

CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES OF THE
WAR OF 1812.

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XV.—The Battle of The Thames.

October 5.—When the loss of the Canadian fleet on Lake Erie left General Procter cut off from his base of supplies, it became necessary for him to abandon the Detroit frontier and fall back upon the Central Division at Niagara. The soldiers taken to man Barclay's fleet had been made prisoners, or had fallen in the fight, thus reducing his force. Food and ammunition were nearly exhausted. Harrison's army had been heavily reinforced and was ready to advance. There was no time to lose.

Yet Procter was slow to move. The Indians, though they had not hesitated to leave him at Fort Meigs, now accused him of intending to desert them, and urged him to remain and make a final effort to repel the enemy. He explained the situation, but they were unconvinced. Unwillingly, and in decreasing numbers, they accompanied him in his retreat along the line of the River Thames, up which his scanty store of provisions was to be conveyed in boats.

On the evening of September 29, the third day after his departure, Detroit and Sandwich were occupied by Harrison's troops, and another invasion of Canada was begun.

Pressing on in pursuit, on the evening of the fourth of October, and in the early morning of the fifth, the enemy overtook and captured the boats which were carrying Procter's supplies, and with them the guard by which they were accompanied. Procter's forces, still retreating, by this time had reached a point some two miles above Moraviantown; and Harrison's troops were close upon them. Procter's effective force now consisted of less than a thousand Indians, under Tecumseh, and less than half as many Canadians. They took up a position in an open wood to await the coming of the enemy. The invaders numbered more than three thousand, including a large body of mounted men.

The battle was soon over. The British line was broken by a cavalry charge, and each section in turn was surrounded and captured. Only a few scattered companies escaped. General Procter fled from the field; finally reaching Grand River, near the head of Lake Ontario, with less than two hundred and fifty men. Many brave

men were taken prisoners; but the greatest loss was in the death of Tecumseh, the noblest and best of the native chiefs who so valiantly supported the Canadians in defence of their homes and loyally stood by them in defeat.

After burning Moraviantown, for which there was no excuse, General Harrison returned to Detroit; where he re-established the civil government of Michigan Territory. The chief object of his expedition was thus accomplished. Excepting the post at Michilimackinac, all the territory which had been conquered by the British was regained.

Major-General Henry Procter, the hero of three battles in which he defeated armies equal to his own, was held responsible for the defeat at Moraviantown; although he had foretold such an occurrence when the reinforcement which he needed were denied. Like Sir Roger Sheaffe at York, he knew that the battle was lost before it was begun; but, unlike Sheaffe, he did not succeed in making good his retreat. Both, perhaps, have been too severely blamed. Procter was relieved of his command, and suspended from rank and pay; and thus he disappears from Canadian history. Another General Henry Procter, (distinguished by a different spelling of the name,) came to Canada in the following year and served on the Niagara frontier. The former died in England in 1822, the latter in Wales in 1859.

The western part of Upper Canada was left undefended after the battle of the Thames, and was exposed to raids and forays such as had vexed the people of the eastern sections in the early stages of the war.

It is proposed to commemorate the centenary of Tecumseh's death on October fifth of this year, by a military display on the site of the battle of the Thames, or battle of Moraviantown, as it is called; and also by laying the corner-stone of a Tecumseh monument at Chatham.

The following extract from the *Youth's Companion* is a good example of the spirit in which national history should be studied:

It is natural and fitting enough to single out a decisive victory as the chief event to commemorate in celebrating the anniversary of an important war. But is it wise for this nation — or for any nation — to commemorate only its great victories? Would it not be well for a people to observe also the anniversaries of the great defeats that have marked its history, especially when those defeats were disgraceful; when