

1900

## MOJOR GEORGE HORNE

One of the most interesting man in Montreal is Major George Horne.

Even the proverbial oldest inhabitants cannot remember that they had not heard of him as somebody who had been on earth previously to themselves.

Sixty years ago he was doing active service in the field during the time of the Papineau rebellion and afterwards served in Ermatinger's celebrated troop of cavalry. Such little things as being one of the founders of the Irish Protestant Benevolent Societies and the Fish and Game Club are matters the old gentleman is fond of talking about;

he can tell of the time when he shot Woodcock in Victoria Square. Just imagine a man who had done his shooting in City Hall Square, or Battery Park, and then a New Yorker man get an idea of what the Major remembers. But first last and all the time he is a soldier.

He comes from a fighting family, his Father being a Captain in the ~~Seventh~~ Seventh Dragoon Guards, better known as the Black Horse, and at the time of the Trent Affair founded the Sixth Fusiliers, now one of Montreal's crack corps. He retired with his rank of Major in 1863.

a/ To the Major I naturally turned when desirous of getting some information as to public opinion in Canada at the time of the trial of the St. Albans raiders.

"Robbery" said the old gentleman ~~sharply~~ hotly. It was not robbery. Those men were not robbers they were patriots, there was none of the rowdy element in them; they were of the respectable refined class of Americans, who were endeavoring to repay in kind some of the depredations of the Federal Army in the South. The Montreal people, ~~in the south~~, in fact the whole Canadian public recognized the fact and sympathized with them accordingly. Robbery indeed, it was reprisal and purely political. The stand the British Government had taken in the Civil War of course carried a lot of weight with the sympathies of the people, for the old spirit of Loyalty to the Mother Country was very much alive in those days."

g/ Enquiring about the general feeling regarding Houghton's mission to Washington and the refusal of Lincoln and ~~Stewart~~ Seward to give an opportunity to prove the bona fides of Lieut. Young's commission, Major Horne in an explosive sort of way remarked shortly- "The people were exasperated; what else could they be?" and then lapsed into a sort of soliloquy or rather a panegyric of Bennet Young and his men. "Captured the horses- had to ride without saddles- desperate gallant soldiers- it was glorious patriotism not money ~~that~~ which actuated them. The Government knew nothing about the ~~RAIDERS GEORGE HOLME~~ raiders, but the people did."

a/ And then the Major grew eloquent; There

They were noble and courageous; they took their lives in their hands; they were chivalric and every body had to admire and like them. Look at Bennett Young and call him a bank robber! Ridiculous! He was a gentlemen and a ~~s~~oldier that any country might be proud of."

A ~~reference~~ reference being made to George F. Saunders, who was supposed to ~~be~~ be the Commissioner of the Confederacy in Montreal, Major Horne replied - "Oh Yez; I knew well through meeting him frequently at the St. Lawrence Hall; but I think that Governor ~~Westcott~~ Westcott was really at the head of affairs. He made his headquarters at the St. Lawrence Hall after a reward had been offered for his apprehension. He seemed to be at the top and bottom of all the confederate secrets, and was very much admired and respected for his amiability and social~~ity~~ ability. I remember him well. He was an extremely clever lawyer; he was allowed to assist the Counsel in defence of the raiders and spoke on the question. He did not seem a very brilliant talker, but he was deep forensic and argumentative; not flowery in ~~foreign~~ eloquence, but methodical and thoroughly conversant with international law. It was this latter qualification likely that brought him into the case"

And then the Major related the following little episode in which he himself took an active part; and which brought up Westcott's <sup>as</sup> Southern blood.

One of the best known men in Montreal in the early sixties was James Smith, or as he was more generally known Jim Smith. He was one of those jolly, whole souled fellows to know <sup>whom</sup> him was to love and admire

4 and as mostly every body knew him he had hosts of friends. Governor Westcott, <sup>a</sup>Major Horne, Mr. Smith and a few other choice spirits were in the bar room of the St. Lawrence Hall. Smith in tapping the Governor familiarly on the shoulder accidentally knocked his hat off. He was keen as a razor and turned like a flash. He glared at Smith a moment and ~~then~~ said deliberately, and evidently weighing his words, as was his wont- "Sir, if you had done that in my country I would shoot you" He was a small unassuming man, but he immediately became dignified and looked dangerous. Smith was surprised and turned scarlet while the Governor was pale with anger. He did not recognize the fact that the code was not much in evidence in Canada, and it was while both men were in this embarrassing position that <sup>a</sup>Major Horne stepped in and remarked to both parties, "Surely the Governor does not mean it."

"I do Sir", said the Governor; "I mean every word I say".

"This somewhat nettled me, continued the Major," and I replied with all the dignity I thought necessary to the occasion. "Then Sir, I am glad I was not born in your Country," and turned on my heel."

"Nevertheless, Sir, that is how we look upon insults in my Country."

For a moment things looked as if they might take a serious turn; but Smith was such a favorite that friends had the matter settled amicably ~~in a~~ in a few minutes. There was <sup>mutual</sup> ~~Montreal~~ reconciliation, hand shaking and the cup of peace was ~~qualified~~ <sup>quaffed</sup>.

In referring to the order to bring the <sup>a</sup>raiders to Toronto for trial, Major Horne smiled quietly

5/ and said. "My old and sworn friend, Coursol, was equal to the occasion and when an application of Habeas Corpus was made he saw the validity of it and set the prisoners free. Within the hour they were out of the city. There was a meeting of the Council next day", continued the Major, "and one of the members was mean enough to insinuate that Judge Coursol had been bribed in a large amount to set the prisoners free. I could not bear to see my old friend maligned, so I immediately drove to his house, got him out of bed and told him of the accusation. We drove down town that night visited the Gazette and Herald offices and requested that a commission of enquiry should be advocated by the press. There was trouble next day and the people laughed in their sleeves. They ~~kw~~ knew Judge Coursol to be an honorable man, too honorable to be bribed and their sympathies made them heartily approve <sup>of his</sup> ~~of their~~ decision. But Judge Coursol insisted on the appointment of a Government ~~commission~~ <sup>set</sup> which ~~go~~ in Montreal for a length of time and eventually vindicated Coursol and his good judgment"

Major Horne is the only man alive today who sat in the Council Chamber when the accusation was made

"Did Canadian political parties ~~decide~~ <sup>divide</sup> on the lines of North and South?

"Not a bit of it; ~~we~~ were all alike in our sympathies. There were a few sympathized with the Federals, but they were few and far between and about <sup>m/</sup> then I would not care to speak"

Do you refer to recruiting agents for the Federal Army?

The old gentleman <sup>in</sup> ~~glowed~~ <sup>glowered</sup> at me a moment and smiled afterwards, but said nothing.

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

J. P. Roche

Historic St. Lawrence  
- 3 -

大