

Truth's Contributors.

QUEENSTON HEIGHTS.

THE BATTLE OF 13th OCTOBER, 1812.

The Famous Battle Field described—A Visit to the Spot—The Death of General Brock.

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The battle of Queenston Heights and the name of General Brock are Canadian household words associated with the war of 1812 which will ever live and be held sacred by Canadians to the latest generation. This battle was fought on the 13th of October, 1812. The village of Queenston is on the bank of the Niagara river, at the foot of the heights, about seven miles above where stood old Fort George of 1812, and is distant some four to five miles from the Falls of Niagara. The battle field of Lundy's Lane, fought on the 25th of July, 1814, is close by the Falls, bordering on the old village of Drummondville.

General Brock was at Fort George that morning, and mounted his horse on the first alarm and rode at full speed to the threatened point; on his arrival he found the Americans on the Heights above the village. Brock was killed at the very opening of the fight, while heading a company of the 49th to retake the battery of one gun on the slope which the Americans had captured; but in the afternoon of the same day, as will be hereafter shown, the scattered bodies of the little British force were mustered from Fort George, Chippewa, and the other outlying posts and attacked the Americans; and after a volley and a bayonet charge, they forced nearly one-half of them over the Heights into the Niagara and captured over 500 prisoners on the Heights, thus avenging the death of their almost idolised commander by a glorious victory.

A RETROSPECT.

Come, young Canadian reader, and let us go back, in retrospect, nearly fifty years ago, to a Sunday morning in the month of June, 1845, when the writer took a seat high up on the top of Queenston Heights, close by where Brock's monument stands; come and be seated with us; let us, if you will permit, light our pipes, and enjoy our "calumet of peace," while we take a panoramic view of hill, mountainside, river, lake and the magnificent landscape spread out below us. There, on the right hand, we have the Lewiston Heights on the American side, separated from the Canadian or Queenston Heights by this deep, narrow gorge, of some 600 feet, of the channel of the Niagara river, cut out of some far-off age. The force of that

whole of the old Niagara District and rendered doubly interesting as embracing a "bird's eye view" of the

WARRIORS OF BOTH ARMIES

during the war of 1812.

On our right hand, on the American side of the Niagara, stands the old town of Lewiston, nestling beneath the shades of its own heights; then about seven miles down, on the American side, stands Fort Niagara on Lake Ontario, directly opposite to where Fort George stood during the war of 1812. The writer thus gives a "pen and ink sketch" of his stand-point view on the top of Queenston Heights as it appeared to him in 1845, which will serve as an index to future visitors to that far-famed spot.

Truly, this is storied ground. On and around those heights and along the whole river bank of the Niagara, from Fort George up to the ruins of old Fort Erie, opposite Buffalo, a distance of over thirty miles, every footstep recalls the bygone history of early Canadian days. Long before a British drum was heard or a Union Jack of England floated in those once far western wilds, the daring pioneer explorers of Old France had visited the Falls, and were familiar with the banks of the Niagara. La Salle, nearly two and a half centuries ago, had established a fur trading post on the very spot where Fort Niagara now stands, and a few miles above the Falls, near Navy Island, he, La Salle, built his little schooner, the "Griffin," the rude pioneer of those magnificent floating castles which have since that day passed over the rough waters of old Erie, whilst hundreds of them, like the "Griffin," now lie buried deep beneath its untroubled sands.

WAR WAS DECLARED

by the United States against Great Britain on the 18th day of June, 1812; as all Canadians know, or should know. General Brock was then in command of the British forces in Upper Canada; General Hull was Governor of the State of Michigan, and had his headquarters at Detroit, from which place he issued flaming proclamations to the people of Canada to induce them to join the American cause or to remain neutral.

General Brock decided to surprise Hull by a rapid movement westwards, and for that end gathered what regulars and volunteers he could, with whom he started for Detroit, and reached Malden, opposite Detroit, on the 15th of August, 1812. The next day General Hull surrendered Detroit and the whole State of Michigan, with all his army, guns, stores, shipping, etc., without firing a shot, as recorded in the history of that date. Brock lost no time after the taking of Detroit, but sailed immediately for Fort Erie, with the prisoners, guns, stores, etc., captured from the enemy. His intention was to attack Buffalo and Fort Niagara and to destroy all the American posts on the Niagara frontier; but to his disappointment and disgust, when he reached Fort Erie, on the 22nd of August, 1812, he found that an armistice had been concluded the week before his arrival. The Americans had taken advantage of the armistice to concentrate large bodies of troops, guns, stores, etc., at their various posts on the Niagara; so that by the middle of September they had fully 8000 men of all arms concentrated between Buffalo and Fort Niagara; there were between 4000 and 5000 collected at Fort Niagara and on the Lewiston Heights, opposite Queenston, with over 400 bateaux, laden with guns and stores from Seneca's Harbor, had reached the mouth of the Niagara and were safely anchored.

THE GUNS OF FORT NIAGARA.

During the first week of October the Americans were prepared to attack, having a large force of 4000 men, with a large number of guns, and a large number of other stores, and other

they chose. General Brock had his headquarters at Fort George, seven miles below Queenston and he had to garrison a line of outlying posts for over thirty miles up to Fort Erie opposite Buffalo. Brock's scattered forces, stationed above the Falls at Chippewa and Fort Erie and the outposts between these two places, required fully 600 men to guard them, and weakened his main point of defence.

The Americans were acting on the offensive and they night invade Canada by way of Buffalo or Black Rock, or at the mouth of the Niagara at Fort Niagara. Brock thought the main attack would be on Fort George, his headquarters. Even on the 9th of October, for days before the battle of Queenston, early in the morning, a large body of marines from Buffalo crossed the Niagara and captured two armed vessels, the "Caledonia" and "Detroit," richly laden with furs, etc., moored under the guns of Fort Erie. The "Caledonia" remained a prize in the hands of the enemy, but the "Detroit" was burned in an attempt to retake her. This called Brock to Fort Erie, where he arrived before sunset that day, but having satisfied himself that this was merely a surprise, and that the enemy would not attempt to cross the river there, he returned to headquarters at Fort George the next day. This hurried journey of Brock's to Fort Erie, thirty miles distant, caused the American General to take advantage of his absence, to prepare to cross the Niagara at Queenston early on the morning of the 10th, but a furious storm of wind and rain passed over their camp while the troops were drawn up in readiness to embark, by which the

ATTACK WAS DELAYED TWO DAYS.

During the whole day and evening of the 12th, the Americans could be distinctly seen from the Canadian heights—battalion after battalion, concentrating in and around Lewiston and on the heights above, to the number of fully 5,000 men, and it was believed on the Canadian shore the crossing would be made during that night; but whether the landing would be made at Queenston or at Fort George was uncertain. Brock himself was of opinion it would be at Fort George. Their boats were all ready, some to carry thirty, others eighty men, and they could as easily float down the current of the river and land above Fort George, when the guns of Fort Niagara could open upon Fort George and at the same time cover the landing of an attacking party from Fort Niagara. This was Brock's opinion, even after he had mounted his horse to leave Fort George for the last time to reach the threatened but real landing at Queenston.

On this 13th day of October, 1812, a day never to be forgotten by Canadians, long before sunrise, the first of the American boats reached the Canadian shore. They were met by Captain Dennis' company, who poured several volleys into them with fatal effect. The flash of their muskets in the dark pointed out their position to the gunners of the enemy on the Lewiston Heights, who were standing by their guns with lighted matches, and who opened fire, causing Dennis to withdraw his men under shelter. The gunners at the one gun battery on the slope of Queenston Heights and those at the one gun battery at Brooman's point opened fire on the Lewiston landing with the hope of disabling the boats. It was a random fire, being quite dark. These two guns continued all morning to throw shot and shell through darkness and distance, and if doing little execution created a panic in the ranks of the enemy and deterred hundreds of the boldest of them from crossing the river.

THE BRITISH FORCE

at Queenston, being an outpost of Fort George, did not much exceed 200 men, composed of Dennis' and Cameron's companies of the York militia, with the light company of the 29th and the Grenadiers stationed in the village—with two other companies of the York militia some three miles distant,

besides a few of the local militia and the gunners to man the gun on the slope and the gun at Brooman's point. This was the whole force at Queenston that morning to dispute the landing, while on the American side, right opposite, stood 4000 to 5000 men, prepared to cross to support their advance body; but their courage failed them on beholding the warm reception their vanguard met with, and in the afternoon of that day fully 3000 of them stood, panic-stricken, on their own Lewiston Heights, as they beheld right opposite on the Queenston Heights the wreck and ruin of their brave companions of the morning who had crossed the river, now being driven over the Heights into the Niagara or surrendering themselves as prisoners of war. The Americans stood on their own shore, not a mile distant from the scene of conflict, having plenty of boats to convey them across, with folded arms and gaping mouths, as silent spectators of the defeat, capture and destruction of their brave vanguard.

Brock reached Queenston before break of day, splashed all over with mud from his hard ride, and at once rode up to the one gun battery on the slope; but shortly after reaching it a loud shout or cheer came from the hillside above, followed by a volley of random bullets, whistling over their heads, while a body of the enemy came charging down the heights upon the battery. Brock and the gunners had to make an immediate retreat, spiking their gun, but on reaching the lower end of the village he found the light company of the 49th drawn up in line awaiting orders; then wheeling his horse in the direction of the Heights, he exclaimed "Follow me, my boys," and led them at a run to the foot of the Height, supported by the Grenadiers of the 49th and a company of the York militia, who were detached to the right to attack the

LEFT AND REAR OF THE ENEMY.

Brock halted at the foot of the hill, behind a stone wall, and dismounted, saying to his men, "Take breath, boys; you will need it in a few moments." Shortly after, observing that his skirmishers on the right had reached the left and rear of the enemy, causing confusion in their ranks, around the battery, he sprang over the stone wall waving his sword and calling upon the Grenadiers of the 49th to follow him. He then led the way up the steep ascent towards the battery. The ascent was difficult; the late rains had caused the fallen leaves to be treacherous foot-holds; the men slipped at nearly every step, some falling to the ground, causing the ranks to be much broken, so much so that Brock exclaimed: "This is the first time I have ever saw the 49th turn their backs." Colonel McDonnell then came up with two companies of the York militia, increasing the attacking party in front and on the right, to nearly 200 men. The enemy's force was now increased around and above the battery to about 500 men. Brock called on Colonel McDonnell to push on the York volunteers. At that moment he was struck by a bullet in the wrist of his sword arm, which he paid no attention to, continuing to wave his sword.

In the dull gray mists of that October morning, half way up the Heights could be seen the tall, portly form of General Isaac Brock, standing in front and far in advance of the Grenadiers of the 49th, a living target for the bullets of the unerring American rifle, waving his sword and calling on his men and encouraging them, both by word and gesture, to hasten their steps. He did not long stand there. The fatal bullet sped its way, striking him near the heart, causing almost instantaneous death! Colonel McDonnell then spurred his horse to the front and assumed command. Everything now was in disorder. The men became dispirited at the death of their almost idolized leader. After repeated attempts to rally and to keep his force together, McDonnell also was killed. The British then gave way and retreated to the foot of the Heights,