

assisting the officers when pressed in their work at the guns, engaged, perhaps, in one spot and unable to give attention at another equally requiring it; taking charge, mayhap, for the moment, of a gun at which the No. 1 has just fallen, keeping up its fire and restoring confidence to its gunners: particularly can his aid in this respect be valuable when the number of the officers is reduced.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, it is the duty of the senior staff N.-C. officer—as it is of all other N.-C. officers in their degree—to stand out as examples of obedience, endurance and every good quality.<sup>2</sup>

It is necessary that a N.-C. officer of experience remain with the wagons when detached from the guns, to act under the second in command with respect to them and to take charge of them in his absence: for this, the junior staff N.-C. officer is the most fitting, not merely because, as we have already pointed out, he is not the most suitable to be in charge of the limbers, but because the duties which he will there have with regard to supply will fit in well with that routine of work with respect to equipment usually given to him and, at the same time, he will be less liable to be placed *hors de combat*, which would cause many details in making good expenditure, accounting for deficiencies, etc., to fall upon the commander after the action, when possibly the latter would have as much as he could do in reorganizing his battery and in general superintendence of its refitting.

The first duty of the second staff N.-C. officer will then be to assist the second in command in the dispositions which he may make with regard to the wagons, carefully noting what is done and the orders which he receives; guided by the latter his next duty will be to take every care of his charge in the absence of the second in command, maintaining it ready for any movement required, taking any additional precautions which, from time to time, may seem desirable, and informing the second in command of anything of importance which may occur. It will further be his duty to send forward, as demanded, wagons, spare men and horses, to examine return wagons, and to send, subject to any instructions he may have received, those which are empty to the reserve for further supply. If he finds any temporary repairs possible by the battery artificers with him in the *matériel* sent back from the guns he should direct and superintend them.<sup>3</sup> While he performs the foregoing duties he must be careful to observe, as far as possible, the progress of the fight, and particularly any change in the position of the guns, or of the reserve ammunition wagons.

#### THE OFFICIAL REPORT OF THE FISH CREEK FIGHT.

The *Canada Gazette* of the 11th contains, as a Militia general order, General Middleton's reports of the actions in which the field force have lately been engaged. We hope to reproduce them all, but can now only give the first report:—

NORTH-WEST FIELD FORCE,  
HEAD QUARTERS, FISH CREEK, May 1, 1885.

Sir.—I have the honor to state for the information of His Excellency the Governor-General and yourself, the following particulars of the engagement between my force and that of the Rebels, on the 24th of April last, which I have been unable to do before, except by telegraph, owing to having so much to do in reconnoitring, getting up supplies and making arrangements for the movement of the troops in the other parts of the North-west Territory.

I had previously informed you of the division of my forces, and on the morning of the 23rd both columns advanced on the two sides of the river, with the scow moving down between them. We halted about 18 miles down the river, my column near the farm of a settler named McIntosh, and the other in a line with us on the other side. After a quiet night we started on the morning of the 24th at about 7 a.m. with the usual military precautions.

Mounted Infantry scouts spread out well in front, with support of Mounted Infantry under Major Boulton about 200 yards in rear. An advanced guard of the 90th Batt. about 300 yards in rear of that, and the main column about 200 to 300 yards in rear of the advanced guard.

Though I had not been led to believe that the rebels would come so far to the front to attack us, still I was aware of the existence of a rather deep ravine or creek about five or six miles ahead, consequently I was on this occasion, with the support under Major Boulton, accompanied by Capt. Haig, R.E., A.Q.M.G., and my two Aides-de-camp, Capt. Wise and Lieut. Doucet, and Mr. MacDowell attached to my staff. On approaching some bluffs, just as the left advanced scouts were circling round, we suddenly received a heavy fire from a bluff and some ground sloping back on our left, which fire was luckily too high to do mischief, having been evidently fired in a hurry owing to the approach of the left scouts. Major Boulton instantly ordered his men to dismount, let loose their horses (two of which were immediately shot), and hold the enemy in check. This was done by them most gallantly—the flankers and files in front falling back on the main body. I sent Capt. Wise back with orders to bring the advanced guard and main body, which was soon done,

though in going with the order Capt. Wise's horse was hit by a shot from the bluffs on the left. The advanced guard on arrival extended and took cover in the bluffs nearest us, and as the main body came up, two more companies of the 90th were extended, the rebels advancing up out of the ravine into which, however, they again speedily retired and a heavy fire was exchanged, but having sent a party round to a house on the enemy's right, the enemy gradually retired along the ravine while our men advanced slowly to the crest of a deeply wooded part running out of the main ravine. In this former ravine a small party of the rebels made a stand, in which we found afterwards to be some carefully constructed rifle pits. These men were evidently the best shots—Gabriel Dumont being amongst them, but were, so to speak caught in a trap. A great number of their horses and ponies were in this ravine, and, what is said to be very unusual, tied up—thus showing, I am informed, that the rebels were pretty confident of success—55 of these horses were killed. These men were gradually reduced in number until, from the position of our men, it was almost impossible for them to retire, and they continued to fire at intervals, doing a good deal of mischief. Captain Peters with great pluck and dash led the dismounted men of "A" Battery, supported by a party of the 90th under Capt. Ruttan, and gallantly attempted to dislodge them, but they were so well covered and were able to bring such a heavy fire on the party advancing without being seen, killing three men, two artillerymen and one of the 90th (the body of one artilleryman was afterwards found within 8 or 10 yards of their pits) that I resolved to leave them, contenting myself with extending more of the 90th in front to watch them and sending some shells into the bluff now and then. Lt.-Col. Houghton, my D.A.G., in taking orders got mixed with this party and advanced with them, showing great pluck and coolness. I would here beg to notice the pluck and coolness displayed by other officers (especially Capt. Drury) and men of "A" Battery in running their guns up by hand to the edge of the ravine and the opposite gully afterwards, three of the men being wounded. In the meanwhile, having seen the part of the 90th extended as above mentioned, I galloped across to the right, having previously sent my two As.-D.-C. there with orders to get "C" half company and two companies of the 90th extended. On arrival there I found that the enemy was in force trying to turn our right, having set fire to the prairie as the wind was blowing towards us. About this period Capt. Drury, of "A" Battery, threw a shell into a house some distance off where some rebels were seen congregating, and set it on fire. The rebels at this time advanced under cover of the smoke out of the ravine which extended across our front, and the firing was tremendously hot. My A.-D.-C., Lieut. Doucet, and several men were hit. Our men were forced back here a little at first, but soon rallied and advanced steadily, holding their own and taking cover well, until using the enemy's own tactics we fairly drove them back bluff by bluff, and they retired all together going off as hard as they could. I may mention here that their attempts to drive us back by setting fire to the prairie proved a failure, though at one time it looked awkward, but I sent for a party of teamsters who soon beat it out, notwithstanding they were for a short time under fire.

By about 2 p.m. the enemy had disappeared and all firing ceased except from the men in the ravine, who seemed by their voices to be reduced in number, and whom I endeavored to reach by means of the guns from the opposite side of the ravine, I think successfully, from the amount of blood found afterwards in the pits and a dead Sioux found near there. To return to the action of the left flank—on recrossing to them I received a bullet through my fur cap from one of the men in the rifle pits, who had made several attempts to hit me before, and whom I have reason to believe was Gabriel Dumont himself, and who a few minutes after, being obliged to recross with my A.-D.-C., Capt. Wise, shot from the same place his horse and threw him. Shortly after, I am sorry to say, while looking over the brow of the ravine to see if the enemy were still there, Captain Wise received a shot in the foot. I found the firing reduced to the men in the ravine, the rest of the enemy having retired in confusion.

During the action a messenger from the left column arrived asking if they should bring troops across, and I directed the 10th Grenadiers to be brought over, which was done by means of the scow most expeditiously, one company with Lord Melgund arriving about 1 o'clock p.m., and two other companies under Lt.-Col. Grasett later on, with two guns of the Winnipeg Field Battery, under Major Jarvis. As the affair was nearly over then, I contented myself with extending a company of the 10th on the right centre to assist in watching the ravine where the enemy's rifle pits were, the other companies being on the extreme right in support and ultimately remaining there until the wounded were removed to the camp ground which had been selected in the meantime. I would here beg leave to draw particular attention to the crossing of these troops, who, though luckily not required, might well have been. To fully appreciate the rapidity with which this was done, in spite of the difficulties that existed, the river must be seen; wooded heights on each side 100 feet high—at bottom, large boulders encrusted in thick sticky mud—a fringe of huge blocks of ice on each side, a wretched scow carrying about 60 men at most, pulled with oars made with an axe, and a rapid current of about three or four miles an hour were the obstacles that were surmounted by dint of determination and anxiety to join with and aid their comrades.

Meanwhile a sort of Zareba had been formed by Mr. Bedson and Mr. Secretan of a few wagons, where the doctors formed their temporary hospital and carried out their functions skilfully, coolly and quietly under the able superintendence of Brigade Surgeon Orton, 90th Battalion. A little later finding the firing had ceased, and the enemy fled except the two or three whom I left there for the reason above mentioned, and as a thunder storm was coming up—having removed the dead, and sent off the wounded, we pitched camp amidst a severe thunder storm in an open spot close to the scene of the fight, which had been selected by Lord Melgund as above mentioned. I append an official list of killed and wounded, which I regret is so large, but which is not larger than might be expected, considering the circumstances under which we were attacked, and the fact that not a man in the force but myself had been under fire. Moreover I had only about 350 men in action, and I estimate the enemy at about 300—as regards their loss, all we actually found on the field was three dead Indians, but I am confident they must have sustained a tolerably severe loss, as they would not have abandoned so strong a position, and one, from the amount of food we found in the different houses, they evidently expected to occupy for some time. Moreover after crossing the creek, the trail was so situated as regards numerous bluffs, running at right angles to it, that they could have impeded my

<sup>1</sup>In such case the sergt.-major is sometimes detailed to look after the division or half-battery of guns: it would, however, seem better to leave him mainly to the charge of the limbers and supply of ammunition, etc., his normal work.

<sup>2</sup>If the sergt.-major falls, the senior coverer should take charge of the limbers: his other duties in action must be carried through by the captain alone.

<sup>3</sup>Any damaged *matériel* not so repairable, and yet desirable to keep, he should send with the wagons to the reserve: he should make a note in a memorandum book of what he sends to the latter and what he receives therefrom.