

ilities without the actual declaration of war. The Governor General took care in consequence to warn the commanding officers of all posts to take all possible precautions to prevent a conflict.* Yet at the same time he responded in another manner by authorising Major C. M. de Salaberry to proceed with the enlistment of a battalion of four hundred *voltigeurs*.†

Early in May there came a laconic warning from Thomas Barclay, the British Consul General in New York, that war was inevitable and would be declared in July at the latest.‡ Under this stimulus recruiting was carried on with much vigour and success in both provinces. Within a month five hundred men were enlisted for the Glengarry Light Infantry and nearly as many for the Canadian Fencibles and Voltigeurs. Measures were taken to repair and strengthen the frontier forts which had been neglected for years. The castle of Chambly was reported as being incapable of defence against artillery from the nature of its construction and the works at St. Jean and Isle aux Noix were literally in ruins. St. Jean, indeed, was no longer considered a post of much importance as it could be turned with little difficulty by the new roads leading from the United States to Montreal. Chambly would only be useful as an advanced depot for stores and a rendezvous for the local militia. Sorel, therefore, was the most important position to be held on the right bank of the St. Lawrence with respect to the concentration of the militia and as a dockyard and base for the gunboats assigned for the protection of navigation in the vicinity. Montreal had become the commercial capital of Canada and its defenceless condition would naturally invite attack. Its ancient walls had been demolished and its future security must depend on the successful defence of a line of resistance extending from La Prairie to Chambly and the equipment of a sufficient flotilla to command the navigation of the St. Lawrence and Richelieu. The militia of the neighbouring country numbered some twelve thousand. They were, however, badly armed and equipped and totally undisciplined with the exception of six hundred, recently assembled for three months' training at La Prairie.

Hardly more encouraging was the state of the war vessels on the lakes, composing the Provincial Marine. The rotten hulk of the *Royal Edward* was the sole remnant of a once powerful naval establishment on Lake Champlain. It was reported as being of no service except to furnish an excuse for pensioning an old seaman as its caretaker. The vessels in commission on Lakes Erie and Ontario had been employed in the transportation of troops and government stores under the super-

*Prevost to Lord Liverpool. No. 40. April 20, 1812.

†Prevost to Liverpool. Apr. 20, 1812; Prevost to Brock, Apr. 30,

‡Barclay to Prevost, May 5.