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MEMORANDUM ON THE DEFENCE OF CANADA.

To Lord Bathurst.

MY DEAR LORD,

London, 1st March, 1819.

I have perused with attention the despatches from the Duke of Richmond upon the defences of Canada, and the papers upon that subject sent to me from your office, which I now return; and having given them every consideration in my power, and endeavoured to make myself acquainted with the nature of the military operations which can be carried on in that country, I am about to communicate to your Lordship my opinion upon the plans of defence for those provinces.

I concur entirely with the Duke of Richmond, that the points of most importance in the two provinces are Quebec, Montreal, and Kingston.

In respect to Quebec itself, I would recommend the purchase of Mr. Ferguson's ground, and the adoption of every measure in the power of government to obtain the removal of the houses already close to the works.

As far as I can learn, the siege of Quebec would be impracticable in a late season of the year if those houses were removed. I would likewise recommend the construction of the citadel as proposed.

An intrenched camp would likewise be useful on the heights of Abraham, on the line now occupied by the Martello towers; but if its flanks cannot be well secured so as that the communication with the town cannot be interrupted, I would recommend that the camp should only be traced out, and that it should be executed afterwards while the enemy should be on the advance.

No work of this kind can be considered perfect in itself, nor can its defects be kept secret from the power likely to attack it; and it is as well that he should not have the advantage of framing his plan and forming his means of attack with an exact foreknowledge of the system of defence to be opposed to him, and of all its defects.

For this reason, as well as to avoid immediate expense, I would recommend the construction of the works of the intrenched camp to be delayed, although I consider an intrenched camp upon the heights of Abraham useful, and even necessary, con-

sidering the kind of troops which may be assembled for the defence of Quebec.

Connected with the defence of Quebec I shall next proceed to consider of those of the river Richelieu, which appears the only line of advance of an enemy upon Quebec; at least it is the only one contemplated by the Duke of Richmond and the officers who have written upon that subject.

I entirely concur with the Duke in thinking it desirable that the works upon the Isle aux Noix should be reformed and put in a respectable state of defence.

I particularly approve of the scheme of making the work within the island complete, and not to consider the river as the ditch.

I should prefer the work, however, if it occupied a larger proportion of the island, particularly to the northward and westward.

I should not think it necessary to give more than a demi-revêtement to the scarp.

The counterscarp should be revetted in order to admit galleries for a reverse fire for the defence of the ditch.

I would recommend that the covert-way should be palisaded with palisades, each made of an entire tree, placed about three inches asunder, so that musketry could be fired from behind them, and firmly fixed in the ground, but unconnected with each other. However dexterous the American soldiers may be in the use of an axe they could not easily cut down these palisades. This defence with a demi-revêtement, although infinitely less expensive, would thus answer in such situations all the purposes of a complete revêtement in masonry. The palisades might be kept in store, and there would be no occasion to place them till war should be expected.

I would recommend that the fort should occupy the whole, or nearly the whole extent of the Isle aux Noix; and that those works looking to the south-west should have ordnance sufficiently heavy to be able to command the entrance of the south river.

Indeed it would be advisable to occupy, as an outwork of the Isle aux Noix, a small island which is at the mouth of that river, as it appears to be navigable from a point only*.

* Blank in manuscript.

miles from Misiskoni bay, which communicates with lake Champlain; and if an enemy could use this communication he would turn the Isle aux Noix.

The forts of St. John and of Chambly should be kept in a state of efficient repair; and everything should be done to impede the navigation of the Richelieu river by the enemy.

This river remaining in our possession, it appears difficult, if not impossible, in the existing state of the country between the Richelieu, the St. Lawrence, and the American province of Maine, for an enemy to penetrate through it with an army of sufficient strength, its supplies, and the necessary military equipments, to be able to make an attack upon Quebec.

The next point for consideration is Montreal, and I entirely concur with the Duke of Richmond in the opinion that it would be expedient to destroy all the works, and to sell all the magazines, military buildings, &c., at that place, and place them upon the island of St. Helen's. This island should be fortified as is above recommended for the Isle aux Noix.

In reference to the defence of the island of St. Helen's, I would recommend the occupation of the small island of St. Regis, below Cornwall, at the entrance of lake St. François in the river St. Lawrence. This may be considered as an outpost of Montreal, which will besides have the effect of protecting the navigation of the lake St. François, &c.

I do not think it would be necessary to do anything upon the river Châteauguay, although the Americans used it as a line of attack upon Montreal last war. But they were easily repulsed.

Before I proceed to the consideration of Kingston and of the defences of the province of Upper Canada, it is proper that I should advert to the communications with that province.

I consider that by the St. Lawrence above St. Regis, and by the lake Ontario, the river Niagara, the lake Erie, the river Detroit, lake St. Clair, the river St. Clair, and lake Huron, to be impracticable in time of war. An enemy has only to place a few heavy batteries, closed in, at almost any points of the rivers, in order to prevent our use of the navigation. We may likewise prevent his using it. But it is absolutely necessary to us, and is not so to him.

This observation applies only to the rivers; but in respect to the lakes it must be observed that our use of each of them must

depend upon our naval superiority upon it ; and as everything which can enable us to acquire and maintain such naval superiority must come from England, and then by a difficult river navigation of nearly three hundred miles to Kingston and twelve hundred to lake Huron, whereas the enemy have all they require upon the spot, it can scarcely be believed that we shall be able to acquire and maintain that naval superiority. The pains which Sir E. Owen has taken to survey these lakes and rivers, and to point out the places at which loaded boats and vessels might take shelter and might receive protection from works and troops, show the difficulty, nay, the impossibility, of executing such a system. Works must be constructed, armed, and manned at every point of the lakes ; and, after all, the officers and men in them might and would have the mortification of seeing valuable cargoes carried off by a single gunboat, to which they should not be able to afford protection

But not only is the use of these rivers and lakes, as a communication, impracticable in time of war, but even if it were or could be made practicable I should not recommend it, as it is the longest, the most inconvenient and expensive, and the most liable to accidents and contingencies.

I would recommend then, First : That the canal from Montreal to La Chine should be completed, so as to take boats of the largest size.

Secondly : That the navigation of the river Ottawa should be made practicable and easy, to the junction of the river Rideau with the former.

Thirdly : That the navigation of the river Rideau should be made practicable and easy to the junction with the Irish Creek, and thence, if possible, through the different lakes to Kingston.

There is besides, I believe, a line which leads up the Rideau river towards the head of lake Simcoe ; and into lake Simcoe by what is called the Black river. This line ought to be examined and completed, if practicable, either by canal or railway.

All these lines of navigation ought to be rendered, if possible, so perfect as that a steam-vessel might be used to tow the loaded boats. Trackways should be made on which the troops might march.

If the navigation could not be completed between the head of the Irish Creek which runs into the Rideau river and Huntley's bridge on the waters which fall into lake Ontario, I would recommend that a good railway should be constructed, on the carriages of which loaded boats might be taken from the one to the other.

The point of the greatest importance after Montreal is certainly Kingston. It is the connecting-point between the Upper and Lower Province. It contains the dockyard on lake Ontario, and is the most populous town in the province; and at the same time so situated in relation to Sackett's harbour as to be liable at all times to be attacked.

It must, then, be secured in some degree by works; but without having more knowledge of the detail of the ground, and of the positions of the several islands, than I can acquire by the descriptions and plans transmitted, which I have perused and examined, it is impossible for me to suggest what ought to be done.

As the attack must be made, however, by a combined naval and military operation, I would recommend the occupation, with closed works sufficiently armed, of Snake island, Cedar island, and Garden island. Those on the spot would best be able to determine how far this system ought to be carried, or whether there ought to be a work on Cataraqui point and one on Simcoe island. None of these works need be very expensive, or require more than 150 men to garrison them. But they must be well provided with artillery of the largest description; and there must be a good fort on point Henry, or elsewhere on the mainland, as the keep to those outworks.

I confess that I very much doubt that we shall ever be able to maintain even an equality of naval force upon the lake Ontario; and, that being the case, I recommend that we should look for our communications forward, to the improvement of the inland navigation from Kingston by the bay of Quinté and the Rice lake to lake Simcoe, and thence to lake Huron, even if it should be found that a water communication can be established from the head of the Rideau, by the Black river, with lake Simcoe.

It is impossible to form a judgment from the very defective details which I have perused, and the confused maps and

charts which accompany them, how far such a navigation can be insured.

It is very obvious, however, that the object of a military communication can be insured by the assistance of railways for the necessary portages.

If the communication with lake Simcoe were once established, whether by the Rice lake or direct from the head of the Rideau, I would recommend to you to remove the capital of the province from York to Kingston, if that town should not be too far removed from the centre of the province; or, if it is, I would then fix the capital of the province either higher up the Trent, or between the head of the Trent and the head of Holland's river.

If it should be impossible to remove the capital, and York should still be the place, it must be fortified; otherwise, from the probable naval superiority of the enemy on lake Ontario, it will be impossible to prevent that town from falling into his hands as often as it may suit him to visit it, whether in winter or in summer. How this town is to be fortified it is impossible for me to say without knowing more of the ground than I do at present.

The next point for consideration is the Niagara frontier. It is my opinion that this frontier cannot be defended by fort George or fort Erie, or even by the possession of fort Niagara. Both fort George and fort Erie fell in the last war without one day's defence; and notwithstanding that fort Niagara was in our possession from the winter of 1813, General Brown remained on the left of the river Niagara from July to November 1814, and in possession of fort Erie.

The Niagara frontier can be maintained and defended only by a superior army, and this superior army can be maintained only by the means which can be conveyed to that distant frontier. It is obvious that we cannot rely upon the enjoyment of the navigation of lake Ontario.

In my opinion, then, we ought to look to that of La Grande Rivière, which falls into lake Erie. We ought to endeavour to connect the navigation of that river with that of Holland's river, which falls into lake Simcoe, with that of the river Thames, and with that of the river Chippeway, by good railways, if the tributary streams should not allow of doing it by water. By these means we should be able to maintain an army upon the

Niagara frontier notwithstanding that the enemy should be in possession of the navigation of lake Ontario. We should likewise be enabled to concentrate our naval means in small craft upon lake Huron, lake Erie, and lake Ontario, upon whichever of the three we might think fit, and thus be enabled to be superior to the enemy on one of the three, notwithstanding that our operations on shore and the defence of the country could be entirely independent of such superiority.

I am perfectly aware, however, that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to reconcile the inhabitants of the country to this system; that they will not believe they are to be defended unless they have visible means of defence on the spot; and that people of that description are not unlikely to connect themselves with an enemy, to whose mercy they might think they are abandoned; and that to prevent these inconveniences it may be necessary to maintain a fort on the Niagara frontier. If this should be the case, I would, as far as I can judge of the localities, recommend a position on the river Chippeway in preference to either fort Erie or fort George.

The next point for consideration is a station upon lake Huron; and upon the whole I prefer Pentengashene, with its communication with lake Simcoe.

The result of all these measures would be to give us a secure line of communication from Quebec to Lake Huron of less than 500 miles even passing by Kingston, but less than 400 direct by the Rideau and Black river, instead of 1200 miles, and affording better means of defending and maintaining the Niagara frontier.

The system of defence which I would recommend is as follows:—

I suppose the army disposable in the field to consist of 10,000 men, cavalry, infantry of the line, and artillery; besides 1000 troops of the line in garrison at Quebec, 500 at Montreal, 500 in the garrisons on the Richelieu, 500 in Kingston, 500 on the Niagara and in Pentengashene, besides the militia which may be destined for each post.

I take this to be about the force which was in Canada when the last war broke out

I would divide this number into two corps, each consisting of 5000 men complete with its field artillery and equipments.

Each of these corps would of course be joined by the militia not in garrison of the districts which would be the scene of its operations.

I would place the left of these corps on the Irish creek, which falls into the Rideau river.

From thence it could reach Montreal in four days, and the frontier of the Richelieu and the Isle aux Noix in two more, or Quebec in three, supposing the communication to be made as perfect as I believe it might. On the other hand it would reach Kingston in two or three days, and lake Simcoe in ten or twelve more from Kingston, or in six or eight if the communication can be established by the Rideau and Black river.

The right corps, consisting of 5000 men with the militia of the district in which it should carry on its operations, should be posted on the communication between the head of Holland's river, which runs into lake Simcoe, and the head of the Grand river, which runs into lake Erie.

If required at York, it could arrive by the Trent in two or three days; if at Kingston, it could arrive in six or eight days; if on the Niagara frontier, it could arrive by the Grand river and the Chippeway in from five to eight days, according to the extent to which the former can be rendered navigable.

According to this system the magazines and stores of the army, and their points of retreat and safety, will be far removed from the frontier, from the line of defence, and from the scene of the operations, at the same time that every point will be in greater security than it was in the last war.

The ordinary communications will cost half the present expense, and a war in that country will, with greater success, not cost half what the last did.

As far as I can judge of the operations of any future war in these countries, from what took place in the last war, I should say that an American corps of strength and efficiency to contend with a corps consisting of 5000 regular troops and 3,000 militia and Indians, which is what I suppose these corps would consist of, would not readily be formed, and that if such a force could be collected and put in operation, its own size would distress it and oblige it to retire from the country without effecting anything.

In the late war the corps which penetrated furthest into the

country was that which defeated General Proctor, on the Thames, near the Moravian town. But this corps, which did not consist of more than 3000 men, did not quit the river Thames, and did not advance above twenty-five miles from lake St. Clair, suffered extremely from want of provisions.

None of the others on either side, excepting in small plundering parties, were ever five miles from their boats or from their respective frontier.

In considering this system I have laid aside, as impracticable, the notion of attacking the United States on their frontier. I have never yet seen any plan of attack upon that power which was at all likely to answer the purpose ; but I am certain that an attack could not succeed made from this frontier, in which we are frozen up for five months of the year, and on which the enemy have, and must continue to have, the naval superiority.

Believe me, &c.,

WELLINGTON.

Sir Alexander Dickson, R.A., to Field Marshal the Duke of Wellington.

MY LORD DUKE,

Woolwich Common, 10th March, 1819.

The question relative to the best mode of conveying small-arm ammunition being about to come under your Grace's consideration, I venture to address you some remarks explanatory of the observations I had the honour to make on the subject in conversation with your Grace some time ago.

I find that two modes are about to be submitted, one of which is a limber-waggon carrying 20,000 rounds, drawn by four horses, and the other a cart conveying 12,000 rounds, drawn by two horses. The argument in favour of a proportionately larger quantity being conveyed in the cart is, I believe, founded on the admitted principle in traffic, that two one-horse carts will move more material than one two-horse cart, and two carriages with two horses more than one with four, and so on ; but though this may be very just as it regards conveying coals from a pit, or any similar operation going at a slow and regular pace on a good and well-made road, I don't think it ought to be accepted as an argument in military matters, where accelerated movement is frequently necessary, and where an equipment would be required to march on every description of road ; for from past experience I know, as far as regards the present carts, which are intended to carry 12,000, that even with 10,000 cartridges, and drawn by two of the strongest description of horses, they could not exceed a walk for any distance without greatly distressing and shaking the horses, however justly the cart might be balanced ; and if even a greater proportion of ammunition was conveyed in carts than in waggons, the admitted advantage would be greatly counter-