

Meanwhile, the men in Colonel Otter's column, which had retired from the perilous position at Cut Knife Hill and camped just outside the stockade at Fort Battleford, spent most of their time training and sharing nightly outlying picket duty. The Mounted Police attached to the brigade patrolled the country daily in all directions. At an early hour each morning a patrol, consisting usually of an N.C.O. in charge and four constables, started out; each day miles of almost impassable ground were traversed, and seldom would the weary patrol return before sundown. It was dangerous work in that savage-infested area, for the patrol might at any time meet up unexpectedly with a band of wandering Indians and either have to fight it out or, if too greatly outnumbered, work out their salvation in other ways.

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I REMEMBER one such encounter which took place on May 14, 1885.

In the morning of that day we were instructed to ride a little further than usual in the area south of the Battle river, if possible to a certain settler's cabin. The settler had been forced to flee, but before doing so had buried two guns in his back yard. Our task was to unearth the guns and bring them to camp. Our search was to be in a section unfamiliar to us of the Eagle Hills which was a favourite stamping ground of wandering enemy bands, and to find the small cabin was going to be difficult—that much we knew.

We left camp at 7 o'clock with Reg. No. 670, Sgt. J. C. Gordon in charge of our party which comprised besides myself four other constables and a half-breed guide. After a few miles the trail was little more than an indistinct thread. It wound tortuously through rough hilly country well wooded with poplar bluffs that made ideal cover for anyone bent on ambush. For several miles we followed our usual routine of examining the ground a mile or so in from the trail on both sides.

At noon we stopped beside a small stream for a lunch of hard tack and spring water. A short rest, then we decided to push straight on for the settler's cabin. The trail got worse as we went along, but that was nothing to what awaited us at the top of one hill we ascended. We rode into a large band of Indians travelling in the opposite direction.

For a moment they were as startled as we. A glance satisfied us that we were hopelessly outnumbered, about 20 to one, and that our only hope was to make a running fight of it.

Rifles barked—theirs and ours—and the Indians made a concerted rush forward, yelling like fiends. We emptied a few of their saddles, then turned and rode for cover. To our dismay we saw a large party of Indians bearing down on us from the crest of a hill on our right. To think of stopping and making a stand was out of the question, so we rode like mad. One of our men, Reg. No. 983, Cst. W. I. Spencer, kept on going. As he dug both spurs into his horse, we cursed him heartily, checked the Indian advance and retreated further.

Another of our party, Reg. No. 973, Cst. F. O. Elliot, was shot from his horse, but we were being pressed too hard to stop and see whether he was dead or not. Common sense dictated the only sensible course open to us. Elliot's horse had bolted, and to stop and try to help our unfortunate comrade, or to investigate, would have been sheer suicide.

All we could do was retreat a few yards at a time, seek cover, fire one or two rounds, then retreat again. We kept doing this until in about an hour and a half the Indians forsook the chase, fortunately before we suffered more casualties.

Back at Battleford we learned that Spencer was under the care of Dr. Strange of "C" Company, Royal School of Infantry, one of the militia surgeons. Then only did we understand why he had fled, leaving us behind. During the first exchange of shots he had been