

The Duke
of Wel-
lington
approves
his action.

course which he took in retreating from Plattsburg. The Duke of Wellington, in sending the Watteville regiment from the Peninsula to Canada, had written in February, 1813, that he trusted Prevost would 'not be induced by any hopes of trifling advantages to depart from a strong defensive system. He may depend upon it that he will not be strong enough, either in men or means, to establish himself in any conquest he might make'; and on December 22, 1814, after the result of the Plattsburg expedition was known, he wrote expressing his high approval of the conduct of the war in North America, and referred to the Plattsburg expedition in the following words: 'Whether Sir George Prevost was right or wrong in his decision at Lake Champlain is more than I can tell, though of this I am certain, he must equally have returned to Kingston¹ after the fleet was beaten, and I am inclined to think he was right. I have told the ministers repeatedly that a naval superiority on the lakes is a *sine qua non* of success in war on the frontier of Canada, even if our object should be wholly defensive.' Prevost might also, by way of justification, have quoted the words of the dispatch of June 3, which, in instructing him to take the offensive against American territory, bid him guard against whatever 'might commit the safety of the force placed under your command'.

Prevost
attacked
by the
naval
officers.

Notwithstanding, for the retreat from Plattsburg and still more for the whole conduct of the expedition, Prevost was and is blamed to the present day. Men remembered that he had in similar fashion drawn off the troops from before Sackett's Harbour; and, undoubted as were his merits as a civil governor; however prudently and watchfully he had maintained the defence of Canada through these trying years, ministering as far as his resources allowed to this point and to that, no success in the field of any kind had been credited to him which his friends could set off against these two mortifying episodes. The naval men not unnaturally found their defence for the overwhelm-

¹ The Duke of Wellington wrote Kingston by mistake for Montreal.