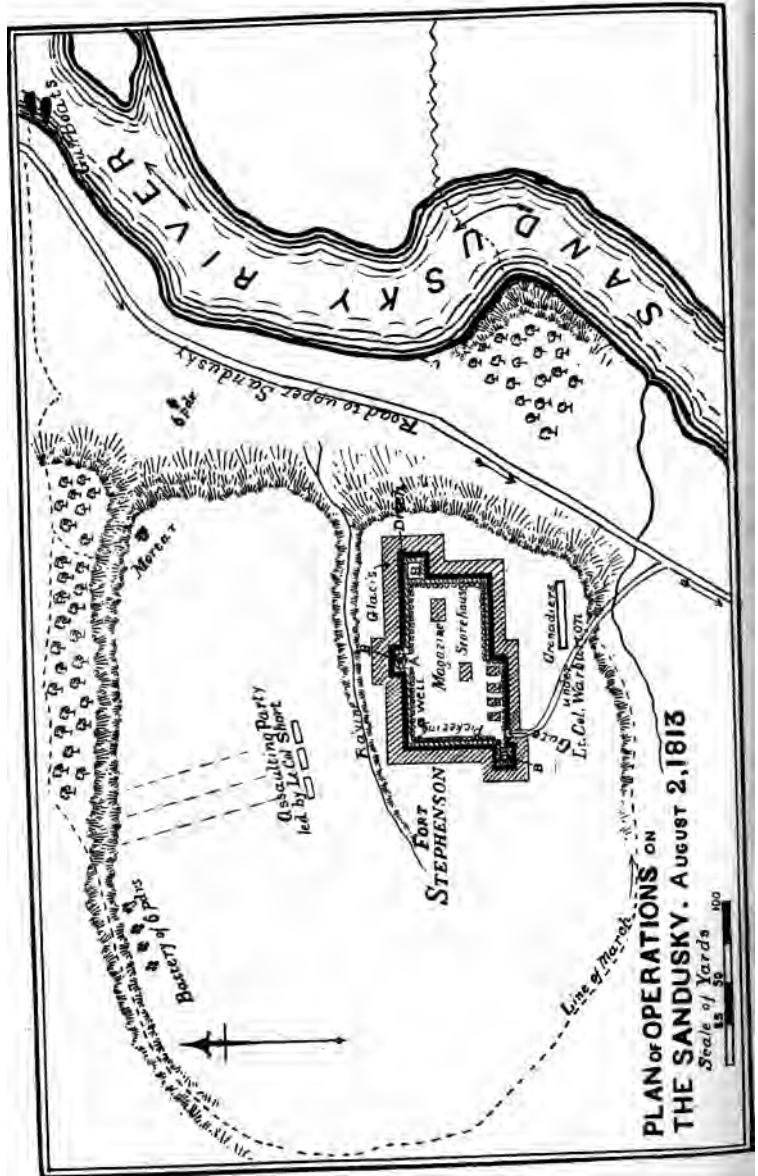


IX

THE ATTACK ON FORT STEPHENSON

The Right Division were not long suffered to remain inactive—Like Sir Thomas Picton's famous division in Spain, they might, on a much more modest and limited scale, have been termed the fighting division of Canada. No other corps was so incessantly in the field—no other corps achieved such important and beneficial results to the country, and when it is considered that this force comprised scarcely more than a single regiment of the line, the repeated claims made upon its energies and exertions, becomes even more remarkable. Late in July, at the earnest instance of Tecumseh, who had formed a plan for the reduction of Fort Meigs, which he conceived would be crowned with the fullest success, a second expedition, consisting of the main body of the ost, (Captain Derenzy having recently joined with those detachments of the regiment which had borne so conspicuous a part in the Battle of Queenston) a few militia, and nearly a thousand Indians, accompanied by a few pieces of light artillery, was undertaken against this fortress. On our arrival in the Miami the whole of the regular force and guns were disembarked on the right bank of the river, out of view of the fort, yet not far from the point where our light batteries had been carried during the late siege.

Tecumseh's plan was as follows. Immediately in rear of Fort Meigs, and at right angles with the river, ran the road to Sandusky, (distant about thirty miles) upon, or near, which the chief had been apprized by his scouts that General Harrison, who with a large portion of his force had left the fort soon after its relief from General Procter's presence, was at that moment encamped. Having



landed some miles lower down the river, the whole of the Indian force was to march through the woods, and gain, unperceived by the troops in the fort, the Sandusky road where a sham engagement was to take place, leading the garrison to believe a corps hastening to their relief had been encountered and attacked by the Indians, and inducing them to make a sortie for their rescue. The moment they had crossed the open ground, intervening between their position and the skirt of the wood, we were to rise from our ambuscade, and take them in the rear, making at the same time a rush for the fort, before the enemy could have time effectually to close his gates.

All the preliminary features in this plan, (which certainly was one that gave every fair promise of success) had been completed, and we were waiting with some interest and impatience the result, when the heavy firing of two distinct parties suddenly commenced on the Sandusky road. We were all instantly, although noiselessly, upon the alert, but in vain did we look for any movement in the fort. Many of the garrison lined the ramparts in the rear, and seemed to look out anxiously in the direction of the firing, but they gave not the slightest indication of a design to leave the fort, even when the musketry had become so animated and heavy, that we were half in doubt ourselves whether the battle was a sham one or a real. Either they had obtained information of our presence, or they suspected the nature and object of the ruse, and we had the mortification to find ourselves utterly foiled in the grand design of the expedition. Annoyed at the failure of his cherished scheme, Tecumseh urged upon General Procter, the necessity of doing something before our return, and it being found out of all question to attempt the reduction of Fort Meigs with the light guns (6-pounders) which accompanied us, it was determined to change the theatre of operation to Sandusky. Thither the main body of Indians proceeded by land, while we re-embarked in our

boats, and descending again the Miami, gained Lake Erie, and thence the Sandusky river, on which the fort of that name' is built.

The expedition having reached the Sandusky river early on the 1st of August, a landing was effected on the same day, and within range of the enemy's guns, several ineffectual discharges from which passed over us, as we traversed a plain several hundred yards in extent in order, to gain the wood, on the skirt of which it was intended to plant the batteries. These being immediately erected, at daybreak on the following morning our fire was opened, and continued until three o'clock in the afternoon of the 2nd, when, it being evident that no breach could be effected on the stockade work, General Procter resolved to attempt it by assault. Accordingly at four o'clock the troops divided into three columns of about 120 men each, were put in motion, and advancing through the plain, in double quick time, were suffered to approach within fifty yards, before they were met by the destructive fire of the enemy. The strong line of picketing, constituting their defence, was surrounded by a ditch flanked by batteries, and beyond the ditch was a deep ravine covered with brushwood, and more or less approximate to the place, according to its windings. Far from being checked by the severe fire of the Americans, the divisions redoubled their exertions, and vying with each other to take the lead, dashed down the ravine, and clambering up the opposite steep, were soon beneath the walls of the fort. Not a fascine, however, had been provided; and although axes had been distributed among a body of men selected for the purpose, they were so blunted by constant use, that it would have been the work of hours

The proper name of this fort is Fort Stephenson, and was situated in the centre of what is now the city of Fremont, called by that name previous to 1846. It is at the head of navigation on the Sandusky river, and about 20 miles from Sandusky bay. The fort was a simple stockade, skirted by a ditch about 9 feet wide, and was erected by the British in the summer of 1812, and

to cut through the double line of pickets, even if an enemy had not been there to interrupt its progress. In defiance of this difficulty, the axe-men leaped without hesitation into the ditch, and attempted to acquit themselves of their duty ; but they were speedily swept away by the guns from the batteries, charged with musket balls and slugs and directed with fatal precision. The troops had established themselves on the edge of the ditch, but it was impossible to scale without the aid of ladders or fascines ; and within a few paces of the enemy only, they saw their comrades fall on every hand with no hope of avenging their deaths. The second division had only two officers attached to it. Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Short, of the 41st, was killed while descending the ravine at the head of his column, when, the command devolving on Lieutenant Gordon of the same regiment, that officer encouraging his men, and calling on them to follow his example, was one of the first in the ditch, and was in the act of cutting the picketing with his sabre, when a ball, fired from a wall-piece, struck him in the breast. Although dangerously wounded, he refused to abandon his post, and continued to animate his men by his example, until a second ball, fired from the same piece, and lodging in his brain, left the division without an officer. The action had continued nearly two hours without producing the slightest impression on the enemy, when the bugles sounded the " cease-firing," and the men were ordered to lie flat on the ground on the edge of the ravine. The first division were so near the enemy, that they could distinctly hear the various orders given in the fort, and the faint voices of the wounded and dying in the ditch, calling out for water, which the enemy had the humanity to lower to them on the instant. After

— Lieut.-Col. William Charles Short, who was killed in this assault, came to Canada with the 41st Regiment. While stationed at Fort George his first wife died and was buried on Aug. 15th, 1805. On July 30th, 1809, he married Jane Crooks, an elder sister of Hon. James Crooks. They had one son, James Symington Short.

continuing in this position until nine o'clock, the columns received an order to effect their retreat in silence, which was done accordingly, the enemy merely firing a few volleys of musketry, producing however no material effect. The troops having been re-embarked the same night, the expedition descended the river, and returned to Amherstburg. Our loss in this affair was severe—3 officers, sergeant, 22 rank and file killed ; 3 officers, 2 sergeants, 36 rank and file wounded ; and 1 sergeant, 28 rank and file missing. Of this number, the proportion of the 1st division alone, consisting principally of the light company of the 41st, which had attacked the strongest point of the position, was five and thirty men.

During the assault, no assistance whatever was afforded by the Indians, who, unaccustomed to this mode of warfare, contented themselves with remaining quiet spectators of the scene. The " devoted men " alone, to whom I have before alluded, followed close in the rear of one of the columns, but they had not long witnessed the effect of the enemy's fire on the divisions, when they retreated to the wood with a precipitation, that with any other people, would be attributed to cowardice, but with the natives it could only be considered as the effect of habit. They expressed much astonishment at the coolness and intrepidity with which the men supported the fire of the enemy, without returning it until arrived at the edge of the ditch; and concluded by saying that they had ever hitherto deemed themselves the bravest nation in the world, but were now willing to concede that distinction to the warriors of their Great Father.

The garrison of Sandusky when attacked, consisted of a force inferior in number to that of the assailing columns, and was commanded by Major Croghan of the line, a promising officer, only nineteen' years of age. The gal-

Grove, George Croghan (pronounced Crawn) was born at Locust-rove, Ohio, on Nov. 15th, 1791, and was consequently more than 21 years of age.

lant defence made by him on this occasion met with the highest encomia from his countrymen, and he was immediately promoted to the rank of lieutenant-colonel ; neither was his conduct without its reward in the approbation of a sex, whose favor and encouragement seldom fail to act as incentives to the acquisition of military glory. The ladies of Ohio (the State in which Colonel Croghan was born) subscribed a considerable sum, with which a handsome sword was purchased and presented by themselves. It is but just to record an act of great courtesy on the part of this gentleman. An officer having been despatched to Sandusky with a flag, some days subsequent to the assault, in order to obtain an exchange of the prisoners, who were chiefly wounded, was received with much politeness by the commandant, who at the moment of departure drew from his secretary a pair of pistols, which had been lost in the brushwood of the ravine during our retreat at night. Presuming from the workmanship and style, that they might be, what in fact they actually were, old family arms, and naturally imagining that their loss must be regretted by their possessor, he begged the officer in question to take charge of, and present them to the individual to whom they belonged. It is unnecessary to add that they were gratefully received. They were my own, and had been lent to the gallant Lieutenant Gordon.

It is somewhat singular that General Procter's report of the second expedition to the, Miami is nowhere to be found. It could not fail to prove a document of some interest to the public, desirous of knowing in what manner he had accounted for his unpardonable neglect of all necessary precaution, to ensure the successful issue of an attack which ought, in no way, to have been rashly undertaken. The only British document, referring to the matter at all, is the following brief notice by Sir George

-General Procter's report, as found in the Canadian Archives, is given at the end of this chapter.

Prevost, on the subject ; evidently founded on a more detailed communication from General Procter, which it has been expedient to suppress.

General Order.

Head Quarters, Kingston,
Adjutant-General's Office, 3rd Sept . , 18 3 .

His Excellency the commander of the Forces, has received a despatch from Major-General Procter reporting the circumstances of an attack, made by a small portion of regular troops, and a body of Indian Warriors, on the 2nd of August on the American Fort of Lower Sandusky, which owing to the strength of the enemy's works, which resisted the fire of the light field guns brought against it—so that a practicable breach could not be effected—as also from the want of sufficient co-operation on the part of the Indian Warriors, unused to that mode of warfare, the assault was not attended with that brilliant success which has so uniformly signalized the gallant exertions of the Right Division. The Major-General extols the intrepid bravery displayed by the detachment under Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel Short, in endeavoring to force a passage into the enemy's fort, and laments the loss of the brave soldiers who have fallen in this gallant, although unsuccessful assault.

Return of killed and wounded.

I brevet lieut.-col., 2 lieutenants, sergeant, I drummer, 21 rank and file killed. I sergeant and 28 rank and file missing. 2 captains, I lieutenant, 2 sergeants, i drummer, 35 rank and file wounded.

Killed, Brevet Lieut.-Col. Short, Lt. Gordon, 41st Regt., Lt. Laussaussiege, Indian Department.

Wounded, Captain Dixon, Royal Engineers, Capt. Muir and Lieut. McIntyre, 41st Regt., all slightly.

By His Excellency's command,
Edward Baynes, Adjutant-General.

Copy of a letter from Major Croghan, to Gen. Harrison dated

Lower Sandusky, August 5, 1813.

Dear Sir—I have the honor to inform you, that the combined force of the enemy, amounting to, at least 500 regulars, and 700 or 800 Indians, under the immediate command of Gen. Procter, made its appearance before this place, early on Sunday evening last ; and, so soon as the General had made such disposition of his troops, as would cut off my retreat, (should I be disposed to make one), he sent Col. Elliott, accompanied by Major Chambers, with a flag, to demand the surrender of the fort, as he was anxious to spare the effusion of blood ; which he should probably not have in his power to do, should he be reduced to the necessity of taking the place by storm. My answer to the summons was, that I was determined to defend the place to the last extremity ; and that no force, however large, should induce me to surrender it. So soon as the flag had returned, a brisk fire was opened upon us, from the gun-boats in the river, and from a five and a-half inch howitzer, on shore, which was kept up with little intermission throughout the night. At an early hour, the next morning, three sixes, (which had been placed, during the night, within 250 yards of the pickets), began to play upon us—but with little effect. About 4 o'clock, P. M. , discovering that the fire, from all his guns, was concentrated against the north-western angle of the fort, I became confident that his object was to make a breach, and attempt to storm the works at that point : I, therefore, ordered out as many men, as could be employed, for the purpose of strengthening that front—which was so effectually secured, by means of bags of flour, sand, &c., that the picketing suffered little or no injury. Notwithstanding which, the enemy, about 5 o'clock, having formed in close column, advanced to assail our works, at the expected point ; at the same time making two feints at the front of Captain Hunter's lines. The column, which advanced against the North-Western angle, consisting of about 350 men, was so completely enveloped in smoke, as not to be discovered, until it had approached within 15 or 20 paces of the lines ; but, the men being all at their posts, and ready to receive it, commenced so heavy and galling a fire, as to throw the column a little into con-

fusion. Being quickly rallied, it advanced to the outer works, and began to leap into the ditch. Just at that moment, a fire of grape was opened, from our 6-pounder (which had been previously arranged, so as to rake in that direction), which, together with the musketry, threw them into such confusion, that they were compelled to retire, precipitately, to the woods. During the assault, which lasted about half an hour, an incessant fire was kept up by the enemy's artillery, (which consisted of five sixes, and a howitzer), but without effect. My whole loss, during the siege, was one killed, and seven wounded slightly. The loss of the enemy in killed, wounded and prisoners, must exceed 150. One Lieut.-Colonel, a Lieutenant, and 50 rank and file, were found in and about the ditch ; those of the remainder, who were not able to escape, were taken off, during the night, by the Indians. Seventy stand of arms, and several brace of pistols, have been collected near the works. About 3, in the morning, the enemy sailed down the river, leaving behind them a boat, containing clothing, and considerable military stores.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the officers, non-commissioned officers, and privates, under my command, for their gallantry, and good conduct, during the siege.

Yours, with respect,

G. CROGHAN, Maj. 17th U.S. Inf. comg.

MAJOR -GENIUZAL HARRISON,
Comg. N.W. Army.

The following is Procter's report referred to on page 182 :

Sandwich, Aug. 9th, 18 3.

Sir,—It being absolutely requisite, for several urgent reasons, that my Indian force should not remain unemployed, and being well aware that it would not be movable except accompanied by a regular force, I resolved, notwithstanding the smallness of that force, to move, and where we might be fed at the expense of the enemy. I had, however, the mortification to find that instead of the Indian force being a disposable one, or under my direction, our movements should be subject to the caprices and prejudices of the Indian body, to the

degree in which my regular force was disproportionat^e to their numbers. For several days after the arrival of Mr. R. Dickson his Indians were restrainable, and tractable to a degree that I could not have conceived possible. I am sorry to add that they have been contaminated by the other Indians. I was, very contrary to my judgment, necessitated to go to the Miami, in the vicinity of the enemy's fort, where I remained a few days, in the hope that General Harrison might come to the relief of the fort, which was invested, in the Indian mode, when finding that the Indians were returning to Detroit and Amherstburg I moved to Lower Sandusky, where, however, we could not muster more hundreds of Indians, than I might reasonably have expected thousands. The neighborhood of the Sandusky, and the settlement on the Huron River, eight miles below it, could have afforded cattle sufficient to have fed my whole Indian force for some time, had they been induced to accompany us. Sandusky is nearly fifty miles by water from Lake Erie ; and nearly forty from several points whence strong reinforcements might be expected ; I could not therefore with my very small force remain more than two days, from the probability of being cut off, and of being deserted by the few Indians who had not already done so. The fort at Sandusky is composed of blockhouses connected by picketing which they flank, and is calculated for a garrison of five or six hundred men. On viewing the fort I formed an opinion entirely different from any person under my command. The general idea being that the garrison did not exceed fifty men, and that the fort could be easily carried by assault. On the morning of the 2nd instant the gentlemen of the Indian department who have the direction of it, declared formally their decided opinion that unless the fort was stormed we should never be able to bring an Indian warrior into the field with us, and that they proposed, and were ready to storm one face of the fort, if we attempt another. I have also to observe, that in this instance, my judgment had not that weight with the troops, I hope might reasonably have been expected. If I had withdrawn without having permitted the assault, as my judgment certainly dictated, much dissatisfaction would have followed me, and I could scarcely have continued to direct their movements. I thus, with all the responsibility resting on

me, was obliged to yield to circumstances I could not possibly have prevented. The troops, after the artillery had been used for some hours, attacked two faces, and, impossibilities being attempted, failed. The fort from which the severest fire, I ever saw, was maintained during the attack, was well defended. The troops displayed the greatest bravery, the much greater part of whom reached the fort and made every effort to enter ; but the Indians who had proposed the assault, and had it not been assented to, would have ever stigmatized the British character, scarcely came into fire before they ran off out of its reach. A more than adequate sacrifice having been made to Indian opinion, I drew off the brave assailants who had been carried away by a high sense of honor to urge too strongly the attack. I enclose a disembarkation return which will show how small my disposable force was. The enemy had a six pounder and a smaller one in the fort. I also enclose a return of the killed, wounded, and missing. Our loss, though severe, and much to be regretted, is less, everything considered, than could have been expected. You will perceive that the Indian force is seldom a disposable one, never to be relied on, in the hour of need, and only to be found useful in proportion as we are independent of it.

Ten Indians were surprised on a plain near Sandusky and were cut to pieces. The Indians have always had a dread of cavalry, of which the enemy have a considerable number. A troop of the 19th would be of the greatest service here, in the confidence they would give to our mounted Indians. I have experienced much deficiency in my artillery, another officer at least is absolutely required, and one of science and experience. The enemy's defences are composed of wood. If we knew how to burn them, as they did ours at Fort George, Mr. Harrison's army must have been destroyed long since. The enemy's vessels are out of Presque Isle harbor, and so decidedly stronger than ours, that Captain Barclay has been necessitated to return to Amherstburg, and with all haste to get the new vessel ready for sea, which she ^{will} be in eight or ten days at farthest, and then only want hands. Whatever may happen to be regretted, may be fairly attributed to the delays in sending here the force ^{of} Excellency directed should be sent. Had it ^{been} sent at once, it could have been used to the greatest

advantage, but it arrived in such small portions, and with such delays that the opportunities have been lost. The enemy are in great numbers at Presque Isle, and have been already reinforced at Fort Meigs. General Harrison's headquarters are near Lower Sandusky, where he arrived on the 3rd instant. I must now look for the enemy from two quarters, and will have to meet them with my small force divided, for the Indians will make no stand without us. You will probably hear of the enemy's landing shortly at Long Point, whence they may gain the rear of the Centre Division, and also affect my supplies. A hundred and fifty sailors would have effectually obviated this evil. I apprehend the enemy's rapid advance to the River Raisin in force and establish himself there, which he can do surprisingly soon. If I had the means I would establish a post at that river, but not having two or three hundred to send there it is not in my power. I must entreat your Excellency to send me more troops, even the second battalion of the 41st Regt., though weak, would be extremely acceptable. If the enemy should be able to establish themselves in the territory it will operate strongly against us with our Indian allies. Your Excellency may rely on my best endeavors, but I rely on the troops alone, and they are but few, and I am necessitated to man the vessels with them. I have never desponded, nor do I now, but I conceive it my duty to state to Your Excellency the inadequateness of my force.

have the honor to be, with much respect,

Your Excellency's obedient servant,

HENRY PROCTER,

Brigr.-General, Comg.

His Excellency,

Lt.-General Sir George Prevost, Bt.

X

THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

The period was not so fast approaching when the fruits of so much toil and privation were to be wrested from our grasp, and the extensive line of territory, both original and acquired, so gallantly defended by a single regiment against the repeated invasions of the enemy during a period of fifteen months, was to fall beneath the efforts of numerical strength. Since the capture of Detroit, the Americans had been indefatigable in their exertions to establish a superiority of naval force, on which, they well knew, depended the ultimate success of their arms. Buffalo was the harbor selected for the construction of their flotilla, which, under the hands of numerous workmen, soon presented a formidable appearance, and was deemed more than sufficient to ensure their ascendancy on the lake. Manned by experienced seamen taken from several frigates then blockaded in their sea-ports, and commanded by able and intelligent officers, these vessels put forth towards the close of August, and continued cruising off the harbor of Amherstburg, in which our fleet lay, awaiting the completion of the Detroit, a vessel of twenty guns then on the stocks, and the arrival of seamen long promised and vainly expected from Lake Ontario. Captain Barclay had arrived some time previous to take the command, and with him several officers and forty men : but notwithstanding every remonstrance on the subject made by the commanding officer of the division, no further assistance was afforded. The remaining part of the crews were provincial sailors, willing and anxious, it is true, to do their duty, but without that perfection and experience in their profession, which are so indispensably necessary to the success of a naval force. Five vessels of Perry's fleet were built at Presque Isle (Erie) harbor.

necessary to the insurance of success in a combat at sea. In defiance of this disadvantage, the enemy had no sooner made his appearance, than the Detroit was launched in her rough and unfinished state, and armed, in default of other guns, with long battering pieces taken from the ramparts. Every calibre was employed—sixes, nines, twelves, eighteens and even the two twenty-four pounders which had been so successfully used at the Miami. The early part of September was employed in getting in her masts and rigging, and in a few days the fleet was ready to sail. Our position at this period had become exceedingly critical. The want of provisions began to be seriously felt, and the ultimate possession of the garrison depended wholly on the result of the naval conflict, for which both parties were preparing. In the event of the enemy being successful, not only must we be open to the incursions of the large forces, then collected in several quarters, and ready to overwhelm us at the moment that the command of the lake would afford them facility of movement, but the means of obtaining supplies from Fort Erie must be entirely cut off. The quantity of provisions already consumed had been enormous ; for independently of the wanton destruction of cattle by the Indians, who often shot or stabbed them merely to possess themselves of the horns, in which they secured their powder, leaving the carcasses to putrify in the sun, ten thousand rations were daily issued to the warriors and their families : the latter apparently increasing in numbers, as our means of supplying them became more contracted.

Such was the situation of the garrison, reduced in its regular force to a handful of men, by the losses sustained in the various engagements herein detailed, when Captain Barclay, who had hoisted his flag on board the Detroit, made the signal, early in the morning of the 9th, to weigh anchor and bear across the lake. The little fleet, consisting of six sail, were, at daylight on the morrow, perceived by the enemy, then lying among a cluster of

islands at some leagues distance, who immediately bore up under a light side-wind, favorable at that moment to the approach of the two squadrons. At one o'clock' the engagement commenced. The Detroit leading into action, was opposed to the Lawrence, mounting eighteen thirty-two pounders, and commanded by the American Commodore ; and such was the effect of the long guns, that the latter vessel was soon compelled to strike her flag, having only twenty serviceable men left. The Detroit and Queen Charlotte had, however, suffered severely in their sails and rigging from the fire of the enemy's gun-boats ; and not only every one of their boats had been so severely wounded as to render it impossible to take possession of the prize ; but the united and unceasing exertions of their crews could not prevent them from running foul of each other. Availing himself of this unfortunate accident, Commodore Perry, who had shifted his flag to the Niagara, a vessel of equal force with the Lawrence, bore up and discharged his broad-side with murderous effect. Waring immediately, a second and equally destructive followed, and in this manner was the action continued, rendering resistance almost hopeless. The other smaller vessels, already warmly engaged, could afford no aid, and the guns of the unfortunate wrecks were at length nearly all unserviceable,—those, at least, of the only batteries which could be brought to bear upon the enemy. Almost every officer had been compelled to leave the deck, and the helplessness of the crews could only be exceeded by their despair, when after two hours and a half of incessant cannonading, the British flag was replaced by the Eagle America.

The anxiety with which the issue of the combat was awaited at Amherstburg, where the firing was distinctly heard, may easily be conceived. From the heights overhanging the lake, and nearly opposite to the islands, the

'Barclay says, a quarter to twelve.

first encounter of the fleets was clearly observed, but the thick columns of smoke in which they were speedily enveloped, precluded all possibility of following the progress of the contest ; nor was it until the thunder of the artillery had been some time discontinued, that the clouds of vapour gradually dispelling, presented the melancholy picture of our vessels, several of them crippled and dismasted, following in the track of the American fleet, then directing its course towards the bay of Sandusky.

In this affair, so unfavorable in its result to our already precarious cause, the enemy had the most decided advantage, not only in respect to superiority of seamen, but in number of ships, and in weight of metal.' Their fleet consisted of nine sail, of which the two principal, the Lawrence and Niagara, mounted eighteen thirty-two pounders. Four others were armed with a long gun of the same calibre, and keeping aloof during the action, were enabled by the calm state of the lake to do much execution among our principal vessels, which were corn-

The most carefully-prepared and the fairest account of this action is given by Theodore Roosevelt in "The Naval War of 1812." Anyone who would desire to get an honest summing up of all the evidence bearing on the contest should read the narration given in this work. Both commanders and their crews were equally brave and about equally skilful; Perry's line, however, was not so well formed as Barclay's, the Niagara not coming to close action until Perry took command. There could be no other ending to the battle. Victory must rest with the stronger force, everything else being practically equal. Perry's fame should rest chiefly upon the indomitable energy and ability he displayed in preparing for the contest, with the inadequate means at his command. In this respect he far surpassed both Barclay and Procter. Although the British officers were wretchedly provided with everything for building and equipping vessels, yet they might have done more with the material they had. Had Barclay shown the same vigilance subsequently to the 2nd of August as he had before that date, Perry could not have got his largest and most formidable vessels over the bar at the entrance to Presque Isle (Erie) harbor without considerable trouble, and here his superior force would have been at a great disadvantage.

The following is a table describing the two squadrons on the day of the battle. The number of the guns is taken from Barclay's letter to Prevost and the tonnage and crews from Roosevelt's estimate. I take Barclay's account of the guns because he gives his squadron a slightly greater long-gun armament than Roosevelt, and the two accounts of Perry's armament about coincide.

From the painting by the artist James Columbus Ohio.

PERRY LEAVING THE LAWRENCE.



pletely raked by their destructive fire. The vessels composing Captain Barclay's force were—the Detroit, twenty guns ; Queen Charlotte, twenty guns ; Lady Prevost, twelve guns ; General Hunter, six guns ; and

BARCLAY'S SQUADRON.

Vessel.	Tons.	Crew.	side in Broad- side in lbs.	Long guns.	Cal- ibre	.6 Cal- ibre CFJ hP
Detroit	490	150	138	(2 11	24 18 12	1 24 1 18
Queen Charlotte	400	126	192	18 3	9 12 14 24	
Lady Prevost	230	86	78	3	9 10 12	
Hunter	80	45	28	{ 2 4 2	6 4 2	2 12
Little Belt	90	18	21	{ 1 1	6 9	
Chippeway	70	15	9			
	1360	440	466	35		28

PERRY'S SQUADRON.

Vessel.	Tons.	Crew.	side in Broad- side in lbs.	Long guns.	Cal- ibre	.6 Cal- ibre CFJ hP
Lawrence	480	136	300	2	12	18 32
Niagara	480	155	300	2	12	18 32
Caledonia	180	53	80	2	24	32
Ariel	112	36	48	4	12	
Somers	94	30	56	1	24	32
Scorpion	86	35	56	1	24	
Porcupine	83	25	32	1	32	
Tigress	96	27	32	1	32	
rippe	60	35	24	1	24	
	1671	532	928	16		38

In the table Perry's crew is given as 532, but sickness reduced his effectives to 416. Barclay probably had more than 440 men, but as some were unfit for duty, his effectives were about the same or probably a few less than Perry's. During the action the Lawrence and Niagara each fought a long 12 instead of one of the caronades on the engaged side, making a broadside of 888 lbs., 312 lbs. being from long guns. Barclay's vessels threw a broadside of at least 466 lbs., 202 lbs. of which was from long guns, but, as will be observed, from guns of small calibre.

two small craft, one of which mounted a mortar, the other a long eighteen-pounder ; and the whole weight of metal did not amount to t, too pounds : while that of the enemy, exclusive of the three remaining vessels of their flotilla each mounting several guns, was 1,280: and when it is taken into consideration that the accident which occurred early in the engagement to the two principal ships, prevented all possibility of bringing a second broadside to bear, while the enemy, on the contrary, were enabled to avail themselves of their whole metal, the disproportion will appear even more enormous. Notwithstanding the disparity of force, however, a different result might have been expected, had the unceasing applications made for sailors been attended to by the naval commander on Lake Ontario, to whose unwillingness to part with men, who might very well have been spared for the occasion, must be attributed the sacrifice of the gallant' Barclay and his fleet, and eventually that of the Right Division. The necessity of having regular and experienced seamen was never more cruelly exemplified than on the present occasion ; since, in all probability, had they been present, the accident which left the Detroit and Queen Charlotte entirely at the mercy of the enemy, would either have been prevented, or remedied in time. All that courage and perseverance could effect was done : but against the decree of Prbvidence who may successfully oppose himself ? Captain Barclay, who had already lost one limb while fighting the battles of his country, was so severely wounded in his only remaining arm as to be compelled to leave the deck early in the action. Captain Finnis, commanding the Queen Charlotte, was killed by a round shot soon afterwards, and the same ball carried off Lieutenant Garden, a promising young officer of the Newfoundland. Regiment, mingling the blood of the one and the brains of the other, on the bulwark, in one melancholy and undistinguishable mass. I had subsequently an opportunity of witnessing

the devastation of this sanguinary day. The decks were literally filled with the wounded ; and such was the crippled state of the Detroit, that not a mast was left standing : almost all the guns were dismantled, and it was impossible to place a hand on that side which had been exposed to the enemy's fire, without covering part of a wound, either from grape, canister, or round shot.

Subjoined is Captain Barclay's account of the action.

Head Quarters, Montreal, Nov. 25th, 1813.

My Lord,

I have the honor to transmit to Your Lordship copy of a letter from Commodore Sir James Yeo, together with Captain Barclay's official account of the action on Lake Erie, referred to in my despatches to your Lordship, No. 90 of the date of the 22nd September, and No. 91 of 8th October last.

The loss sustained on that occasion Your Lordship will find subjoined to the general order also herewith transmitted, which I have felt it my duty to issue in consequence of the recent events in this command.

I am happy to be able to add, that Captain Barclay is recovering of his wounds, and that there is a prospect of his valuable life and services being preserved for the benefit of his country.

I have the honor to be, &c.,

George Prevost.

The Right Hon. Earl Bathurst,

His Majesty's Ship Wolfe,
at Kingston, Nov. 15th, 1813 .

Sir,—I yesterday received Captain Barclay's official statement of the ill-fated action on Lake Erie, and as Your Excellency must wish to be informed of every particular, I have the honor to enclose the same.

It appears to me that though His Majesty's Squadron were very deficient in seamen, weight of metal, and particularly long guns, yet the greatest misfortune was the loss of every officer, particularly Captain Finnis, whose life, had it been spared, would, in my opinion, have saved the squadron.

I have honor to be, &c.,

James Lucas Yeo, Commodore.

His Excellency Sir George Prevost, Bart.

Governor and General in Chief.

His Majesty's late Ship Detroit,
Put-in Bay, Lake Erie, Sept. 12th, 1813.

Sir, —The last letter I had the honor of writing to you, dated the 6th instant, I informed you, that unless certain intimation was received of more seamen being on their way to Amherstburg, I should be obliged to sail with the squadron deplorably manned as it was, to fight the enemy (who blockaded the port), to enable us to get supplies of provisions and stores of every description ; so perfectly destitute of provisions was the port, that there was not a day's flour in store, and the crews of the squadron under my command were on half allowance of many things, and when that was done there was no more. Such were the motives which induced Major-General Procter (whom by your instructions I was directed to consult, and whose wishes I was enjoined to execute, as far as relates to the good of the country), to concur in the necessity of a battle being risked under the many disadvantages which I labored, and it now remains for me, the most melancholy task to relate to you the unfortunate issue of the battle, as well as the many untoward circumstances that led to that event.

No intelligence of seamen having arrived, I sailed on the 9th inst. fully expecting to meet the enemy next morning, as they had been seen among the islands ; nor was I mistaken ; soon after daylight they were seen in motion in Put-in Bay, the wind then at south-west and light, giving us the weather-gage. I bore up for them, in hopes of bringing them to action among the islands, but that intention was soon frustrated, by the wind suddenly shifting to the south-east, which brought the enemy directly to windward. The line was formed according to a given plan, so that each ship might be supported against the superior force of the two brigs opposed to them. About ten the enemy had cleared the islands, and immediately bore up, under easy sail, in a line abreast, each brig being also supported by the small vessels. At a quarter before twelve I commenced the action, by firing a few long guns ; about a quarter past, the American Commodore, also supported by two schooners, one carrying four long twelve-pounders, the other a long 32 and 24-pounder, came to close action with the Detroit ; the other brig of the enemy, apparently destined to engage the Queen Charlotte, supported in like

manner by two schooners, kept so far to windward as to render the Queen Charlotte's 24-pounder carronades useless, while she was, with the Lady Prevost, exposed to the heavy and destructive fire of the Caledonia, and four other schooners, armed with long and heavy guns, like those I have already described.

Too soon, alas ! was I deprived of the services of the noble and intrepid Captain Finnis, who soon after the commencement of the action fell, and with him fell my greatest support ; soon after, Lieutenant Stokoe, of the Queen Charlotte, was struck senseless by a splinter, which deprived the country of his services at this very critical period. As I perceived, the Detroit had enough to contend with, without the prospect of a fresh brig. Provincial Lieutenant Irvine, who then had charge of the Queen Charlotte, behaved with great courage, but his experience was much too limited to supply the place of such an officer as Captain Finnis, hence she proved of far less assistance than I expected.

The action continued with great fury until half past two, when I perceived my opponent drop astern, and a boat passing from him to the Niagara (which vessel was at this time perfectly fresh); the American Commodore seeing, that as yet the day was against him (his vessel having struck soon after he left her), and also the very defenceless state of the Detroit, which ship was now a perfect wreck, principally from the raking fire of the gun boats, and also that the Queen Charlotte was in such a situation, that I could receive very little assistance from her, and the Lady Prevost being at this time too far to leeward, from her rudder being injured, made a noble, and alas ! too successful an effort to regain it, for he bore up, and supported by his small vessels, passed within pistol shot, and took a raking position on our bow, nor could I prevent it as the unfortunate situation of the Queen Charlotte prevented us from wearing ; in attempting it we fell on board her ; my gallant first Lieutenant Garland was now mortally wounded, and myself so severely, that I was obliged to quit the deck.

Manned h squadron was, with not more than fifty British seamen, the rest a mixed crew of Canadians and soldiers and who were totally unacquainted with such service, rendered the loss of officers more sensibly felt, and never in any action was the loss more severe ; every

Names of officers killed and wounded—Lieut. James Garden, Royal Newfoundland Regiment, killed ; Detroit, killed : First Lieut. John Garland ; wounded : Captain R. H. Barclay, dangerously ; J. R. Hoffmeister, purser, dangerously ; Queen Charlotte, killed : Captain Robert Finnis ; wounded : First Lieut. James Stokoe, severely ; James Foster, midshipman, slightly ; Lady Prevost, wounded : Lieut. Edward Buchan, commanding, dangerously ; First Lieut. F. Rolette, severely ; Hunter, wounded : Lieut. George Bignall, commanding, severely ; Henry Gateshill, master's mate, slightly ; Chippeway, wounded : master's mate, J. Campbell, commanding, slightly.

(Signed)

R. H. Barclay, Commander,
and late Senior Officer.

The annexed is Commander Perry's Official account of the action.

U.S. Schr. Ariel, Put-in Bay, 13th Sept., 1813.

Sir,—In my last, I informed you that we had captured the enemy's fleet on this lake. I have now the honor to give you the most important particulars of the action :—On the morning of the loth instant, at sun-rise, they were discovered from Put-in Bay, when I lay at anchor, with the squadron under my command. We got under weigh, the wind light at south-west, and stood for them. At 10 a.m. the wind hauled to south-east, and brought us to windward ; formed the line, and bore up. At 15 minutes before 12, the enemy commenced firing ; at 5 minutes before 12, the action commenced on our part. Finding their fire very destructive, owing to their long guns, and it being mostly directed at the Lawrence, I made sail, and directed the other vessels to follow, for the purpose of closing with the enemy—every brace and bow line being soon shot away, she became unmanageable, notwithstanding the great exertions of the sailing master. In this situation, she sustained the action upwards of two hours, within canister distance, until every gun was rendered useless, and the greater part of her crew either killed or wounded. Finding she could no longer annoy the enemy, I left her in charge of Lieut. Yarnall, who, I was convinced, from the bravery already displayed by him, would do what would comport with the honor of



OLIVER HAZARD PERRY.

the flag. At half past two, the wind springing up, Captain Elliott was enabled to bring his vessel, the Niagara, gallantly into close action ; I immediately went on board of her, when he anticipated my wish, by volunteering to bring the schooner, which had been kept astern by the lightness of the wind, into close action.

It was with unspeakable pain that I saw, soon after I got on board the Niagara, the flag of the Lawrence come down; although I was perfectly sensible that she had been defended to the last, and that to have continued to make a show of resistance, would have been a wanton sacrifice of the remains of her brave crew. But the enemy was not able to take possession of her, and circumstances soon permitted her flag again to be hoisted. At 45 minutes past two, the signal was made for "close action" ; the Niagara being very little injured, I determined to pass through the enemy's line—bore up and passed ahead of their two ships, and a brig, giving a raking fire to them, from the starboard guns and to a large schooner and sloop from the larboard side, at half pistol-shot distance. The smaller vessels, at this time, having got within grape and canister distance, under the direction of Capt. Elliott, and keeping up a well-directed fire, the two ships, a brig, and a schooner surrendered, a schooner and sloop making a vain attempt to escape.

Those officers and men, who were immediately under my observation, evinced the greatest gallantry ; and, I have no doubt that all others conducted themselves as became American officers and seamen. Lieut. Yarnall, 1st of the Lawrence, although several times wounded, refused to quit the deck. Midshipman Forrest, (doing duty as Lieutenant), and sailing master Taylor, were of great assistance to me. I have great pain, in stating to you the death of Lieut. Brooks, of the marines, and Midshipman Laub, both of the Lawrence, and Midshipman John Clark, of the Scorpion ; they were valuable and promising officers. Mr. Hambleton, purser, who volunteered his services on deck, was severely wounded, late in the action. Midshipmen Claxton and Swartwout, of the Lawrence, were severely wounded. On board the Niagara, Lieutenants Smith and Edwards, and Midshipman Webster, (doing duty as sailing master), behaved in a very handsome manner. Captain Brevoort, of the army, who acted as a volunteer, in the capacity of a marine

officer, on board that vessel, is an excellent and brave officer ; and, with his musketry, did great execution. Lieut. Turner, commanding the Caledonia, brought that vessel into action in the most able manner, and is an officer, in all situations, that may be relied on.

The Ariel, Lieut. Packett, and Scorpion, sailing master Champlin, were enabled to get early into action, and were of great service. Captain Elliott speaks in the highest terms of Mr. Magrath, purser, who had been dispatched in a boat, on service, previous to my getting on board the Niagara ; and, being a seaman, since the action has rendered essential service in taking charge of one of the prizes.

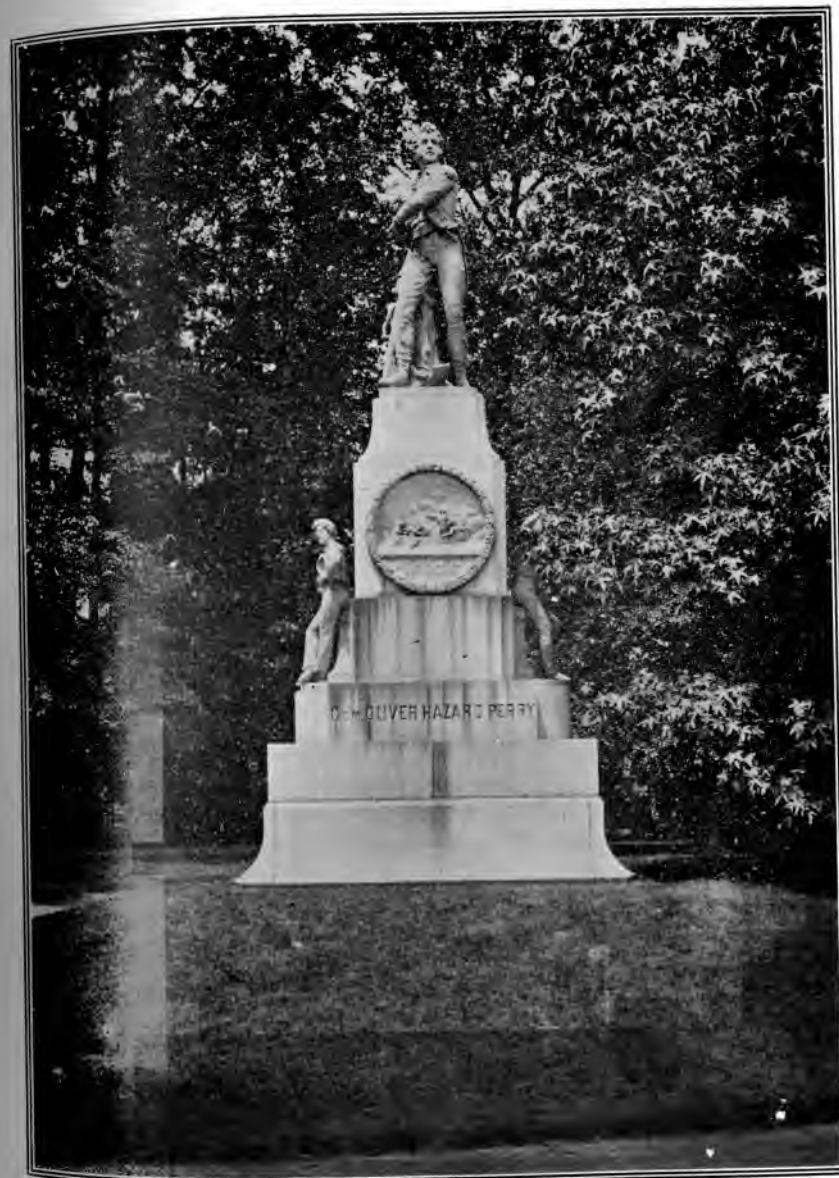
Of Captain Elliott, already so well known to the government, it would be almost superfluous to speak :—in this action, he evinced his characteristic bravery and judgment ; and, since the close of the action, has given me the most able and essential assistance.

I have the honor to enclose you a return of the killed and wounded, together with a statement of the relative force of the squadrons. The Captain and ist Lieutenant of the Queen Charlotte, and ist Lieut. of the Detroit, were killed. Captain Barclay, senior officer, and the commander of the Lady Prevost, severely wounded. The commanders of the Hunter and Chippeway, slightly wounded. Their loss, in killed and wounded, I have not been able to ascertain.; it must, however, have been very great.

I have caused the prisoners, taken on the loth inst., to be landed at Sandusky ; and have requested Gen. Harrison to have them marched to Chillicothe, and there wait, until your pleasure shall be known respecting them.

The Lawrence has been so entirely cut up, it is absolutely necessary she should go into a safe harbor ; I have, therefore, directed Lieut. Yarnall to proceed to Erie, in her, with the wounded of the fleet ; and dismantle, and get her over the bar, as soon as possible.

The two ships, in a heavy sea, this day at anchor, lost their masts, being much injured in the action. I shall haul them into the inner bay, at this place, and moor them for the present. The Detroit is a remarkably fine ship ; sails well and is very strongly built ;—the Queen Charlotte is a much superior vessel to what has been reiSresented;—the Lady Prevost is a large, fine schooner.



PERRY'S STATUE, CLEVELAND, OHIO.

I also beg your instructions, respecting the wounded ; I am satisfied, sir, that whatever steps I might take, governed by humanity, would meet your approbation ;—under this impression, I have taken upon myself to promise Capt. Barclay, who is very dangerously wounded, that he shall be landed as near Lake Ontario as possible ; and, I had no doubt, you would allow me to parole him ; he is under the impression, that nothing but leaving this part of the country will save his life. There is also a number of Canadians among the prisoners—many who have families.

I have the honor, &c.,
O. H. Perry.

Hon. W. Jones, Sec. Navy.

The Return above alluded to by Commodore Perry, admits the American loss to have been 27 killed, and 96 wounded—total 123.2

=Perry was not a Commodore, neither was Barclay. The Commodore of the Americans was Isaac Chauncey, and of the British Sir James Lucas Yeo. James Fenimore Cooper says : " Perry was not made a Captain until after the Battle of Lake Erie, his commission being dated Sept. 10th, 1813, the day of his victory."

2These casualties were distributed in the following manner,—

VESSEL.	KILLED.	WOUNDED.	TOTAL.
Lawrence	22.....	61.....	83
Niagara	2.....	25.....	27
Caledonia	0.....	3.....	3
Somers	0.....	2.....	2
Ariel	1.....	3.....	4
Trippe	0.....	2.....	2
Scorpion	2.....	0.....	2
Total	27.....	96.....	123