

ed to be a party of friendly Saskatoon farmers, kindly coming out to meet them with spring waggons, fresh straw, and other luxuries for the sick. Clarke's Crossing was reached that night. Tents were pitched, beds were put up, and the wounded removed into these and into a vacant stone house, in order to obtain a comfortable night's rest. Here the scouts left them. Saskatoon was reached on the following day, and the wounded were handed over to the charge of Dr. Douglas, V. C. Nothing could exceed the kindness of the people of Saskatoon. They made mattresses, vacated their best rooms, and gave up everything for the comfort of the wounded soldiers. Here they were able to obtain those little luxuries of diet so necessary for the sick: eggs, milk, butter, rice, bread, tea.

Meanwhile Middleton and his men waited for the arrival of the *Northcote*. She was bringing with her two companies of the Midland Battalion, commissariat, and other supplies, Capt. Howard and the Gatling gun. The waiting was not a time of idleness; the picket duty was very heavy. They were in the enemy's country and knew not at what moment a surprise might be attempted. At last the *Northcote* arrived. She was hailed with delight and unloaded as fast as possible. Not the least of the articles she brought was a foot-ball. This was a never-ending source of delight to the troops, and a ludicrous sight it was to see the heavily booted and spurred scouts rushing frantically amongst their red-coated comrades in pursuit of the flying ball. The band of the 90th also added to the gaiety of the camp. Every night it played, and crowds gathered to listen. The weather was fine and the mails were regular. The food, too, was slightly improved. In addition to the eternal tea and hard tack there were now to be obtained bannocks, slap jacks, apple jack, so that on the whole affairs had taken a turn for the better.

The rest of the force had by this time crossed over and joined Middleton's division. The camp was large, and time was spent in throwing up entrenchments, unloading and barricading the *Northcote*, experimenting with the Gatling, etc.

On the 7th of May the advance was made for Batoche. The march lay through bushy country on the Batoche trail. It was an exciting march. The enemy was supposed to be at hand, and at any moment a volley might have been poured into the advancing columns. On the afternoon of the first day Gabriel's Crossing was reached, and the camp pitched half a mile from Dumont's house. Here again a strong picket was posted, a night attack being expected. On the following day a long detour was made to escape the rifle pits, which it was known had been formed on the trail in the region of Batoche. This brought them within four miles of the village. It was a beautiful country here, and there were seen lovely lakes, poplar in abundance covering an undulating country, and animal and vegetable life was seen on all sides. Here and there a rebel scout was discovered watching them from a distance. The rebels were close, their stronghold was known to be at hand, and everything was made ready. Pouches were filled with cartridges and ammunition was placed ready to hand. Long halts were made while plans were developed, and slowly the column neared Batoche.

It was a strange and solemn sight. The scouts scouring the country in front and flank, followed by the guns and ammunition, then the ambulance, and behind them a long string of waggons stretching far into the rear.

## BATOCHE.

At four o'clock in the morning the advance was sounded, and the troops advanced on the trail due west towards Batoche in the following order:—

Boulton's Scouts, 75 men.  
Gatling gun, commanded by Capt. Howard.  
Royal Grenadiers, 262, numbers one and two Companies leading.  
90th, of Winnipeg, 275.  
Midland Battalion, 116.  
"A" Battery, two guns, 95 men.  
French's Scouts, as flankers, 30 men.  
Hospital and ammunition waggons.

This was the critical time. Here the rebellion was to be stamped out. Here the mettle of our soldiers was to be put to the test, and this was no play work, as we already know. For four days that brave band ventured forth against their foe, and the foe was no despicable one. Hundreds of rifle pits lined and crossed the trail leading to the village. Hundreds of it not disciplined, yet fanatical, Indians had gathered here to make one last stand. For months the enemy had been busily engaged preparing for the assault. The time had come when either Middleton or Riel must gain a decisive victory.

About nine o'clock the first shot was fired. The column halted. The *Northcote*, which had been ordered to co-operate with the attacking forces, was heard far in the distance attacking and being attacked. Again the column advanced and neared the field of battle. This may be described in detail.

Batoche lay on the bank of the Saskatchewan. Between it and our approaching troops was ground of a very varying character; an open field, *coulees*, ravines, both thickly wooded, undulating country, very heavily covered in some places with dense underbrush, a few knolls, much sloping ground, with here and there thick woods.

The column, it will be remembered, had left the Clarke's Crossing trail, and had made a long detour in order to escape the rebel rifle

pits. They again met this trail, less than two thousand yards from the spot where it is crossed by the Humboldt trail. At the point of meeting stood a church and school house, of which we shall hear more. Near the point at which they joined the Clarke's Crossing trail were found two small sheds, and of these the enemy had already taken possession. Beyond the trail, to the left of our men, or towards the river, were thickly wooded banks; and nearer Batoche, several *coulees*, all containing rifle-pits, and all furnishing excellent shelter for the enemy. At the commencement of one of these *coulees*, and about a hundred and fifty yards from the church, was found a spring of water—a source of great relief during the next four days. Past the *coulees*, further still to the left, and nearer the village, came a large and open field, affording no cover for an attacking force. The whole ground on all sides, too, was thickly filled with rifle-pits—ranging in size from such as would hold but one or two men, up to those that could accommodate twelve or sixteen. The ground to the right was equally diversified, open spaces alternating with bluffs, with depressions and heights succeeding each other. On the opposite bank of the river came wooded sloping ground, with, behind this, thick woods.

The sheds first mentioned were found to be filled with half-breeds. These were rapidly shelled and the ensconced enemy as quickly scattered, and their shelter was soon a mass of flames. The firing now became very hot, but, without a stop, the advancing forces made their way swiftly over the ground towards the village of Batoche.

On this, the first day of the fighting about this spot, so steady and irresistible was the attack of our men, that the front line, with ease, were able to work their way—not, however, without loss—well past the church, an achievement not again made till the fourth and last day of the attack. Indeed, even the ammunition waggons were able to penetrate to within fifty yards of the church and school-house.

If an opinion may be hazarded accounting for the success of the first day's attack, I should be inclined to trace it to the fact that the majority of the rebels were probably engaged in a fierce attack upon the steamer *Northcote*. She, as has been remarked, was ordered to co-operate with the attacking force, but being discovered before that force had reached its anticipated destination, she drew upon herself the concentrated fire of the rebels surrounding Batoche. The severe attack upon her, however, was not destined to last long, and, at the first sound of Middleton's guns, the enemy scampered back to their rifle pits to be ready to oppose the newly arrived and now quickly oncoming troops.

The attack was commenced by the Gatling and the batteries. The first sheds were shelled and quickly emptied of the rebels. The houses then took fire from the shells and burned. The whole force now advanced in the direction of the village, till the Gatling came to within a hundred yards of the church. Some priests opened the door and waved a handkerchief. Fifty rounds were poured into the school-house at a high elevation. No response was made. General Middleton rode up and found five priests and six men ensconced in the church for safety against the Indians. The Quebec Battery was ordered up and commenced shelling the houses on both sides of the river. Women and children first, and the men afterwards, were seen running away. Suddenly a band of rebels rose from the ravine in our very faces and opened fire. The guns and the Gatling were ordered to the rear. But Howard, the American who was handling it, gallantly held fast, pouring in shots and saving many lives, perhaps the guns as well. In the meantime Companies 1 and 2 of the Grenadiers advanced into the bush in the rear of the school-house and on the right centre, where we first felt the fire from the rebels pits. Numerous efforts were made to turn our left flank by the rebels in the bush underneath the high river bank, and on the slope and by those across the stream. All were foiled by the Gatling, which did splendid work. The Martini-Henry sharpshooters of the 90th, and some dismounted men of A Battery lay down and fired over the crest of the ridge. The Winnipeg Field Battery was drawn up in the rear of our right, and the 90th deployed to protect the right centre, which was threatened, and to support the left and left centre, where the heaviest firing occurred. The Gatling, having silenced the fire on the left of the ravine, was brought to the rear of the left centre, but fired only a little. We were soon surrounded by fires, and our skirmishers had to retreat slightly. The wounded had been placed in the church, but as it was in good range and the fire seemed threatening them, they were removed further to the rear, as were ammunition waggons, over which bullets constantly whistled. About noon, there was heavy firing from our left flank and on the rear of the right flank, while the fire was constant on the left centre and the centre, which created the idea that we were being surrounded. But the Winnipeg Battery put four shells to the front with good effect, while the attack on the right was repelled, if seriously intended. On our left flank, the rebels took advantage of another ravine and fired up it so hotly that the scouts and a detachment of A Battery had to retire, leaving behind them one killed and two wounded. (The fire slackened until two o'clock, when half the Midland Battalion went into the ravine last mentioned, with a stretcher in charge of Dr. Codd, of Winnipeg, to drag off Phillips' body. The firing was very hot, but no one was hit.)

Capt. French also bravely rescued Cook, one of his men, who had been wounded and left behind. Another unsuccessful attempt by the Midland Battalion to clear the *coulee* closed the day's fighting. The casualties were as follows:

Killed—Gunner Wm. Phillips, "A" Battery. Wounded—Gunner T. J. Stout, "A" Battery, ribs smashed by the wheels of a gun carriage; Driver Nap. Charpentier, "A" Battery, shot in the leg; Gunner Twohey, "A" Battery, shot in the leg; Capt. Mason, Grenadiers, flesh wound in the side; Gunner Fairbanks, "A" Battery, shot in the thigh; Cook, French's scout, shot in the leg; Curley Allen, of the same corps, shot in the arm.

That night, in the corral, was one to be long remembered. The corral was a large one. All the troops, of course, withdrew into it for the night. All round the edges were placed the waggons, the guns facing the enemy, with here and there a little earth thrown up, as a slight protection against the bullets. To the rear was a small pond—the only water they had to drink, and over this was placed a guard. Near this, too, was pitched the tent, to accommodate the poor fellows who had been shot down during the day's encounter. Not a light was allowed. Even the solitary candle which dimly glimmered in the hospital tent, shedding its fitful light on the pale and ghastly faces of the suffering wounded men, was carefully shaded, that not a single mark might exist for the ever watchful rebels. Even the General in command retired that night in a darkened tent. No one knew how close the enemy might not be; no one knew whether or not that enemy, covered by the stillness and darkness of the prairie night, might not stealthily surround this small band; no one knew whether he would see the next day's sun. The foe was in force, and they were determined. They had fought well all that day, undaunted by the shells and only temporarily cowed by the Gatling. The slow and orderly retreat of our men, covered though it was skilfully and well by the fearless ranks of skirmishers, was closely followed with exulting and yelling Indians. Till far into the night bullets fell thickly in the very corral itself. Who might next be hit, whether one's self or one's comrade, was a matter for fate. An uneasy feeling prevailed. Every now and again, crash would come a ball against the protecting wagon. Whether the next would fly with a truer aim only Providence could tell. Some, before lying down to snatch such sleep as they could, wrote a few last words to those at home, who perchance dreamed little of the weird surroundings of those at the front. And weird, indeed, those surroundings were. No moon lit up the sleeping host. The dark and leafless branches of the neighbouring trees gave no sign of protection. Behind them might there not lurk the bloodthirsty and relentless rebel? The silence, which fell like some ominous spectre enshrouding the small army with no sheltering wing, was broken here and there by the sharp and startling challenges of the wakeful sentry. Soon, however, sleep came to the tired warriors. They had fought hard. Since four that morning they had been on the alert. No luxurious food had nourished their weary frames. No comfortable meal had warmed them at the close of the long and arduous day. A few biscuits, perhaps, and a draught of water from the solitary pond was all that could be obtained. No cheerful fire by which to sit and talk of the dangers and hardships of the day was allowed. Even the comforting pipe was lighted with caution or altogether forgone. What was most to be feared was a sudden night attack. In the corral were a large number of cattle which had been brought from Fish Creek, in addition to all the team and troop horses. A stampede amongst these would have been terrific. We know from the accounts of that sad battle of Tamai, in Egypt, how fearful are the effects of stampeding animals about a camp. Had the rebels known their power and our weakness, it is a question whether they would not have attempted a rush through the outlying pickets into the corral. What the results of such an on-rush would have been it is difficult to surmise; that it would have been disastrous is probable.

Perhaps the most onerous duty to be performed on that strange night was that of the pickets.

On Sunday morning the men stood to their arms at four o'clock, stiff and sore from the fatigues of the previous day, want of sleep and cold. Scouts were ordered out to feel the position of the enemy. This accomplished, the artillery advanced and opened fire on the ravines where the fighting was done on Saturday. The rebels were slow in answering our fire, and the guns succeeded in demolishing a number of huts along the river. No sooner, however, had the troops formed up for a dash on the houses behind the bluffs than the enemy's fire grew so hot that our men were obliged to fall back again. No further attempt at a general advance was made during the day. The remainder of the time was taken up in alternate cannonading and skirmishing—the latter only serving to show the determination of the enemy to stubbornly contest the slightest advance. At six in the evening the rebels had ceased to reply to our artillery fire. As the shadows lengthened the dead of the previous day's fight were consigned to their last resting place.

We have before this mentioned the impressive church services held now and again during the progress of the campaign. Perhaps the most impressive of these was the funeral service, conducted by the Rev. C. Gordon, on that Sunday evening, the second day of Batoche. It is doubtful if ever in the history of war this service has been paralleled. It may almost be said to have been conducted under fire. It was listened to by men who had but a few minutes since been in the thick of battle. An attack was, during its whole course, being carried on within a few yards of the reader and his hearers. Every moment this attack and defence was becoming hotter, and only with difficulty were the men drawn up before the preacher pre-

vented from rushing off to join their fellows in the field. The case stood thus: Towards the close of evening, some of the troops were in the corral, the remainder retiring for the night from the scene of conflict. The men in the corral were called together to hear divine service. But as usually happened towards the time of sun-set, the rebels, seeing the disadvantages under which our men suffered by the adverse rays of light, made it their custom to renew the attack with fury. This they did on this eventful evening at the very moment when quietly in the corral was going on that solemn prayer and praise. Volley followed volley. The noise of the Sniders and of the repeaters and fowling-pieces increased every moment. Whether our men were being hard pressed or whether they were driving the Indians before them, those in the camp could not tell, and an invincible desire seized them to join in the fray. Seeing this the officiating chaplain brought the service to a close, and his listeners sallied forth to take their places at the side of their fighting comrades.

Monday followed with the same wearisome tactics that characterized Sunday; no advantage seemed to be gained, except that the 90th forced their advance as far as the church, and the Midland, under Colonel Williams, advanced far enough along the river bank on the left to allow two guns of the Winnipeg Battery to throw a few shells into Batoche, a mile or so distant. Again the men lay down, and fought, being peppered at all the while, and presenting an open target for the rebels. The coolness and indifference of our men was most praiseworthy. Their self-restraint, under the unerring fire of the enemy, is the surest evidence of the truest discipline in the men. Their one desire was to charge, and the word to charge would not come, so they did their duty as it was given them to do, but with a mental resentment at being made a target for bullets with no means of retaliation. Perhaps it was as well, for their passive submission to the state of affairs goaded the men into fierceness, and when the moment came each man was possessed with the ferocity of rage and revenge.

We come now to the famous and already historical charge—Tuesday's dash that won Batoche and crushed the enemy. Unfortunately, about this decisive manoeuvre of the fourth day, it is extremely difficult to obtain such positive, detailed and accurate information as one could wish. Each person consulted—and pains have been taken to consult many men of different regiments and ranks, and men widely separated from each other in the line of advance—each person consulted has been able, to a great extent, to give only a partial and incomplete story of the movement. He has seen only that part that lay within the range of his own experience, and knows only indistinctly of what was done beyond. And this is to be expected. The distance traversed was long; the line far extended; the ground variable. Here was a steep bank that shut out of view all beyond it. There was a series of *coulees* and bluffs which completely obscured all who neared them. Every man, too, had quite enough to do in looking straight before him; so that it is natural to expect that a succinct and panoramic account of the whole charge is a thing not easy to obtain.

It is natural, also, to expect that much difference of opinion should exist as to the parts played by the different corps engaged. That controversy has raged on this point is a fact not to be ignored. Some have extolled one commander or one regiment, others another. Some maintain that such and such a corps bore the brunt of the fight, others think this enviable post must be assigned to quite a different one. But what to us is of most importance is to know that all who were engaged fulfilled to the utmost all that was expected of them—nay, fulfilled much more. The relative positions of the men were obtained by them purely by chance, and if certain companies found before them a greater number of rifle pits, or encountered a more obstinate resistance than others, the fact is not to be chosen as a peg upon which to hang either excessive laudation of their own bravery or disparaging comments on that of their less favoured comrades.

Let us here try to gain a clear idea of the respective positions held by the different corps engaged in the charge?

Before detailing this, however, let us regard for a moment the feelings of the men who had, for three days, sat down before Batoche.

That they were in high spirits could hardly be asserted of them. No lasting impression had been made upon the enemy. Each day brought the same routine of duties: rising at dawn, some to intrench the camp, some to engage in useless, and seemingly resultless, attacks upon the rifle-pits. Each morning a line of skirmishers advanced without the corral and fired unceasingly at the rebels. Each night they returned, sometimes hotly followed by the foe, to the cheerless, and by no means impregnable, zariba. The same ground was gone over day after day; the same rebels, in the same rifle-pits, were pelted at for hours, and no appreciable advantage was gained. To-day the church and school-house were captured; to-morrow they were lost. It was truly disheartening work. Each day, too, men fell and were carried away to the hospital tent, and there seemed no way of avenging them. And the nights were as unsatisfactory as the days. From sunset to sunrise out there in the pitch darkness, with no sound to relieve the weird silence, stood the picket. A responsible post was this. Alone, or almost alone, vigilantly to and fro marched the sentry. At any moment might there not rush forward the whole rebel force? At any moment might there not rise on the still night air that horrible Indian yell? What hindered a sudden night attack? A responsible