

occupied the woods on the west side of the town, skirmishing to ascertain the precise place of landing.

An eyewitness has described the scene. The American fleet, in beautiful order, bore down before a fresh breeze which carried them beyond the intended point of disembarkation. They had fallen to the southwest as far as the eastern extremity of Humber Bay, ere the ships of war rounded to, and brought their heavy broadsides to bear on the shore. Sail was rapidly taken in, the boats assembled under cover of the vessels,—men promptly embarked, and the stalwart rowers,—the best seamen in the American service,—bent ready to the oar.

By this time McNeil, assured of the point of descent, had brought his men down the shore road, and had drawn them up in line, on the top of the bank which bounds the western side of Humber Bay, a startling red line, right in front of the American batteries, and at half cannon shot from the muzzle of the guns. It was a dauntless, but desperate expedient, "*eVait bien ma gni-fique, mais ee n'etait pas la guerre.*" The first American broadside swept the men down like grass before the scythe. Under cover of their broadsides, amid the din and smoke, the American boat's crews dashed to the shore.

The disembarkation was well handled. So soon as the keels touched ground, the riflemen under Forsyth, sore with recollections of Ogdensburg, were overboard, in the water, up the bank, down among the bushes, invisible, except where the rapid puffs of white smoke bespoke their fatal presence. The boats backed off instantaneously, and returned for reinforcements. McNeil himself and the greater part of his brave grenadiers had been killed by the first cannonade; the remnant, scattered and shattered, fell back from before the lashing fire, and the American rifles, always desperately resisted, held their own. A bitter, skirmishing fight ensued among the trees. But the eager reinforcements hurried to

the shore. General Pike of the American army, an officer of repute, landed in the rear of the riflemen, at the head of a division at least 1000 strong, and the torn relics of the British detachment,—the *reliquice Danaum*,—slowly fell back upon the town.

Meanwhile, Sheaffe had collected his stores, dispatched his convoys, and ordered his retreat upon Kingston. The light company of the King's regiment, an additional reinforcement for Niagara, was rapidly approaching from that direction, and afforded opportune support. The ship and the dockyard, and a large quantity of marine stores were destroyed,—much removed; the residue, for the most part indestructible in material, fell finally into the hands of the enemy.

General Pike, on his part, had pushed forward, feeling his way through the bush, and fighting with an enemy who defended every tree. His advance was slow but steady. At about 2 P. M., he emerged from the forest in the rear of the old French Fort and insignificant harbour defences. The fleet having effected the disembarkation weighed anchor and stood up into the harbour itself. The simplicity of this operation proves all practical defence to have been impossible, and that any more protracted resistance would have doomed the town. The American troops pushed on and soon enveloped the Fort. It contained at this time within its *enceinte* the government or "King's House," some public offices, the usual complement of barracks and store houses, and a powder magazine, built into the bank on the lake shore. This must have been a recent structure, as Brock, in 1811, complained that "the only powder magazine was a small wooden shed only sixty yards from the King's House." For safety's sake this dangerous appendage had been removed to a strong stone building constructed in the water front of the Fort.

The Americans swarmed into the works, fiery with fighting, and flushed with success, when, suddenly—with the crash and concussion

of an earthquake,—the powder magazine exploded at their feet, spreading havoc through their ranks. Of the assailants 250 were instantaneously killed or wounded ; of the defenders many perished.

Up to the sky, like rockets, go
All that mingle there below :
Many a tall and goodly man,
Scorched and shrivelled to a span,
When he fell to earth again,
Like a cinder, strewed the plain.
When in cradled rest they lay,
And each nursing mother smiled
On the sweet sleep of her child,
Little thought she such a day
Would rend those tender limbs away.

Pike had pushed on to the front and was in the act of questioning a militia soldier, one Joseph Shepherd, whose family still reside in the township of York, when—with a flash and eddying smoke—the infernal blast swept through the air. A heavy mass of stone struck the General down. In like manner, Shepherd was crushed at his side, and was borne off in the arms of his relative and fellow soldier, Joseph Dennis, now of Buttonwood, Weston. The gallant general and more humble soldier, both died of the injuries received, within a few hours, victims alike in the cause of their respective countries.

The contest itself was stayed by this catastrophe ; it had endured for eight hours. The surviving troops had withdrawn, well covered and unmolested by the enemy ; all that could be done had been done, and York capitulated through the local officers of militia. What remained of the public stores was surrendered, two hundred and sixty-four militia men laid down their arms. Sheaffe left behind him of the regulars 62 killed, 72 wounded ; one wounded officer with one sergeant major and four men of the artillery, prisoners of war ; and fell back deliberately and without obstruction upon King-

ston. Such are the facts, the inferences are left to the judgment of every intelligent man, soldier or not.

• * * Si quid novisti rectius istis
Candidus imperti, si non, his utere mecum.

*It is painful to relate that the American army shamefully abused its success, and perpetrated acts of vandalism, which at a later period, and in a distant scene, entailed just retribution.

The details cannot be given more effectively, than in the vigorous language of the Rev. Dr. Strachan, D.D., now the venerable Bishop of Toronto, who in a letter addressed to Thomas Jefferson, Esquire, of Monticello, ex-president of the United States of America, and dated York, 30th January, 1815, expressed himself as follows :—" In April, 1813, the public buildings at York, the capital of Upper Canada, were burnt by the troops of the United States, contrary to the articles of capitulation. They consisted of two elegant halls, with convenient offices, for the accommodation of the Legislature and of the Courts of Justice. The library, and all the papers and records belonging to these institutions were consumed ; at the same time the church was robbed, and the town library totally pillaged. Commodore Chauncey, who has generally behaved honourably, was so ashamed of this last transaction, that he endeavoured to collect the books belonging to the public library, and actually sent back two boxes filled with them, but hardly any were complete. Much private property was plundered and several houses left in a state of ruin. Can you tell me, Sir, why the public buildings and the library at Washington should be held more sacred than those at York ?"*

We have here the testimony of an eyewitness, whose evidence is beyond challenge. There is not in Canada a man whose career has been more thoroughly dovetailed into the moral structure of

* *Vide* Appendix No. 1. Letter from Dr. Strachan to Thomas Jefferson, Esquire, *in extenso*.

society, in welfare and in sorrow, than that of John, the revered Bishop of Toronto. From a beginning of noble humility, by dint of talent and honest energy, he now adorns the episcopate. Sixty-four years since, in the grand field of educational labour, he struggled with, and mastered a rugged soil, which has rendered noble increase. It was his great privilege, to have modelled the minds and characters of the men, who have since made the country, and who have left upon its broad surface, the "tower mark" of sterling. Whatever differences of opinion may have been, at times, entertained as to his course, that course has ever been straightforward, truthful, and uncompromising; and at the age of eighty-five he enjoys, in the lusty winter of his years, the well earned respect and esteem of all classes of men in Canada. His testimony on the subject of the severities, persistently exercised by the American armies, is unimpeachable. His remarkable letter will be found at length in the Appendix.

Again, after the tragic scenes which have been narrated, came the farce. The Americans occupied some days in removing the naval and military stores. The commanders found solace in the composition of despatches and in the compilation of catalogues. The "spolia opima" were all duly recorded, but the sensational 'trophy of the day, embalmed in a special report from the innocent seaman in command on lake Ontario, was "a human scalp" alleged to have been found "suspended from the chair of the speaker of the House of Assembly." The official circles at York were a little scandalized and more amused at this announcement; by some it was regarded simply as a *mauvaise plaisanterie*, others it puzzled, but at last it eked out, that the shocking trophy so loudly paraded, was in reality a *periwig*,—an official *peruke*, dropped in the confusion, and transported in triumph to Washington, to find a place by the side of the "stand of colours" captured in the wig-wam of the Indian interpreter at St. Mgis.

The Americans evacuated York on the 2nd May, 1813.

CHAPTER X.

American programme. Modification: Fall of York. NeWitir threatened. Description of Newark. Fort Niagara. Fort George. Climate and country. La Salle. Sketch of his exploits. Discovers the Mississippi. Fort George burnt. Rebuilt by Denton; vine. Colonel Dongan, Governor of the Province of Nev'r York; objects to the building of a Fort at "Ohniagro." Baron de Longueuil—Record of this family. Fort Niagara taken by the British, 1759. Surrendered to United States, 1796. Upper Canada created a separate Province, 1791. Governor Simcoe. His career. Newark his capital. Visit of Duke of Kent, 1793. Compared with that of Prince of Wales, 1860.

The programme of the American ciiiiinanderd ha at & it embraced the reduction of Kingston, itnrk, and VOit: George or Newark. The attack on Kingston- had been abandoned; York had succumbed; and Newark, distant only a few hours' sail, un supported and indefensible, lay at their mercy.

Contrary winds, however, thwarted all endeavours, and they did not arrive off the coast of Niagara before the 8th of May. They disembarked at the mouth of a streamlet known as Four-mile Creek, on the American shore of Lake Ontario, and, as its name implies, situate about four miles to the east of Fort Niagara: Here, for nearly three weeks; the expedition lingered, while Chauncey was employed in removing his wounded to Sackett's Harbour, and in transporting from thence reinforcementi and heavy ordnance, preparatory to the attack on the British position at Fort George.

We may occupy the interval' by decribing the main features of this part of Canada.

The mouth of the river Niagara afford4'On° of the finest harbours