

CHAPTER XIX.

Early intimation of the attack upon Washington—Defensive preparations in consequence—Arrival at BerMuda of troops from France—Departure of general Ross in the Tonnant for the Chesapeake—Reconnoissance on shore by the latter and rear-admiral Cockburn—Meditated attack upon Washington—Arrival of the troops from Bernluda—Different routes to Washington—Captain Gordon's affair in the Potomac—Disembarkation of the troops at Benedict in the Patuxent—Pursuit, by the combined forces, of commodore Barney's flotilla—Its destruction—March of tlw British troops—Their arrival at Upper Marlborough — Rear-admiral Cockburn's Junction with - them — Advance of the British towards Washington—Correct American account of their number—Retreat of the American army by Madensburg to Washington— Further advance of the British—American account of general Winder's force—Re-advance to Bladensburg—Appearance on the field "of the president of the United States—American account of the battle of Bladensburg — Flight of the Americans— Mutual loss—Behaviour of Mr. Madison—His narrow escape from capture—American plans (f

their towns and cities; of New York in particular—Brief description of Washington—Advance of part of the British force from Bladensburg—Its encampment near Washington—Reconnoissance of general Ross and other officers—Fire opened upon them—Advance of the light companies—Destruction of the capitol and two houses whence the fire proceeded—Explosion at the navy-yard—Arrival at the encampment of remainder of British forces—Entry into Washington of 200 British—Destruction of the president's house; also of the treasury and war offices—Anecdote of a British centinel—Amount of American force in the vicinity—Accident at Greenleaf's-point—Destruction of the secretary's of state's office, ropewalks, ordnance, bridge, navy-yard, &c. — Amount of public property destroyed—Acknowledged respect paid to private property—Departure of the British front Washington—Their unmolested arrival, and disembarkation, at Benedict—American accounts—Erroneous impression respecting rear-admiral Cockburn's conduct at Washington—Sir Alexander Cochrane's letter to Mr. Munro, and its reply—Mr. Madison's proclamation—British accounts—Annual Register —Parliamentary speech.

SOME hints thrown out by the British commissioners at the conference at Ghent, coupled with the rumoured. destination of British troops

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shipping in the ports of France, induced the American commissioners to intimate to their government, that an attack upon the federal city would probably be made in the course of the 'summer of 1814. This notice reached Mr. Madison: on the 26th of June; and, on the 1st of July, he submitted to his council a plan for immediately calling 2 or 3000 men into the field, and holding 10 or 12000 militia and volunteers, of the neighbouring states, in readiness to reinforce that corps. On the next day, he created into a military district, the whole state of Maryland, the district of Columbia, and that part of Virginia north of the Rappahannock river, embracing an exposed coast of nearly 1000 miles; vulnerable at every point, and intersected by many large rivers, and by Chesapeake bay. On the 4th of July, as a further defensive preparation, the president made a requisition to the several states of the union, for 93500 militia, as authorized by law; designating their respective quota, and requesting the executive magistrates of each state, to detach and hold them in readiness for immediate service. Of these 93500 militia, 1.5000 were to be drawn from the tenth military district, or that surrounding the metropolis; for whose defence they were intended.

- On the 2d of June sailed from Verdun roads, the Royal Oak, rear-admiral Malcolm, accompanied by three frigates, three sloops, two bomb-

vessels, five **ships armées en fide**, and three transports, having **on board the 4th, 21st, 44th, and 85th, regiments, with a proportion of royal artillery, and sappers and miners, under the command of major-general Ross.** On the 24th of July the squadron arrived **at Bermuda, and there joined vice-admiral Cochrane, in the Tonnant.** On the 2d of August, vice-admiral Cochrane, **having received on board-the Tonnant major-general Ross and his staff,** sailed, in company with the *Euryalus*; for Chesapeake bay; and, on the 14th of August, arrived, and joined the *Albion*, vice-admiral Cockburn, off the mouth of the Potomac. On the next day, major-general Ross, accompanied by rear-admiral Cockburn, went on shore to reconnoitre. The rear-admiral's knowledge of the country, as well as the excellent plan he adopted to prevent surprise, enabled the two officers to penetrate further, than would otherwise have been, prudent. The thick woods that skirt, and the numerous ravines that intersect, the different roads around Washington, offer important advantages to an ambushing enemy. Rear-admiral Cockburn, therefore, in his frequent walks through the country, invariably moved forward between two parties of marines, occupying, in open order, the woods by the road-side. Each marine carried a bugle, to be used as a signal, in case of casual separation, or the appearance



of an enemy. It was during the excursion with general Ross, that rear-admiral Cockburn suggested the facility of an attack upon the city of Washington ; and general Ross determined, as soon as the troops should arrive from Bermuda, to make the attempt.

On the 17th of August, rear-admiral Malcolm, with the troops, arrived, and joined vice-admiral Cochrane, off the mouth of the Potomac ; and the whole proceeded to the Patuxent, about *N* miles further up the bay. In the meantime, captain Gordon, with some vessels of the squadron, had been detached up the Potomac, to bombard Fort-Warburton, situate on the left bank of that river, about 14 miles below the federal city ; and captain Parker, with the *Mene-laus* frigate, up the Chesapeake, above Baltimore, to create a diversion in that quarter. The successful proceedings of captain Gordon, in the destruction of the fort ; and,—a measure entirely his own,—the capture of the populous town of Alexandria, will be found fully detailed in our naval volume.* The direct route to Washington, from the mouth of the Potomac, was up that river, about 50 miles, to Fort-Tobacco ; thence, over land, by the village of Piscataway, 32 miles, to the lower bridge across the eastern branch of the Potomac ; but, as no doubt could be entertained that this bridge,

* James's *Nay. Occur.* p. 381-6.

which was half a mile long, and had a draw at the west-end, would be defended, as well by a body of troops, as by a heavy sloop of war and a armed schooner, known to be in the river, the route up the Patuxent, and by Bladensburg, where the eastern branch, in case of the bridge at that spot being destroyed, could be easily forded, was preferred.

Commodore Barney's gun-boats were still lying in the Patuxent, up which they had been driven.* An immediate attempt against this " much-vaunted flotilla" offered two advantages ; one, in its capture or destruction, the other, as a pretext for ascending the Patuxent, with the troops, destined for the attack of the city. Part of the ships, having advanced as high up the river as the depth of water would allow, disembarked the troops, on the 19th and 20th of August, at Benedict, a small town, about .50 miles south-east of Washington. On the evening of the 20th, rear-admiral Cockburn, taking with him the armed boats and tenders of the fleet, proceeded up the river, to attack commodore Barney's flotilla ; and to supply with provisions, and, if necessary, afford protection to, the army, as it ascended the right bank. For the full details of the successful enterprise against the American flotilla, we must refer to our naval volume.t In

* See 252. p. + See Plate V. - —

§ James's *Nay. Occur.* p. 375.

justice to commodore Barney, we shall here introduce general Wilkinson's statement upon the subject. "Cockburn," says the general, "with his Tharges, pursued Barney's flotilla, which had, by order of president Madison, been unfortunately abandoned, and was, without resistance, blown up; when it will be apparent to every competent judge, that, from the narrowness of the channel, the commodore could have defended himself, and repulsed any floating force the enemy could have brought against him; and his flanks were well secured, by the extent of the marches on both sides of the river."

Mr. Thomson has found out, that general Ross, while on his march, avoided an engagement with an inferior number of American troops. Having previously stated the British force at "about 6000 regulars, seamen, and marines," "being 1000 more than Mr. O'Connor, and 2000 more than doctor Smith makes them, Mr. Thomson says:—"The enemy approached the wood-yard, a position 12 miles only from the city, and at which general Winder's forces were drawn up. The force consisted of about 5000 men, and offered battle to the British troops. But general Ross, upon reaching the neighbourhood of Nottingham, turned to his right, and took the road to Marlborough, upon which general Winder fell back to Battalion Old Fields, about eight miles

* Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 766.

from the city."* To make it appear, also, that the British were actually pursued, he, in the very next paragraph, declares, that "several prisoners" were taken. As general Ross, after stating the landing of the army, says merely:—"On the 21st it reached Nottingham," we should have only the improbability of the thing, to oppose to Mr. Thomson's gasconade, had not general Wilkinson touched upon the subject. "On the morning of the 22d," says the general, "the cavalry of Laval and Tilghman, say 200 men, with the regular troops, under lieutenant-colonel Scott, about 400 strong, were ordered to advance towards Nottingham, and reached Oden's house, where they were soon followed by major Peter, with six 6-pounders, flying artillery, and a detachment of about 250 select men. General Ross marched from Nottingham, the same morning, by the chapel road leading to Marlborough; and, on discovering the American troops, made a detachment to his left to meet them, which advanced to the foot of the hill near Oden's house, when the American troops fell back, and the enemy resumed their march." †

On the afternoon of the 22d, general Ross, with the troops, arrived, and encamped, at the town of Upper Marlborough, situate about four

* Sketches of the War, p. 331.

† Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 765.

miles up the western branch of the Patuxent, The men, therefore, after having been nearly three months on board ship, had, in less than three days, marched 40 miles ; and that in the month of August, when the sultriness of the climate could scarcely be tolerated. We may (twin some idea of the military obstacles that *might* have presented themselves during the march, by the observations of general Wilkinson. " Not a single bridge," says he, " was broken, not a causeway destroyed, not an inundation attempted, not a tree fallen, not a rood of -the road obstructed, nor a gun fired at the enemy, in a march of near 40 miles, from Benedict to Upper Marlborough, by a route on which there are 10 or a dozen difficult defiles ; which, with a few hour's labour, six pieces of light artillery, 300 infantry, 200 riflemen, and 60 dragoons, might have been defended against any force that could approach them : such is the narrowness of the road, the profundity of the ravines, the steepness of the acclivities, and the sharpness of the 'ridges.'"* While general Ross and his men were resting themselves at Upper Marlborough, general Winder and his army, now joined by commodore Barney and the men of his flotilla, were lying at their encampment at the long Old Fields, only eight miles distant. With the full knowledge of what a fatiguing march the British

* Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 759.

had made, the hero of La Colle mill declares, that general Ross, with his " 4 or 5000 veteran troops, ought to have marched upon and routed" general Winder.* The latter, however, "rashly kept his position during the night ;" and, on the next morning, the American troops were reviewed by Mr. Madison, " their commander-in-chief, whose martial appearance gladdened every countenance and encouraged every heart."⁴ Soon after the review, a detachment from the American army advanced along the road to Upper Marlborough ; and, after exchanging a few shots with the British skirmishers, fell back to the main body.

On the morning of the 23d, rear-admiral Cockburn, having left at Pig-point, directly opposite to the western branch, - } the marines of the ships, under captain Robyns, and two divisions of the boats, crossed over, with the third division, to Mount Calvert ; and proceeded, by land, to the British encampment at Upper Marlborough. The little opposition experienced by the army in its march from Benedict, and the complete success that had attended the expedition against commodore Barney's flotilla, determined major-general Ross to make an immediate attempt upon the city of Washington, distant from Upper Marlborough not more than 16 miles.

At the desire of the major-general, the marine

* Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 760. f See Plate V,

and naval forces at Pig-point were moved over to Mount Calvert; and the ship-marines, marine-artillery, and a proportion of seamen, joined the army at Upper Marlborough. It is now time to give the numbers of the British, so fearlessly approaching the metropolis of the United States. Fortunately, the only American account which pretends to any accuracy upon that point, supplies us with the necessary information.

" Those," says Dr. Smith, " who had the best opportunities of counting them, (the British,) calculated that their whole number was about 4000; and this calculation is warranted by the incidents in the field."* .He then states, that the British army, under major-general Ross, was distributed into three brigades ; the first brigade, commanded by colonel Brooke, of the 44th, and composed of the 4th and 44th regiments ; the second brigade, commanded by colonel Patterson, of the 21st regiment, and composed of that regiment, the second battalion of marines, and the ship-marines under captain Robyns ; the third brigade, commanded by colonel Thornton, of the 85th light infantry, and composed of that regiment, the light companies of the 4th, 21st, and 44th regiments, one company of marine skirmishers, a detachment of colonial marines, also of royal artillery, with two 3-pounders and a howitzer, and a party of

* History of the United States, Vol. III. p. 298.

seamen and engineers, with rockets.* Leaving captain Robyns, with the marines of the ships, in possession of Upper Marlborough, major-general Ross and rear-admiral Cockburn, with the troops, marines, and seamen, whose number, notwithstanding the absence of captain Robyns and his party, we will still state at 4000, moved forward, on the evening of the 23d ; and, before dark, arrived, and bivouacked for the night, at a spot five miles nearer to Washington.t

As if by concert, the American army retired from the long Old Fields,, about the same time that the British army advanced ironjipper Marlborough ; the patrolsof the latter actually occupying, before midnight, the ground which the former had abandoned.. The Atnerican army did not stop till. it reached Washington ; where it encamped, for the night, near the navy-yard." On the same evening, upwards of 2000 troops arrived at Bladensburg from Baltimore. At day-light on the morning of the 24th, general Ross put his troops in motion for Bladensburg, 12 miles frOm his camp ; and, having halted by the way, arrived at the heights facing the village about half-past 11 o'clock. § While the British troops are resting themselves, and preparing for the attack, we will endeavour

* Mist. of the United States, Vol. III. p. 298.

t Sec Plate V. 1: Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 767.

S See Plate VI. *d d.*

to place before the reader, the force which they had to overcome, before they could enter the metropolis of the United States.

" The army under general Winder," says doctor Smith, " consisted of

-- United States' dragoons	-	140
Maryland ditto	- -	240
District of Columbia ditto		50
Virginia ditto	-	100
		<u>530</u>
Regular infantry	- .	500
Seamen and marines	- < -	600
		<u>1100</u>
Stansbury's brigade of militia		1353
Sterrett's regiment, ditto		500
Baltimore artillery, ditto		150
Pinkney's battalion, ditto ;		150
		<u>2153</u>
Smith's brigade, ditto	-	1070
Cramer's battalion, ditto	.	240
Waring's detachment, ditto	•	150
Maynard's ditto ditto	- -	50
		<u>1610</u>
Beall's and Hood's regiment of ditto		800
Volunteer corps	— -	350
		<u>1150</u>
Total at Bladensburg		6513

At hand,

Young's brigade of militia		450
Minor's Virginia corps	-	600
		<u>1050</u>
Grand Total		7593*

of the U. S. Vol. III. p. 207.

'According to general Armstrong's letter to the editor of the " Baltimore Patriot," of September 3, general Winder had, under his command, exclusive of the 15000 militia he was directed to call out, as many regular troops and seamen, as would make his total force, when assembled, " 16300 men." " General Winder," proceeds doctor Smith, " after the battle, reported his forces at about 5000 men ;* nearly 2600 less than appears from the preceding detail Nor has the general given any account of his artillery ; although we find that " the American army had, on the field, not fewer than 23 pieces, varying from 6• to 18.pounders." This army was drawn up, in two lines, upon very commanding heights, on the north of the turnpike-road leading from Bladensburg to Washington ; and, as an additional incitement to glory on the part of the American troops, their president was on the field. " Every eye," says general Wilkinson; "was immediately turned upon the chief; every bosom throbbed with confidence ; and every nerve was strung with valor. No doubts remained with the troops that, in their chief magistrate they beheld their commander-in-chief, who, like another Maurice, having, by his irresolution in council, exposed the country to the chances and accidents of a general engage-

* App. No. 66.

t list. of the U. S: Vol. III. p. 297.

ment, had now come forward to repair the error, by his activity in the field ; determined to throw himself into the gap of danger, and not to survive the honor of his country, especially entrusted to his guardianship." **f, t**

The affair, .for it hardly deserves the name of battle,--of Bladensburg, may be given in the words of general 'Wilkinson ; assisted by a reference tae his own diagram.t `.' 'The enemy," says the general, ". made the attack with their light brigade ; the right wing, led by colonel Brooke, of the 44th regiment, and the left by colonel Thornton, of the 85th. They crossed the bridge *in* disorder, and the skirmishers advanced in loose order, and forced the battery and riflemen in *h, i*. The right wing formed in *u, it*, and followed the skirmishers through the corn-field, *p, p*, and the orchard, *q, q*, and over the field, forward of the tobacco-house, *k*. Captain Doughty," (with a corps of riflemen,) " formed in *l*, gave a few fires, and retired with the rest of the troops ; and the enemy pursued to the fence 14, 14 ; while our troops generally retreated," proceeds the general, " by *l, l, r*. **R**." Before we proceed to detail the operations of colonel Thornton's 'wing, a: little explanation, as to numbers, may be necessary. The American force, thus routed by about 750 rank and file of the 4th and 44th regiments, including a
lit Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 781. f See Plate VI.

rocket-party, consisted of, regular and militia dragoons, 530; major Pinkney's battalion of militia-riflemen, 150 ; Doughty's riflemen, number not stated ; Stansbury's militia-brigade, 1353 ; Sterret's militia-regiment, 500 ; *Baltimore* artillery, with six pieces,* 150 ; major Peters, with six pieces of artillery, and lieutenant-colonel Scott, with the 36th United States?' regiment, together, 500 ;t Burch's artillery with four pieces,: number of men not given ; Smith's militia brigade, 1070: total 4000 men, and 16 pieces of artillery. It is fortunate that we have American testimony for the extraor- dinary account here given. -

Requesting the reader again to turn to the diagram, we will, with 'general. Wilkinson's assistance, narrate the `proceedings of the remainder of the British and American forces. " Colonel Thornton," Says he, " with the left wing, pushed up the turnpike-road, and was about to attack the 5th regiment, in flank, when it gave way. **There** were a great many commanders this day, **and**, among them, not the least discerning, colonel Wadsworth ; who, to avoid interference with others, and render what service he could, had prepared, and, with a few hands, brought forward, two field-pieces. to *t, t*, on the turnpike, with intention to open and

* See Plate **VI: h**.

l. Ibid. 9 and 10.

t Ibid. O.

maintain a retreating fire upon the column of the enemy as it advanced ; which, while his flanks were secure, would undoubtedly have retarded, galled, and cut them sensibly ; but, after the first shot, which will be found in the under-work of the bridge, his men introduced the wrong end of the cartridge, and, instead of drawing it to get it out, depressed the muzzle of the piece until the trail and wheels overturned, and, by this time, the enemy was so near as to oblige them to flee for safety. Seeing the troops on his right give way, colonel Thornton advanced, crossed the conduit, and ascended the opposite side of the ravine ; but was so warmly received by .commodore Barney's battery of three 18 pounders at 4, " that, after some pause and fluctuation, he turned to his left, and displayed in a field in 2, 2, where he, for a few rounds, combated a valorous little band of the marine corps, commanded by captain Miller, with three 12-pounders, in 3, and the flotilla-men of commodore Barney, in 5, 5 ; which forced him to incline to his left, and endeavour to turn the American right, by a wood, in 2, 2, 2, 2, where lie was met by colonel Beall, who was formed under the summit of a conical hill, in 6, 6." General Wilkinson then introduces a long letter from colonel Beall ; from which we gather, that, after firing a few rounds, the latter and his

See Plate VI. .)

regiment, took to their heels. After a resistance, which, compared to the behaviour of the American troops in general, may be termed gallant, the flotilla-t► en and marines retreated ; leaving upon the field, their commanders, commodore Barney and captain Miller, severely wounded ; and who, along with their guns, fell into the hands of the British. Without considering that the American right was reinforced by its re-, treating left, or the British left by its advancing right, we may state the relative numbers, at this end of the field, as 750 British and 2500 Americans. Ten pieces of cannon were taken ; but not above 120 prisoners ;* " owing," says rear-admiral Cockburn, " to the swiftness with which the enemy went off, and the fatigue our army had previously undergone." t The retreating American troops proceeded, with all haste, towards Vt ashington ; and the British troops, including the rear-division, which had, just at the close of the short scuffle, arrived upon the ground, halted, to take some refreshment.

Had it not been for the American artillery, the loss of the British would have been very trifling. We find 24 pieces marked upon gene., ral Wilkinson's diagram. Those at *h* completely enfiladed the bridge, and were very destructive to the advancing column. Under

* App. No. 66. + App. No. 6S1,
See Plate VI. o, 10, 4, 3, t t,

these circumstances, the British loss amounted to, one captain, two lieutenants, five serjeants, and 56 rank and file, killed ; two lieutenant-colonels, one major, one captain, 14 lieutenants, two ensigns, 10 serjeants, and 155 rank and file, wounded ; total, 64 killed, 185 wounded: grand total, 249. Of the American loss we have no very accurate account. Mr. Thomson, in the single instance of the Bladensburg battle, does not say a word on the subject. Doctor Smith says :—" General Winder supposed that the loss of his army was from 30 to 40 killed, and from 50 to 60 wounded.* It is believed, however, that this is a large computation ; for doctor Catlet, the attending surgeon, stated the killed at 10 or 12 ; and the wounded, some of whom died, at 30.† As the British two 3-pounders and howitzer, being stationed near to e, in Bladensburg village, were of little service j, and, as the Americans did not stay to receive many rounds of musketry, nor one thrust of the bayonet, their trifling loss is by no means extraordinary. Without wishing to exult over a fallen foe, we may express our surprise, that, the classical ground, } in the neighbourhood of, which " the meritorious conquerors of Tecumseli,"§ among other American troops, were drawn up, should have failed to inspire them

*App. No. 66. -I- Hist. of the U. States, Vol. III. p. 498.

† Thermopylw, "tiber,

§ Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 770; and our Vol. I. p. 294.

with a portion of that " Roman;" or, in reference to " American," " *second degree*' valor," spoken of by an American congress-man.*

What became of Mr. Madison ? is a question the reader is, no doubt, anxious to have solved. We shall here quote, and let it be understood that we are quoting, the words of an American writer :—" Not all the allurements of fame, nor all the obligations of duty, nor the solemn invocations of honor, could excite a spark of courage : the love of a life which had become' useless to mankind, and served but to embarrass the public councils, and prejudice the public cause, stifled the voice of Patriotism, and prevailed over the love of glory ; and, at the very first : shot; the trembling coward, with a faltering voice,' 676 claimed:—" Come, general Armstrong; ;conn;, Colonel Munro ; let us go, and leave it to the Commanding general.',iitf7 :According :to::(the testimony of Mr.:William Simmons, one of the witnesses examined by the American committee of investigation, assembled in consequence of the capture of Washington, the American president, the attorney-general, and secretaries of war and state, were indebted'tb' his information, for notwithstanding fallen into the hands of major-general narla4Ini rat .4lic1b urn; colonel Thornton, and a number of staff-officers, Who, in their undress coats, had entered

* See p. 25. † WilliansOn'S Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 783.

densburg, by a circuitous route, unobserved by any but Mr. Simmons. A delay of five minutes would, it appears, have placed the commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States, and the whole executive corps, in the hands of the British.

Europeans, often to their cost, read accounts of the fine rich land to be met with, in almost all parts of the United States. It is a matter of equal policy, to show the existence of markets capable of carrying off the abundant produce of so fruitful a soil : therefore, most plans of towns or cities sent to Europe from the United States, have their sites ready covered with all the streets, which even a century may not see built. We have now before us a large folding map of the city of New York, with all its squares filled up in black, resembling a map of London, rather than of Liverpool, which it scarcely reaches in population. It will not, then, surprise the reader, that the city of Washington, or, as the bard of Lalla Rookh once sang,—

" This famed metropolis, where Fancy sees
Squares in morasses, obelisks in trees;
Which travelling fools and gazetteers adorn,
With shrines unbuilt, and heroes yet unborn ;"

covering, as it does, about eight square miles of ground, should contain no more than 400 houses;

less, than is to be found in a single street of London.*

As soon as the troops were refreshed, general loss and rear-admiral Cockburn, " with 1000 men," moved forward from Bladensburg; and, at about eight o'clock in the evening, arrived at an open piece of ground, two miles from the federal city. The troops were here drawn up, while major-general Ross, rear-admiral Cockburn, and several other officers, accompanied by a small guard, rode forward to reconnoitre. On arriving opposite to some houses, the party halted; and, just as the officers had closed each other, in order to consult whether or not it would be prudent to enter the heart of the city that night, a volley was fired from the windows of one of two adjoining houses, and from the capitol ; § which volley killed one soldier, and general Ross's horse from under him, and wounded three soldiers. Rear-admiral Cockburn instantly rode back to the detachment, stationed in advance ; and soon returned with the light companies. The house was then surrounded ; and, after some prisoners had been taken from set on fire ; the adjoining house fell with it. The capitol, which was contiguous to these

* Strand. + History of the United States, Vol. III. p. 294.
Wilkinson's Memoirs, Vol. I. p. 791. § App. No. 62.

|| Poulson's Philadelphia paper, of August 29, 1814.

houses, and which: was "capable of being made an impregnable citadel against an enemy, with little artillery, and that of the lighter class,"* was also set on fire. The "capitol containing the senate-chamber, representative-hall, supreme Court-room, congressional: library, and legislative archives;" -r these rooms, "or public buildings," as many of our London journalists have called; them, could not otherwise than share the, fate of the building of which they formed part. • —

Scarcely had the flames burst out from the capitol and the two contiguous houses, than an awful explosion-announced, that the Americans Were employed upon the same business in the lower part of -the city. By this time the remainder of the British forces from Bladensburg had arrivedatthe encampment. At about half-past 10, after n party had been sent to destroy the fort-and-public works at Greenleaf's point, major-general Ross, and rear-admiral Cockburn, each at the head of a small detachment of men, numbering, together, not more than 200, t. proceeded down hill towards the president's palace. Finding it utterly abandoned, and , hearing, • probably, that a guard of soldiers, with two pieces, of CRIIBQIiyvelhumunted on travel.

*Uistory of the United States, Vol. III. p. 29(. † Ibid. 291.

‡: Wilkinson's Men►. Vol. I. p. 791.

ling carriages;"* had been stationed at, and but recently fled from, this the American " commander-in-Chief's" head-quarters, the British caused it to be set on fire. A log-hut, under similar circumstances, would have shared the same fate, and the justice of the measure not been disputed. Why, then, in a country where "equality of rights" is daily preached up, should the palace be held more sacred than the cottage? The loss of the one falls, where it ought, upon the nation at large; the loss of the other,—a lamentable case, at all times,—solely Upon the individual proprietor. rind generals Armstrong and M'Clure consulted this principle, the village of Newark would have remained undestroyed; and the feelings of humanity not have been so outraged as they still are, at the bare recital of that atrocious proceeding.

To the building, containing the treasury and war offices, the torches of the conquerors were next applied. On arriving opposite to the office' of the "National Intelligencer," the American government-paper,—whose editor, -Mr. Gales, a British subject, had been giving currency to the grossest falsehoods againstthe British commanders in the Chesapeake, and against the British Character in general, rear-admirat -Cockburn' observed to the inhabitants near him, that he

• Testimony of Mr. Wm. Simmons, before, tke Americas committee of investigation.

must destroy it. On being told, however, that the adjoining buildings would be likely to take fire be desisted. The rear-admiral, then, wishing the inhabitants good night', and assuring them that private property and persons should be respected, departed to his quarters on the Capitol-hill. Early on the next morning the rear-admiral was seen walking about the city, accompanied by three soldiers only. Indeed, general "Wilkinson says :—" A single centinel, who had been accidentally left on post near the office of the National Intelligencer, kept undisturbed possession of the central part of the metropolis, until the next morning ; of which there are several living witnesses."* At this time, too, it appears, an American " force of more than 4000 combatants" was posted upon the heights of Georgetown,* which is a continuation of the city to the westward.

During the morning of the 25th, the secretary of state's office was burnt, and the types and printing materials of the government-paper were destroyed. A serious accident had happened to the party sent to Greenleaf's-point. Some powder, concealed in a well, accidentally took fire, killing 12, and wounding 30, officers and men. Three extensive rope-walks, at some distance from the city, were, by the British, entirely consumed ; and so was an immense quantity of

* Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 791.

small-arms and heavy ordnance ;* as well as the great bridge across the Potomac : t a -very prudent military measure, especially as the Americans had themselves destroyed the two bridges crossing the eastern branch. t A party, under captain Wainwright, of the Tonnant, destroyed the few stores and buildings in the navy-yard, which had escaped the flames of the preceding night. As the British were in haste to be gone, and as the vessels, even could they have been floated in safety down the Potomac, were not wanted by us, it was very considerate in the American government to order the destruction of the frigate, of 1600 tons, that was nearly ready to be launched, and of the fine sloop of war, Argus, ready for sea ; and whose 20-32-pounders would have assisted so powerfully in defending the entrance to the city by the lower bridge. According to the official estimate of " the public property destroyed,"t the value has been much over-rated. It appears not to have exceeded 1624280 dollars, or £365463 sterling.

With respect to private property, we have only to quote passages from American prints, to show how that was treated. One newspaper says :- " The British officers pay inviolable respect to private property, and no peaceable citizen is molested." § A writer from Baltimore, under

App. No. 65. t See Plate V. t App. No. 67.
Columbian Centincl, August 31st.

the date of " August 27th," says:!"—" The enemy; learn, treated the inhabitants'of Washington well."* But what says Mr. Gales, the mouth-piece of the government,' he whose presses had been destroyed and whose " types had been so shamefully dispersed."?"—" When we remarked," says he, " in our paper of yesterday, that private property had, in general, been scrupulously respected. • by the 'enemy during his late incursion, We'Spoke what we believed, from a hasty survey, and perhaps without sufficient inquiry. Greater respect was certainly paid to private property than has usually been exhibited by the enemy in his marauding parties. No houses were half as much plundered by the enemy, as by the knavish wretches about the town, who profited by the general distress. There were, however, 'Several private buildings wantonly destroyed, and some of those persons who remained in the city were scandalously maltreated."t We are to consider that this charge contains the utmost that has been alleged against the British during their 20 hours' occupation of the metropolis of the United States. The " several private buildings," besides " the dwelling-house owned and occupied by Mr. Robert Sewall, from behind which a gun was fired at general Ross," consisted of a commodious dwelling, belong-

* Boston paper, September 1st.

† National Intelligencer, August 31st.

ing to the estate of general Washington, and Carroll's hotel :"* the former suffered, from its contiguity to, or absolute junction with, the house from which the firing had been directed; the latter, not unlikely; from the act of some of " the knavish wretches about the town, Whci profited by the general distress." That the British officers did all they could to secure the inhabitants from injury, both in their persons and properties, may be gathered from Mr. Thomson's acknowledgment, -that,—" the plunder of individual property was prohibited, and soldiers, transgressing the order, were severely punished." t

We shall dismiss this subject with an American statement, which, we trust, will set at rest all remaining doubts. " The list of plunder and destruction, copied from a vile and libellous print of that city, into several federal papers, is a gross and abominable fabrication, known to be such by every inhabitant. Most of the plunder was committed by rabble of the plaCe, fostered among the citizens ; and from whOse villainy no place is free, in times of peril, and relaxation of the law. The British army, it is no more than justice to say, preserved a moderation and discipline, with respect to private

* History of the United States, Vol. III. p. 295.

Sketches of the War, p. 336.

persons and property, unexampled in the annals of war."*

At eight o'clock on the evening of the 25th, the British left Washington, i.)y the way of Bladensburg. Here such of the wounded as could ride, or be transported in carriages, were provided with 30 or 40 horses, 12 carts and waggons, one coachee, and several gigs. With these, preceded by a drove of 60 or 70 cattle, the army moved leisurely along. On the evening of the 29th it reached Benedict, - 50 miles from 'Washington, without a single musket having been fired ;.t. and, on the following day, re-embarked in the vessels of the fleet. No complaints, that we can discover, have been made against the British, during their retreat across the country ; although, as an American writer has been pleased to say, " general Ross scarcely kept up his order, sufficiently to identify the body of his army." § The Americans are very difficult to please. If the British decline fighting double the number of Americans, shiness is alleged against them ; if, on the other hand, they not only fight, but conquer, as at Bladensburg, more than double their number of Americans, they are denied all credit. In this spirit doctor Smith says :—" The success of general Ross, in

* Georgetown paper, September 8th.'

+ See Plate V.

! : App. No. 62.

§ Hist. of the United States, Vol. III. p. 299.

this expedition, cannot be ascribed to the display of superior military skill. It was not due to his force, or the deportment of his troops in the field. The resolution to march an army, 50 miles into the interior of a country thickly inhabited, and in the face of another, of superior numbers, affords strong proof of his temerity, but none of his prudence. He succeeded against every rational calculation."—How could this writer touch upon " deportment of troops " ?- We rather think, that major-general Ross and rear-admiral Cockburn made their " calculation," upon what they conjectured would be the "deportment" of the American troops; although they certainly did not expect quite so great a contrast to " temerity," as they found upon the field at Bladensburg.

All the American writers who have had occasion to deplore the fate of Washington-city, have levelled their abuse against rear-admiral Cockburn ; " on whom," says one of them, " if the safety of the citizens' dwellings had alone depended, they would have rested on a slender guarantee." t How will this writer ; how will all the other American writers ; how will the British public in general, receive the assertion, that rear-admiral Cockburn got blamed by his commanding officer, for not having acted more

L v . * Hist. of the United States. Vol. III. p. 299.
 „ „ + Sketches of the War, p. 3.F,6.

in the spirit of "retaliation" than he did? This brings us to sir Alexander Cochrane's letter,* in which that harsh word appears.: It was an ill-advised letter; serving only to convict us of a seeming intention to do what we never did do. What "towns and districts" upon the American coast, did, tile British "destroy and lay waste"? Was Washington destroyed and laid waste?—Was Alexandria destroyed and laid waste?—We deny that there was any thing done at either of those places., unless it was the behaviour of an American naval commander at Alexandria,t that was at all .. contrary to the usages of civilized warfare." This letter was just what Mr. Munro:: wanted. It enabled him to declaim; at,length, about "the_, established and known humanity of the American nation." § The chief. of Mr. Munro's, unsupported assertions have already been replied to, in different parts of this work : we have, at present, only to do with _the paragraph in which he tells us, that "., in the course of ten years past, the capitals of the principal powers of the continent of Europe have :been:, conquered and occupied., alternately, by the :victorious armies of each other; and no instance of such wanton and unjustifiable destruction has been seen;" and refers us to distant ages for a "parallel" to our

* App, No. 68.: + James's, Naval Occurrences, p. 383.
Now president of the United States. § App. No. 69.

behaviour. We will dismiss Mr. Munro with this question,—Did any one of the "sovereigns" to whom he alludes, fly "in panic terror" * from one end of his city, while an enemy entered the other? In his search for a "parallel," too, where will he find, even if lie goes back to distant and barbarous ages," that a sovereign behaved, as we have American testimony for asserting, that Mr. Madison, "the commander-in-chief of the armies of the United States," did behave, at, or rather *before*, the battle of Bladensburg?

But Mr. Madison himself must issue his "Proclamation;" t dated from "Washington," too, the .. seat of empire," which lie, only six days before, had abandoned, to seek "an „asylum among the hills, west of the great falls." The five day's march of our troops, including the battle in which he set so bright an example, he calls a "! sudden incursion," He then ventures to state the American troops at Bladensburg, as "less numerous" than their British opponents. This is excellent. Admitting that, the British were in possession of Washington "for a single day' (and night) only," were the 4000 American troops, drawn up in full view of the destruction of "the costly monuments of state," led forth. by Mr. Madison, or led forth at all, to drive the British away? "We destroyed," he says, "the

• Wilkinson's Mem. Vol. I. p. 789. t App., No. 70.

public- edifices, having no relation in their structure to operations of war, nor used at the time for military annoyance." Was it no " military annoyance," to kill one soldier and wound three, and, by mere accident, not to kill the British commanding general ? Where was the war declared, but in the " senate-chamber and representative-hall," contained within the Capitol ? What enforced " military annoyance," or gave life to the " operations of war," but the dollars in the " treasury-office" ? On the other hand, " the patent-office," in which were collected the rarest specimens of the arts of the country, having no relation to the " operations of war," was not, in the slightest degree, injured. • Who, when colonel Campbell, of the United States' army, destroyed the dwelling-house and other buildings of a Canadian inhabitant, declared the act to have been " according to the usages of war," t because a troop of British dragoons had just fled from them ? Why then was not the destruction of the president's palace, from which a company of American artillery, with two field-pieces, had just fled, equally " according to the usages of war" ? The only surprise is, that the American government should have so well succeeded in hood-winking the people of Europe. One British editor rates his

* Sketches of the War, p. 336.

+ See p. 111.

ferocious countrymen; for " having levelled with the dust the splendid palaces and sumptuous edifices by which the city of Washington was so liberal¹⁴.- einhellished." "This can but raise a smile ; -especially upon a reference to the estimated value of these". Splendid palaces."! We shall forbear to notice the long account of " the extent of devastation practised :-by the victors" at Washington, which has found its way into that faithful record of frays; murders, births, marriages, and deaths, but certainly not of historical events, the Annual Register for 1814 ;" and thence, of course, into most of the prints of the United States. But what was there done by the British at Washington, that could provoke an eminent parliamentary orator to describe their proceedings as " so abhorrent, so inconsistent with the habits of a free and generous people ;—so to be hated and detested, 'condemned and abjured" ?t " In burning Washington," says this same speaker, " we had acted worse than the Goths, when they were before the walls of Rome." In another place he talks of " the pillage of private property." t What a pity this gentleman did not read even the whole of the *American* accounts, before he ventured to sanction, with his respectable name

* App. No. 67.

+ Parliamentary Proceedings, November 8, 1814,