

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES OF THE
WAR OF 1812.

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XXII.—A Landing On the New England Coast.

June 14.—The month of June was chiefly marked by preparations for the final conflict on the Niagara frontier. The leaders of the war party were still in power in the United States, but they were making overtures for peace. There had been great changes at home and abroad since they so lightly issued their declaration of war two years before. They had found war to mean something more than a series of raids on the Canadian border, which at the end of the two years had resulted in nothing gained; something more than a succession of stirring naval duels, which at best made no noticeable difference in the strength of the British fleet.

In 1813, British squadrons from Bermuda and the West Indies had made hostile visits to some parts of the Southern States, compelling the militia to organize for the defence of their own shores. There was danger of an uprising of slaves to help the British; and it was suspected that this was one of the objects which the British had in view. The absurd blockade of the whole Atlantic coast maintained by a few British ships in 1813 had been relaxed during the winter; but it had been renewed with vigor in the spring, and was no longer absurd. The commerce of the blockaded ports was completely destroyed. They had not a merchant ship afloat. The cruisers, of which they had been so proud, were confined to port; or, when they could get out to sea, were no longer able to bring in prizes because of the blockade. All their triumphs had been at sea, and the sea was closed against them.

There were public rejoicings in New England when news of the fall of Napoleon was received; for there the peace party was in the majority, and thought that peace would come all the sooner with British ships and British regiments thus set free to take part in the war in America. War, instead of bringing the people of the country together to withstand a common enemy, was dividing them; and not the least of the troubles which had to be faced by the party in power was a threat that New England would secede from the Union if the war were prolonged.

Thus was the Washington government situated when it finished its preparations for the campaign of 1814. There was then no hope of conquering British America. The war must come to an end without that; yet they hoped to drive the Canadians back across the Niagara, and to gain some foothold on Canadian soil before the peace was concluded, that they might thereby be in a position to obtain better terms. Therefore they sent their best leaders and their best battalions to Niagara. The invading army of 1814 was to be a well disciplined soldiery, very different from the unmanageable troops of former years.

The Canadians, greatly exhausted, and near the end of their resources both in men and in means, were not as well able to meet the foe as they had been at the first onset; yet, knowing that ample reinforcements were now on the way from England, they could but try to hold their own until the sorely needed help should come.

Hitherto New England, while it had suffered the most from loss of commerce because it had the most to lose, had escaped direct attack. This immunity was at an end. On the fourteenth of June, boats from British ships in the offing made a landing at Wareham, Mass., where several vessels and a factory were burned. The unexpected attack gave rise to fresh alarm. It marked a new departure in the British plan of campaign; and shewed an intention of hastening the end of the war by carrying it into the enemy's country, and of relieving the pressure at Niagara by threatening the whole Atlantic coast.

PRAYERS.

God who created me
Nimble and light of limb,
In three elements free,
To run, to ride, to swim:
Not when the sense is dim,
But now from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him:
Take the thanks of a boy.

Jesu, King and Lord,
Whose are my foes to fight,
Gird me with Thy Sword
Swift and sharp and bright.
Thee would I serve if I might,
And conquer if I can;
From day-dawn till night,
Take the strength of a man.

—Henry Charles Beeching.