

but I found no clue. I interrogated the late Rev. Dr. Richardson on the subject (he, in his younger days, lost an arm while actively serving in a naval capacity in one of the expeditions ordered by Sir George Prevost). I addressed notes to several gentlemen who had interested themselves in early Canadian history, but without result. Amongst them, especially, I applied to Col. Coffin, above named, but after inquiry instituted, he could afford me no help. Inquiries were also made for me of the present proprietors and publishers of the *Montreal Herald*. I thought that possibly among the traditions of the office of that paper the name of its now historical contributor might be preserved. Mr. Penry, the present editor of the *Herald*, kindly endeavoured to get the desired information from Mr. Archibald Ferguson, a gentleman now aged more than ninety years, formerly proprietor of *Herald*. Mr. Ferguson's reply, however, now lying before me, was as follows:—"In answer to your note of the 17th instant, I beg to inform you that I do not know who wrote the articles signed Veritas and Nerva, in 1815. They were published nine years before I purchased the *Herald* establishment, and the two former proprietors were dead before I purchased." (I had coupled my query about Veritas with one about a writer styling himself Nerva, also in the *Herald*; but Nerva I discovered afterwards by accident, while looking through the articles in Mr. Morgan's *Bibliotheca Canadensis*.) How I came at length to recover the all but totally forgotten authorship of the Veritas letters, I will detail concisely after I have given a sample or two of the productions themselves. I add the reflection: if in so short a period an uncertainty so decided could spring up in regard to writings whose authorship was probably notorious to contemporaries, how easy it must have been, in the days when printing was unknown, and when of many an important record no duplicate existed, for ambiguities to arise on such points; how easy it must have been, at the dictate of policy or ambition, to falsify and substitute, with small chance of explicit detection at the hands of posterity.

Veritas, throughout his letters, inveighs against Sir George Prevost for an apparent lack of energy, decision, and dash. But we must bear in mind what Auchinleck has said, as quoted just now, that Sir George was

probably under restraint from the instructions which he had received from the Ministry at home, who had no relish for the contest in which they found themselves engaged. "Towards spring, 1814, so inveterate," Veritas says, "was Sir George's rage for armistices, notwithstanding the injurious consequences of the former to the military service, that a negotiation for another was set on foot, and defeated solely from the refusal of our admiral on the American Station to concur in it. The Americans gave out that the proposition came from Sir George, which I believe, because otherwise he would have met it at once by a direct negative that would have ended all discussion on the subject. In January, 1814, whilst the Legislature was sitting at Quebec, Sir George made a trip to Montreal, from no military motive that has ever been discovered or assigned, during which the then Assembly were active in preparing mischief. That Session was a stormy one, and ending in March, the Head-Quarters were re-transferred to Montreal. * * *

Soon after the navigation opened upon Lake Champlain, Capt. Pring, in the naval command there, sailed from Isle aux Noix with our flotilla, then superior to that of the enemy, which had wintered in Otter Creek, where they had a ship in yard employed in constructing a force intended to surpass ours. Capt. Pring, in consequence, applied to Sir George for some troops to accompany him, with a view of attempting to destroy this establishment and the vessels in that creek, whether afloat or upon the stocks, which, next to Sackett's Harbour, was an object worth a trial at some risk. As usual, the application was refused. When Capt. Pring returned from his cruise up that creek, he reported to Sir George what might have been done by a joint attack, and then he was offered assistance, but the Captain replied that it was then too late, as the enemy had taken alarm and prepared accordingly. Sir George had the extraordinary fatality of either never attempting an active operation, or of thinking of it only when the time for practical execution was past."

Here is a passage which, for style, may remind us of Kinglake or Sir William Napier; the incidents referred to will also probably interest us. "As the season for action advanced," Veritas says, "to the astonishment of everyone, there was formed at