

The Battle of Eccles Hill.

In another part of this issue notice is taken of the intention of the Missisquoi Historical Society to hold a picnic at Eccles Hill on Dominion Day. In this connection it may not be uninteresting to publish an account of the skirmish that took place at Eccles Hill on the 25th May, 1870. The account is taken from a pamphlet published in the year following the disturbances of which it treats. The pamphlet is entitled "A Brief Account of the Fenian Raids on the Missisquoi Frontier in 1866 and 1870," and was written for the confessed purpose of showing the part taken by the Dunham Home Guards in the affair.

Since that time a new generation has sprung up, and we are assured that many men and women, as well as younger people, even those who reside close to the ground, made historic by the incidents related, have never heard anything but the most vague descriptions of them.

After describing the incidents of the raid of 1866, and the history of the formation of the Home Guards, and the events just prior to the actual attempt at invasion made by the Fenians, the narrator continues:

About sundown Captain Westover held a consultation with his men and a part of the force returned to their homes. . . . They were all to return on the following morning and bring provisions for those who kept the night watch. The names of those who remained, who literally took their lives in their hands, were: Asa Westover, Andrew Ten Eyck, R. L. Galer, James McRae, David Westover, Spenser Scott, John Pickering, Austin Hill, Lyman Call, James McElroy, George Longeway, Manville Rublee.

About nine o'clock on the evening of the 24th, a despatch was sent to Captain Westover at Eccles Hill. This telegram, as will be seen was from Colonel Chamberlain to his uncle, Dr. G. Chamberlain, at Frelighsburg, and ran as follows:

Frelighsburg, May 24th, 1870.
3 p.m.

By Telegraph from Montreal.

To G. Chamberlain,

Westover and Red Scarfmen should occupy old Fenian position at once, if possible, and pester the flank of any party crossing. I go to Stanbridge by next train.

(Signed) B. Chamberlain, Lt.-Col."

This telegram contained the first encouraging word from any quarter, and inspired the little party of guards now left to themselves, with fresh courage to do their duty in the trying situation in which they were placed.

The night proved exceedingly dark; so intense, indeed, was the gloom that the watchers could not distinguish each other's persons at the distance of a few feet.

A part of them were stationed in an old house, known as the Eccles House, while another picket was established to the west, between the hill and the road, in order to prevent a surprise from that quarter.

An arrangement was made, besides taking the above precautions, with a young man who could be relied upon, to watch the Fenian movements, and come before them to give warning of their approach.

Between ten and eleven o'clock this messenger came in great haste to say that large numbers of them were advancing, as was supposed, to take up their position on or near Eccles Hill.

Almost immediately after this message was received, the little party heard the roll of wheels along the road leading from Franklin, and listened intently to make sure if it was a single vehicle approaching, or whe-

ther the hosts arrayed against them had really taken up their line of march with the design of securing their old camping-ground under cover of the darkness.

As the sounds came nearer they made sure there were but two carriages, which, after crossing the boundary line slackened their horses to a walk, and the occupant of one vehicle called to a person in the other in these words:

"We are on invaded territory. We are in Canada," and added, "we shall be halted before we get through."

"Who will halt us?" enquired he of the other waggon. "There are no troops on the borders, and the volunteers are not called out."

"I tell you we shall be halted," the first went on, "before we get through; for Westover's company is out, and there is a slew of them."

A moment later and Captain Westover, who had walked forward and was a little nearer the line than his men, gave the word the last speaker was expecting, and his "halt" brought both waggons to a sudden standstill.

He desired to know the names of the parties and their business. Their names were Frank Johnson and Clark Barney. Captain Westover, not being acquainted with the former, went forward with them to the Guard House, and called to know if any of the men knew Frank Johnson, of Highgate.

Lieutenant Galer answered in the affirmative, and afterwards they were questioned.

Barney's business was said to be merely to his own family, while Johnson said he had been at St. Armand Station sometime during the day, and had been engaged by Captain P. Smith to drive from there to St. Albans and back to Cook's Corner, and report anything of interest he might learn with regard to the Fenian movements to one John Morris, who was to meet him there.

Captain Westover enquired who John Morris was?

Johnson confessed his ignorance, but supposed he might be a police detective.

He was then desired to report to the Home Guards, which he did, his reports exactly agreeing with what they had before learned, in addition to which he informed them that the force which the messenger just mentioned had stated was advancing was, for reasons with which he was entirely unacquainted, returning to their camp; that he had passed them after they turned back, and that they numbered between two and three hundred.

After giving this extremely satisfactory information they were allowed to pass on.

It appears that the love of fun had not quite deserted the younger guardsmen on this their first night of actual service; for it occurred, at this juncture, to Pickering and Scott to hasten forward a short distance to a cross-road leading to the road to Pigeon Hill, and halt the parties a second time, in order to make it appear that their numbers were sufficiently large to keep pickets out in all directions.

Accordingly, they had stationed themselves in the road, and were ready with their "halt" when the waggons drove up.

The travellers appeared greatly surprised, and desired to know why they were again stopped. The picket wanted the counter-sign, and ordered them back to get it, expecting, at the same time, as they afterwards said, a severe reprimand for the part they had played.

Captain Westover was staggered when the parties returned. His first thought was that the Fenians had come in by some more circuitous route, and were behind as well as before them; and so pleased was he to find his mistake, that he could readily forgive the strategy practised by his merry guards.

Two or three hours after this occurrence, Lieut. Galer and Mr. A. Ten Eyck, being on duty together, had walked across the line and a short distance up the hill on the other side, when they heard a carriage approaching. They hastened back to the line, and Mr. Ten Eyck placed himself against the iron post, while Lieutenant Galer stood on the opposite side of the road. Thus they waited till the wagon drove up, when a halt was ordered, and the business of the two men who were seated in it demanded.

They said they were going to report to General O'Neill, and said they had papers to prove they were all right, and one of them gave the word "Winousky," supposed to be the Fenian countersign.

Mr. Ten Eyck informed them they were in Canada, on which they endeavored to back their teams around. He, however, ordered them forward at once, and, hearing something very like the "click" of cocking a rifle, they obeyed the order.

When opposite the Guard House they stopped, and called for the captain, who questioned the prisoners as to their business. They answered again, "To report to General O'Neill."

They were then ordered forward to Cook's Corners under escort of Lieut. Galer, George Longeway, Lyman Call, James McElroy and Spenser Scott, to be given in charge of the volunteer force, which they had just then learned by a special messenger from Colonel Chamberlain, had arrived there in small numbers. This was because of the darkness of the night of the 25th, as nearly as they could judge, being unable in the darkness to see the time.

The special messenger above alluded to had brought word that the volunteers would be up in the morning. Captain Westover sent back a request to have them move forward at once.

When the guards returned from escorting the prisoners to Cook's Corner, they brought a message from Adjutant Kemp to have the Home Guards "fight and fall back," and that they would be supported at the Krans Bridge!

This bridge is over Elke River, on the road from Stanbridge to Cook's Corner, and by the direction of the same adjutant, was taken up during these days of excitement, or rather the upper tier of planks was removed, and the lower ones so loosened that they could be hastily thrown off in case it should be deemed desirable to do so.

At four o'clock on that morning (May 25th) Lieut. Baker arrived at Eccles Hill with twenty-one men of the Dunham volunteers, a part of Captain Robinson's company. They called for breakfast, and Captain Westover sent them to Mr. Holden's—about a mile distant—where they were provided with what they required.

A few hours later, Captain Bockus, and about the same number of men, came up from Stanbridge; and about ten o'clock Colonel Chamberlain, Colonel Osborne Smith, Adjutant Kemp and Captain Gassaigne arrived on the ground.

After viewing the position, and entirely approving of the course which had been pursued by the Home Guards, and also the plans they had laid down for their further movements, Colonel Smith concluded by saying they "did not require anyone to command or direct them."

Colonel Smith remained at Eccles Hill about an hour, and then returned towards