

CHAPTER III.

THE WAR OF 1812-15

The American war still dominating public effort and the country's resources, the command of the fur routes had become of secondary importance to that of military and naval routes and the transport of war supplies. An acute stage of the situation calling for urgent supplies for the garrison at Mackinaw in case of siege, diverted the attention of the authorities for a time from the establishment of the new post, and the work of clearing the military road to Penetanguishene. An attempt had been made in the latter end of 1813 by Commissary Crookshank to transport a supply of provisions to Mackinaw by way of York and Matchedash, but the batteaux with their loads were frozen in the ice on Lake Simcoe. In January, 1814, Commissary Crookshank wrote to General Drummond that "he had consulted with Surveyor Wilmot and several credible persons and all agreed that it would be impracticable to transport anything by that route previous to a road being cut upwards of thirty miles in length, requiring two hundred men at least three weeks before it could be made passable, and in case of deep snow it could not be done at all." On account of the delay and difficulty Mr. Crookshank made arrangements for forwarding the supplies to Nottawasaga Bay, a distance of only twenty miles from Penetanguishene. "The opening of this road to the Nottawasaga River will take twelve men for about ten days and in a short time he will commence sending stores across." Gen. Drummond added, "this will be a somewhat expensive proceeding, but I see no alternative." The projected military road was, therefore, left in abeyance and a temporary portage opened to the Nottawasaga River where a block-house was built and where by 27th April thirty batteaux had been built, loaded and set sail under Col. McDouall with provisions for the relief of Mackinaw. The futile siege of Mackinaw, the destruction of the Schooner Nancy at the mouth of the Nottawasaga, loaded with provisions, the capture of the U. S. gun boats Scorpion and Tigress, a series of dramatic events fol-