



SITE OF THE FORT AT WILLOW CREEK—PRESENT APPEARANCE.

## A NEGLECTED CHAPTER IN THE WAR OF 1812.

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A RECENT proclamation of the United States Secretary of War reports that as Michilimackinac has ceased to be a position of strategic value, the garrison will be removed. It was not always thus with this old post. That it was of great value as a key to the upper lakes in the stirring times of 1812, is clearly shown from the fact that here was struck the first blow in the war. On July 17th of the opening year, it was captured from the Americans, who fully realized their loss, and towards the end of 1813 their generals began to make preparations for its recapture. News of this design reaching the small British garrison at the place, there was great alarm, and a despatch was sent immediately to the Canadian military headquarters at Kingston, appealing for aid to meet the coming attack.

A relief expedition accordingly left Kingston in February, 1814, consisting of ten officers and two hundred picked men, with twenty artillerymen, and twenty men of the Royal Navy, all under the command of Lieut.-Col. Robert McDowall, of the

Glengarry Light Infantry. A large part of the route lay through territory then but little known. To this must be added another hardship—the severity of the weather in which the march was made. From Kingston they proceeded to Little York, which was still suffering from the grim experiences of its capture. They next advanced northward by Yonge-street to Holland Landing, after which they passed entirely out of the settlements, and crossed the frozen surface of Lake Simcoe. Beyond this lake, the forest was then unbroken, except by an Indian portage, which, for the passage of their supplies, they widened as they advanced. This road, leading from the head of Kempenfeldt Bay to Willow Creek, a branch of the Nottawasaga River, was called the “Nine-Mile Portage,” and it afterward became an important colonization road. At its north-westerly end, near Willow Creek, a wooden fort was subsequently erected, and a hamlet flourished there for several years, but it has long since disappeared, and its site, as an accompanying illustration shows, is