

over Hampton's failure to join him with his little army of 4000, while all the time he had a force in his hands that for the purpose of capturing Montreal was overwhelming. With the British strength bottled in Kingston, it was the easiest of exploits to swoop down on Montreal and make it his prey. Why he failed to do so, forms a remarkable page in American history.

In 1813 the republic was in its infancy as regards material resources, so that when it undertook to concentrate 15,000 fighting men at a point on its north-western frontier it was making a herculean effort. There were then no railways and no steamboats. Cannon, food, material of every kind except timber, had to go by tortuous rivers with many portages on account of rapids, while the men had to march over roads which were canals of mud. That all difficulties were overcome, that a fleet of several hundred boats was built, and a fully equipped army, including cavalry and an artillery-train, got together at the head of the St Lawrence, told of energy, ingenuity in overcoming obstacles, and financial sacrifice. When, on the 19th October, Armstrong left for Washington, where his authority as Secretary of War was much called for, he considered the expedition ready to sail, and expected it would do so when the weather, which was stormy, with adverse winds, became favorable. As a consequence of his departure, Wilkinson, from second in command, now became chief. By profession he was a physician, but service in the revolutionary war enabled him to pose as a soldier. First and last he was a politician and that at a period when public life was a scandal; when politician meant a man who sought position and opportunity to gain wealth. What he lacked in natural ability, Wilkinson made up in bluster and pretence: there was no louder boaster as to what he would do, no greater failure in performance. In every public position he wormed himself into he left behind a record of incompetency, of quarrelling with subordinates, and a flavor of dishonesty. While his duties at Sackett's Harbor consisted in visits to places on lake Ontario, whence reinforcements and supplies were to come, in consultations with Chauncey, the commander of the lake fleet, in issuing orders and criticising subordinates, his overbearing manner and bombast concealed his incompetence, but when he could no longer avoid entering on active operations he had to find other masks. He did so by pleading ill-health and throwing blame, when failures occurred, on his assistants.