

In 1812, the quiet of this and many other happy homes was disturbed by the sound of war. Against the wishes of New Englanders, for flags were hung half-mast in Boston Harbor, against the judgment of many of the wisest and best in other parts of the United States, President Madison declared war against England and sent an invading army into Canada. There was an instantaneous outburst of loyalty. Canadian militiamen vied with the regulars of the British army in their efforts to repulse the intruders. Mr. Secord, who a few months before had resigned his company and left the militia, now offered his services as a volunteer. The Americans were driven back, and at Detroit were forced to capitulate. At Queenston Heights, after a hotly contested struggle, the victory was ours, although brave General Brock was killed. Many were left dead or dying on the battlefield, among them Laura Secord's husband. He would soon have died of his wounds, had not his devoted wife made a long and harrowing search. She found him, wounded in leg and arm and fainting from loss of blood. The quiet home became a quieter sick-room where the wounded man was gradually nursed back into life. As soon as possible, the family moved to a farm-house in the country for the benefit of the invalid, but Mr. Secord never fully regained his health or strength.

The invasion was renewed the next year, 1813, and the Americans for a short time again occupied Queenston. A cordon of sentries was stretched out ten miles from the frontier, and the Secord's farm-house, being within that limit, was liable at any time to the entrance of the enemy's soldiers demanding a meal. Once after breakfasting three men, one remarked, "You have a nice place here, missis; when we come for good to this country we'll divide the land and I'll take this here for my share." Mrs. Secord replied sharply, "You rascal, you, all you'll ever get here will be six feet of earth." In a few days two of the men returned. "You were right, missis, about the six feet of earth"—one of the men had been killed. At another time the house was searched for money. Mrs. Secord had a small store of Spanish doubloons which she saved by throwing them into a pot of boiling water which hung on a crane over a blazing fire.¹

Meantime the fighting went on with varying success. The Americans captured Fort York (Toronto) and Fort George (Niagara) but were surprised, defeated and driven back at Stoney Creek (Hamilton)

¹From notes to Mrs. Curzon's drama "*Laura Secord*."