

Some Personal
Recollections

OF THE

REBELLION OF
1837 IN
CANADA.

✻ BY ✻

SYDNEY BELLINGHAM, Esq.

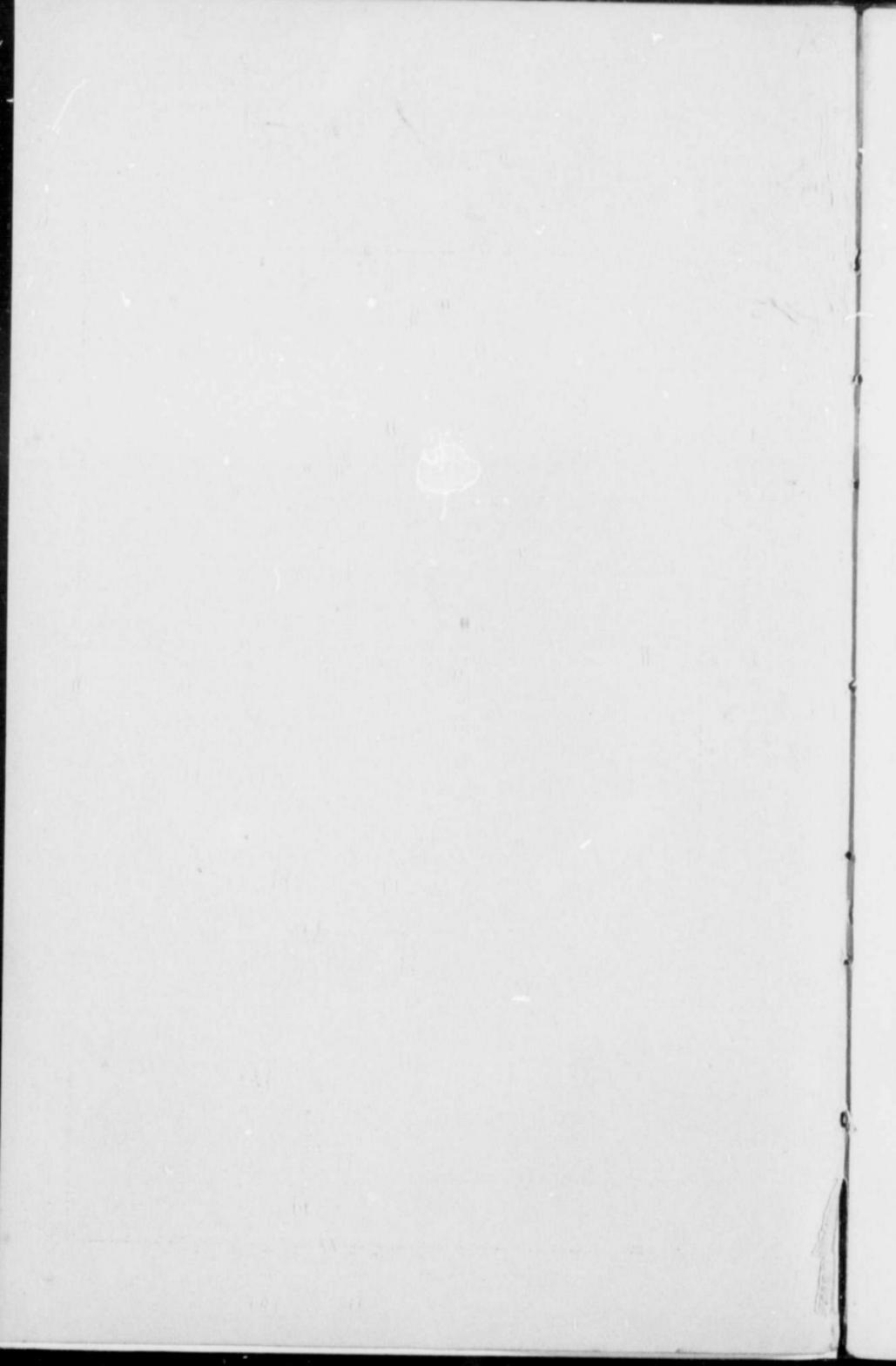


Dublin :

Printed by BROWNE & NOLAN, LTD.,

NASSAU STREET.

1902.



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PREFACE.

THE following interesting details concerning the Canadian Rebellion in 1837 were found amongst my uncle's papers after his death. His intention had evidently been to publish them, so that I felt it a duty incumbent on me, as his Executor, to follow out his wishes. In the later years of his life he had frequently spoken of this Rebellion and the part he had taken in it, and used to relate the details with great interest. He emigrated to Canada early in the nineteenth century, settled there, and for fifty years represented the District of Argenteuil in the Canadian Parliament. The last Twenty-five years of his life were spent in his own house in the village of Castlebellingham close to the family seat, in which place he died after a brief illness in March, 1900, in the ninety-third year of his age.

HENRY BELLINGHAM, BART.

CASTLE BELLINGHAM,

December, 1901.

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SOME PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

OF THE

REBELLION OF 1837 IN CANADA.

BY

SYDNEY ROBERT BELLINGHAM.

For some fifty years Member of the Canadian Parliament.

Introductory—Arrest of Demeray and Davignon—Defeat of the Cavalry under Sharpe—The Prisoners Rescued near Longueuil by the Rebels—Mr. Bellingham Commissioned as the Magistrate—He consents to carry Despatches—Major Reid with Troops ordered to Longueuil to Rescue the Cavalry—Colonel Wetherall with Troops ordered to Chambly, afterwards to St. Charles—Scenes on the Way—The Battle Won—Victorious Return to St. Hilaire, Chambly, St. Johns and Laprairie—Arrive at Montreal on the 29th November, 1837.

THE House of Assembly at Quebec had again and again refused to pass the Supplies. The speeches both inside and outside of the House, and the inflammatory articles in the newspapers had excited the youth on both sides. The stormy petrels of revolution were on the wing, and a conflict of nationalities was in the air. The sons of the men who fought at Waterloo and at Trafalgar looked with scorn and contempt at the presumption of the spoiled children of French Canada and French nationality, who evinced a desire to dictate to the British.

Fortunately for all classes the Clergy of the Catholic Church, far from leading and inflaming the revolt, urged their flocks to refrain from a fruitless conflict, and they were aided by many honourable, honest-minded and well-educated French Canadians, settled at various points in Lower Canada.

Gentlemen of the position of Paul Lacroix, Jean D. Lacroix, Olivier Berthelet, Jules Quesnel, and others in Montreal, and Gabriel Marchand at St. Johns, Colonel de Salaberry at Chambly, Colonel de Rouville at St. Hilaire, and others throughout the

country, raised their voices, urged their influence and protested against the insanity of an appeal to force which, they foresaw, would invite defeat, or if successful would lead to absorption by the United States.

An enterprising hardware dealer, Thomas Storrow Brown, of American birth, a pronounced Papineauite, induced the pugnacious French-Canadian youth to assemble in a field, east of St. Denis street, now a part of Sherbrooke street, where an incipient military organization developed itself. Some five hundred assembled there, and gave coherence to the conspirators. The hot-blooded youth on the British side provoked collisions and several duels followed.

An ardent Britisher, James Holmes, of the firm of Macdonnell, Holmes and Co., organized a band of a dozen youths, whose mission was to meet an equal number of French-Canadian youths. Several duels followed, but as the youth on both sides were new to the work of duelling, few casualties occurred.

The antagonism on both sides found vent when the Papineau party, now merged in the revolutionary party, held a meeting, on November 6th, 1837, in Boulet's Yard, St. James street, near McGill street, and in rear of Bonacina's tavern on Notre Dame street. Here violent harangues were addressed by party leaders to over fifteen hundred men, who were urged to take possession of the city, and to "détruire les Ecosais—les Anglais—la Bureaucratie—et tous les méchants ennemis de notre pays." After being thus goaded on to attack the British, on the gate of the yard being opened the patriots rushed into the street, armed with bludgeons of every description. They had all their own way till they reached the corner of St. Francois Xavier and St. James streets. Here the loyalists mustered a couple of dozen men, and showed fight, but they were outnumbered and had to retreat to the Place d'Armes where they were joined by a sufficient number to give battle. Here a mortal combat took place. Sticks rattled against each other, and the same sticks rattled on the heads of the brave ones on both sides. Again the English had to give way, being only a few compared with the hundreds who gloried in being Patriots. They were driven to the corner of Place d'Armes, Little St. Joseph and Notre Dame streets. Here again they gave battle, and as they were closely hemmed together it was impossible for the patriots to wade through them. Here I witnessed the dogged pluck of the British. They fought desperately and conquered. Deaf Burke, the English pugilist, was mounted here on a white horse. He rode furiously into the patriot crowd. I saw him catch one of them by the neck and with his powerful arm fling him on the pommel of his saddle, and ride through the crowd with his growling captive, defying a recapture.

Soon after this engagement the loyalists mustered in great numbers and took possession of the city. The troops were called

out, but they were allowed to *stand at ease* as the loyalists had secured peace for the moment.

I resided at the time in one of Jacob DeWitt's houses on St. James street. After the defeat of the rebels on the Place d'Armes I returned to my house, and was soon afterwards attracted to a window by a tumult. There was a rush, a brief struggle, and the loyalists were again victorious.

I was surprised, afterwards, to behold Mr. Whitlaw, of Chenneville street, a steady going, middle-aged Scotchman, flourishing an axe-handle and leading a band of active youths to meet another gang of patriots. Under him the loyalists secured another victory.

Meetings to support the Papineau party and to denounce the Government were speedily organized throughout the district of Montreal. The districts of Quebec and of Three Rivers, apart from the chief towns, maintained an attitude of reserve and watchfulness.

About this time seven of the Montreal Cavalry, under Captain M. E. David, and Captain Glasgow, with a six-pounder field-piece and five artillery men, were ordered to St. Johns, by way of Laprairie, where they remained for several days, with their horses saddled night and day, and the field-piece kept always in readiness for immediate use the moment it was required. A squad was repeatedly called out to patrol or to satisfy rumours, but never met the enemy. On one of the evenings Captain Glasgow with his five artillery men, Captain David with four of his troopers, all with side arms only, crossed over the St. Johns bridge to St. Athanase, to reconnoitre, and on landing met a large crowd apparently led by Demeray and Davignon, two violent Papineau partisans. After riding up and down the village, they were followed and almost hemmed in by an excited and threatening crowd, yelling: "Hourra pour les patriotes; hourra pour Papineau. A bas les Anglais; à bas les bureaucrates!" As no notice was taken of their yells, they yelled louder and louder—flourishing a few sticks without even attempting to strike the little army marching through the village. Finally the squad was allowed to re-cross the bridge without actual molestation, but when all were safely landed at St. Johns, the would-be patriots brought an old cannon, used for announcing the arrival or departure of the steamers plying between St. Johns, Plattsburg, Burlington and Whitehall. It was loaded with sufficient powder and old spikes to burst it, but the cannon proved its strength by forcing its charge across the bridge, destroying a small part of the railing and doing no other damage. This provoked Captain Glasgow. He ordered out his field-piece. In ten or twelve minutes it was ready for action. It was then taken on the bridge, and a shot from it went to St. Athanase, quickly followed by Captain Glasgow and his squad, but on arriving at St. Athanase there was no Demeray, no Davignon, no patriots. So the squad

returned again in safety to St. Johns, leaving the runaways to glory in their escape from possible death.

Speakers at meetings in the district of Montreal allowed themselves a license of speech which, if tolerated, must have denuded the Government of all authority. Two gentlemen at St. Athanase, Demeray and Davignon, made themselves so obnoxious that the authorities in Montreal resolved to arrest them on a charge of treason. Warrants were issued for their arrest but no constable could be found to execute them, hence twelve of the Montreal Cavalry, under the command of Sergeant William Sharpe, were entrusted with the warrants, and they at once proceeded to St. Athanase, made the arrests and left immediately to bring their prisoners to Montreal. Unfortunately they attempted to return by Chambly and Longueuil, instead of by St. Johns and Laprairie.

Sergeant Sharpe, formerly of the 14th Dragoons, took the lead, followed by his troopers with the prisoners. He had all the pluck of a brave soldier. He was a great favourite with the admirers of a good horse, especially a race horse, as he was a first-class and a successful jockey, and he owned a well-known livery stable in Montreal.

The convoy proceeded with slight interruption till they were within a few miles of Longueuil, where their progress was impeded by a barricade across the road, slightly in advance of a stone house. A large number of rebels were ensconced both in rear of the house and inside of it. Sharpe made a halt, ordered his troopers to keep their eyes on the prisoners and to fire on the rebels whenever they showed their faces. The troopers had very seldom occasion to fire, because the enemy kept themselves carefully sheltered, while the Cavalry were exposed to a galling fire. They were ordered to ride up to the barricade, with the hope of finding some of the rebels behind it, but they were doomed to disappointment. Here shots were fired, from the windows of the stone house, wounding several of the troopers. After Sharpe had received a severe wound he commanded his men to abandon the prisoners and break down sufficient of the barricade to secure an exit. It was useless to hold out any longer against sheltered and overwhelming numbers. The prisoners fell into the hands of their friends and of their captors, and it was said they were awarded a grand glorification. The brave Cavalry men had to cry out *saute qui peut*, and make their way with all speed through the fields to St. Lamberts, as it was risky to continue on the Longueuil road.

Defeat, loss of prisoners, jaded horses, worn out and disabled men, accompanied the gallant fellows to St. Lambert's, where they succeeded in crossing the St. Lawrence to Montreal, and arrived there shortly after a military force had been ordered, by way of Longueuil, to their aid.

On the 14th November, 1837, I was summoned by the Attorney-

General, Charles R. Ogden, to attend at his office. When I appeared he informed me that, having been advised that a body of armed rebels had erected defences on the causeway near Longueuil, he ordered me, as the magistrate, to be ready early next morning to join a military force and proceed to Longueuil. At the appointed time I found myself on the horse-ferry boat at the foot of Current St. Mary. The military consisted of two companies of the 32nd Regiment, under a staid old soldier, Major Reid. The other officers I knew were Captain Markham, who died a general in the Crimea, Captain Englis, subsequently Sir John, an Indian military hero, and Captain Lysons, now high up in the military hierarchy as Lieutenant-General Lysons, and Bobby Weir who was subsequently murdered.

We landed at Longueuil about 9 a.m. on the 15th. The troops piled arms. Major Reid told me he should not leave the ferry but await there the arrival of the prisoners. I mounted my horse, and rode in the direction of Chambly.

I saw at a house I passed that the men had not gone to work, and I interrogated one man who was loading a fowling-piece. He said: "On va arrêter les carabiniers, et on va prendre les prisonniers." As I saw they were charging their guns with ball, I knew they meant mischief. I rode on, and after I had proceeded over a mile I saw a barricade on the causeway, near a stone house, and, at least, two hundred men moving about. I turned my horse and rode back to the ferry, where I reported the facts to Major Reid, and I asked, as the magistrate in charge of the soldiers, to let me take one company to clear away the rebels from the barricade, as otherwise the prisoners must be rescued and the escort killed or wounded. Major Reid replied that he would not stir from the ferry, where he would await the escort, but I thought he was wrong. I told him that a friend of mine, named Macdonald, occupied a farm, half a mile below Longueuil, on the river bank, and that I would ride to his place and request him to intercept the escort before it reached the barricade, and warn it to go across the country to the Longueuil ferry.

I returned in all haste to the ferry-boat to find it had left the wharf, but it returned for me, and when I got on board I found two of the escort, who had escaped from the rebels. I then saw that Sharpe had a severe wound, and that his favorite blood mare had two balls in her and was bleeding from the wounds. When we reached Montreal we were told that the remainder of the escort had arrived.

On the morning of the 18th, I was again summoned by Attorney-General Ogden. He informed me that a military force would be sent to Chambly, along the Longueuil road, on the following morning to destroy the barricade and arrest any one who resisted, and that I was to serve as the Magistrate.

The force, under the command of Colonel Wetherall, consisted

of three companies of the 1st Royals, one company of the 66th Regiment, and a few Montreal volunteers. Deaf Burke was one of them.

We moved forward unmolested till we entered the woods north of Chambly, where mounted and unmounted rebel scouts fired a few shots. The result of the encounter was the flight of the rebels, who left several horses as prizes. I had, on that occasion, as a fellow Magistrate, Pierre Edouard Leclere. At Chambly, Deaf Burke, the pugilist, felt that he was of no further use, and expressed a wish to return to Montreal. He was a pet of the soldiers. My services as Magistrate closed with the arrival of the troops at Chambly; and as the Government had not provided for my safe return, I had to consider my position and route home, through a decidedly hostile country. To add to my embarrassments, Deaf Burke attached himself to my side and implored me to assist him. Fortunately I secured one of the captured nags, on which I mounted him. The other volunteers remained at Chambly to await further orders. I resolved to return by a road more to the west, being familiar with the line of country.

P. E. Leclere joined our party, and all being well armed, we proceeded a couple of miles on our road, when Leclere called a halt and loudly rapped at the door of a good-sized substantial dwelling. A window on the second flat was opened, a head protruded, and an elderly man called out in French that he would surrender. The noise of our sabres clicking made him imagine that a military guard had come to arrest him. Leclere reassured him. He told him he had come to leave his arms and war trappings in his house.

Deaf Burke was an attentive spectator of the scene. The sky was dark, the sun long gone down, yet, notwithstanding his deafness, he interpreted the proceedings to me; he and I he observed, having no friends in the country with whom we could leave our arms or remain in safety, should forthwith make the best of our way back to Montreal.

Horses are sure-footed during the darkest night, and, although Deaf Burke was not as good a horseman as a prizefighter, and more than once came to grief, yet before morning we reached the margin of the St. Lawrence, above St. Helen Island, where we found means of crossing.

On the 19th, just after my return from Chambly, I was again summoned by the Attorney-General Ogden. He informed me that he would confide to my care a despatch to Colonel Wetherall, who was in command at Chambly; that I was to leave at once and attach myself to the force under the Colonel as the Magistrate in charge of the military; that I should not have any colleague, as the Magistrates at Chambly were indisposed. One of them, indeed, Colonel de Salaberry, was confined to his room.

I embarked for my journey on board the ferry-boat at the foot

of Current St. Mary. Ice was floating in the river, and when we reached the Longueuil shore we saw that the wharf had been carried away by the ice. I had no alternative but to put my saddle and bridle into a canoe, tumble my horse into the river, and make for the shore. On arriving I gave my horse a drink of warm oatmeal and water flavored with half a pint of gin. The Chambly road at this season was coated with mud six inches deep, in places slightly frozen, and with lots of rough round stones to keep one on the alert. I travelled without any serious interruption. I rode into the fort of Chambly, tired, dirty, and hungry. I saw Captain Daveny at a window peeling potatoes, and he called me in, promising me food. I first proceeded to deliver my despatch to Colonel Wetherall, and then returned to the mess-room of the Royals to feed; but I had not been a quarter of an hour at table when the bugle sounded to turn out. I enquired the cause. Daveny replied: "The cause, my boy, is the despatch you have just brought."

I at once joined Colonel Wetherall.

Captain Glasgow and Captain David, with their men, had been ordered from St. Johns to Chambly, where they remained for a couple of weeks waiting further orders. On Colonel Wetherall's arrival at Chambly, Captain Glasgow and Captain David, with their men and the field piece, were ordered by the Montreal authorities to Colonel Wetherall's command. This gave an additional force to the Colonel. It consisted of Captain Glasgow, five Artillery men with a six-pounder field-piece; Captain M. E. David, Lieutenant Samuel E. David, with six Montreal Cavalry troopers; Thomas Walter Jones, M.D.; James Macdonald, merchant, St. Johns; Charles Ermatinger, son of the late Sheriff of Montreal, afterwards a lieutenant in the same troop; George Pyke, deputy prothonotary; Edward Finlay, a clerk in the Bank of Montreal, and John Lovell, publisher.

Major Ward had been for weeks in Chambly, in command of two companies of the Royals, and one company of the 32nd Regiment, to protect the Loyalists and the Government property.

About 7 p.m. on the 19th, when darkness covered the earth, Colonel Wetherall commenced his march up the Richelieu with 120 bayonets. After proceeding about a mile over a muddy road, through rain and sleet, a halt was ordered at a ferry where two scows were found, into which as many soldiers were put as the scows could carry. They were ferried over to the opposite shore of the Richelieu, and landed at the foot of a precipitous ascent, almost knee deep with sticky mud.

While the soldiers were being ferried over, rockets were sent up by the rebels, from both sides of the river, a proof that they were on the alert.

About 10 p.m., all the soldiers, the horses, and the field-piece were landed, and the hardship of mounting the precipice

commenced. Two horses and a number of men were put to drag up the field-piece, and it was only by the dint of determined perseverance that they were successful in reaching the main road.

Colonel Wetherall then informed me that he must have a horse for his trumpeter, as he ought to be alongside of him. I proceeded to the nearest house. Its occupant was a surly-tempered fellow, who seemed to wish me and all the troops at perdition, but he became mollified and smiling when I told him that I must have a horse, and all I wanted to know was his price. He replied £40. On seeing the horse, I gave him a draft on the Government for £40. I then brought the horse to the Colonel who thereon mounted his trumpeter.

Here all were formed into line of marching order. Rain turned into sleet, making the tenacious clay roads execrable and almost impassable. The soldiers' clothes were stiffened with ice, so that they could merely creep over the partially frozen road and mud holes, with great fatigue. They held on, nevertheless, with indomitable hardihood and British pluck.

The night was dismally dark, so dark that the advanced guard had to carry lanterns, a rare occurrence in war time.

The tenacity of the clay was such that in several instances soldiers in heavy marching order could not withdraw their feet from the partially frozen mud. I obtained a few carts, as we moved on, to relieve the willing but distressed men.

We marched gloomily and in silence. The night was cold but calm. We reached Point Olivier about three o'clock in the morning. Here Colonel Wetherall said to me: "I think I must give the troops a rest. What do you say?" I replied: "I should have preferred to remain in the Chambly barracks until morning, but under existing circumstances we should house ourselves or the troops will be knocked up." We were near a large stone mansion. I heard afterwards that Mr. Malhiot was the owner. I got down from my horse, and knocked loudly at the door. No reply. I called to a couple of sergeants to force the side window, to get into the passage and open the hall door. They did so. The house was warm and comfortable, and from the number of caps and coats hanging in the passage, I knew that the dwelling was occupied.

After billeting the men in the village in warm houses, and placing guards and patrols, Colonel Wetherall, Captain Glasgow, and the other officers, and five Artillery men, got quarters in Mr. Malhiot's fine house, where they were favored with refreshments and comfortable beds.

Captain David and Trooper Lovell volunteered as a patrol, riding through iced slush and mud, six to eight inches deep while drenching sleet helped to form icicles on their clothing. Fortunately, during their patrol, they had to pass Colonel Wetherall's head quarters. He was standing on the verandah and called to

know who was passing. David answered: "Captain David and Trooper Lovell." The Colonel said: "David, you have a bad night and wretched roads. You may retire. I have guards and patrols so placed as to prevent a surprise." The Colonel was too anxious about the safety of his soldiers to take either rest or sleep. He was always on the *qui vive*.

All needful precautions having been taken, I rode on to the outposts. I was clothed in a suit of Canadian homespun cloth. I had no side arms or trappings. I resolved, therefore, to quarter myself on the enemy. I was on the road to St. Hilaire. I discovered a house with a light burning. The inmates must have assumed that I belonged to the rebel party, and was making my escape; for they gave me a good supper and were equally generous to my horse. I slept till seven in the morning, when my host rushed into the room warning me to remain quiet and conceal myself because the troops, he said, were passing, and I must therefore be on my guard. I replied that I should remain until the troops were out of sight, that meanwhile I should thank him to prepare my breakfast, and when I had eaten it I would mount my horse and ride after the troops to ascertain their intentions. An hour subsequently I bid my host farewell. He declined any remuneration. I cantered after the troops, and much did the officers marvel what had been my fate as they could not account for my disappearance the previous night.

We arrived at St. Hilaire about 11 a.m. on the 20th. Colonel Wetherall, myself, the officers, Captain David and his troopers were cordially invited to the splendid residence of the Seigneur, Colonel de Rouville, a venerable gentleman of the old school, wearing a frilled shirt and ivory miniatures in a conspicuous place. He was a model of hospitality. He lived near the focus of the insurrection, on the margin of the River Richelieu.

We enjoyed the leisure, the warmth, and the well supplied tables, although our enemies kept up a desultory and harmless fusilade from the woods and high ground in the rear. Why they did not attack our small force is a mystery.

Towards evening, while in the midst of our fun, Colonel Wetherall received a despatch that Colonel Gore, with the troops under him, had left Sorel, in order to effect a combined movement with Colonel Wetherall; that they had encountered the rebels under Dr. Wolfred Nelson, and were repulsed, losing their gun and sustaining other serious casualties.

The question Colonel Wetherall had to decide, on receipt of this news, was a momentous one. He was in the heart of the enemy's country. The co-operating force had been driven back, and if he advanced on St. Charles and failed, none of his small force could escape, as his repulse would be a signal for the entire country to rise and overwhelm his 120 men. He had fears if he drew upon the small force at Chambly, under Major Ward, con-

sisting of two companies of the Royals and one company of the 32nd Regiment, that he would only have 300 men to face at least 1,500 armed French-Canadians, who were assembled behind well piled timber and frozen clay walls, confronting him.

Colonel Wetherall sent for me to explain his position, and having done so, he added: "I have no right, Mr. Bellingham, to ask you to do me the service I require; but, having failed elsewhere, I turn to you and want to know whether you will carry a despatch to Chambly and bring on the troops quartered there, under Major Ward, as I cannot venture to attack St. Charles without their assistance."

I accepted the mission. The night was dark; the hour past midnight, and the mud on the road was partially frozen.

A guide was engaged at a cost of £20.

John Lovell had just returned, with Trooper Ermatinger, from a patrol of five or six miles to the environs of St. Charles, without the slightest interruption on the way. Arriving near St. Charles they witnessed a few of the movements of the insurgents. The deluded men were jolly and hilarious—singing, shouting, playing cards, and smoking. They were both in front and behind their breastworks. The night was cold. Trooper Lovell being without a change of clothing of any kind for over three weeks, and his bare knees exposed to the cold and to his stirrup-leather, was entitled to rest; but on being told that his fellow troopers refused to accompany me—not even one of them having offered his services—he immediately volunteered to assume the risk, provided he could get a pair of drawers, a pair of socks, and a good horse. The truly estimable Colonel de Rouville gave Mr. Lovell a pair of his own drawers and socks. I ordered a horse for him. Colonel Wetherall then asked Mr. Lovell to mention a sum of money as his reward. Mr. Lovell refused to accept any other compensation than the honour of going with me.

Had we been seeking a money reward for our services, we could have demanded and received, from Colonel Wetherall, an order on the British Government to pay us £500 sterling each a year, during our natural lives. We did not then, nor have we since, received the slightest remuneration, in any shape or form, in the way of compensation.

We had soon started on our hazardous venture. We left at one a.m. on the 21st.

I left my own horse behind and mounted a powerful sixteen-hand hunter, belonging to Thomas Walter Jones, M.D., one of the troopers.

Lights were placed high in the De Rouville mansion, so that if we were attacked and driven back, we might know where to find shelter.

I urged the importance of our mission on my companion. We agreed that if either of us fell on the way, the other was to ride on to the ferry, if possible.

Our guide rode on, and gave us enough to do to follow him. He had a good horse, used to the roads, upon which our horses stumbled now and then. Mr. Lovell was thrown over his horse's head twice, but always held his bridle reins and in a moment was in his saddle.

We reached Point Olivier ferry about four o'clock, a.m. Here our guide left us, on receiving from me an order for £20 on the Government.

Knowing the place we proceeded at once to the ferry, but unfortunately there were no oars in the scow. I took Mr. Lovell's horse while he went to wake up the ferryman. After rapping, he was asked: "Qui est là?" Mr. Lovell answered: "Un ami. Dépêchez-vous." On the door being opened, Mr. Lovell dropped one of his feet inside the threshold, fearing that the door might be closed against him. He was right. The ferryman, on seeing Mr. Lovell, tried to shut the door, saying: "Vous, vous êtes un bureaucrate." Mr. Lovell said to him: "N'importe, dépêchez-vous. Je désire, immédiatement, traverser. L'eau est traversable." He hesitated, the rebel patrol was in the next house taking it easy. Mr. Lovell had to threaten, and on opening his coat he displayed a pair of horse pistols. This secured the ferryman for the moment. He said the oars were under the scow, and proceeded to the ferry, under close *surveillance*, till both reached the scow. On seeing me with the horses he started, and after looking under the scow for the oars, without finding them, he said they were in the barn, and that he would get them there. I still held the horses. Mr. Lovell, fearing treachery, ran on the east side to the upper end of the barn, while the ferryman went up on the west side, continually looking back at me. The moment he supposed his way clear, he made for the rebel patrol house, and in doing so he almost threw himself into Mr. Lovell's arms. As Mr. Lovell stood before him with a brace of horse pistols in his hands, the ferryman staggered backwards. He fell on his back. In a moment Mr. Lovell had his foot on the ferryman's chest and a cocked pistol at his mouth, demanding silence or death. He was collared and taken to the barn, where the oars were found. On their return to the scow, I ordered the ferryman to go in first. I led my horse in and Mr. Lovell led his. Although there was some floating ice, we had a good and a speedy passage. We could see a rebel patrol some distance from us, on the north side of the Richelieu. I paid the ferryman. We disembarked with all haste, mounted our horses, put spurs to their sides and rode with all speed, a few stray shots from the rebel picket following us, but without reaching. Then the break of day enabled us to select good footing for our tired horses. We reached Chambly between 5 and 6 a.m. On arriving at the barracks I requested the sentinel to call Major Ward. On seeing him I put Colonel Wetherall's despatch into his hands.

Having read it, he ordered breakfast, which we enjoyed after our fatiguing ride. Our horses were well cared for.

While the soldiers were being aroused and breakfasted, I secured sufficient scows and boats to carry the three companies, so that they might reach St. Hilaire without fatigue. The moment all were ready the embarkation commenced. There were two companies of the Royals and one company of 32nd Regiment, leaving only a Corporal's guard in charge at the Fort. Major Ward, myself, the Lieutenants, Ensigns, and Trooper Lovell, rode on horseback, on the north shore of the Richelieu, always keeping the scows and boats in sight till we reached St. Hilaire. Here we crossed in scows with our horses, in time to see all landed safe and well.

I selected the scows and boats, because, in the event of an attack from either side of the Richelieu, we could either give battle or cross over. It is satisfactory to say that we had no enemy to contend with on the way down.

Colonel Wetherall was on the shore to welcome us. We received his thanks for the great and timely service we had rendered him. He again urged Lovell to name a reward. Lovell replied: "Colonel, I have been for several years in my troop. I am still a full private. There is now a vacancy. We have no Cornet. I should like to bear the colors of the troop. Will you recommend me for the position?" The grand man said at once: "Mr. Lovell, you shall get the appointment." He did not get it.

I was welcomed to my former quarters by Colonel de Rouville. So was Mr. Lovell. The day and evening were spent in preparations for the march to St. Charles. We got a good dinner and a good supper and a fine night's rest. The following morning we had an early breakfast. Preparations were ready for an early start. We had 300 fighting men and a six-pounder field-piece. Frost had dried up the road. We had a bright clear day and only five or six miles to travel before meeting the enemy.

We heard subsequently that Sir John Colborne, commander-in-chief, had, after the news of Colonel's Gore's repulse, sent twelve despatches, by different routes, by confidential messengers, recalling Colonel Wetherall; but not one of those despatches had reached the Colonel. If any had come to hand, and a retreat had been ordered, the force under Colonel Wetherall must have been overwhelmed and annihilated. To attempt to traverse thirty miles of hostile country late in November, with demoralized and retreating troops, would have insured disaster and the insurrection would have burst out wherever a chance of success presented itself.

The march from St. Hilaire to St. Charles was seldom checked. From one farm-house shots came. When the troops reached it they set the building on fire. I entered the stables and saw thirty cattle tied by their heads. I tried to free them, but the

smoke forced me out. I mounted my horse and galloped after the troops. I did not know till subsequently that a section of soldiers, seeing a man, clad in Canadian cloth, and taking him to be a rebel, trying to escape, had fired at me. Only for Lieutenant David, of the Montreal Cavalry, telling the soldiers that I was the Magistrate in charge, they would have continued firing at me.

When near St. Charles, Colonel Wetherall noticed a fine looking old man standing at his door. The Colonel sent Trooper Lovell for him, and spoke to him in French in a kind and earnest way, requesting him to go to the breastworks and ask his compatriots to lay down their arms in order that he might have a parley with them. The fine old man entered the breastworks by a narrow gate facing the roadway. As he did not return he must have been forced to join the rebels. Soon after he entered two cannon balls bounced along the road. Troopers Lovell and Pyke, being on the road, had just time to make way to right and left, so that the two balls might pass on harmlessly. They raised themselves in their saddles and looked at the bouncing balls, the latter got tired and took rest in a ditch.

Colonel Wetherall's 300 men were soon in battle array. Their appearance, near the battlefield of St. Charles, was greeted by the rebels with bravado and loud cries of defiance. The rebels, about 2 p.m. on the 22nd, commenced the battle by firing at our men.

A timber and mud wall, which was frozen solid, confronted us. It covered the front of St. Charles. Five old cannon were mounted behind the mud wall near the road.

The north side of St. Charles rested on the Richelieu River. The south side rested on a dense wood of heavy timber.

Colonel Wetherall ranged his force about one hundred and fifty yards from the defensive four-foot mud wall, behind which the rebel marksmen sheltered themselves.

Our Artillery tried the range of their gun. The first shot sent a ball through the steeple of the Church of St. Charles.

The five guns of the rebels were contemptible, and inflicted no serious loss. They were almost useless.

Lieutenant David and four of the Montreal Cavalry were placed behind a barn in charge of the Hospital for the wounded.

Major Ward had the general surveillance of the breastworks, and was seen constantly riding in front of them, sword in hand. He had a few of the Royals lying along the wall, under shelter but ready for the fray, and his sword was soon dyed in blood.

Lord Charles Beauclerc was sent to the extreme right to hold in check any attempt of the enemy from that quarter. Early in the combat Colonel Wetherall ordered me to tell Lord Charles not to expose his men needlessly. As I rode diagonally across the front of the enemy's position, dressed in Canadian cloth, they honored me with a volley. I saw Lord Charles and conveyed to

him my orders and returned to Colonel Wetherall to report. When I reached him I saw that his horse had been shot. I thereupon dismounted and gave him mine. I then moved to the extreme right of the line, where the soldiers sheltered themselves in a dry ditch from the Rebel fire—waiting the bugle sounding the assault. The man next to me was hit in the stomach. He asked me to remove his belt and open his coat. He was deadly pale, his brow covered with perspiration. He was taken to the Hospital.

After about two hours' fighting, during which the enemy fought bravely, but fired too high, Colonel Wetherall ordered a charge, and it was responded to in true British style. Cheer after cheer arose—then came a rush.

Major Ward hastened from his position at the breastworks, where, several times during the fight, he dyed his trusty sword in the blood of any unfortunate rebel daring to hold his head above the breastworks. By this time his noble charger had several balls in his body, yet he still carried his master. The Major's military frock-coat was so pierced with balls as to make it a cloth riddle. He was at once at the head of a company of the Royals, and led them to a small gate in the breastworks, immediately facing the highway. He rode through it, his brave soldiers following with all speed to face three mounted cannon and two dismounted, but no cannoniers to handle them.

On proceeding to the top of the rising ground, the Major saw a large number of rebels lying on their face and hands, but, on seeing the soldiers, they were instantly on their feet. They received the soldiers with a few bayonets, old muskets, old fowling pieces, pikes, and long poles, and fought with wonderful courage as long as there was hope, but the English bayonets cowed them and made short work of them.

After some of the rebels had fallen, several of their comrades threw down their arms and fled in all directions. The Major did not fire on the fleeing foe. The moment he saw the rebels had given up the fight and were running away, he called a halt of his men. Soon afterwards his noble charger staggered and fell dead at his master's feet. Wonderful to relate, the Major did not even receive a flesh wound.

The naked steel caused a stampede. The enemy were seen running in all directions, especially towards the woods and towards St. Denis. The battle was won. The enemy were disgusted with themselves, and so humbled in their aspirations and so crest-fallen that the leaders—if there were any on the field—never again attempted a rising in the neighbourhood of St. Charles.

Troopers Pyke and Lovell being placed before the action commenced, on the bank of the river as sentinels, witnessed the battle, and especially the charge made by Major Ward. They saw the rebels fall in every direction and witnessed their courage and endurance. Had they been under even ordinary command,

their fate might have been more cheering. The armed rebels appeared to be fighting without organization, and without a commander of ordinary *savoir faire*. It was notorious that if they had a general, he kept himself in safe quarters, so that he "might run away to fight another day."

Immediately after Major Ward's charge, 25 of the rebels, guns in hand, endeavoured to escape by the back of the river, where they were taken prisoners by Troopers Pyke and Lovell.

Our casualties were 7 killed and 23 wounded, out of 300 bayonets. I counted 66 dead on the side of the enemy. Mr. Lovell said he counted 120.

The wounded on both sides were tenderly and carefully taken to the *Presbytère*, where a sufficient number of beds and stretchers were arranged on stone floors, in two large rooms on the ground flat. Surgeon Wetherall, a nephew of the Colonel, was in attendance, and was most assiduous in ministering to the unfortunate wounded, which included 23 soldiers and a larger number of rebels. Both soldiers and rebels were treated alike. It was near midnight before the last patient had his wounds dressed. Trooper Lovell volunteered to hold a lamp for the Surgeon, while the wounded were being operated upon, by having balls extracted, bandages applied and being otherwise cared for. A number of soldiers were always in attendance, applying wet cloths and other restoratives, wherever needed. Some of the wounds were heart-rending to behold, and the patience and endurance of several of the hapless sufferers were beyond praise. One poor soldier had a part of his bowels torn away—possibly by a cannon shot from one of the horrible-looking guns in the possession of the rebels. Another had every tooth in his mouth torn out. While he was in the act of biting off the end of a cartridge, to load his musket, a ball from the enemy struck the side of his mouth and made a tour, forcing away every tooth and carrying away part of the flesh on his right cheek.

The prisoners were over 60, 25 of whom were taken by Troopers George Pyke and John Lovell, just after the battle, and while they were trying to escape along the south shore of the bank of the River Richelieu, facing St. Marc. They bore guilt on their countenances but showed submission in their immediate surrender. They laid down 19 guns, without a charge in any one of them, evidence that they had used them to the last moment. They were ordered to lock arms, two by two, and form into line, the two rear couples carrying the 19 captured fowling pieces. The prisoners were, by order of Colonel Wetherall, placed in the Church for safe keeping.

The evening being fine, but cold, Troopers Lovell and Finlay started for a short walk. They happened to pass where the cap of liberty was raised on the top of a high pole. In the excitement of the moment, Lovell procured an axe, cut it down, and

then took the cap with four or five feet of the pole to his captain, who ordered them to be taken to Colonel Wetherall.

The surface of the battlefield was dry. The burning cartridges ignited the grass, and the clothes of several of the dead caught fire leaving their bodies almost naked, and their flesh slightly browned.

All danger of surprise being at an end, the men were carefully housed, except a few pickets and patrols at exposed places. The seven of our men who were killed during the action were gathered together and were put in safe keeping till they were buried on the next day, Sunday.

Colonel Wetherall, myself, Major Ward, Captain Glasgow, the other Officers, the Troopers of the Montreal Cavalry, with five Artillery men, were quartered in the mansion of the seignior, the Honorable P. D. Debartch, who had to seek shelter in Montreal. His beautiful mansion was fearfully and wantonly abused by the reckless reprobates who occupied it for weeks before the battle. Imagining that the seignior had turned his back on them, they took sweet counsel together and resolved, in a most wanton, degraded, and cowardly manner to satisfy their vengeance by destroying everything that they did not require. The reprobates gloried in their shameful conduct. Some time after the fight the seignior returned to St. Charles to find his residence in disorder, the interior ransacked, and the voluminous correspondence of himself and his charming daughters scattered broadcast. Notwithstanding this wanton intrusion and the free use by the rebels of the well-filled cellars of wine, ale, and of eatables, a bountiful supply remained. The Artillery men, being good cooks, prepared a delicious supper of roast fowl, fried bacon, baked and fried potatoes, hot bread, hot rolls, pancakes, tea and coffee, to which ample justice was done by tired and hungry soldiers, who had fasted from early morning till then, 6 p.m.

With the exception of the melancholy duty of attending the unfortunate and suffering wounded, and that of guard and patrol, Saturday evening gave rest and an early bed to the victors.

Sunday morning, Nov. 23, 1837.—After breakfast the roll was called, every man answered to his name, or was accounted for.

Peace reigned within the village and about its environs. No French-Canadian man was to be seen, either in the houses, in the stables, or in the barns. Women and children were left to do their own *chores* and to feed and care for their cattle. The dead bodies of the unfortunates who fought for their runaway and heartless leaders, were to be seen in all directions. Some of them were lying at full length on their backs, with their arms stretched out, others were to be seen with their knees in their mouths, and their hands and arms tightly pressed upon them, showing that they must have struggled with death and expired in the utmost pain and agony. Such is war in one of its most

hideous phases. All were frozen stiff. No patriot was there to lend a helping hand to house or gather them together until a dishonored grave was prepared for them, apart from consecrated ground.

The wounded on both sides passed a painful but a quiet night. Surgeon Wetherall, Trooper Lovell, and several soldiers being in constant attendance all the night through.

"May God bless you, surgeon!" was the fervent prayer of the English sufferers.

"Dieu vous bénisse, monsieur!" was the devout ejaculation of the French sufferers.

At 10 a.m., Colonel Wetherall, myself, the officers, troopers and soldiers, proceeded with our dead to bury them in a rising ground on the borders of the main road, near to where Sergeant Black was killed. A trench had been dug out on the previous evening, 6 feet in length, 14 feet in width, and 6 feet in depth. The 7 bodies were lowered into it and laid side by side, Sergeant Black was put in the middle, that is, with three on either side of him. At the order to charge he was the first man to stand erect on the breastworks. He was instantly hit, a ball passing through his head, and he fell back amongst his men—a corpse. He was a powerful man—six feet in his stockings—well built, with a handsome and a pleasing face. It was a sad sight to look into the grave and behold seven fine fellows laid low in their final earthly resting place.

One of the Officers of the Royals read the burial service of the Church of England. Afterwards their own blankets were placed over them to receive the earth, which was shovelled in and over them by sorrowful and loving comrades. When their grave was filled, it was made even with the surface of the place. The remaining earth was scattered so as to leave no sign of a grave. Unlike a soldier's burial generally, no guns were discharged over them. We were still in an enemy's country. No foe witnessed their burial, therefore we may suppose that they were allowed to remain where we sadly laid them to rest.

The next move was to bury the horses of Colonel Wetherall and of Major Ward, which had been killed during the action.

Here I availed myself of the opportunity to offer Colonel Wetherall the horse which he rode throughout the battle, after his own horse had been shot under him. The gift so timely offered was graciously accepted, and he rode the favorite horse in triumph to Montreal.

Soon after caring for the dead, Troopers Lovell and Finlay obtained Colonel Wetherall's permission to stroll into the country. Within a mile they met the Parish Priest, M. Chartier, and a large number of innocent *habitans* who had congregated from all parts, and who declared that they were not in the revolt. The priest enquired if they would be allowed to go on the battlefield

to gather up their dead and to find out what had become of the wounded. Trooper Lovell assured him that the wounded were in his *Presbytère*, under the untiring care of Surgeon Wetherall. He then said that he would return to Colonel Wetherall and get permission for him, the priest, to go with his people into the battlefield to gather up their dead. Colonel Wetherall's permission was instantly granted. Mr. Lovell returned at once to the priest with Colonel Wetherall's answer, which seemed to please the priest and those about him.

Early in the afternoon the priest, several of his parishioners, and a number of horses and hay carts were to be seen among the dead. The bodies, stiff and frozen, were piled on each other in the hay carts, and load after load was taken to the west side of the Church and there piled in three ranges against the wall to await burial.

Just before the priest and his party arrived I shot several pigs that were feeding on the dead men.

It fell to my lot, being able to speak French, to be ordered to accompany two well-dressed girls in their search of relatives. Alas, they soon saw a father and an uncle amongst the slain. Such is civil war.

The rebel prisoners were regularly fed from the well filled cellars of the seignior.

The remainder of Sunday passed over without any stirring event. The state of the wounded was anxiously enquired after, and all that could be done for them was done by Surgeon Wetherall. His military assistants were ever in attendance administering to the wants of the sufferers. Sunday night gave ease, rest, and sleep to a large number of both the English and French-Canadian patients.

Monday, 5 a.m.—Colonel Wetherall was walking to and fro in front of his head quarters. Quiet, speedy and cautious preparations were being advanced under his personal orders for the return of the troops to St. Hilaire. Carts and waggons, supplied with straw, mattresses and pillows, were in readiness for the twenty-three wounded, who were carefully and tenderly placed on the mattresses and pillows, and covered with blankets, each of them having a soldier in attendance. There was only one of the wounded whom the surgeon desired to leave behind, because his bowels were so fearfully torn that he could not survive many minutes after being put in a waggon. His earnest appeal to be taken, so that he might die amongst his fellow soldiers, was agreed to. Poor fellow, he died in about 10 minutes after leaving. His body was taken to Chambly for interment.

The rebel wounded were left in the *Presbytère*. Fortunately a few of their own slightly wounded compatriots were able to be in attendance on them, and were likely to be relieved the moment the troops were out of sight.

All were now on the march. On arriving at the breastworks, Colonel Wetherall ordered the five old cannon, used by the rebels, to be taken down to the Richelieu and sunk.

The Canadian prisoners were marched four abreast, and were not shackled. Guards were in front and in rear of them. During the route to Montreal there was no attempt to escape, and on the way they were regularly and plentifully fed.

When we were about three or four miles from St. Charles, a party of rebels fired at us from a dense wood. Captain Glasgow was ordered to the front. One shot from his field-piece made a clearance which showed the rebels in full flight, leaving nine horses in the woods, saddled and tied to trees. These were found useful for jaded soldiers, and the remainder of the journey to St. Hilaire was not impeded.

A happy welcome was extended by the estimable Colonel de Rcuville to Colonel Wetherall, to myself, the officers, the troopers, and indeed to all. A substantial dinner and a nice tea were provided for us. Our wounded soldiers required rest and extra care, and, therefore, we did not leave St. Hilaire till next morning. The troops were quartered amongst the inhabitants and an afternoon and night of rest were secured for all.

Tuesday, Nov. 25, 7 a.m.—Breakfast was cheerfully supplied to Colonel Wetherall, myself, his immediate staff, and to the troopers by our estimable host, Colonel de Rouville, whose bounty must ever be remembered with gratitude.

All were soon on the march to Point Olivier, where we crossed to the Chambly side of the River Richelieu. Although there were several scows, the crossing was tedious, because floating ice impeded the crossing. It was, therefore, late in the afternoon when we reached Chambly. Here all felt at home. But—a dreadful scene followed. The widow of Sergeant Black came to look for her husband, and not seeing him or hearing of him, she almost became frantic. She called out "Black, Black." The sad news of his death had then to be told. A fearful scream caused a convulsed body. She fell senseless to the ground, surrounded by sympathizing and sorrowing friends.

The wounded were carefully housed and kept till they recovered.

Major Ward with his two companies of the Royals and one Company of the 32nd Regiment took up their former quarters, and remained in Chambly.

Wednesday, Nov. 26, 8 a.m.—Left for St. Johns. Here a kind welcome awaited us. For some cause, best known to Colonel Wetherall, we were kept here till Friday morning, when we got orders to march to Laprairie, 20 miles away. We reached this place late in the evening and remained till next morning.

Captain Glasgow with his five Artillery men were ordered to remain in St. Johns.

Our march from St. Charles to Laprairie must have impressed the *habitans* favorably, and forcibly shewed them the folly of taking up arms which could only end in their own discomfiture.

Saturday, Nov. 29, 9 a.m.—We embarked on board the Laprairie steamer for home, for Montreal. As it was late in the year we anticipated seeing the channel frozen, but to our great delight it was free from ice. We arrived at 10.30. A large crowd was on the wharf to give us a hearty welcome. We disembarked and marched through St. Paul and St. Mary Streets with our unfortunate prisoners. On reaching the gaol they were put into the safe keeping of the gaoler. We returned by Water Street, and deposited, in the old Commissariat stores near the Barracks, the trophies taken at St. Charles, consisting of a number of old guns, rusty swords, new flags, a cap of liberty, etc. Afterwards we were taken to the Barrack yard, where we were addressed by Colonel Wetherall in a few kind and cheering words, in which he especially thanked myself and the troopers for the able and willing assistance we rendered in trying moments.

Tattered and torn, myself, Captain David, Lieutenant David, and the six troopers bid adieu to our estimable Commander, his officers, and to the men who had borne the fatigues of a long journey—and a trying campaign—with the resignation and endurance of true, noble and courageous British soldiers. Their indomitable courage, steady fighting, and their victory over the rebels at St. Charles gained our admiration, and, I am sure, gladdened the hearts of all loyal men. May Canada ever remain a bright gem in the British possessions!

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Copies of Letters

FROM

GENERAL WETHERALL, LORD METCALFE,
AND LORD SEATON.



Copy of a letter from G. A. WETHERALL, Deputy
Adjutant-General, to SYDNEY BELLINGHAM, Esq.

MONTREAL, 18th April, 1838.

MY DEAR BELLINGHAM,

Some late arrangements induce a belief that the Volunteer Corps will soon be disbanded, and although it is probable that the Montreal Cavalry, from their zeal and efficiency, and in consideration of the active duties on which they have been employed, may be the last to share the fate of the others, or may be organised as a corps of guides, I deem it but justice to you to say that if you are tingured with as much military mania as formerly, and wish for employment, I shall be happy to exert my "petite possible" to promote your views. I feel much indebted to your assistance, whilst attached to me as a magistrate in the operations against St. Charles, and I cannot forget, when detained at St. Hilarie, by the unhappy repulse of the Force against St. Denis, I deemed it of paramount importance to obtain a reinforcement from Chambly, you were the only person that could be found bold enough to carry my orders, owing to the danger of being captured and probably killed by the insurgents, then in the highest state of excitement, and who had cut off all communication. No reward could tempt even a Canadian to venture—on that occasion your services were most valuable.

On the line of march to St. Charles you were also most useful, and in the attack of that place I received from you every assistance. You kindly acted as my A.D.C., and when my horse was shot you kindly lent me your own. I do not forget that upon these occasions you were the magistrate, whose instructions from Government it was my duty to support, and that of all men belonging to the Force, you were the last from whom I could expect such services, and they were appreciated accordingly.

On the march to St. Eustache, at the attack of that place, and during the subsequent operations, you were attached to my Brigade as A.D.C., and I had every reason to be thankful for your assistance; of this I beg you to be assured, and also that I shall be happy to state these circumstances officially to the Commander of the Forces, if the state of the country or if the military arrangements of His Excellency should tempt you to seek employment.

Believe me,

Always truly yours,

G. A. WETHERALL,

Colonel, D.A.G.

Copy of Letter from LORD METCALFE.

2, MANSFIELD-ST., LONDON.

27th January, 1846.

DEAR SIR,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 24th inst., and to state in reply, that at the period of my administration of the government of Canada to which you advert, I had reason to believe that you exerted yourself zealously in support of Her Majesty's Government, and to add that I still retain the same impression.

I have the honour to be,

Yours faithfully,

METCALFE.

Copy of Letter of Lieut.-General Lord SEATON.

CORFU, 7th February, 1845.

MY DEAR SIR,

With reference to your letter of the 15th Jan., I beg to acquaint you, that I have great satisfaction in transmitting to you the accompanying certificate of your services, which I hope may contribute to promote the object you have in view.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Yours faithfully,

SEATON.

"Mr. Bellingham, one of the most active Magistrates of Montreal, resided in that city at the commencement of the disturbances in Canada, and both as a Magistrate and as an officer in command of a troop of volunteer cavalry rendered, by his exertions and determination, great services on several occasions to the local Government and to the Commander of the Forces. His offer to accompany a detachment of troops under Colonel Wetherall being accepted, when that officer was directed to disperse an armed force at St. Charles, he was employed on that affair and also on a duty of much risk, which he performed with great credit to himself and advantage to the Province. He was employed afterwards, during the two outbreaks in Canada, in assisting to disperse the rebels, in protecting the Frontier from incursions of American brigands, and he received the thanks of different Commanding Officers for his active military services."

(Signed) SEATON,
Lt.-General.

