

Viger, Jacques

REMINISCENCES

— OF THE —

WAR OF 1812-14.

BEING PORTIONS OF THE DIARY OF A CAPTAIN OF THE "VOLTI-
GEURS CANADIENS" WHILE IN GARRISON
AT KINGSTON, ETC.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH
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DIARY OF AN OFFICER IN THE WAR OF 1812-14.

I HAD the honor of reading the following paper before the Kingston Historical Society, at its February meeting. It consists of the diary of a Captain in the "Voltigeurs Canadiens," while on detachment duty at Kingston during the summer of 1813. This article is therefore a translation from the original in French, to which I have added a few notes. It contains so much of interest to the historian, the antiquarian, and even entertaining matter for the general reader, as told in the original text, that I have taken pains to depart from it as little as possible. I beg the reader to overlook gallicisms, even if of frequent occurrence.

This diary has been attributed to Captain Jacques Viger, who subsequently rose to great distinction in civil life, and in 1833 became first Mayor of Montreal. I believe that portions of it appeared anonymously in a small periodical, printed in Montreal, about 1824, I cannot say. Viger's name, however, does not appear in the list of officers of the Voltigeurs for 1814. Had he resigned after the campaign of 1813? He had been most actively employed during that year's operations, having been present at the attack on Sackett's Harbour, the siege and capture of Oswego, the battles of Chrystler's Farm and Chateauguay, the engagements at the Four Corners and Lacolle, etc. The Voltigeurs Regiment was raised in Quebec in May, 1812, specially for the war. It was commanded by Colonel de Salaberry, the hero of Chateauguay. It was nearly exclusively composed of French-Canadians. It greatly distinguished itself in the field, but was disbanded in 1815.

DIARY—TRAVEL TO UPPER CANADA IN 1813.

April 1st.—On the first of the month I left St. Philippe, after having dined with my friend Sanguinet at La Tortue, and slept that night at Chateauguay, in a tavern kept by a doctor.

On the 2nd we left Chateauguay and dined at Isle Pernot, near the church. The village stands on an elevation, overlooking the lands of Chateauguay, the Lake of Two Mountains, and

further to the west the picturesque Coteau des Cédres, clad with ever-green trees. At the foot of these hills are to be seen the canal cut through the rock to facilitate the passage of the Cascades rapids. This canal crosses a point at the foot of the Cedres rapids; it is built with great care; its margins are lined with stone masonry; it is spanned by a handsome bridge well arched. This bridge was formerly the "Porte des Recollets, or Recollet Gate," one of the city gates of Montreal.* In it I recognized an old friend, and at first experienced joy, which was soon followed by an opposite emotion; it had, alas, lost the once familiar stains of time. Oh! this bridge, handsome and solid though it be, had lost for me the attraction of former days. Then it was tottering, it is true, and was threatening to crush the passer-by, but it was a ruin and worthy of my love and veneration.

Cornwall or New Johnstown.—On the fourth we reach Cornwall, as weary and fatigued with the journey as we possibly could be.

Cornwall is the first Upper Canadian town met with on the journey up to Kingston. It is well situated in a commodious cove, the outlet of a creek. The streets are wide and straight. It has a church, a court house, a jail and neat houses, all built of wood. The Government has a barracks here and also maintains a small garrison. The building formerly known as "The Cornwall College" is now closed; there is a school where children are taught to read and write. The ground owned by this town is quite extensive, but so far it consists mostly of building lots, surrounded by fences, three-fourths of which are vacant. Commerce flourished here before the declaration of war; its college had a fair reputation. These advantages and its pretty site would have made it a town of some importance. A piece of paper—a mere document—with a few musket balls, have changed all this. The Temple of the Muses is deserted; the merchant's yard measure is laid aside for the *gille* or the musket.

Cornwall—otherwise New Johnstown—is the Capital of the District; in its rear extends the County of Stormont. The

*I have been unable to ascertain if this venerable city gate of Montreal is still extant, nor if the canal referred to still exists. It had originally been made at the time of the War of Independence, and enlarged and rebuilt in 1799, 1801, 1802, by Captains Bruyeres and Landmann, of the Royal Engineers. It was probably at this period that the Recollet gate was re-erected as a bridge.

French-Canadian Voyageurs know it still by the name of Pointe Maligne.* It is eighty miles distant from Montreal.

On the 5th we journeyed but two leagues, and encamped at Mille Roches, the weather having become very bad.

On the 6th we made an early start, passed the Long Sault, the "Rapide Plat," and put up that evening at a Dutchman's named Chrystler; he is a recruiting captain and landed proprietor, also owner of a very handsome establishment in the Township of Williamsburg.† All the officers put up at his house, and he placed moreover, at their disposal a large apartment for the use of the men. His wife equalled him in hospitality and civilities. She supplied them abundantly with fresh milk, vegetables, etc.,—in a word, they treated us to all sorts of attentions. Captain Chrystler is a well-to-do farmer, who lives as a gentleman. His lumber enterprises are enriching him rapidly. We were supplied here with most comfortable beds, and we left this hospitable home with regret, after partaking of an excellent "déjeuner a la fauchette." Chrystler, moreover, prevailed on me to leave my carriage with him and to accept the use of his own—a better one—and of his "confidential servant," who drove me as far as Cananocoui, and proved of the greatest assistance to me.

On the morning of the 7th we started from Williamsburg, and encamped that evening at two leagues from the next village (Johnstown) in a miserable cabin, where Indians had preceded us. We were famished, but found there no provisions whatever. Our hostess was one of those unfortunate creatures afflicted, I think, with innumerable imaginary ills. What a bore! If we asked for food she replied with full descriptions of her sufferings; if for a bed, then her tale of woe was rehearsed; in despair we spoke French to her; she nearly fainted with fright; we thought best to retire for fear of a more deplorable contingency.

The 8th we reached Johnstown, formerly Oswegatchie, in time for breakfast. Johnstown, Capital of the District of the same name, is situated in the Township of Edwardsburg in the County of Grenville. It fronts on the St. Lawrence, and is 120

* Because here began the difficult ascent of the Long Sault.

† The battle of Chrystler's farm was fought here on the 18th, Oct., 1813, when 1,100 British troops and Canadian militia, under Colonels Morrison and Harvey, defeated 2,000 American troops, chiefly regulars, under General Wilkinson, with a loss of 236 wounded and 102 killed. The British loss was 1 officer and 21 men killed, and 10 officers and 137 men wounded. Croil, in his history of Dundas County, says that Captains Nairn and Clause, of the 49th, and Ensign De Lounier, of the Voltigeurs, were killed during the action. He states that the British force numbered only 850 all told.

miles west of Montreal, It consists of a court house, a jail, a good lodging-house, a few private houses built along the public highway, also of a King's store-house or magazine.

The sites of both (*Johnstown and Cornwall*) were well chosen. The first is situated at the foot of the rapids and enjoys the expanse and fair waters of Lake St. Francis, while from the second at the head of the rapids vessels can sail to Queenstown on the Niagara River, and to all the other harbours and ports on Lake Ontario.

The women, children and heavy impedimenta were left here to permit us to travel more rapidly. We now soon covered the three miles to Prescott or New Oswegatchie, also facing the river, in the Township of Augusta. This village is well built on a rocky prominence. It is also known by its ancient name of La Galette.* The buildings are not remarkable in appearance, it is true, it is, however, the strongest military post we have yet come to. On the left of the village is an "embarras" or *cheveau de frise*, made with interlaced branches, to render its approach from that side more difficult. At a short distance from and behind the town earth-works are being thrown up with fascined embrasures, where heavy artillery will soon be mounted. These works are quadrangular in shape, surrounded by a moat. They will contain a redoubt, store-houses and casemated quarters for a goodly garrison. (It has since been named Fort Wellington.) To the west of the village there are also some batteries. The garrison at present consists of regulars and militia.

†On the south side of the river immediately opposite, on the banks of the Oswegatchie, are the ruins of an ancient fort, known to the English as Oswegatchie and to the French as Fort La-Présentation; contiguous to it is the handsome and prosperous town of Ogdensburgh. The Americans have batteries there.

Early on the morning of the ninth we reached Brockville (formerly Elizabethtown), 142 miles from Montreal. This village is undoubtedly the best built and prettiest yet seen on the way up. Its buildings are handsome, even elegant. It fronts Eliza-

*Point a la Galette is very often mentioned in the old French diaries from the time of La Salle; at one time a small fort or entrenchment existed there.

†Lt.-Colonel George MacDonell (Red George) commanded here. On the 22nd February preceding he had crossed over to Ogdensburgh at the head of his regiment of *lencibles*; he had put the garrison to flight, destroyed their barracks, armed vessels, and returned with 4 brass cannon and 700 stand of arms.

bethtown Township in the County of Leeds. The King's highway is the only street, it is true, but it is wide, long and straight. Several large houses built of brick and wood, some of them roofed with "Arga masse" (*sic*) line both sides of the road. On the most elevated part of the village, facing a public square, is a large edifice of brick, recently built; it is the court house. For the present it is used for the triple purpose of church, jail and guard-house. This village recently took the name of Brockville when General Brock was promoted to the Presidency of Upper Canada.

There are several sawmills in Upper Canada operating several saws, but Mr. Jones' mill at Brockville is known far and wide as the "14 sawmill," and among the batteauxmen and voyageurs to go to the "14 Sawmill," means to go to Brockville and nowhere else.

April 11th.—Cananocoui is a small military station, thirty-four miles from Brockville; it is also situated in the County of Leeds on the St. Lawrence. It is named from a river which takes its source in a chain of lakes in the interior. I noticed here a redoubt, manned by a few militiamen, three or four houses, a large bridge, a fine waterfall, and again a "14 saw mill"—that's all. From Brockville upwards the road is hewn through a continuous forest of very lofty trees. We here see the St. Lawrence for a while but soon penetrate the forest, from which we emerge again only at Kingston, the ancient Cataracoui, 35 miles distant.*

"*The Land Journey from Montreal to Kingston, formerly Cataracoui.*"—When you travel from Montreal to Kingston you keep the St. Lawrence in sight until you have reached six miles beyond Brockville. The roads are good enough, particularly so from Cornwall westward. Six miles above Brockville the woods commence; the roads here are unpleasant, long stretches of corduroy bridge the swamps and low grounds, bridges remarkably solid, some long and lofty, span creeks and fairly-wide rivers. With the exception of at Cananocoui, for a short distance, the River St. Lawrence is lost to view. The soil is mostly rocky, yet well wooded.

The first part of the journey is made most pleasant by the view of the great river. Although in parts it is not wider than

*An error; it is only 18 miles.

the length of a musket shot, yet in others it widens and offers a most majestic spectacle. Here it flows through banks covered with verdure, there it runs swiftly, in others it rushes with fury, cresting its waves with foam—a most impressive sight. The banks, verdure-clad, bend towards its raging waters, while numerous rivulets and rivers pour their floods within its capacious flanks. Elsewhere majestic forest trees cast their deep shades upon its waters, crown its course with their lofty heads—an immortal crown indeed. Such is the St. Lawrence; but that is not all. Imagine a long street, lined on both sides with houses built of wood or stone, painted in gay colours, islands of all shapes and sizes mirrored in its azure waters; picture to yourself all these objects repeated over and over again for the delectation of the admirers of nature; such is the St. Lawrence. But leave these pleasant scenes to penetrate the dark forests, the rocky breaks, the swamps, which are to be found, for instance, between Brockville and Kingston, what a contrast! Trees of great height cast their deep and sombre shadows and close on all sides the view; dark and mournful looking rocks throw a gloom on everything, not excepting the soul of the traveller. A cleft in the rocks gives passage to a torrent, spanned by a bridge fixed to both its perpendicular sides. These sombre scenes are not, however, without their grandeur and poetry; they suggest thoughts which are as a gleam of sunshine to the weary wayfarer. These rapid tumultuous streams foster, however, prospering industries, which have arisen on their banks, in the shape of grist, saw and fulling mills.

Kingston or Cataracoui.—The town of Kingston at the n. e. extremity of Lake Ontario in the County of Frontenac, lies under $44^{\circ} 8' n.$ lat. and $71^{\circ} 41' w.$ long. from Greenwich. It is the Capital of the Midland District. It is built on very rocky ground; whenever the foundations of a house are to be made they are dug out of solid rock. "This stone," says Liancourt, "has the remarkable qualities of being easy to cut and of hardening afterwards when exposed to the air; it is not split by the action of frost."* Notwithstanding this, the houses—which are considerable in number—are mostly built of wood.

*The writer was certainly misinformed; no one can claim these qualities for the Kingston limestone.

This town stands on the site of old Fort Frontenac; a few of its remains are still to be seen. The Indians gave this place the name of Cataracoui, which means "Clay Soil." The town is on a point of land; it is built with good taste; the streets lie mostly at right angles, they are straight and wide. On its eastern limits are the barracks and the King's store-house. The barracks, built partly of stone and partly of wood, are two stories high; they face a large square. A tower* now used as a powder magazine, and a triangular structure near the artillery barracks are the last vestiges of the French constructions. The remains of an earth-work, built by Bradstreet, who captured the fort from the French in 1758, are still to be seen. Two large wooden buildings towards the centre of the town are used as a military hospital.

Kingston is divided in two portions by a central square, which is used as a parade ground by the troops; there is also a market building, and opposite it is the Anglican Church; both are of wood. To the right of the square are the court house and the *café* (hotel); both are of stone and two stories high. The latter is an excellent house in every respect, but the former is built in bad taste. On its ground floor are the kitchen and jail, the upper flat is divided into two apartments—the largest is used by the Courts of Justice, the Sessions sit in October and April annually; one of the apartments is used as a library, consisting of 400 or 500 volumes, † the annual subscription to which is 20 shillings.

A § teacher of considerable reputation keeps a school, which is very well patronized. With aid from the seminaries and inhabitants of Lower Canada a Roman Catholic Church of stone was erected; the interior is unfinished. It is used at present as a public hospital. An old wooden house, which was brought up a few years ago from one of the neighbouring islands, is now "the Commandant's" house; it is by no means handsome, but is prettily situated. ||

*The foundations of this tower are very distinctly visible to this day (1894) in the Barrack square, Tete du Pont Barracks, near the ball alley. According to Sheriff Ferguson, the original structure was not demolished until the thirties. A singular triangular foundation can be traced on this square. Its object cannot be easily determined, but may have been similar to the one referred to in the diary.

†At present the British American hotel; the older portion of the hotel, corner of Clarence and King, was built about 1808.

‡A goodly number of these volumes are to be found in the Library of the present Mechanics' Institute.

§The Rev. John Strachan, afterwards Archdeacon and first Bishop of Toronto.

||The building referred to was the old Macaulay residence, which was floated on a raft from Carleton Island to Kingston about 1803. It is now Gowdy's butcher shop, corner of Ontario and Princess Streets.

The remains of a moat or ditch, also of a glacis, constructed by the French, can still be seen on the public square. To the west is Point Mississaga, and still further west is Point Murney. These two important Points are fortified; batteries have been erected there. The interior of the first is faced with heavy square timber. In the rear of the town and on the right flank have been erected, recently, several redoubts, part of stone and part of wood; they defend the approaches from the north. Other defensive approaches have also been made.

The land behind Kingston slopes up gently. To the front is a bay, running 5 miles to the north. The Government has there magnificent mills:* This bay forms a fine harbor, where vessels can be secured most comfortably for wintering. The opposite shore, to the east, is cut into three points—the two furthest are quite high, but the middle one is of all others the loftiest spot in the neighbourhood. The furthest of these is known as Point Hamilton†; it is thickly wooded. Off its shore is Cedar Island, which is rocky, and quite recently laid bare of all its trees. On this island is a telegraph or signalling station, in view of Snake Island far out in the lake, and of other similar stations towards Cananocoui. The middle point is known as Point Henry; it has also been cleared of wood, with the object of planting there a camp of observation. It is proposed to erect here extensive fortifications. The nearest Point was formerly named Point Haldimand; this has been changed to Frederick or Navy Point. It is a very level piece of ground and low lying; it is well fortified. Between these two points is Navy Bay, occupied by the naval building yard and admiralty buildings. Troops are always quartered here in separate and very comfortable quarters. A hulk is moored in the bay between the two Points; it is used for hospital purposes. The security of Kingston on the water side depends on the co-operation of the batteries of Points Frederick and Mississaga, and the cross fire from these two points if well directed should make the entrance of the harbor an impossibility.

All the supplies for the Upper Countries pass through Kingston; it is also the principal depot of military stores, provisions,

*The Kingston Mills, five miles from the town.

†Now Cartwright's Point.

etc. All these stores are usually brought here from Montreal in batteaus; large lake vessels in consequence seldom go further down the river, although the largest of them could easily reach Prescott, but the channel is narrow and the return could only be accomplished with the aid of a favorable wind. The first French vessels which navigated Lake Ontario were constructed at Cataracoui by M. de la Salle.*

Before 1784 this town was merely a military post where the King's stores and the trading houses of a few private individuals had been erected. It is from these comparatively recent beginnings that its present proportions have been reached; its commerce is prosperous.

The lands in the immediate neighbourhood are of indifferent quality; they are, however, of far better quality two or three miles away; they are being rapidly settled. The climate is good. "Larochefoucauld Liancourt says that its calcareous stone beds "are of the clayey type—fine grained and dark grey in colour. "The boulders, like elsewhere on the shores of Lake Ontario, are "of various sorts—schists and quartz; there are also layers of "granite. Large boulders, dark in color, resembling bazalt and "sandstones containing fossil remains, are frequently met with." Three miles back of the town flows a creek which has retained the name of Cataracoui. It is fairly wide, sluggish, very muddy, and its margins are fringed with bushes. It is crossed by the York Road. At the head of the bridge a small entrenchment with embrasures for cannon has been erected.

The Abbe Gaulin.†—Several families from Lower Canada are domiciled here, but they can claim neither rank nor fortune; two or three at the utmost live in comfort. The only French-Canadian one can associate with, with pleasure and profit, is the Missionary Gaulin, a truly learned, clever and witty man. He is a native of Quebec; he speaks English with perfect ease. No one excels him in public esteem, and no one so well deserves it. His virtues, his learning, manners, patriotism—all in this worthy

*During the last years of Fort Frontenac under the French, they maintained on Lake Ontario, a flotilla of from ten to twelve vessels; some 3 masted of about 200 tons burthen, carrying 20 guns, 4, 6 and 12 pounders.

†Remi Gaulin, born at Quebec, June 30, 1787, ordained Priest in 1811, was therefore quite a young man when he first came to Kingston as missionary. From 1815 to 1822 he served in a similar capacity in Nova Scotia; he then spent ten years in the diocese of Montreal as parish Priest. In 1833 he was consecrated coadjutor Bishop to Monsignor Alexander Macdonnell, first Bishop of Kingston. He succeeded him in the See in 1841; retired through ill-health in 1844; and died on the 8th of May, 1857. He was highly esteemed and beloved by all.

priest and loyal compatriot—combined to secure him favourable reception wherever he presents himself, and causes him to be desired whenever absent. For our militiamen to know him was to love him, and to us, in this exile, the Abbe Gaulin has been] a most precious friend.

*Lieutenant-Colonel Drummond.**—The light company of the 104th Regiment was encamped at Point Henry when we took up our quarters there. Major Drummond, a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Provincial Militia, was Commandant.† I cannot help making a special mention of this brave and excellent officer. In April last he came up to Kingston with me, together with two companies of his regiment. We both put up at the same lodgings in Cornwall, and I had the honour of dining with him. During these few moments I formed the very highest opinion of him. He is one of those men who inspire affection at sight, and who win your respect and confidence even before becoming intimate. I had proof that my high estimate of his character was perfectly justified. My further relations with him fully convinced me that I had nowise over-estimated his worth. The Colonel is above the medium in height, has a dignified appearance, regular and clear-cut features and a charming expression. Some might think that he seems satisfied with his own personal appearance. I for one would feel disposed to forgive him this weakness, if it exists, for it would not be without considerable show of reason. He speaks French most correctly, with no foreign accent whatever; he expresses himself gracefully and with kindness. He is easy of access and not at all repellent in manner as is so often the case with officers of his rank and even junior rank. Whoever you may be you are received with kindness, listened to with attention; his politeness and manners are never wanting. To his many accomplishments Col. Drummond adds that of a knowledge of medicine. I have often seen him dress the wounds and administer medicine to his own men and to our Voltigeurs when the doctor was not at hand, and these services were all the more appreciated on account of his great suavity of manner. So many estimable qualities, together with his reputation for

*Killed at the assault on Fort Erie, on the 15th of August, 1813.

†In the Army List for 1812, William Drummond appears as Senior-Major of the 104th Regiment, at the time stationed in New Brunswick. The Regiment was ordered to Upper Canada during the winter of 1813. It marched all the distance from Fredericton to Quebec on showshoes.

courage, so well sustained at the late attack on Sackett's Harbour, caused him to be idolized by the officers, his own men and the Voltigeurs.

On the 29th of April I was officer on duty, and that night, about midnight, the *alarm* was sounded. I was then asleep in the guard house. The news of the fall of York* had just been received, and it was believed that Brother Jonathan was marching down towards Kingston.

This news of the first success of the Americans during this war caused a deep impression on all, and many were the rumours which flew round. York in itself was not of supreme moment, but with it were lost an armed vessel and another about to be launched, together with considerable supplies of all sorts for the troops further to the front and in the west.

A sudden call to arms is liable to cause a certain amount of excitement and confusion, which led on this occasion to the death of one of our Voltigeurs, the first which had occurred since we have come here. At the first call the men seized their muskets; one of them, by mistake, picked up one which was not his own; it happened to be loaded with ball. He was tightening on the flint when it suddenly went off. The charge lodged itself in the back of a young man named Laframboise, who died a few hours after. A similar accident nearly happened to a soldier of the 104th Regiment in the adjoining barrack room, only in this case the ball buried itself in a chunk of pork which one of his comrades held in his hand.

The Tete de Pont.—On the night of the 1st of May another alarm. It had certainly not taken me more than three minutes to dress and run to the barracks—our Voltigeurs had however already formed rank in the square. Colonel† Halkett, the Commandant of Kingston, arrived a few moments afterwards. He

*The Capital of Upper Canada had capitulated to the Americans on the 27th of this month. The enemy had 10 vessels of war, under Commodore Chauncey, and 2,500 men, under General Dearborn, to effect a landing and attack, while General Sheaffe, who commanded this unfortified place, could oppose but 600 men—half of whom were militiamen. Notwithstanding this inferiority in numbers, Sheaffe did not hesitate to offer battle. The landing of the Americans was effected under General Pike, who perished at the moment of victory by the explosion of a powder magazine, where our troops had retired, but on being forced to evacuate it, blew it up. (Foot note appended by the writer of the diary.)

†Alexander Halkett was Colonel in the Army and Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding the 104th Regiment, at that time forming part of the Garrison of Kingston.

ordered me to proceed to the Centre Bridge* with 30 Voltigeurs and a Subaltern and 10 men of the 104th. This time I vainly expected that an engagement was at hand. It had been rumored through the day that the enemy's fleet had been seen making for Kingston; it was not unnatural to suppose that, with the object of cutting off the retreat of the debris of General Sheaffe's small army, the Americans might land troops in the neighbourhood of Kingston. We hastened to our assigned position; the roads were abominable and the night as dark as pitch.

Three miles from Kingston flows a small river still known by the name of Cataracoui; it is bridged over at three different points. While I was proceeding to the centre bridge two other officers were being sent to the two† others with detachments of soldiers. The road which the defeated army was retreating by (and by which Sir Roger Sheaffe eventually reached Kingston) proved to be mine. The Tete de Pont‡ on the town side was easily susceptible of defence. It consisted of an entrenchment lined with timbers and fascines pierced with two embrasures for cannon. The river is pretty wide at this point; its bed is very muddy and bordered with thick shrubbery.

My first care was to render the bridge impassable. I had been authorized to destroy it with axes. I contented myself with loosening the planks. In the stillness of the night the distant sounds of chopping informed us that the two other bridges were being destroyed. I deferred the destruction of mine for the following reasons: 1st, to permit Gen. Sheaffe's retreat should he come my way that night; 2nd, to prevent the enemy from collecting the floating debris with which he might make rafts and effect a crossing. My views found acceptance—my orders were obeyed; a chieftain must necessarily be so clever!

The planks of the bridge were therefore loosened and left in such a way that they could at a moment's notice be removed; and at the first intimation of the approach of the enemy these planks were to be piled in such a manner as to offer a protection to sharpshooters, and in this way utilize them as a first line of

*Known at present as the bridge which crosses Cataracoui Creek at the Bath Road.

†That is to say the long causeway or bridge over the creek near its mouth on the front road, and that near the present Cataracoui or Waterloo village; the writer of the Diary's position being at the present Bath road crossing.

‡This is a term of engineering, meaning works which defend the approaches of a bridge.

defence. With the number of men I now had at my disposal this task could have been performed in about two minutes, for I must add that within a few hours my party was reinforced by the arrival of 40 militia men and 20 Indians under the Chevalier de Lorimier*. I now placed six sentries in pairs, each 500 paces in advance of the other, while a dragoon was posted as *vi-dette* still further in advance of these, I also sent out a few Indians as scouts. During my absence on this duty Lieut. LeCouteur had attended to my instructions with regard to the bridge, 20 feet of which could be removed in the "winking of an eye." On my return to my post I placed my men in the position they should occupy in the moment of need, I then caused a few fires to be lighted, for we were drenched with rain. My command now consisted of: 1 Captain, 3 Subalterns, 10 soldiers of the 10th, 40 militia-men, 30 Voltigeur's 20 Indians. Total, 104 braves. We hadn't the two cannons, but come who dares!

I must say in praise of my small army that for the nonce the alert was considered genuine, that the best of spirit, activity, vigilance and discipline was displayed under very trying circumstances on this night, sufficient evidence of what could have been expected of them if opportunity had offered, in other words if the expected had happened. It had, however, been otherwise ordained in the "Great Book of Fate" the "Centre Bridge" over the Cataracoui would for ever remain an obscure, mean commonplace Bridge whose sole destination was to give passage to wayfarers, cattle drovers and countrymen over a dirty muddy stream; for neither dragoon, patrol, sentry, nor scout saw the shadow of an enemy! All my cleverness for naught! My laurels to the wind! Daylight found us still on the "*qui vive*" (excepting friend Tasche, who was snoring deeply, his cheek pillowed on the rounded form of a fat Iroquois. Hush! let him sleep!, Shivering with cold rather than excitement, more inclined to sleep than to laugh, we returned to the town.

"*The Voltigeurs' Camp at Point Henry.*"—After having spent 21 days in the Barracks of Kingston, 10 days in quarters prepared by us, but not for us at a Mr. Smith's, and 4 days in a camp made by us, but once more not for us, on the heights of King-

*Killed the following October at the battle of Chrysler's Farm.

ston, we were ordered by General* Prevost on the 17th of May to cross over to Point Henry, where we now occupy tents which we again once more put up in a wilderness of stumps, fallen trees, boulders, and rocks of all sizes and shapes; sharing our blanket with reptiles of varied species; carrying out the precepts of the most self-sacrificing charity towards ten million insects and crawling abominations, the ones more voracious and disgusting than the others. Phlebotomized by the muskitoes, cut and dissected by gnats, blistered by the sand flies, on the point of being eaten alive by the hungry wood rats as soon as they shall have disposed of our provisions. Pray for us! Pray for us! ye pious souls.

Broken down with fatigue, drenched with rain, I enter my tent to find that the birds of the air have besmirched me with lime; I have no sooner sat on my only camp stool when a horrid toad springs on to my lap in a most familiar way; I cast my wearied limbs on to my couch, a slimy snake insists on sharing with me the folds of my blanket, I hastily retire and leave him in possession. Let us have supper! The frying pan is produced to fry the ration pork. Horror! A monstrous spider has selected it for his web; he holds the fort in a viciously threatening attitude in the centre of its rays, he defiantly seems to say, remove me if you dare! The flinty biscuit must be pounded and broken or one can't eat it, here again the beastly wood-bug must needs crawl under the masher, and in losing his life infect everything with his sickening odor. Oh! Captain, what can we do? exclaims my valet. *Fiat lux!* What, Sir? Light the candle, you block-head, light the candle. Let us write to our distant friends the excess of our misery. O ye gods, what a place this is! The candle is lighted, it is the next moment surrounded by myriads of flying things. My table is littered with writhing abominations, June bugs hasten from all sides, they besiege the light, extinguish it under one's very nose, strike you in the eye, and as a parting shot stun you with a blow on the forehead. What a paradise this spot would be for an entomologist!

We remained in this inferno a whole fortnight, but thank

*Sir George Prevost had arrived in Kingston on the 11th of May accompanied by Col. Baynes, two aides de camp and 20 Sault St. Lewis Iroquois in command of Lieut. and Interpreter, B. St. Germain. Sir J. L. Yeo arrived on the 12th with two Brigades of gun boats.

heavens these very unpleasant experiences came to an end and were followed by better times. After showing you the dark side of the medal it is but right you should now be shown the bright.

When we first came to Point Henry on the 17th of May, it was covered with stumps and the ground was nothing but holes and bumps. The trees had been cut down but quite recently. With much labour our Voltigeurs succeeded in levelling their camp ground. The camp consists of two rows of Marquises, facing one broad central avenue at the head of which are our Major's quarters and at the foot a small entrenchment. On a fine day our encampment presents quite a pretty sight. The Point is high and commands the view over all the surrounding country. We can here perceive the immense expanse of Lake Ontario, on the distant horizon a few wooded islands, to the right the town and its pretty back-ground; the harbour and its sailing craft; Point Frederick, its fortifications and shipyards are mapped before us; to the left is Wolfe Island with its extensive forests dotted here and there with new settlements. Away from the town and the control of the "Big Heads," under the immediate command of an officer* who is popular, we can hope to live here in peace, quietness and happily,

"*Corporal or Lance Sergeant Chretien.*"—Cananocoui as before stated is 18 miles lower down than Kingston; we have there a redoubt. The garrison consists of local militia and a detachment from this post. Nine Voltigeurs under the order of Corporal Chretien were on duty there on the 14th of May, when Lieutenant Majoribanks, R.N., in command of a gun vessel cruising among the islands, arrived and landed 30 militiamen. He had discovered one of the enemy's gun boats on the river. He proposed to his men to attack this boat, but these good people thought otherwise; they were not yet I presume tired of life; they offered many objections to the lieutenants hostile and bloodthirsty intentions. The poltroon has powers of eloquence quite equal to those of the brave man; these philosopher soldiers used their rhetoric to such good purpose that the Lieutenant saw the futility of risking the

*Major G. F. Herriot, the assistant superintendent of the Voltigeurs, a Captain seconded from Brock's regiment the 49th, distinguished himself greatly during the war, especially at Chrysler's Farm, and at Chateauguay as second in command under De Salaberry. He was born in the Island of Jersey Jan. 2nd, 1766. He became a Major-General, retired from the army and settled in Drummondville P. Q., where he died in 1844.

attack with such a crew, and decided to land them at Cananocoui. From what precedes you may perhaps conclude that under the weighty arguments of these braves this bloodthirsty officer had yielded and had come to more humane and rational sentiments. Alas, no! you are wrong. They are case-hardened villains, these English tars; they live for knocks and thumps; they know positively nothing of our college logic, or, if they speak of it it is merely to ridicule and despise it; they affect to believe that there is more argument and sound sense in a grape shot than in the best argument. Strange people, do you say? Well, they are. Anyway, after landing his thirty rhetoricians (an epithet which our friend the officer emphatically qualified, it is said, with heavy words) he invited volunteers to accompany him on his venture, for he was still bent on the same sanguinary designs; one subaltern and 10 men of the 104th Regiment, Corporal Chretien and the nine voltiguers volunteered to form part of the expedition and were permitted to do so by Colonel Stone of the militia, who was commandant. These, with the boat's crew of six men, gave chase to the enemy's vessel, but failed to overtake her.

Feeling very sore and disappointed at the failure of this second attempt to close with the enemy, Marjoribanks had made up his mind not to return empty handed; he therefore decided to make a descent at the nearest American port, which was Gravelly Point.* His pilot had told him that the Yankee boats repaired to the Cape every night. He conceived the evil pleasure of cutting them out by way of surprise, and his wicked followers accepted the idea with the greatest enthusiasm.

About one o'clock on the morning of the 25th of May, two countrymen were taken prisoners off the shore, and forced to guide the marauders to the village, still a good distance off. Gravelly Point was at last reached at two o'clock. Alas! the enemy's boats were not there. A landing, however, was effected, a few soldiers of the 104th left to keep guard over the boat, and the troops, headed by Chretien, advanced noiselessly, following each other in Indian file; they reached the barracks, which stood at about 20 acres from the village, smashing in the windows and

*Or Cape Vincent. It was a small American village of about 20 houses, at the discharge of Lake Ontario. The enemy had cannon and soldiers there.

doors with their axes, they found them quite deserted. They then advanced towards the commandant's quarters without meeting the slightest resistance. A sentry was found on duty; he was told to keep quiet or have his brains battered. He managed to break away, however, taking his unbattered brains away with him. A light was burning in the officers' apartments. Chretien took but an instant to knock in the door; he was met by the officer (a major) who attempted to discharge his pistol at him (it was loaded with 20 slugs); it missed fire, however. Chretien was more fortunate; he let him have his musket charge in the stomach, laying him dead. Three other loaded pistols were found on a table, 20 cartridges loaded with slugs; there were also 2 sabres. These were the only articles the men were permitted to take away. The retreat was now ordered. When they had pushed away a good distance the Yankees, (who had run away from their barracks in a most disgraceful way even before our people had landed), now reappeared on the shore, and, for the purpose, we presume, of frightening the fishes, kept up for quite a while a desultory musketry fire. It was "*mustard after dinner.*" The two countrymen who had been seized and forced to serve as guides were then put ashore and the expedition returned to Cananocoui.

The naval lieutenant in his official report to Commodore Yeo, gave a detailed statement of Chretien's coolness and courage, together with the peril he had exposed himself to during this brush with the enemy. He further charged him to convey the despatch to Kingston. Sir George Prevost sent for him, and, besides promoting him to the rank of sergeant, presented him with the sabres and pistols looted at Gravelly Point.*

Cananocoui.—The Cananocoui River, which draws its waters from a chain of lakes in the interior, has its discharge on the front of the Township of Leeds in the County of the same name, in the Johnston district; its mouth forms an excellent harbour—the water 12 or 15 feet in depth—and with little current. With the exception of three small portages, this river is navigable for batteaux a distance of about nine miles, when the first of its

*Major Durham of Cape Vincent informs me that among the series of volumes known as the "Documents relating to the history of New York" are a series of papers known as the "Brown Papers," in which a very different account is given of this affair at Cape Vincent: the British are there stated to have been repulsed, with considerable loss in dead and prisoners. I have been unable to verify the American version of the affair.

lakes is met. Its banks are as a rule steep and fringed with tall woods. It was known by the name of Thames previous to the division of the Province; the Indian name, Cananocoui, means, I am told, "where the ash trees grow." Several fine sawmills have been erected along its course. This locality is celebrated for its healthful climate; this fact was well known to the Indians, who for generations past have been in the habit of bringing their sick here to recuperate.

About seven miles up this stream are, on both banks, quarries known by the name of "Marble Rocks." The stone of the east bank is pure white and brilliant; that on the west bank is of various shades of green, veined with black. The white marble is of great hardness—the best file hardly produces an impression upon it—while the green stone is quite soft; it can even be worked with a knife; the Indians make their "Calumet" or pipes out of it. Much talc is also found in this neighbourhood. Here also and about the inland lakes are found rich iron mines, which have been worked for some years back with success. Lead and lime has also been reported. At the other end (?) of this river is a redoubt, garrisoned by a few men; Colonel Stone owns there a "fourteen saw" mill.

"My Quarters at Cananocoui."—On the 27th of July, Major Heriot and three companies of the Voltigeurs were ordered to Fort George.* On the 29th I was sent to Cananocoui, in command of a *select* detachment, made up of the culls of the corps—the old, the halt, the incapables, the cripples—in short, an assorted lot of *invalids*. Voltigeurs invalids! These words coupled together are contradictory, bizarre and non-sense, I admit, but such was the case, and, to cap the joke, my redoubt was dubbed the Hospital!

Cananocoui is pretty and quite a picturesque spot—good fishing, good sport, nothing to do—all these things are delectable, yet time hangs heavy. I am weary and as unhappy as any man can well be. I am consumed with "*ennui*." Colonel S——, Captain B——, and D——, a tavern-keeper, are the swells of this place. I keep myself to my miserable quarters, and do not associate with these great people. Like the good Lafontaine of old, I sleep part of the day and do nothing the rest; hunting

*On the Niagara River.

and fishing is devoid of attractions for me. Would that some of my friends would drift this way. Nothing easier. Batteaux start from Montreal every day, and, when with me, should they be overtaken by "*ennui*," opportunities of return are just as plenty.

Shall I tell of the many attractions of my quarters? (1) My four poster consist of four rough planks, nailed to four uprights; it can accommodate six with ease; (2) My room has two large window sashes—my kitchen the same—but being fond of an abundance of fresh air, I have not provided the sashes with panes; here it can never be said "who breaks the glasses pays"* for there are none; (3) To close my quarters I would need four doors; the kitchen door is stowed away in the garret—it has no hinges; two others have their panels knocked out; the fourth consists of the frame only; (4) The walls are throughout of a rich, smoky, brown colour; they are not hung with costly gobelins tapestry, but the delicate webs of my friends the spiders festoon the ceiling; nor are there artistic paintings—such decorations are not in fashion at Cananocoui; preference is shown in my apartments for drawings in chalk or coal, representing various fantastic creatures—related to the mammoth perhaps; their prototypes certainly antedated the deluge. Now come and see for yourself if I have not told you the truth, all the truth, and nothing but the truth, about the attractions of my quarters in far-famed Cananocoui. . . .

J. L. H. NEILSON.

*"Qui casse les vitres paye" a very common saying among the French Canadians.

FOOT NOTE.—With the exception of a few detached pages containing nothing of much interest I have now translated the best of Viger's Journal such as I possess it. I have, however, been recently told that a more complete copy, perhaps the original version, covering the period from April to Nov. 1813, including the account of Sackett's Harbour expedition, the battles of Chrysler's Farm and Chateauguay, exists among the collections of Principal Verreau of the Normal School, Montreal.