, turbulent race of men, and have been brought into but slight contact with the mollifying influences of civilization. Among them tribal distinctions are rigidly preserved and tribal rights upheld; while the mountainous nature of the region and the fact that their chief sustenance is derived from the rivers combined have limited them to a comparatively narrow strip of country, and thus their warlike tendencies have been maintained at the utmost tension, to prevent encroachments on their respective pretensions. The Indians in the Skeena district chiefly belong to one tribe, although scattered in villages along the banks of the river, and it is between these villages that the sub-tribal distinctions are maintained. To the stranger, however, they are alike unfriendly and repulsive. Until recent years they were engaged in a series of bloody conflicts with the Haidahs, a tribe inhabiting the Queen Charlotte islands off the north-west coast of British Columbia. The Haidahs were a sort of modern Vikings and used to make periodical incursions into the Skeena valley plundering and destroying whatever they could.

During the last twenty or thirty years zealous efforts have been made to Christianize the Skeena Indians, but with a marked want of success. Some travellers to that country have described them as the most determined heathens on earth. Their moral instincts are of the lowest; their pilfering habits irrepressible and cold-blooded murders in their villages appear to be no unusual occurrence. Consequently, residence for civilized man in that district has always been recognized as perilous, and accounts for the fact that between Port Essington and Hazelton (the scene of the present trouble), a distance of 150 miles, there is not a single settler; while at the former there are less than half a dozen, and at the latter the white settlement is practically limited to the inmates of the Hudson's Bay Company's fort. In 1880 there were about 2,000 Indians scattered along the banks of the river, not including several large villages above Hazelton. For years they have been more or less disaffected, and if the outbreak becomes general an extended campaign will be necessary to suppress it. Geographically the savages have a great advantage, the mountainous character of the country, the practical impossibility of navigating the Skeena more than 70 miles above its mouth—broken as it is with torrents and falls—together with the natural obstacles to portaging or tramping offered by the high banks and alternate stretches of dense bush and rocky ground, rendering their position well nigh inaccessible to a large force of men.

On the other hand the military authorities will have an advantage in an early determinable and accessible base for their operations. The conflict is bound to be confined to the neighbourhood of the rivers, the lack of game in that country rendering any lengthened retreat inland on the part of the Indians out of the question; so that Port Essington, at the mouth of the Skeena, will in all likelihood be the base of military operations. Port Essington is about 450 miles north from Victoria.