



Frederick C. Mürtele

Quebec.

RELIEVÉ PAR  
P. A. LAFRANÇOIS




The background of the image is a traditional marbled paper pattern. It features a dense, irregular network of veins in shades of red and blue, set against a light beige or cream-colored base. The overall effect is a complex, organic texture. In the upper left quadrant, there is a white rectangular label with a thin black border. Inside this label, the text "The Library of York University" is written in a black, elegant Gothic-style script. The text is arranged in two lines, with "The Library of" on the top line and "York University" on the bottom line.

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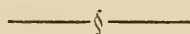
DELIVERED BY

JAMES STEVENSON, PRESIDENT,

WEDNESDAY, 19TH DECEMBER, 1877,

TO THE MEMBERS OF

## The Literary and Historical Society of Quebec.



I have much pleasure in welcoming you to the first meeting of the lecture season, and I hope the proceedings of the evening may not prove altogether uninteresting.

We shall have the pleasure of listening to a lecture by one of our associate members, Mr. Turcotte, recalling the annals of this Society. The purposes for which this Society was formed are clearly set forth in its Royal Charter: "The prosecution of researches into the early history of Canada; the recovering, procuring, and publishing interesting documents and useful information as to the natural, civil, and literary history of British North America, and for the advancement of the arts and sciences, from which public benefit may be expected."

Mr. Benjamin Sult, of Ottawa, is at present engaged in preparing for the press, a history of "L'Institut Canadien" of Ottawa; and Mr. Turcotte, animated by a similar spirit, has prepared a short history of our own Society, which was established long before the city of Ottawa had any existence, or was even known as a place under its primitive patronymic of "By-town."\*

\* After the late Colonel By, Royal Engineers.

This Society, as far as I have had opportunities of judging, has realized the expectations of its Founder. Its rooms are the resort of those who find time to cultivate an acquaintance with literature, and who are desirous of diffusing knowledge. A few of its members continue to prosecute researches into the early history of Canada; and from time to time, useful information relating to the natural, civil, and literary history of the country, appears in our "Transactions." The aids which the Society affords to study, the museum and the library, are accessible to members during the greater part of the day, and are not allowed to fall into a state of decay or neglect; but are properly arranged, duly cared for, and frequently enriched by desirable additions.

Although the Society was formed chiefly for the purpose of prosecuting researches into the early history of Canada, its founder, the Earl of Dalhousie, was anxious to bring together and secure the co-operation of all those in the small community, who had given their attention to subjects of science, whether natural, physical or historical. Hence the museum for the purpose of exhibiting specimens of the Fauna and Flora, as well as the Archæology and Numismatology of the young colony. The department of Natural history—though somewhat foreign to the main purpose of our mission—has received a good deal of attention, and I believe the Ornithology, Oology, and Entomology of Lower Canada are fairly represented. Upon all those subjects, however, I can unfortunately say but little, for the simple reason that from my own ignorance of them, I have nothing to contribute. Still I am not insensible to the enjoyment which our collections must furnish to the students of natural history, and to every lover of nature.

As regards other objects in our museum, considerable interest is attached to the Indian relics, to some valuable old charts, a well executed drawing, representing the inte-

rior of the old church of the Recollet Fathers, models of forts, and other reminiscences of old buildings and places in Quebec, all which may be considered the commencement of a collection to be designated hereafter our Archæological Section. The Society is perhaps fortunate in the possession of these relics, for the mural monuments of Quebec, those mute chroniclers which better represent the character of a city than a score of books, are rapidly disappearing. Municipalities generally look upon things from the utilitarian point of view, and are never very favorably disposed towards old city walls, but look upon them as useless impediments to circulation. Old gateways, too, are an impediment to traffic, so that there is a strong tendency to demolish them. Artists and antiquarians, on the other hand, and all people who have either a love for the picturesque, or a sentimental interest in the historical past, are eager to preserve such great visible relics of it, as walls and towers, which speak of it to all men, and once destroyed can never be restored. The familiar monuments, witnesses of olden times—our gates—are gone, but they may be replaced by others of modern and more ornamental construction. We have reason to hope they will, for our worthy Mayor informed us in a recent speech, that the Prime Minister had promised to place on the estimates for next session of the Dominion Parliament, an item for carrying out the improvements suggested by our distinguished Governor-General. I trust, therefore, that the old walls which surround the city proper, may be spared, and that suitable gates will be built in the breaches. There is a strong desire to preserve the monuments of the past in a city, rich in associations with memorable events and romantic adventure. Thanks to the enterprise and liberality of a few of our esteemed citizens, the historic Plains of Abraham have been rescued from a discreditable condition, and are now surrounded by a substantial fence, while the Plains continue accessible as a promenade, a drive, or a parade ground.

Our limited collection of coins and medals, some of which are exhibited in the reading room, has no doubt been examined by many members. That collection has not been made for the mere purpose of gratifying or amusing antiquarian curiosity, but with a higher and more important object. No doubt public acts, official papers, journals and private memoirs are the sources from which the historian must draw his facts, but he frequently has recourse to cabinets of coins and medals for information. Old coins and medals may therefore be classed with historical documents, for they are of acknowledged value and service in the elucidation of history, especially of ancient history. Princes and corporations consecrate the memory of great events by striking medals, the materials of which are so durable that many historical facts unnoticed in manuscripts and inscriptions, stand recorded upon medals. The national collections of Great Britain have recently been enriched by valuable trovers or finds. We read in Ruding that: "Some years ago, as four boys, under ten years of age, were playing at marbles, on a Sunday afternoon, on a small piece of pasture land, at Beaworth, in Hampshire, one of them discovered in the track of a wagon-wheel, a piece of lead sticking up above the surface; upon stooping down to take hold of it he perceived a small hole, into which he thrust his hand, and brought out a number of coins, his companions immediately following his example. Though they did not consider their treasure to be more than old buttons, they concealed part of them in an adjoining potato field, and others they took to the village of Beaworth, but treating them as of no value, some they jerked into the pond, and others they flung about the road. Half a dozen villagers who were, as usual upon a Sunday afternoon, congregated in the street, were attracted by the circumstance, and being more aware of the value of the pieces thus discovered, hastened to the spot and commenced a regular scramble for the booty. As some of the parties



obtained possession of many more than others, the parents of the boys who first discovered the treasure, became dissatisfied, and appealed to the owner of the land. This gentleman immediately sent a confidential person to Beaworth to claim from the parties the delivery of the coins to him, which was readily complied with, though it is suspected not to the full extent; on the same evening he received upwards of six thousand. They were chiefly composed of coins of William the Conqueror and William II; and, according to the villagers' account, they were packed in regular layers, in a leaden case, with an attempt at chronological arrangement."

But perhaps the greatest discovery that has been made in modern times of treasure-trove, in the shape of ancient coins, has just occurred in Scotland, on the Montrave estate, belonging to Mr. John Gilmour, (son of the senior of one of the leading commercial houses in this city), who is now in this country, and from whom I have received the following interesting particulars on the subject: "Several farm laborers had been employed to drain a part of the land about 500 yards from the farm steading. The operations were being carried on two feet from where, according to the drain plan of the farm, laborers must have been engaged in a similar enterprise a quarter of a century ago. The soil is of the wet, boggy sort. The laborers had not been long at work, and had only got ten inches below the surface, when one of the picks struck upon what, at first, seemed to be a round boulder, which was speedily unearthed, it then appeared that the stone was the cover of a large pot, into which it was firmly wedged. It was considerable time before the contents could be got out. Latterly this was accomplished, though with difficulty, and earth and coins emptied on the ground. It was a very tedious and difficult task to separate the pieces of silver

from the earth, the sides, and the bottom of the pot. Indeed the bottom of the pot remains inlaid with coins. On removal to Montrave House, the counting was proceeded with by Mr. and Mrs. Gilmour, when it was discovered that there were upwards of 10,700 pieces! The most of these are about the size and thickness of a well worn sixpence, a few the size of a florin, though not so thick, and a small number of medium size between these. From the partial examination that has been made, the silver pieces are evidently the coins of the realm that were used in the 12th, 13th, and 14th centuries. The most of the letters are obliterated. Some of them bear the words *Rex Scotorum Dei Grati*, and *Rex Scotorum David Di Grati*. These letters surround the head of a monarch on the one side, while on the other a cross extends over the whole silver piece, with four stars in angles in the centre. In several, three dots occupy the place of the stars. It is supposed that the coins were used in the reigns of Robert II, Robert III, David II, and in one or other of the Alexanders, and that they must have been in the position where they were found, for more than 300 years. The pot, which is in an excellent state of preservation, is about 20 inches high, 13 inches in diameter at the top, and bulging out towards the centre. It is evidently a bronze composition. The stone which covered the mouth of the pot is of a reddish color, very much decayed, and in a crumbling state.”

“Amongst the coins found at Montrave are many foreign imitations manufactured chiefly in Holland—raising interesting questions for the Antiquary and Historian. Half of the coins seem to be Scotch, half English, and many of them have a present market value for museums and private collections, of from \$25 to \$50 each; at these prices, the 10,735 pieces would be worth converting into current coin. The Queen, however, is entitled to the whole, and all, including the pot, are now in London, where, after

scientific examination and classification, probably occupying a year or two, the final distribution will be made as may please Her Majesty. To the two men only who actually dug up the treasure, is any share of the find lawfully due. The proprietor of the estate, can demand nothing, although every reason exists for believing that when the investigation is over, he will receive back any portion he may in reason ask for."

"The kingdom of Fife, in which the Montrave estate is situated, is rich in Historical tit-bits, and there, as elsewhere, old coins and other relics are, no doubt, appropriated by the finders oftener than given up. On the estate of Largo, some years ago, an interesting and valuable suit of silver armour was found by a vagrant pedlar who unfortunately kept his secret until disposing of his find in the ordinary course of his trade, by peddling it piece by piece away, he lost to the country a priceless relic of the fierce old times." It has ever been considered as the common interest of mankind to concur in the preservation of old coins, for few monuments have contributed more to establish history upon a sound and trustworthy basis than the numary monuments.

And now leaving the museum, I turn to our extensive library, comprising upwards of thirteen thousand volumes. It would be difficult to construct a sentence which could convey an adequate idea of the collection of valuable books which it contains. Since the formation of the Society, many rare and valuable volumes have been damaged and destroyed by fire, but the liberal contributions which have since been made, from time to time, by the Government and by private individuals, have enriched the library with works which illustrate the truths of history, and exhibit the progress of science. The members of the Council, in making their selection of books, have not been unmindful

of the mission and objects of the Society, and consequently a preference has been shown for those more costly productions which few can afford to purchase, but which many feel bound to read ; while the lighter and more graceful forms of literature have not been systematically excluded. A roomy fire-proof chamber has recently been constructed in the basement of this building, for the custody of old and rare works which could not be replaced in the event of loss ; and to make security doubly sure, the chamber has been provided with an iron chest, in which historical manuscripts, memoirs, and other documents which constitute the archives of the Society are deposited.

Since I last had the pleasure of meeting you, this society has published its transactions for 1876-7, and also a small volume of historical documents relating to the war of 1812, selected from those rare old pages in our possession, of the "Quebec Gazette." Among the documents which we have just published, will be found particulars of the engagement between the British man-of-war "Leopard," Captain Humphreys, and the American frigate "Chesapeake," Commodore Barron, one of the events, if not the very event, which brought on the war of 1812. I shall read a portion of a paper which I have just received from a friend relating to that affair. "In the early part of June, 1807, the fifty-gun ship "Leopard," Capt. Salasbury Pryce Humphreys, sailed from Halifax with an order addressed to the captains and commanders under the vice-Admiral's command, directing that in case of meeting the American frigate "Chesapeake" at sea, and without the limit of the United States, they were to show her Captain that order, and require to search for deserters from His Majesty's ships "Belleisle," "Bellona," "Triumph," "Melampus," "Chicester," "Halifax" and "Zenobia," and were to proceed and search for the same." "The 'Leopard' having weighed and made sail, arrived off Cape Henry within hail of the 'Chesapeake.'"



Captain Humphreys hailing, said, "He had despatches from the British Commander-in-Chief." The answer was "Send them on board, I shall heave to." Both vessels hove to at about half-past three in the afternoon, and in a few minutes Lieut. Meade went on board the "Chesapeake," bearing in addition to Vice-Admiral Berkley's order, already cited, a letter from Captain Humphreys to Commodore Barron, adverting to the order enclosed, and expressing a hope that every circumstance might be amicably arranged. At 4.15 in the afternoon, the boat not making her appearance, the "Leopard" recalled her by signal, and in a few minutes Lieut. Meade returned with Commodore Barron's reply : "I know of no such men as you describe, the officers who were on the recruiting service for this ship, were particularly instructed not to enter any deserters from His Britannic Majesty's ships, nor do I know of any being here." "The Commodore then states that his instructions are not to permit the crew of his ship to be mustered by any but her own officers, that he wishes to preserve harmony, and that he hopes his answer will prove satisfactory."

"The 'Leopard' then edged down nearer to the 'Chesapeake,' and Captain Humphreys again hailing, said :— 'Commodore Barron, you must be aware of the necessity I am under of complying with the orders of my Commander-in-Chief.' After this hail had been twice repeated, the only reply returned was, 'I do not understand what you say,' yet the words were distinctly heard by the hailing ship, and she was to windward. Captain Humphreys resolved no longer to be trifled with, and observing on board the American frigate indications of intended resistance, the 'Leopard' discharged a shot across the 'Chesapeake's' fore-foot. In a minute's time, a second shot was fired ; and in two minutes more, or at 4.30 p.m., nothing but evasive answers being returned to the hails of Captain Humphreys, the 'Leopard' fired her broadside. Commodore Barron then

hailed ; upon this, orders were given to cease firing ; but as the purport of the hail was only to intimate that he would send a boat on board the 'Leopard,' and as the 'Chesapeake' was now clearly seen making preparations to return the fire, the thing was considered to be an artifice to gain time, and the 'Leopard' renewed her fire ; the 'Chesapeake' returned a few straggling shots, not one of which struck her opponent, and at 4.45, just as the 'Leopard' had fired her third broadside, the American frigate *hauled down her colours.*"

" Almost immediately after the surrender of the American frigate, her fifth Lieutenant, Mr. Sidney Smith, came on board the "Leopard" with a verbal message from Commodore Barron, signifying that he considered the "Chesapeake" to be the "Leopard's" prize."

" At 5 p.m., Lieut. Gordon, J. Talcon, George Martin Guise, and John Meade, with several petty officers and men, went on board the "Chesapeake" to fulfil the object of the orders of Vice-Admiral Berkley. The books of the "Chesapeake" were produced and the crew mustered, one only of the five deserters from the "Halifax" was found, but three were found from the "Melampus" frigate.

" With these, at 7.30 p.m., the "Leopard's" boat returned to the ship, bringing also Lieut. William Henry Allen, of the "Chesapeake," with a letter from Commodore Barron, again offering to deliver up the frigate as a prize. To this Capt. Humphreys replied, that having fulfilled his instructions, he had nothing more to desire, but must proceed to join his squadron, he then tendered assistance and deplored the extremity to which he had been compelled to resort. At 8 p.m. the "Leopard" made sail towards Lynhaven, and shortly after the "Chesapeake" did the same towards Hampton Roads."

“Unfortunately this encounter, although bloodless to the “Leopard,” was not so to the “Chesapeake,” the latter having had three seamen killed, the Commodore, one midshipman, and sixteen seamen severely wounded. Although no one could regret more than Captain Humphreys that the order should have issued, he performed the unpleasant duty imposed upon him like a gentleman and a true heart of oak. Admiral Berkley perfectly approved of the conduct of Captain Humphreys in the fulfilment of his duty, but the Captain was nevertheless visited with the condign displeasure of the Admiralty, was recalled, and never received any command afterwards, although he frequently applied for one. When the “Chesapeake” was captured by the “Shannon,” during the war of 1812, he earnestly solicited Lord Melville to give the command to him to whom she had previously lowered her colours; but neither this nor any other application met with success.” Twenty-seven years later, however, our sailor-king, William the IVth, having looked into the case of Captain Humphreys (afterwards better known as Sir Salasbury Pryce Davenport), conferred upon him the honor of Knight-hood, thus tardily recognizing the merits of a brave officer. Through the kindness of his grandson, Malcolm Davenport, Esq., son of the late Captain Davenport, of the 39th Regiment, who married a daughter of Chief-Justice Sewell, one of our first presidents, I have been enabled to submit the particulars just read of the attack on the “Chesapeake,” and I am further enabled to bring the event vividly before you by exhibiting an admirable likeness of the gallant sailor—valuable both as a work of art and a historical relic—which has been entrusted, temporarily, to the safe-keeping of this society by the heirs of the family. Every possible reparation for the attack on the ‘Chesapeake’ was made and offered to the American Government. It was declared that the right of search, when applied to

ships of war, extended only to a *requisition*, and could not be carried into effect by force. But the wrath of America was unappeasable, the blow, the irreparable and unpardonable blow, had been struck.

The volumes of the *Quebec Gazette*, which afford further information on the same subject, contain numerous copies of important state papers relating to the civil and military history of Canada, published under the authority of the Executive Government. To trace the sources and movements of history in public documents is an enterprise full of interest and utility. In the perusal of historical works, otherwise nobly executed, we frequently meet with passages the accuracy of which has to be questioned ; for the historical imagination sometimes unconsciously paints a picture not of what took place, but of something entirely different ; something, perhaps, that harmonizes with the political bias of the author. I shall give an instance of this :—In one of our most interesting histories of England, it is stated that when King Charles I, who had left London to spend some time in Scotland, received the terrible news of the Irish rebellion, terrible because of the cruelties which were committed, “he sat down and wrote coolly, ‘I hope the ill-news of Ireland may hinder these follies in England.’ ” Now listen to what we have from other sources, from those who were in the company of the King at the time :—“The King was engaged in the game of golf,\* on Leith Links, when in November, 1641, a letter was put into his hands which gave the first news of the Irish rebellion ; on reading the letter he suddenly called for his coach, and leaning upon one of his attendants, in great agitation, he drove to Holyrood palace, from whence he

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\*The Royal and ancient game of golf, in which the King took delight, was introduced a few years ago into Canada by the present Captain of the Quebec Golf Club, C. Farquarson Smith, Esq., and is played with great zest, during the golfing season, by some of our citizens, over that extended common known as the Cove Field, which golfers now call the Quebec *links*, in imitation of the custom in the Mother Country of applying the term *links* to an extended grass common or downs.



set out the next day for London." This was, undoubtedly, his last game in Scotland, and probably the last game of golf he ever played. The touching story of the golfers bears upon its face the very stamp of truth, and removes the painful impression produced upon the mind by the implied heartlessness of the King, as he is represented in the historical narrative.

It would not be difficult to adduce other instances of conflicting testimony in historical literature, but I have said sufficient to show that for practical guidance in the construction of history, we have to depend upon such documents as this Society, in fulfilment of its mission, has published from time to time. Thus far the attention of its working members has been bestowed chiefly upon the early history of Canada under the French régime—a delightful theme, equally gratifying to the historical and the antiquarian taste. We have, however, reached a point, I think, in our search for materials belonging to that period of history, when we travel over the same ground again and again without making many new discoveries, and consequently it has been considered desirable to enter upon another field embracing a later period of our history, and to deal with it in the same manner that we have dealt with the elder. Hence the publication of the fifth series of historical documents which I have referred to, and which relate almost exclusively to the war of 1812, every event of which is interesting to us as Canadians.

In pursuance, then, of that design, it is the intention of the Society, I believe, to continue collecting and publishing such papers of interest as can be obtained, consisting of official documents, journals and memoirs relating to the war. The latter, I may add, are very rare; therefore, if any member of the society has such in his possession, or knows where they are to be found, I

shall be pleased if he will communicate with me on the subject with a view to their publication. One valuable memoir has been transmitted to me by our esteemed friend, Colonel Coffin, of Ottawa, author of "The War of 1812 and its Moral," in whose behalf I have now the pleasure of presenting the memoir to the Society, as a gift, viz. :—An autograph letter of the late Sir Etienne Taché, relating to the battle of Chateauguay and the attack on Plattsburg. I shall read an extract from a note, which I received from Colonel Coffin, accompanying the *mémoire*.

"I have been amusing myself," he says, "by re-assorting papers relating to the war of 1812. Side by side with a very pleasant letter from yourself, I find a paper to which I attach more than ordinary historical importance. It is an autograph letter from Sir Etienne Taché, written in 1863, to assist chiefly in compiling my (intended) account of the Plattsburg campaign. I never got so far, and so the paper has remained unused. It is doubly valuable as a truthful and trustworthy narrative of the occurrences related, and as indicative of the modest and manly character of the writer. I think the paper too valuable to remain in my hands, and that the archives of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec would be an appropriate shrine for such a relique. I hasten, then, to place it, through you, at the disposal of this body, praying simply that in return they will have the goodness to cause a copy to be made and sent to me—retaining the original."

I shall now do myself the honor of reading the memoir, which I am sure will be listened to with attentive interest. It is dated

MONTMAGNY, 29<sup>me</sup> MAI, 1863.

MON CHER COLONEL,

Je vous remercie bien sincèrement de votre obligeance, dans le dessein d'obtenir de moi des renseignements per-

sonnels touchant la bataille de Châteauguay, afin de vous permettre d'introduire mon nom dans la série de lectures que vous vous proposez de donner sur les événements de la guerre de 1812. Les choses changent bien dans le cours d'un demi-siècle, et les péripéties de la vie humaine étonnent souvent ceux qui en sont les jouets, tant dans la bonne que dans la mauvaise fortune.

Il y aura cinquante ans l'automne prochain que s'est livrée la bataille de Châteauguay. A cette époque je n'étais *qu'un pauvre petit lieutenant*, bien jeune, n'ayant que 18 ans. Vous vous proposez de donner, sur la dernière guerre avec nos voisins, des lectures *historiques*, sans doute, et non de la *poésie*, ou du *roman*, comme cela se pratique quelque fois. Or, *l'histoire*, c'est quelque chose de sacrée; l'histoire c'est la fille du ciel, qui n'admet pas l'ombre même d'un relief pour l'ornement d'un fait. Voici donc la part que j'ai réellement prise lors de l'événement mémorable en question. Deux de nos compagnies—la droite et la gauche, commandées par MM. les capitaines Lévesque et Debartch—furent chaudement engagées dans cette affaire; un lieutenant y fut blessé—Powell, des Townships—et plusieurs hommes tués et mis hors de combat, *mais je ne faisais pas partie de ces compagnies*. Le reste du bataillon, le 5ème, ou "*Devil's own*," comme on l'appelait alors, parce qu'il y avait bien des avocats parmi les officiers, était stationné aux Cèdres et au Côteau-du-Lac. A la nouvelle de l'approche d'un gros corps ennemi se dirigeant *vers la fourche*; ordre fut donné au détachement stationné au Côteau-du-Lac de traverser incontinent à Beauharnois et de se porter en toute hâte sur Châteauguay. Ce détachement, composé de trois compagnies, était commandé par le Major Guy, et les Capitaines étaient Louis Joseph Papineau, La Rocque et votre humble serviteur, le petit Lieutenant de 18 ans, commandant une compagnie vacante en l'absence de son brave Capitaine, M. Berezy, remplissant à

cette époque, dans le Haut-Canada, des fonctions spéciales. Ce détachement, après avoir passé le fleuve, en toute hâte se dirigea à marches forcées à travers les bois, les rivières et les marais sur Châteauguay. Cependant il était décrété, là-haut, que, nonobstant nos fatigues et nos privations de toutes sortes, nous n'aurions pas le plaisir de tirer un coup de fusil, l'ennemi ayant pris la fuite peu de temps avant notre arrivée. Néanmoins nous pûmes occuper de suite une position militaire et nous préparer à prendre une bonne part à une nouvelle lutte, si l'ennemi eût voulu la recommencer. C'est sur la narration fidèle, et attestée, de la part que prit notre détachement à l'affaire de Châteauguay, que la Commission, chargée par les autorités Britanniques de la distribution des médailles, a accordé la médaille de Châteauguay aux officiers et aux miliciens de ce détachement qui l'ont réclamée. Ainsi vous voyez, mon cher Colonel, que si *mes lauriers* de Châteauguay n'ont pas été teints de sang, ils ont été en revanche mouillés de beaucoup de sueurs et couvert d'une énorme quantité de boue et de fange !

Le printemps suivant, dans le mois d'avril, le détachement dont je faisais partie, ayant passé l'hiver en garnison à Montréal, ne fut pas plus heureux, du moins quant à l'occasion de faire le coup de fusil. Sur la nouvelle d'une approche de l'ennemi vers Lacolle, il reçut ordre, avec trois jours de provisions, de se porter en toute hâte sur le point menacé. Nous passâmes le fleuve à la veille de la débâcle, non sans beaucoup de dangers, et nous dirigeames alors notre marche par Laprairie, St. Philippe, l'Acadie, Bartonville, sur Lacolle. Vous dire la misère et la fatigue que nous éprouvâmes durant tout le cours de cette expédition est chose impossible à décrire, et avant de bivouaquer le soir à Bartonville il nous fallut passer une petite rivière, moitié à la nage pour les plus petits, et à l'eau sous les aisselles pour les plus grands, les hommes, durant cette ma-



nœuvre, accrochant leurs gibernes entre la bayette du fusil et le coude de la baïonnette pour préserver la poudre. Enfin, rendus à Bartonville, mouillés plus que des canards, il nous fallut coucher à *la belle étoile*, par une nuit très-froide du mois d'avril, et nous déshabiller *nus comme la main*, pour tordre nos vêtements et les faire sécher au feu de vieilles bâtisses que nous avons embrasées, et des piquets et perches de clôture qui se trouvaient à notre portée, dont nous nous servîmes toute la nuit pour combustible, durant de longues heures de souffrance. A l'heure qu'il est, je ne puis m'expliquer comment la grande moitié du détachement ne mourut pas de misère ; mais la jeunesse a tant de viabilité ; l'enthousiasme fait vaincre tant de périls ! Encore s'il nous eut été donné de pouvoir tirer un coup de fusil sur l'ennemi, cela nous eut dédommagé de bien des misères ; mais arrivés le soir, à la nuit tombante, à Bartonville, les Américains venaient d'être repoussés quelques heures auparavant, et cela seulement à deux milles de distance d'où nous étions parvenus. Ainsi la gloire—voyez les caprices de Dame fortune—les lauriers furent pour ceux qui n'avaient pas fait un mille pour se déplacer ; la fatigue, la misère, les dangers de l'immersion totale du corps, à cette saison de l'année, le dépit de n'avoir pas combattu l'ennemi, après tant de souffrances, devinrent notre partage ; et il nous fallut rebrousser chemin, la tête basse ; c'est bien ce qui s'appelle, à juste titre : “fortune de guerre.”

La campagne de 1814 s'étant ainsi ouverte pour nous d'une manière assez désagréable, se termina, en revanche, il faut le dire, d'une manière plus conforme au naissant esprit militaire qui commençait à se manifester alors chez tous nos compatriotes. En revenant donc de Bartonville, nous rencontrâmes l'Honorable Gerald de Courcy, ci-devant Major au 70ème Régiment d'infanterie, qui venait d'être nommé Lieutenant-Colonel de notre bataillon, lequel, dès lors transformé en bataillon d'infanterie légère, fut appelé

“Chasseurs Canadiens.” Depuis cette époque—la fin d’avril 1814—jusqu’à la marche de l’armée échelonnée depuis Chambly à Odletown, sur le territoire ennemi, au commencement de Septembre, ce ne fut pour nous qu’exercice et manœuvres du matin au soir. Notre jeune et infatigable chef étant debout au *réveille*--4 heures du matin--jusqu’à la nuit noire, nous donnait une heure pour déjeuner, une heure-et-demie pour diner, une heure pour souper, et employait le reste du temps, sans relâche, à l’instruction des officiers et des soldats. Aussi fallait-il voir notre corps, vers la fin d’août, comme il était beau, comme il manœuvrait fièrement en ligne, côte-à-côte des Wellingtoniens; comme il bondissait de jeunesse et d’enthousiasme, comme il avait confiance en sa force! Excusez, mon cher Colonel, ces réminiscences d’un demi-siècle: l’âge affaiblit le corps, et je sens des larmes involontaires s’échapper de mes yeux. La marche sur Plattsburg ayant été ordonnée, les Chasseurs Canadiens, les Voltigeurs, appartenant à la brigade Brisbane, longèrent les bords du lac Champlain, suivis du 103ème et du 13ème Régiments d’infanterie, composant cette brigade, tandis que les brigades Power et autres se portaient sur le même point par le chemin intérieur et parallèle à celui du lac. La gauche en tête, les Chasseurs ayant eu l’honneur d’être appelés à former l’avant-garde, mon brave Capitaine, William Berezy, qui alors avait repris le commandement de sa compagnie, celle de la gauche, eut l’avantage d’ouvrir la marche avec ses tirailleurs. Les tirailleurs ennemis firent bien frime de nous inquiéter, mais notre feu bien nourri, dans tous les cas, nous en débarrassa bien promptement. La colonne, arrivée à trois ou quatre milles de la place, se vit tout à coup arrêtée par des embarras considérables; des pins de trois à quatre pieds de diamètre ayant été jetés péle-mêle, tête bêche, à travers la voie principale. D’abord le Général mit à l’œuvre ses sapeurs Wellingtoniens; mais que faire avec des hommes n’ayant que des serpes et des égohines “*handsaws*” pour

couper des pins de trois pieds sur la souche ? Alors de Courcy et Herriot se procurèrent des hâches, et cent bons bras Canadiens, mettant le fusil de côté pour un instant, commencèrent l'œuvre du déblaiement. Les pins se séparent en pièces de vingt pieds de long, comme par enchantement ; on les place à droite et à gauche de la route ; la colonne, arrêtée pour un instant, reprend sa marche : infanterie, artillerie et cavalerie se dirigent en avant. C'est alors que j'entendis un officier de l'état-major du Général Brisbane s'écrier : "*what smart young fellows ; what should we have done without these lads.*" Deux heures après la tête de la colonne, c'est-à-dire, mon vaillant Capitaine Berezy, arrivait à "*Dead Creek,*" qu'il fallut passer à gué, l'eau étant à demi-jambe, et fort agréable à cette saison de l'année, offrant un grand contraste, pour la sensation et la profondeur, avec la petite rivière que nous avons passée le mois d'avril précédent en approchant de Bartonville. Débarrassés alors des tirailleurs ennemis, nous nous trouvâmes en face du lac Champlain, en vue de la belle flotte Américaine, qui semblait nous défier, et qui, ayant des chaloupes canonnières sur les bords du lac, nous salua de son mieux, sans que nos chefs daignassent répondre à cet acte d'agression. Pendant six jours nous fûmes occupés à la tranchée et à la protection de nos ouvrages, à demi-portée de canon de l'ennemi.

Le jour de l'assaut, dont le signal devait être donné par l'attaque de notre flotte, la compagnie Berezy, toujours la gauche en tête, étendait son front en tirailleurs sur notre côté de la rive de la Saranaque, et les tirailleurs Américains nous rencontrant, en manœuvrant en sens inverse, il s'en suivit une bien vive fusillade, durant laquelle notre compagnie, d'un effectif de 70, eut treize hommes de tués et mis hors de combat en moins de quinze minutes. Mais le Capitaine Berezy m'ayant ordonné d'aller informer le Colonel de ce qui se passait, celui-ci ordonnant un "à

*gauche—pas de course !*” au reste du bataillon, les Voltigeurs, stationnés sur notre droite, en faisant de même, en un clin d’œil ce renfort opportun chassa dans l’intérieur du bois la force qui nous était opposée.

Je n’entreprendrai pas ici de blâmer, de justifier ou d’expliquer tout ce qui est arrivé dans le cours de la malheureuse expédition de Plattsburg. J’ai désiré me borner dans cette lettre à faire voir le rôle que jouèrent les Voltigeurs et les Chasseurs Canadiens dans cette occasion. Les Chasseurs, arrivés les premiers devant Plattsburg, furent aussi les derniers à laisser cette place : ils avaient formé l’avant-garde en marchant contre l’ennemi, ils durent former l’arrière-garde en retraitant sur le territoire Canadien. Quant à la part que prirent dans les chaloupes canonnières, deux compagnies du 3<sup>ème</sup> bataillon—les compagnies de flancs—je prends la liberté de vous référer à un petit mémoire que j’ai publié dans les “Mémoires et documents publiés par la Société Historique de Montréal, troisième livraison,” que je vous envoie, et que je vous prie de me renvoyer lorsque vous l’aurez lu, n’ayant que cette copie. Indépendamment de cette brochure, je vous expédie par la poste de ce jour trois exemplaires d’un petit opuscule que je viens de publier sur l’organisation des Volontaires et de la Milice. En somme, si l’expédition de Plattsburg a été une affaire manquée pour l’état, elle n’en a pas moins été une belle occasion pour les Franco-Canadiens, qui n’étaient pas tenus, par la loi, de faire une guerre d’agression en pays ennemi—de montrer que les frimas du Canada n’avaient rien refroidi l’ardeur belliqueuse des petits-fils de la vieille France ; que, semblables en tout à leurs ancêtres, ils savaient donner des preuves de cette gaieté inépuisable, de cette agilité incroyable, de ce mépris de la vie qui, à toutes les époques de l’histoire de l’Europe, a distingué le soldat Français.

Tout à vous,

E. P. TACHÉ.



The late Hon. Wm. Hamilton Merrit, of Niagara, a contemporary of Sir Etienne, a fellow soldier, and subsequently a fellow legislator, left a diary which he kept during the war—a mass of papers—no doubt of much historical value, but they were all burnt up with the town of Niagara. The raw material out of which history is formed consists of such papers : their safety and preservation is therefore a matter of importance to the common interest. We have, I fear, reason to apprehend that valuable historical documents are not lodged in places of safety. It is therefore the duty of the society to take cognisance of this, and to protect the archives of the country by every means in its power. At a Convention recently held in Ottawa, on the occasion of the inauguration of the new Hall of L'Institut Canadien, the subject of the archives of Canada was discussed. This society sent two delegates to that Convention, Past-President J. M. LeMoine, Esq., and Vice-President Colonel Strange, and on their return they submitted a lucid report of the proceedings, adverting more especially to the subject of the archives. Their views correspond with those expressed by one of our late Presidents —“That our first efforts should be directed to making arrangements for collecting together, assorting and indexing the very valuable historical documents which we already possess, but which are unavailable from being scattered from one end of the Dominion to the other.” No doubt that course should be adopted, and this society should join with others of kindred purpose in memorializing the Dominion Government upon the expediency, or rather the necessity of securing the safety and preservation of the archives by gathering them together into one Public Record Office. I shall not, however, attempt to discuss the subject in the last paragraph of an address already spun out to too great length ; but I will suggest that a special general meeting should be called for the purpose of dealing with it in a manner calculated to lead to practical and beneficial results.