

From Ensign to Colonel

of Jerbourg where but a few years before he was wont to sweep the ocean for belated fishing smacks, Brock saw his kinsman, Sir James Saumarez, and the white canvas of a small squadron, heave in sight from Plymouth Roads. The British sailor had been ordered to ascertain the strength of the French fleet. Saumarez' ships were far slower than those of the enemy, so, feigning the greatest desire to fight, he lured his opponent by a clever ruse. First he closed with him, and then, when his own capture seemed inevitable, hauled his wind, slipped through a maze of reefs by an intricate passage—long familiar to our hero—and found safety off La Vazon, where the Frenchmen dare not follow.

In June, 1795, Brock purchased his majority, but retained his command of the recruits. From toes to finger-tips Isaac was a soldier, bent on mastering every detail of the profession of his choice. A year after the return of the 49th to England, on the completion of his 28th year, he became by purchase senior lieutenant-colonel of his regiment. High honour and rapid promotion, considering that for five out of seven years' service he had remained an ensign. He had learned to recognize opportunity, the earthly captain of a man's fate.

"For every day I stand outside your door,
And bid you wake and rise to fight and win."

But Brock's position was no sinecure. The regiment was in a badly demoralized condition. The laxity of the late commanding officer had created a deplorable state of things. To restore the lost *morale* of the corps was his first duty.