

sudden arrival of Sir George Collier's fleet had disconcerted their plans.

The siege was raised with alacrity. In the words of one of the defenders¹—

The rebel fleet never attempted to make a stand, but ran up the river in the utmost confusion. Two of their vessels only were taken; the rest the rascals ran ashore and burned before our shipping could get up with them. Unluckily, they had intelligence of our fleet the day before, and in the night time their army got on board their shipping, and took along with them most of their cannon and stores.

The prisoners were set at liberty before the ships were burned, and the crews made the best of their way homeward through the woods.

The way in which the burning of the ships is glossed in a newspaper report of 1779 is curiously interesting, since it bears a strong resemblance to war news of later date:—

The publick may be assured that only two ships have fallen into the enemy's hands. Admiral Staltonstal has taken effectual care to prevent their taking any more.

In spite of such deception, the excitable Americans were deeply chagrined by the defeat at Penobscot, and the Loyalists were equally elated. With the aid of the three sloops of war the king's forces had been able to hold out for twenty-one days against a fleet and army of more than six times their number and strength. The relieving fleet was composed of one ship-of-the-line, two frigates, and three smaller vessels. The British loss was seventy men in all—killed, wounded, and missing. The enemy lost nearly 500 in battle, besides their eighteen war vessels, twenty-four transports, and all their equipments and stores. After taking to the woods, the fugitives fought among themselves, seamen and soldiers accusing each other of cowardice. Many more lives were thus lost; others perished of famine; the remainder reached Boston in a most miserable plight.

Penobscot was held unmolested during the remainder of the war, and was the last place evacuated by the British troops after the treaty of peace.

An officer who took a leading part in the defence² thus sums up the result of the crushing defeat:—

It was positively the severest blow received by the American Naval force during the War. The trade to Canada, which was intended, after the expected reduction of the Post of Penobscot, to be intercepted by this very armament, went safe that Season. The New England Provinces did not for the remaining period of the contest recover the loss of Ships, and the Expence of fitting out the Expedition. Every thought of attempting Canada and Nova Scotia was thenceforth laid aside, and the trade and Transports from the Banks of Newfoundland along the Coast of Nova Scotia, &c., enjoyed unusual Security.

¹ Lieutenant Moore, of the 82d, or Hamilton Regiment, who had distinguished himself for personal bravery at the commencement of the siege; afterwards Sir John Moore, who ended a glorious military career, with a soldier's death, at Corunna.

² Captain Henry Mowat, R. N., commander of the three armed vessels which so successfully held the harbor.