

THE SERGEANT'S STORY

By MAXWELL DREW.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

Concerning the North-west Rebellion.

1885.

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A NIGHT OF PICKET DUTY.

The rebels sneaked off to the east as soon as it got dark, an' we wuz ordered to retire back to the river bank, where a corral wuz formed about 600 yards or so from the ravine, Captin Caston coverin' the retirement wid No. 1 Company. As soon as we got to where the camp wuz the Granideers had to go right on picquet an' in a pourin' rain storm, too, an' we didn't have no great-coats, nayther, Ye see, sor, we'd sor, come over the river in a mighty big hurry an' we didn't have no toime fer to bring our Sunday close wid us. We stayed out, on duty till early mornin' whin we wuz relieved by the 90th. Thin we rolled ourselves up in our blankets an' went to sleep, an' we didn't nade no rockin' ayther, fer we'd bin on our fate fer 24 hours, an' hustlin' most ov the toime, too. We put in an awful noight that noight, I'm tellin' ye, sor, standin' out on the river picquet all noight in in the pourin' rain, but the few bottles of "Paddy's eye water," that Major Dawson sint over the river to us out ov the medical stores made things koind ov more aisy loike. As soon as the Gineril tuck stock ov things, he found that our stringth an' the rebels' wuz just about equal, about 300 on aich soide—10 ov our fellows wuz killed, mostly all belongin' to the 90th, an' 40 wounded. The rebels lost 11 an' carried off 18 that got wounded. This wuz found out whin Riel's papers wuz captured at Batoche. Gabriel Dumont, the buffalo hunter an' Injin fighter, was in command, an' a dam smart gineril he wuz, too, an' jist as brave as any wan in the outfit. Riel stayed at Batoche, lookin' after his health I'm thinkin'. There's tactics fer ye. Sure an' a place where bullets an' shrapnels is flyin' about isn't healthy anyhow an mebbe he thought discretion wuz the better part of valour. The Injins always spoke ov Dumont as the "Fightin' Chief" an' Riel as the "Talkin' Chief." Chin music an' palaver don't go wid thim Injins whin wanst they go out on the "war-path," an' they ain't no fools whin it comes to sizin' a fellow up.

The next day, the 25th, we buried the dead, poor souls, an' cudn't help wonderin' whose turn it wud be to stop a bullet next. The Gineril read the burial service himself so he did, an' done it as good as any priest in Toronto cud do it. He wound up wid sayin', "Men," sez he, "your comrades have done their duty an' done it well, they have nothin' to regret." Before we lift Fish Creek about a hundred waggon loads ov big stones wuz hauled up to the camp an' a cairn built up. Thin a big wooden cross wuz put up on top ov it fer to mark the last restin' place ov them brave lads who had fought so well an' give up their lives fer their country, God rest their souls. The same day the rest ov the West Division crossed over to the east soide ov the river an' the byes were ov coorse very anxious fer to hear all the "ins" an'

"outs" ov the engagement, ye may be sure, sor.

On the 26th Lord Melgund wuz goin' the rounds ov the piket late at noight whin an Englishman named Moss who wuz doin' "sentry go" calls out.

"Halt," sez he, "whoes there?"

"Rounds," sez Lord Melgund.

"What rounds," sez Moss.

"Grand Rounds," sez Lord Melgund.

"Stand Grand Rounds," sez Moss, "an' trun up yer hands," getting a bead on him at the same time.

"Come to the port, sor," sez Melgund.

"I said Grand Rounds."

"Port nothin'," sez Moss, cockin' his rifle.

"Stand jist where ye are an' hold up yer hands till the sargint comes, or by the Lord Harry, I'll let the moon shine through," he sez.

An' wud ye believe it, sor. Lord Melgund had to stand there wid his hands struck up in the air till Sargint Lane put in an appearance an' put things right. Poor Moss expected to be coort martialled fer it the next day, but he niver heard no more about it, exceptin' by way ov a joke.

BETWEEN THE BATTLES.

The next day Bill Urquhart comes over into our tint munchin' away at some lump sugar, wid a smoile on his good lookin' face that lit up the whole tint. Now, sor, ye can take me word for it, that if there's anythin' that'll make a divil's mouth water that's bin livin' on tay an' hard tack, it's lump sugar.

"Hello, Bill," sez Mac, "an' where the divil did ye git that?"

"Oh, aisy enough," sez Bill, "ye know thim 'medical comforts' that is piled up in the ambulance tint. Well," sez he, "I jist crawls over there last night an' I lifts up the curtau ov the tint an' I puts me arm in an' I was swipes two or three handfulls out ov the the box."

"An' did no wan hear ye," sez Mac, his oies bulgin' out at the soight ov the stuff.

"Divil a wan," sez Bill, "barrin' the Hospital Sargint, he wakes up jist as oi got me fist in the box, an' he calls out.

'Whose there?' sez he, an' oi kapes as quiet as a mouse. 'What's that?' sez he agin, an' I niver said nothin'. Then he yawns an' sez to himself kind ov out loud like, 'Oh, pshaw, it's thim dam 'gophers' ov the Surgeon's,' an' off he goes to s'ape agin."

Ye see, sor, Dr. Ryerson had foive or six "gophers" nailed up in a box, an' he used to kape thim in the ambulance tint. "Good for ye, Bill," sez Mac, "I'll have some ov that sugar to-night," sez he, "or me name's not McManus." An' sure enough about midnight out he snakes an' goes over to the ambulance tint. He lifts up the curtin, shoves in his fist jist loike Bill did, an' wuz groupin' around tryin' fer to foind the box, whin up wakes "Bob" Hazleton, the sargint, an' calls out:

"Who's there?" sez he.

Mac he niver let on.

"Who's that?" sez Bob agin, koind ov loud loike.

"Whist, Sargint," sez Mac, drawing' out his arm, "go to slape. I'm wan ov thim dam gophers that woke ye up last noight."

Nothin' ov much importance happened durin' the 28th or 29th or the 30th. Ye see, sor, we wuz jist waitin' there fer orders to go on to Batoche an' give Riel a dressin' down.

THE GATTLING GUN ARRIVES.

On the first ov May the wounded were sint off to Saskatoon by trail, where a Field Hospital had bin established, an' that evenin' the Ninetieth band played fer the first toime since the foight. The next mornin' Mac comes rushin' into the tint jist after breakfast, an' sez, "Boys," sez he, "did ve hear the joke on the band?" sez he. Ov coorse ivery wan sez "No." "Well," sez he, "after the band got through playin' in front ov the officers' quarters last noight a deputation, consistin' ov a knock-kneed corporal an' a cross-eyed clarinet player, goes up to the Gineril's tint an' asks fer to see him. The cheek ov thim, d'ye moind."

"Well, an' what do yez want?" sez the Gineril.

"We wuz playin' fer 'mess' to night, sor," sez the Corporal.

"Yes, oi know," sez the Gineril, "oi heerd yez."

"Well, sor," sez the Corporal, "we wuz thinkin' praps yez might want fer to treat the min, sor."

"God bless me sowl," sez the Gineril, "an' is thot what yez come fer. Oi heerd yez playin', but pon me sowl I thought ye'd come over here fer to apologize." Moind ye, sor, oi don't say the story's true, sor, only that's what Mac said, sor, an' Mac had a foine ear fer music.

On the 5th ov May Kurnel Straubenzie arroived at Fish Creek on board the steamer Northcote wid wan hundred min ov the Midland Battalion an' a Gatlin' gun in charge ov Captin Howard. The "gat" is a nice, pleasant koind ov a gun somethin' loike a hordy gurdy, only the music is kind ov different loike an' it spits out about 1,500 bullets a minnit, an' pon me sowl, sor, Captin Howard cud talk jist about as fast. The same day word has brought into camp that Kurnel Otter bad bin havin' a scrap wid Mister Poundmaker at Cut Knife Hill an' had lost 8 men an' there wuz 14 wounded. Things wuz gettin' serious loike, ye see, sor, an' the Gineril made up his mind to git a move on an' on the 6th ov May the Northcote wuz converted into a warship by barricadin' it wid bags of grain an' wood an' all that sorr ov thing so it cud float down the rivdr an' take a hand in the attack on Batoche that the Gineril proposed makin'.

We struck camp on the 7th ov May an' marched to Gabriel's Crossin'—named after Gabriel Dumont—where we camped for the noight. Early in the mornin' ov the the 8th we left the crossin' an' marched to a spot about eight moiles to the east an' jist a little south ov Batoche, an' we camped there fer the noight. This wuz a little trick ov the Gineril's, this marchin' out acrost the prary a bit an' thin comin' in from the other way fer to give some bad places on the regular trail the "go by," an' not give the rebels a chance fer to catch us in ambush like. See sor?

Some ov the "know alls" thought the Gineril wuz lost an' didn't know what he wuz doin', but he jist kept his ideas under his cap an' came out on top in the end. Oh, he wuz an' old campaigner, he wuz, an' always had cards up his sleeve loike, whin he needed thim.