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## HISTORY OF THE WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, DURING THE YEARS 1812, 1813, AND 1814.

### CHAPTER XV.

The regulars and militia, who had escaped captivity or destruction at the unfortunate 5th of October, retreated, as may be easily imagined, in the greatest confusion, to Ancaster, a small village some ten miles from the head of Lake Ontario, and, on the 17th of the same month, they rendezvoused at that place, their numbers, inclusive of seventeen officers, amounting to two hundred and fifty-six. During this retreat, which was effected through an almost unbroken wilderness, the troops suffered the greatest privations and misery, and their appearance as they straggled into the village, was by no means calculated to lessen the feeling of apprehension, which the rumour of the defeat at Moravian town had spread amongst the defenceless inhabitants. To these unfortunates, pillaged houses and their little homesteads destroyed, could not but appear inevitable, and the infection of the panic spread far and wide.

General Armstrong in his observations on Proctor's retreat and subsequent defeat, seems to have been unaware of that officer's situation previous to the commencement of his retreat, and uninformed as

to the manifold difficulties by which he was surrounded.

Proctor's situation at Malden, writes Armstrong, made necessary on his part, a prompt retreat to Vincent, unencumbered with baggage; or a vigorous defence of the post committed to his custody. By adopting the former, he would have saved seven hundred veteran soldiers and a train of artillery, for the future service of his sovereign; by adopting the latter, he would have retained the whole of his Indian allies, (*three thousand combatants*) giving time for the militia of the interior to come to his aid; had the full advantage of his fortress and its munitions, and a chance, at least, of eventual success, with a certainty of keeping inviolate his own self-respect, and the confidence of his followers. Taking a middle course between these extremes, he lost the advantage that would have resulted from either. His retreat began too late—was much encumbered with women, children, and baggage, and at no time urged with sufficient vigour, or protected with sufficient care. Bridges and roads, ferries and boats, were left behind him, neither destroyed nor obstructed; and when, at last, he was overtaken and obliged to fight, he gave to his veterans a formation, which enabled a corps of four hundred mounted infantry, armed with rifles, hatchets, and butcher knives, to win the battle "in a single minute." Conduct like this deserved all the opprobrium and punishment it received, and justly led to General Harrison's conclusion, that "his antagonist had lost his senses."