

But Prevost was not to blame for the want of means. He had written home urgently, time and again, to ask for seamen, shipwrights, and whatever else was required to win the command of the Lakes. But the Great War was still at its height in 1812; and seamen were scarce even in 1813. Besides, Lake Erie was at the far end of a very long line of communication, which could only be worked at great expense and considerable risk.

Immediately on taking command Barclay had proposed a joint attack on Presque Isle, "to destroy the nest." But Procter had no men or means to spare, and Prevost no reinforcements to send. Barclay did his best to blockade Perry, and for a time succeeded. But at the end of August he put back to Amherstburg for supplies, and Perry got out in his absence. The situation now was most critical. Thousands of Indians were clamouring to be fed. Stores were at a low ebb. No help seemed to be forthcoming. Prevost had been urging on Procter that Barclay had "only to dare" and he would succeed. It was quite clear that the choice lay between starvation and a battle once Perry could interrupt the water-borne transport from the east. "So perfectly destitute of provisions was the port," wrote Barclay, "that there was not a day's flour in store." Accordingly he and Procter decided on risking a battle at once, as they had no means of telling when the seamen said to be coming overland would arrive and equally no means of telling whether the guns for the *Detroit* would arrive at all. Cannon of all the odd types that had accumulated at the little port of Amherstburg were requisitioned and put hurriedly on board. The ammunition was scarce and bad, while the tubes and matches were so defective that the guns had to be fired in action by the flash of a pistol.

Nevertheless Barclay sailed out on the 9th of September with his ill-assorted flotilla of six little vessels, his haphazard armament, and his untrained crews. Next morning he