

## THE WAR OF 1812.

## THIRD ARTICLE.

The retreat of Hull may be said to have virtually terminated the campaign in the West so far as offensive operations were concerned; but he was opposed to a soldier who knew the full value of striking such an effectual blow as would prevent the possibility of a repetition of a similar movement on his part.

Having prorogued the Legislature at Little York on the 6th of August, Brock left that town and embarked at Long Point, on Lake Erie, for Amherstburg, accompanied by 300 Militia and a few regulars, in open boats. After a perilous voyage of four days, he landed at midnight on 13th August, without losing a man of his little force. The whole available troops assembled amounted to 300 regulars, 400 Militia, and 600 Indians. On the 15th he summoned Hull to surrender, which, after two hours' consideration, was declined, and that night Tecumseh crossed the river with his warriors and invested Detroit. Before daylight on the 16th, Brock crossed the river at the head of 730 men, landing four miles below the fort. The Americans, panic-stricken, abandoned a strong outwork, and the British boldly advanced to the assault. But the American General was not prepared to allow matters to reach any such climax. A flag was despatched to the British General, and a capitulation was finally entered into, by which the whole Michigan territory, Fort Detroit, 33 pieces of cannon, a ship of war, stores, military chest, one stand of colors, and 2,500 were surrendered to the British. This placed the issues of the war in Brock's hands; and as his correspondence testifies, he was determined to follow up this success by most energetic measures, calculated to sweep the frontier from Buffalo to Fort Niagara of everything in the shape of an American soldier to be found there, and to finish up by the reduction of Sackett's Harbor, a standing menace to Central Canada, directly on the line of his communications with Montreal by the St. Lawrence.

It is painful to record the diplomatic folly which neutralized this grand scheme, and virtually sacrificed, in a useless skirmish, the life of this great and gallant soldier. The Orders in Council, the ostensible cause of the war, had been revoked, and Sir George Prevost, acting, it is said, by instructions from home, had proposed that most mischievous of all measures under the circumstances, an armistice, to Gen. Dearborn. The latter, finding it impossible to collect supplies of men and material capable of striking a decisive blow, and knowing Hull's position, gladly consented. Like all other acts of this description, it gave them just the time wanted to collect men and transport stores, remove from under the guns of Fort Wellington nine fine vessels, which subsequently gave them the command of Lake Ontario, and enabled them to destroy Little York, and finally led to the death of the gallant officer whose professional ability enabled him to foresee the disasters consequent on this infatuated policy. The interval between the capture of Detroit and the actual close of the campaign is filled with deeds of individual heroism and prowess. While the courtiers and courtizans of Louis XV. might cover their disgrace and the humiliation of their country by the assertion that Canada was only a few acres of snow, for which it was not worth fighting, the parties most interested were of a contrary opinion.

If the pertinacity with which a country is

defended is any proof of its value, then Canada must be the most fortunate country in the world. French or English, no matter under what standard—the gay lilies and “drapeau blanc,” or the “old Red Cross”—the defenders of Canada have fought for their “Lares” and “Penates” with a determination which merits the admiration of all true soldiers. Nor in this instance did they either flinch from the contest or seek to avert its consequences by abject submission; in fact, the ground covered by the American army at any or all times marked the terminus of their conquests in Canada.

Many actions, of greater or less note, diversified this contest, but in every one of them the invidiousness of the Canadian Militia soldiers shone pre-eminently.

On the 13th of October, 1812, the Americans, under Major-General Van Rensselaer, crossed the Niagara river, protected by the fire of a battery of four guns, and effected a landing a little above Queenstown before daybreak. They succeeded in capturing a single-gun battery, from which they dislodged the light company of the 49th Regiment. The whole force by which they were opposed consisted of two companies of the 49th Regiment and 200 of the York Militia, against 1,300 American soldiers. Manfully the odds were accepted, and a conflict began which ended in the total and unconditional surrender of the American troops at a late period of the day. In the meantime, General Brock, aroused by the firing, hastened from Fort George to the scene of action, and in assisting to repel the first attack, met a soldier's death with the heroism and fortitude which so eminently marked his career.

Gen. Dearborn had been concentrating troops at Plattsburg, on Lake Champlain, and with 10,000 men menaced Montreal. He attacked a picket of Canadian Militia and a few Indians, under the command of Col. McKay, at Lacolle, but was repulsed with such aggravated disgrace and loss that he went into winter quarters. Meanwhile, the astute Secretary at War, desirous to retrieve his losses on the Niagara frontier, endeavored to achieve that end by a change of generals, and therefore appointed a General Smythe to the command of the forces there, with whom General Sheaffe concluded one of those armistices which distinguish this war. This arrangement terminated on the 20th November, and the Yankee general had prepared 2,500 men for an invasion of Canada. This affair came off on the 27th of November, between Fort Erie and Chippewa, and was signally defeated by a third of the numerical force employed. General Smythe, whose principal forte appears to have been the manufacture of bombastic bulletins, went into winter quarters, and finally was obliged to make a speedy personal retreat to the South to avoid tar and feathers from his own troops. Thus ended the first campaign; signally favorable to Canadian prowess, dimmed by diplomatic stupidity, and suffering fearful loss by the death of General Brock. The mistakes made were in not following out Brock's design in the first place, and secondly, because Sheaffe did not follow up the victory at Queenstown by becoming the assailant, by which he would have annihilated Van Rensselaer's army, and prevented the possibility of reassembling a force of any magnitude in that neighborhood.

In a review of this description, it would be impossible to detail the events of the various naval encounters, which, while they tested the courage and skill of the combatants, exerted no permanent influence on the events of the war, simply because they were isolated, and undertaken without any other object than the mere weakening of the enemies' forces. On the lakes, the American Commodore Chauncey had acquired the command of Lake Ontario as the results of the first armistice concluded with General Dearborn; while Lake Erie, left to the care of sluggish and unenterprising officers, was witnessing the construction of a flotilla which finally gave its supremacy to the American flag.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

To the Editor of the Volunteer Review

SIR,—The London ‘Times’ has a letter signed ‘Viator,’ and another signed ‘O.’ on the question of Canadian defence, in which both writers plausibly enough place their views before the public. ‘Viator’ roundly declares that Canada is defenceless, and that it would be for England's advantage to abandon it altogether. ‘O.’ thinks if Montreal is not covered by fortifications, there is no hope for the country, and refers to Col. Jervois' report on the defence of Canada. The latter writer also suggests a plan by which an increase of Militiamen could be obtained at the expense of a portion of the public domain. Both these gentlemen appear to ignore altogether the idea that Canada is of any value to the British Empire, and in their anxiety to advocate the doctrines of the Goldwin Smith school, forget that the “argumentum ad absurdum” can be turned against them by asking, Is not Ireland as defenceless as Canada? Is it not worse, because a large portion of the population is in a state of chronic rebellion, requiring a costly army to keep them down? Is it not as open to aggression as Canada? and why, therefore, imperil the British troops by keeping them there? Why not abandon Ireland, and reduce the British Empire to its pristine dimensions—such as it was in the days of the Heptarchy? Logic of this description is in reality the only answer to give to those philosophers who would destroy the integrity of the empire, and lower its prestige in the dust for an idea.

The whole British force here does not exceed 10,000. Its presence or absence will make little difference in the defence of Canada; but the day will be one of humiliation, mourning and woe to England when they are withdrawn through confessed weakness. Canada is capable of defence against any force which our neighbors in our days may bring against us. History has proved this fact more than once. Great Britain, for the maintenance of her prestige and national existence, must maintain her supremacy on the high seas—her only rival, and the one she has just cause to dread, is the people of her revolted colonies, now the United States; and the best guarantee she can possibly hold for the good behaviour of these States is that 4,000,000 of free and independent Britons are on her borders, within striking distance of her vital points of strength, and not afraid to try the issues of the contest.

‘Viator’ appeals to geographical position. Let him take the map and study it carefully. If he is not a soldier, let him get the assistance of one, and if he knows aught of his trade, ‘Viator's’ sentiments will be likely to undergo a change on the defence question.

It has been asserted that many military men declare that Canada cannot be defended. Now, a question of this description is always governed by the appliances available for such a purpose, and therefore a military engineer would be likely to make that declaration from the knowledge that only some 25,000 regular soldiers could be spared for such a purpose—a force manifestly insufficient, apart from all strategical considerations. But Canada can supply 500,000 men, fighting on their own soil, in their own fields, and through a country particularly difficult for an invading force to sustain itself in. The events of the war of 1812 amply proved this.

There are only three points on which Canada could be assailed—from Lake Michigan, on the Niagara frontier, and by the valley of Lake Champlain. In any case, an action fought short of the objective point by the invader would be fatal to ultimate success, and if de