

General Sheaffe, who had been entrenched here, at once retreated with his men to the Half-Moon Battery, a little farther to the east. The Americans followed up their advantage, and Sheaffe and his troops were compelled to retire to the Garrison, from whence a brisk fire was opened upon the advancing Americans. The latter had reached a point about two hundred yards to the west of the Garrison, where they had come to a temporary halt. Just then a rumbling of the ground was felt, and in another second there was a tremendous explosion. For a moment the town and the waters of the lake seemed to heave to and fro as though impelled by a mighty earthquake. The secret of this commotion was that Sergeant Marshall, an English officer on duty at the magazine, had blown it up, to prevent the enemy from gaining possession of the large quantity of powder — no less than 500 barrels — which was stored there. The effect of the ignition of such a quantity of gunpowder must have been terrible indeed. The air for several hundred yards round in every direction, for a single moment, seemed to be charged with fragments of timber and great boulders which had formed part of the walls of the magazine. When the smoke cleared away it disclosed a sickening scene. More than two hundred Americans lay strewn upon the plain, many of them mortally hurt, and fifty of them killed outright. Among those mortally wounded was the young Brigadier-General himself, who was crushed by the shower of stones, and died within a few hours afterwards.

Major-General Sheaffe, all through this contest at York, seems to have lost his head. His preparations for the defence of the town had been altogether inadequate, and he did not even turn to the best account such insufficient means as he had prepared. He availed himself of the confusion following the explosion to beat a retreat. He placed himself at the head of as many of the regulars as he could get