

THE U.S. CAMPAIGN OF 1813 TO CAPTURE MONTREAL

On the 18th June, 1812, the United States declared war against Great Britain, and on the 12th July followed up its declaration by invading Canada from Detroit. The invasion had a disgraceful ending. From Niagara a second invasion was attempted on the 13th October, which was also repulsed. The results of the operations of 1812 made it plain to the authorities at Washington that efforts to conquer Canada by invasions west of lake Ontario must be futile, for the reason that overrunning the western territory left intact the source from which the supplies and reinforcements came to renew resistance. It was Britain that furnished the means to continue the war, and the channel through which she sent them was by the St Lawrence. Block that channel and the current of supply would end. There were two points at which this could be done—Montreal and Kingston—and President Madison's cabinet were divided as to which should be attacked. The preference was for Kingston, as being nearer the United States and giving an opportunity for the co-operation of the naval force that had been organized on lake Ontario. With Kingston in American possession, no supplies could filter past it to the British forces in the west. This was admitted, but it was also pointed out that all of Canada east of Kingston would be untouched, and that while Montreal was in British possession an army could be brought in by sea that might retake Kingston. Quebec was the proper place to strike, but it was regarded as impregnable. Montreal came second. Once plant the stars-and-stripes over it and not only would all the military stations west of it, from Kingston to Niagara, and from Niagara to Sandwich, be compelled to surrender from lack of supplies, but the boats and ships which brought men and material from England could no longer land them, for Montreal was at the head of navigation. As the importance of Montreal was realized, the advocates of an onward movement on Kingston included the capture of the other—a combined attack would be made on both Montreal and Kingston from land and water.

The weak point in the defence of Canada was the slender