

As before said he was weak, in face of an enemy superior in numbers, and embarrassed by a crowd of prisoners, whom he had to guard as well as feed. He expected reinforcements, the safe and speedy arrival of which would change the aspect of affairs. It is obvious too, that he acted under unseen pressure, and that, in this respect, he was not his own master. Temporizing was the government "order of the day;" Sir George Prevost had imposed it upon Brock, he in his turn had impressed it upon Proctor in the west, and Sheaffe, with soldierly subordination, did as he understood.* Sir George Prevost disapproved of this armistice when reported to him; but the British ministry, as Sir George said, had "hampered the contest with strange infatuation," and it cannot be wondered at, that absorbed in a vast life-and-death struggle in Europe, they prayed to be ridded, by any concession, of the worriment of a *petite guerre* in America. On the spot, and in our sown view of our own interests, we see things in a larger and truer point of view; and it should be kept in mind that the propriety of the armistice was never questioned in England.

The Americans were nothing daunted by this reverse. To the popular eye, the disaster at Queenston heights read as a success. The authorities, as well as the writers of the day, spoke of the death of Brock, as they now do of the fall of Stonewall Jackson, as equivalent to a victory. It has even been contended that the temporary tenure of the crest of the hill, up to the arrival of the reinforcements under Sheaffe, was in itself a victory. The British held the Redan in front of Sebastopol for two hours, before they retired, and yet it may be doubted if any American writer would admit this honourable feat of desperate valour to be a success.

But successes of another and unexpected character—successes on the ocean, to be enlarged upon hereafter, had, at this

Life and Correspondence of Brock, Tupper, p. 116.

critical moment, elated the mind of the government and people, and imparted an immense impulse to the national energies. The reluctant good sense of the country was drowned in the general intoxication. The government urged on with vigour its preparations for further invasion. Late as the season was, they had calculated to take Canada at a disadvantage, when hermetically sealed by winter from extraneous help; and, to impart to the tragedy, which had been enacted amid the melodramatic scenery of Niagara, its due proportion of farce, they appointed one General Smyth to the command. This gentleman was the Bombastes Furioso of the day. In proclamations he stands unrivalled. Never was there "a most noble army" more "bethumped by words,"—but his exploits appear to have been limited by phrases.

Leaving General Smyth to apostrophize his "Hearts of War," in front of General Sheaffe, we will proceed to the New York frontier of Lower Canada, where General Dearborn had assembled 10,000 men, and from Plattsburg, menaced Montreal. But the French Canadian militia, like the dragon's teeth sown by Cadmus, sprang to arms; the land bristled with bayonets. Major de Salaberry, in the infancy of his fame, had the command of the outposts, and, under his inspiration, these undisciplined levies speedily showed that they were too much in earnest to be trifled with. After some parade of demonstration, on the 20th November, an attack was made on a picket at Lacolle, by a force from Champlain Town. The picket consisted of frontier militia and a few Indians under Col. McKay, of the North West Company, who had borne the news of the war to Mackinac, had returned to Montreal, to throw himself into the field at the head of his Indians, and who, in 1814, performed services still more important in the capture of Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi.* This gentleman so handled his small force, that the

* Col. William McKay was father of Robert McKay, Esq., an eminent advocate of Montreal.

enemy, in the dark, fired upon their own people, killing several, and then, much disconcerted, fell back on Champlain Town, from whence they came ; and thereupon Dearborn, in deference to the mandates of climate, retired into winter quarters.

On our way back from the Plattsburg-Montreal section of the international frontier, we will touch at the Indian village of St. Regis where the line 45° strikes the St. Lawrence. It is the westernmost, and extreme point of the frontier between Lower Canada and the State of New York. The Upper Province on the north shore of the St. Lawrence and Lakes had been formed into three military divisions—left, centre, and right—the left extending upwards from the old French fort of Coteau du Lac, up the line of the St. Lawrence, included Kingston. The centre embraced York and the Peninsula of Niagara ; the right comprehended the Detroit frontier and the Upper coasts of Lake Erie. St. Regis in Lower Canada, on the south shore of the St. Lawrence, opposite to Cornwall, was surprised on the morning of the 23rd October by a force of 400 men detailed from Plattsburg. The outpost or picket, at this point, consisted of twenty men and an officer of Canadian Voyageurs. Lieut. RotOtte, Sergeant McGillivray, and six men were killed, the remainder taken prisoners. In a cupboard of the wigwam of the Indian interpreter, was found a Union Jack, on gala days the worthy object of Indian adoration. This windfall was announced to the world as the " capture of a stand of colors," " the first colors taken during the war." Dozens of them might have been obtained, at far less cost, in any American shipyard.

This affront was resented forthwith. On the 23rd November, small parties of the 49th Foot and Glengarry Light Infantry, supported by about 70 men of the Cornwall and Glengarry militia, about 140 in all, under Lieut.-Colonel McMillan, crossed the St. Lawrence and pounced on the American fort at Salmon river, opposite to St. Regis. The enemy took to the block-house, but finding them-

selves surrounded, surrendered prisoners of war. One captain, two subalterns and forty-one men were taken, with four batteaux and fifty-seven stand of arms. No " stand of colors" was captured with the Americans, as it is not usual to confide standards to the guardianship of detached parties of forty or fifty men in any service.

But while winter, growing gradually up the river, had already imposed an icy barrier to all military operations in Eastern Canada and on the line of the river St. Lawrence, the climate of the Western Province, the more moderate as it declines westward, admitted, to a much later period of the year, of naval combinations and of the movements of troops. At a time when the St. Lawrence, from Quebec downwards, is barred by thick ribbed ice, and the vast territory intermediate between the Atlantic and this noble river is an impassable wilderness of snow ; where the breath freezes in the very nostrils of men ; the immense tract of country west of, and among the Lakes, enjoys a climate very like that of England ;—somewhat less of humidity, perhaps, and a little more of sun. At Detroit, the river freezes occasionally, as does the Rhine, and as does the Thames, and leads to much the same exhibition of jollity, booths and bonfires, races and roast oxen ; but the vast expanse of the lake surface moistens and softens the atmosphere—the waters are, for military purposes, at no period of the season reliably impracticable, and the West is, during winter, and in ordinary seasons, as pleasant a country to fight over as any part of Flanders.

Thus, on the 9th of November, 1812, the American fleet from Sackett's Harbour, consisting of the Oneida brig of 16 guns, and six heavy schooners, chased the Royal George, commanded by Commodore Earle, into Kingston. At an earlier period the Commodore had withdrawn from an attempt on the Oneida in Sackett's Harbour, and much had been said to his disparagement in consequence. We have been reminded significantly, that the Canadian

Commodore did not belong to the ' Royal Navy. The imputation should have been spared until it had been fully ascertained how much of his apparent backsliding was ascribable to British mismanagement. What was the strength of his crew ? What the state of his equipments ? What his orders ? His conduct simply indicated the character of all the orders of that time. We do not hesitate to say that the Canadian seaman, on his own waters—man to man—is as good as the briniest salt that ever trod deck ; and as a rule, for pluck or conduct, the raw Canadian material is equal to any found in Yankeedom, or Christendom either, and in proof we quote the daring escape of the Canadian schooner *Simcoe*, James Richardson, commander, by running the gauntlet of the American flotilla. The story is thus told :

On the 20th November, the Americans had cannonaded the town of Kingston, and got the worst of it, at long bowls. They had hauled off, beating out of the channel into the open lake, under heavy press of sail, when they discovered the *Simcoe*, a fine 200-ton schooner, bound from Niagara to Kingston. She had been employed in the transportation of troops and stores, and was returning in ballast. The American force, armed with long heavy guns, intercepted her completely. Richardson, not relishing the idea of capture, and the transfer of so fine a vessel to the American marine, attempted at first to run her ashore on Amherst Island, but the wind baffled this design. In the meantime one of the enemy's schooners got under his lee, and opened fire, but, attempting to tack, " missed stays." Richardson's nautical blood was up in a moment. He cheered his men. "Look, lads, at these lubbers ! Stand by me, and we will run past the whole of them, and get safe into port." The answer was a ready cheer. The helm was instantly " put up," and spreading all sail, with a stiff breeze blowing, the daring *Simcoe* bore down direct on the harbour, passing a little to the northward of the enemy, who,

ship by ship, delivered their fire of round and grape, and vainly endeavoured to cross her bows. She shot by them all, with riddled sides and sails, but not a man hurt, running the gauntlet for four or five miles. Before reaching port she was struck under water by a 32-pound shot, filled, and sank, but was easily raised afterwards, and repaired. As she sank the crew fired their only piece of ordnance, a solitary musket, with a cheer of defiance, which was taken up and echoed by the thousands of citizens, troops, and militia who thronged the shore.*

A few hours after, Commodore Chauncey, in command of the American squadron, captured a schooner having on board Capt. Brock, a brother of the deceased General, with plate and effects of his late relative. Chauncey paroled the captain, and, with graceful generosity, restored to him all the captured property he had in charge.

The armistice between Gen. Smyth and Sir Roger Sheaffe terminated on the 20th November. With Gen. Smyth gasconading was a gift. He had primed his men with proclamations, but fired the train with a long lanyard. He had prepared 2500, men for an invasion of Canada. He presided at the embarkation,, saw the men off safely, and retired to " organize further."

" The tornado burst on the Canadian shore," to use the words of the American annalist, j- at the upper end of Grand Isle, between Fort Erie and Chippewa. It was met by the gallant Col. Bishopp, who commanded about 600 men,—360 regulars, and 240 militia, under Major Hatt and Capt. Bostwick. The first demonstration took place on the 27th November. Small outposts of the British were temporarily overpowered, guns were spiked ; Lieutenants King, Lamont and Bartley, of the Royal Artillery, perversely, fighting, with that stupid indisposition to give in, natural to British youngsters, ,

* Memoranda of the Rev. Dr. Richardson, D.D.

f Nile's Weekly Messenger, quoted by Auchinleck, 119.

were badly wounded ; but when morning broke, Bishopp and Ormsby were down upon the invader. The guns were recaptured and unspiked ; a second division of American invaders repulsed with much loss ; and an aide-de-camp of the American general, with about forty men and some other officers, were taken prisoners. Smyth, who had already proclaimed himself victorious, was puzzled. Considering the disparity of numbers the British ought to have surrendered long before—he was sure they meant to do so—the case of Hull was precisely parallel. He would give them an opportunity,—and so despatched a flag of truce to Fort Erie, politely requesting a surrender—a suggestion which was declined, in the best possible temper, by the imperturbable Bishopp.

Smyth ordered his men again into the boats, and then, to disembark and dine, and then, to repeat the same manœuvre, until at length, on the 1st December, he decided to abandon all idea of crossing and conquest, and to go into winter quarters, which was done, it must be said, to the intense disgust of his army. Winter quarters led to military conventions, and to resolutions very disconcerting to the General, who finding himself to be threatened with tar and feathers, departed forthwith South, was removed in a summary way from the U. S. service, and subsided finally into a member of Congress : and thus ended the campaign of the year 1812, not inauspiciously for Canada.

It proved two things—first that the people of the United States were disunited on the subject of the war, while the people of Canada were united to a man. The Legislature of Maryland openly denounced the war. The governments of Massachusetts, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, had refused the quota of militia demanded of these States respectively. Such men as Quincey declared in the House of Representatives at Washington, that " since the invasion of the Buccaneers, there Was nothing in history more, disgraceful than this war."

The voice of Canada was unanimous—in the Upper and in the Lower Province—French and English—Protestant and Catholic—men of all parties and all policies—the voices of all were still for war. They had not sought it,—they had shunned it,—but it had been forced upon them, and they were ready to fight it out. Recollect, that this was not the sentiment of a vagabond population, but of the farmers, whose fields were left uncultivated, and families destitute, while they risked their lives for their national independence. Nor were these sacrifices, all : let us consider the privations endured. Men were suddenly summoned from their firesides, homely but plentiful, to encounter a campaign, imperfectly armed, insufficiently clad, uncertainly fed. And yet no complaints were heard—they suffered and fought on.

But the knowledge of their distress pervaded the community and touched every heart. First, the people of York originated a subscription, and the young ladies devoted themselves to the work of preparing flannels for the men. In December 1812, rose the " Loyal and Patriotic Society of Upper Canada ;" Thomas Scott, Chief Justice, President, and John Strachan, William Campbell, John Small, William Chewitt, J. B. Robinson, William Allan, Grant Powell, and Abel Wood, as Directors. The object of this Society was ^N provide comforts for the men, support for destitute families, succour for the wounded, compensation to the plundered, and assistance to all who required and deserved it. The appeal of this Society met with an instant and generous response. In London, under the auspices of the Duke of Kent, was subscribed at once £5,000 ; in Jamaica, £1,419 ; in Nova Scotia, £2,500 ; in Montreal, £3,130 ; in Quebec, £1,500 ; in York, £1,868 ; in Kingston and Eastern Districts, £800. In other places both within and without the Province other large sums; amounting altogether to £14 or £15,000. These moneys were employed very judiciously, to the relief of great distress, leaving at the close of the war a con-

siderable balance in the hands of the Treasurer, but, at the time, this generous appreciation of their efforts had a grand effect. It sank deep into the hearts of the people of Canada. Inspired by the sympathy and enthusiastic support of their fellow-subjects in all parts of the world, the loyal men of Canada rallied to the flag of their native land—in *utrdque fortunâ parati*—with the sentiment in their hearts which they have handed down to their children, expressed in Præd's Charade—

Fight as your fathers fought,
Fall as your fathers fell :
Thy task is taught—thy shroud is wrought—
So—forward, and farewell.

initialSoeS tAgeWifirY; aim
l:fkoliNikixtVeutO
vftrira

§

CHAPTER VI.

Naval occurrences of the war. Supremacy of England on the ocean. Indifference to foreign progress. American frigates—Unrivalled in construction—Speed—Equipment—Power. Naval duels. The Constitution and Guerriere. The Frolic and Wasp. The United States and Macedonian. The Java and Constitution. Effect of these contests. Exultation of Europe. England nerved and steeled. The Hornet and Peacock. Counter-stroke. Shannon and Chesapeake. Moral effect. The balance redressed. Gallantry on both sides. Effect of these events on the war in Canada.

Not to interrupt, as far as could be avoided, the thread of the preceding narrative, no mention has been made of those remarkable naval duels which imparted so much of a bold and startling interest to the American contest, so called, of 1812. The first of these occurrences, which took place towards the end of that year, electrified and dazzled America, and blinded the popular vision to the reverses which had been encountered in Canada, while a series of well fought engagements, resulting, in rapid succession, to the disadvantage of Great Britain, signalized the opening of the year 1813. Up to this period of time, England had held dominion of the seas. The oceans of the globe owned her sway. The Spaniard and the Frenchman, the Dutchman and the Dane, had confessed her prowess. From Cadiz to Copenhagen, from Gibraltar to the Nile, she ruled the main. It was with astonishment, not unmixed with glee, that those who had suffered discomfiture, now witnessed her disaster. The haughty lioness had been bearded in her den, by her own sea-cubs, who proved themselves, in deadly conflict, to be not unworthy of their origin.

In 1812 Great Britain had one thousand pennants afloat. At