



TO
LIEUT.- COLONEL JOHN HARVEY, C. B.

DEPUTY ADJUTANT-GENERAL OF HIS MAJESTY'S FORCES

IN THE CANADA

WHO,

BESIDES DISTINGUISHING HIMSELF ON SEVERAL

OTHER OCCASIONS,

DURING THE LATE AMERICAN WAR,

DID,

AT MIDNIGHT, ON THE FIFTH OF JUNE, 1813,
LEAD THE ADVANCE OF AN ATTACK,

PLANNED BY HIMSELF,

IN WHICH

SEVEN HUNDRED AND FOUR BRITISH

SURPRISED,

AND, AFTER A SHORT STRUGGLE,

DROVE FROM THEIR FORTIFIED ENCAMPMENT,

NEAR STONEY CREEK,

IN

UPPER CANADA,

THREE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AMERICANS:

AN EXPLOIT

WHICH TENDED, IN A HIGH DEGREE, TO THE SAFETY OF TWO

VALUABLE BRITISH PROVINCES;

THIS WORK

IS

MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED,

BY

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE.

THE length of time that has elapsed since the appearance of the work to which this bears so close a relation, has arisen out of the delays and difficulties experienced by the author in collecting materials ; few of which were in his possession, when he promised the public to extend his labors, beyond the naval, to the military, occurrences of the late American war.

Immediately on the publication of his former volume, he transmitted copies to some of the principal reviewers in the United States; hoping to have it in his power, through the medium of the present work, to correct any mistatements that he may have made, • upon a topic so interesting to the two nations. Beyond one or two newspaper paragraphs, first misnaming, and then calumniating, the

author, nothing of the kind has yet reached him. He has, however, been favored with the sight of an American periodical work, entitled,—'Analectic Magazine and Naval Chronicle;' which contains, among its pages, some very copious remarks upon an article in the British - Naval Chronicle,' headed

SYNOPSIS OF NAVAL ACTIONS BETWEEN THE SHIPS OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY AND OF THE UNITED STATES, DURING THE LATE WAR; BY A BRITISH NAVAL OFFICER ON THE AMERICAN STATION: *

— the latter consisting of *extracts* from a series of letters, signed 'Boxer,' forwarded by the author, (but who had neither designated himself as, nor can claim the honor to be, a British naval Officer,) from Halifax, Nova Scotia; and becoming, afterwards, the groundwork of the author's pamphlet in Halifax, and subsequent volume in this country.

As the present is a military work, the author, after bestowing a passing glance of admiration upon the flashy vignette of

* 'An Inquiry, &c.,'

gamboling dolphins, tridents, wreaths of laurel, &c. displayed, as if *in terrorenz*, at the commencement of every fresh quotation from the 'Synopsis,' will digress no further, than till he has exposed some half a dozen of the American reviewer's mis-statements; thence submitting, as a fair inference, what degree of credit is due to the remainder of that gentleman's assertions.

Not being a 'naval officer,' the author could have no *esprit de corps* to bias his judgment. All inuendoes on that head, and pretty numerous' they are, may therefore be blotted out of the piece. The same fate, for (as one may suppose) the same reason, must attend the commencing charge, that the production came abroad under the sanction of the admiralty.'

Any railing at the author's affected arithmetical precision' t can but create a smile, when the American reviewer is compelled,

Analectic Mag. and Naval Chronicle, Vol VII. p. 295.

j Ibid. 302.

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for lack of argument, to pass by the cyphering business:* It is that cyphering business,' that debtor and creditor account," in the naval warfare between the two countries, that is fast withering the laurels, with which one of them has, of late, so strutted in *caricatura*.

Who it is that weighs balls with the most minute precision,' let American naval officers and American naval histories tell.§

The author, although he is no naval officer,' would be ashamed to be convicted of having stated, that the loss of a ship's jib-boom' is equal, in point of importance, to the loss of a brig's main-yard.' 11 But, in truth, was the Wasp without her jib-boom ? If so, as she carried it away three days before the action,t her officers and crew must have been very negligent

* Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chron. Vol. VII. p. 307•

4. Ibid. 302.

I Ibid. p. 304.

§ Naval History of the United States, Vol. I. p. 179—American Naval Monument, O. 141. 181.—James's Naval Occurrences, p. 10. 124. 365.

Analectic Mag. and Naval Chron. Vol. VII. p. 388.

Naval Monument, p. 13.

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in not having rigged a fresh one ; and Me Coyne,' the Boston painter, and his employer, ' A. Bowen,' the Boston engraver, are chargeable with unpardonable inaccuracy, for having given to the Wasp, in their representation of the Frolic's capture,* a ' jib-boom,' and no short one either. After stating that the Wasp's crew consisted, in reality, of only 110,1- the writer does not proceed far in his magazine of wonders;:t before he introduces the following paragraph: ' They (the American captain and one of his officers) testified, on oath, that the whole number of persons on board the Wasp, previous to the action, was 137;' §—actually within *one* of the author's statement.t

In the very teeth of, American official papers,11 does this American writer allege, that complaint' was made, when several

Naval Monument, p. 13.

Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chronicle, Vol. VII. p. 387.

lb. 382.

§ Ib. 487.

¶ James's Naval Occurrences, p. 1.52.

Nav-Monument, p. 63.—James's Nay. Occurr. p. 223.

of the crew of the Chesapeake were killed, by firing down the gangway.' ⁴

To the ⁴ 'fabulous account,' that the vessel said to have declined engaging the President off Sandy Hook, was not a small frigate,' the Loire,- but the ⁴ 'Plantaganet 74,' nothing was wanted but the trial of her commanding officer.'.* This trial our ⁴ 'candid' reviewer is authorized to affirm' took place at Bermuda. By way of corroborating, what must appear to all but him and his party as, an

absurd and ridiculous story,' he brings to his aid—' the express admission of an officer of marines, then in the squadron cruizing off New York, and now a consul in one of our ports.' Who can this be but lieutenant Patrick Savage, at that time of the Narcissus frigate, and now, or lately, consul at Norfolk, Virginia ?—It is to be hoped that the statement will meet his eye, if only to afford

* Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chron. Vol. **VII.** p. 388.

t James's Naval Occurrences, p. 324.

Analectic ag. and Nay. Chron. Vol. **VIII.** p. 136..

him an opportunity of doing justice to his brother-officers late of the Plantaganet.

After, in several instances, flatly contradicting his own official accounts, the American reviewer puts European gravity to the test, by declaring, first, that his government made war in defence of the universal rights of man,' and next, that the modest,' or, as recently and more truly styled, arrogant,' commodore Perry, when he filched the commencing words of Nelson's letter, t. was paying his lordship a high compliment.'t

Had the writer in the American ' Naval Chronicle' employed less acrimony,' and more research, in his calling, he might have received the author's thanks for pointing out several real ' inaccuracies,' particularly as to the size and armaments of the American ships. But these inaccuracies,' along with the hated cyphering business,' he has let ⁴ 'pass by,' to

* Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chron. vol. V **W**, p. 185.

t **Ib.** 145.

James's Nay. Occurr. p. 294.

be rectified by the author himself, in his two works, that followed, in quick succession, that little hastily-drawn sketch, which, the American reviewer, not having seen those works, is pleased to say, appears to contain all that has hitherto been urged, as well as every thing that can be urged, in extenuation of the numerous disasters of England during the last war ;* but, as he more truly than consistently adds, which **is in** reality an indifferent production.'t If so, therefore; and if the production' teems with admissions,' such as British officers' ought to ' feel mortified at,' why is the American reviewer, in his . candid' examination of it, so extremely irritable ? Even his own countrymen, the gentle' readers for whose entertainment he has labored and sweated so much, will attribute his anger to the dilemma into which he is placed, by the ' novel' way of weighing **and** measuring, by the pound and by the foot4 battles' that have turned out so

Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chron. Vol. VII. p. 289.

t lb. p. 295.

lb. Vol. VII. p. 307.

lucrative to the **American** **ifess, in general, and to the American Naval Chronicle,' in particular.**

What **language contained in the "Synopsis,'** Written **when' the two countries were at war,** equals, **in falsehood, absurdity, or intended severity,' the assertion; made while the two countries are at peace, that ' American officers are more brave than their rivals' ?***

How much moderation, **candour,' and discernment, the writer of the American review can bring into discussion, when his country is a party, may be gathered from his comparing,—without meaning it in irony,—' the battle of New Orleans,' with . the battles of Cressy and Agincourt.'t**

This sudden change from naval to military warfare recalls the author's attention to the subject **immediately before him. The** first point he would press upon the reader's attention is, that the system of tactics adapted to the

Analectic Mag. and Nay. Chron. Vol. VII. p. 306.

t lb. p. 294.

cultivated plains of Europe cannot be practised amidst the wild regions of America. Woods, precipices, creeks, and morasses, are traversed with ease by native troops, while a body of the best disciplined foreigners is either opposed in its advance by insurmountable obstacles, or led into an ambush, where the more ardent the courage, the greater is the slaughter, the more certain the defeat.

The British soldier can seldom trace his acquaintance with fire-arms beyond the day of his enlistment ; but the American soldier has been accustomed, from his infancy, to the free use of the most destructive of all fire-arms, the *rifle*. No laws have interfered to restrain him from amusing his fancy, or furnishing his table, with the game that so abundantly surrounds his home ; and the daily toils of the huntsman, while they have fitted his body for enduring, without fatigue, the longest marches, have familiarized him to the intricacies of his native forests. Where bush-fighting can be practised, he is truly

formidable: an open country, and a struggle with the bayonet, he alike avoids, as the bane of his hopes.

Nearly the whole of the military contests treated of in these volumes were carried on amidst the thinly inhabited, and, of course, but slightly cultivated, parts of North-America. The reader whose mind is filled with the justly celebrated fame of British troops must, therefore, be careful how he forms an opinion upon the merits of the combatants. He should recollect, that the American troops fought their battles upon their own ground ; and obtained, in consequence, a decided local superiority over the British sent out against them. Viewed thus, it cannot be objected, if all estimates of relative force between British and American troops, other than where batteries are concerned, be founded upon the principle of—not a presumed inequality of powers, but—man for man, or unit for unit.

The historian may describe, in the most impassioned language, the meeting of two armies,'

their furious onset, and long and bloody conflict; how this side fled and that pursued ; yet, if he fail to impress upon the reader's mind a clear conception of the quantum of force which each party brought into the field, he shall employ his labors to very little purpose. Of the many printed narratives of battles, by far the greater number are deficient in this important particular. With due acknowledgement to the American reviewer for the hint, the author produces, as a prominent example, the celebrated battle of Azincour.. Hume gives no figures, but states that the '**enemy**' was four times more numerous.* P. Daniel says three times.' t

Different French writers make their own force 100000 ; ' ' 140000 ;" 150000, the third part horse ;" 150000 horse.' j- Other historians say, that ' the French amounted to 150000, and the English but to 9000;' -j° which is nearly 17, instead of ° **six**, '**four**, or even

* Hume, Vol. HI. p. 100.

t Rapin (folio edit.) Vol. I. p. 512.

three, ' to one,—of all,' the most probable proportion.

In detailing the operations of the British and American armies, a clear and satisfactory account of the force engaged will, next to the immediate result of the battle, form the most important object. As the fairest means of ascertaining this, each party will be considered as unquestionable authority for the amount of his own numbers; unless an evident contradiction, or attempt to deceive, discovers itself. In that case, reliance will be placed upon the positive assertions of the opposite party.

A British official account of every military action has appeared in the Gazette ; and copies of the whole, as well as of such American official accounts as have been published, or could be procured, are given in the Appendix. The deficiency on the American side is compensated by the ample details, and, upon some points, apparently authentic information,

contained in three very recent American publications on the events of the late war. As these works are rarely to be met with in this country, and will be frequently quoted in the progress of our enquiries, the reader is here presented with their respective title-pages :

Historical Sketches of the late War between the United States and Great Britain ; blended with Anecdotes illustrative of the individual bravery of the American Sailors, Soldiers, and Citizens, embellished with Portraits of distinguished Naval and Military Officers ; and accompanied by Views of several Sieges and Engagements. By John Lewis Thomson. Third Edition. Philadelphia : published by Thomas Desilver ; 1816:

An Impartial and Correct History of the War between the United States of America and Great Britain; comprising a particular Detail of the Naval and Military Operations, and a faithful Record of the Events produced during the Contest, from its Commencement, June 18, 1812, to the Treaty of Peace, ratified at the City of Washington, February 17, 1815. By T. O'Connor. Fourth Edition, revised and corrected. Carefully compiled from Official Documents. New York : printed and published by John Low, No. 6e, Vesey Street, 1817.'

History of the United States, from their first Settlement as English Colonies, in 1607, to the Year 1808, or the Twenty-Third of their Sovereignty and Indepen.

deuce. By David Ramsay, M.D. Continued to the Treaty of Ghent, by S. S. Smith, D.D. and LL.D. and other Literary Gentlemen ; in Three Volumes. (8vo.) Philadelphia : published by M. Carey, 1817:

The first of these books is dedicated ' to the Honorable James Munroe, secretary of state of the United States ; ' and the third edition was published a very short time before the writer's patron attained the honors of the president's chair. This work, therefore, may be regarded as a demi-official performance; and, in some cases, especially where the American official letters have not been obtained, or prove deficient in particulars, Mr. Thomson's very minute details may be profitably employed.

The History of the War,' till the third, if not the fourth edition, was an anonymous work. At last, the people of the United States gave so loud and unequivocal proofs of the value of the writer's zealous, if not impartial' labors, that Mr. O'Connor must have possessed a very blameable degree of

modesty, indeed, not to have avowed himself the author. How far, in so doing, he has consulted his reputation, will appear in the sequel.

The 'History of the United States' bears, upon the face of the title-page, the stamp of respectability. **An** - M.D.' a D.D. and LLD.' - and other literary gentlemen' as the authors, without **James Munroe**, 'and 'The navy department,' among a numerous list of subscribers, afford reasonable grounds for hoping, that, at last, a candid history has appeared from the press of the United States.

That the author may not, as often as a battle occurs, have to repeat remarks upon, what, without reference to the fair promises just noticed, may be termed, the staple commodity of American historians, a few words on the subject will not be out of place here.

Our old enemy in Europe has at all times been ready to do justice **to** the valor of our

troops. A Frenchman is contented **to** boast, that the best 'oldiers of his country have beaten an equal number of ours. But an American historian will gravely tell you, that **about** 200 raw, undisciplined, American militia, entirely routed 600 veteran British regulars ; 'aye, and that with the bayonet 'too : or, if the Americans are described as the routed party, it is,—' after **a** desperate struggle with five times their number.' **None** of these gentlemen think it worth their while to advance any authority for even the most improbable fact. In despite of our reason we are to credit their naked assertions ; and to confess, that the heroes of the new, are giants in prowess, compared to the heroes of the old world. Scarcely is a battle recorded, wherein the superiority of numbers was not on the British side; unless, indeed, an opposite statement would serve to heap disgrace upon a certain commander, because he happens to differ, in political tenets, from that party, to

whose sinister purposes the writer has devoted his talents and his conscience.

When a national' officer does, as he always should, explicitly state the amount and quality of his own force, no one has a right to dispute his word; but his assertions respecting the force of an enemy, unless nearly the whole number that engaged him became his prisoners, ought to be received with caution. A general may find it convenient to show an extended front, of only one or two files deep ; and thus deceive his opponent. A few stragglers in a wood may be considered as part of a larger body; or a severe unexpected repulse may induce the retreating troops, from their fears alone, to magnify the number of their foes. For this reason chiefly it is, that the author has resolved to take each party's positive enumeration of his own force, in preference to the loose statements and vague conjectures, too often Omitted into the opposite official accounts.

In a work of details like the present, many

facts must be admitted, having no official foundation on either side. **Here the reader,** beyond the rule of probability, has only the author's veracity to trust to. Upon that point, he deems it proper to state, that, in his military, as in his naval work, his unofficial facts are the result of direct applications to officers of rank and respectability; but whose names (as must be obvious) he is not, in all cases, at liberty to disclose. Should, however, any mistatement have incautiously crept into his narrative, military or naval, the author would **be** happy to receive, and, when an opportunity offers, to make public, an authenticated correction.

A woody battle-ground is not the best calculated for a display, even on paper, of military evolutions ; the author, therefore, in selecting his plates, has, in most cases, preferred a sketch **of the** country traversed by the contending armies, to a plan of their fluctuating positions during **an engagement.** **One impor-**

taut exception is the battle near New Orleans. Here, without a plan of the natural, as well as artificial, military obstacles, the most minute verbal description would fail short. Fortunately, he can present Plate VII;; with confidence in its general correctness; not weakened, he trusts, by his having wholly framed it out of the engravings in two American publications on the subject I. For Plates **I**, **III**, V, and VI, he is indebted, also, (some slight alterations excepted,) to an American work, major-general James Wilkinson's 'Memoirs of my own Time,' published in 1816; a work that will be frequently consulted in the course of the investigation.

As Great Britain and the United States of America are now, happily, at peace, a strong motive exists for describing the events of the late war between them, in language, if not courteous, temperate at least ; and this, without any reference to' the notorious fact,

* Latour's War in Louisiana, and Eaton's Life of Jackson,

that all American histories, from general Wilkinson's huge **Memoirs'** down to the 'Grub street' * **Analectic**; pursue quite an opposite course. The author, much as he has, while scrutinizing the American accounts, endeavoured to command his feelings, may, upon unravelling any design **of** marked atrocity, have been betrayed into a warmth of expression below the dignity of an historical subject. **To** the general reader, in that case, some apology is due: as to the American, let him vent his rage upon those of his countrymen, who, disgracing the name of historians,' are the authors or abettors of all the calumnies which gave the provocation.

He who shall succeed in teaching American writers to venerate truth, as much as their readers idolize vain-glory, will have achieved, for the republic of America, a ten-fold greater service, than the whole pantheon of demi-gods,

* **Analectic Magazine and Naval Chronicle**, Vol. VII. p. 246.