

of happy memory, flew to the frontier with that ardour which has always distinguished them.

The brave General Brock, Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, personally overlooked the defences at Niagara and Detroit, and entrusted to Major-General Shaw the eastern frontier, of which Kingston was the centre. The American General Hull, Governor of Michigan, set out from the Ohio with 2,500 men, for the purpose of invading Canada, on the 12th of July. He crossed the Detroit and encamped at Sandwich, in Upper Canada, with the intention of investing Fort Malden, or Amherstburg, situated some leagues below. Several of his detachments were defeated by parties of our soldiers and by the Indians. But none of these actions deserve such admiration as the enterprise of Rolette. The *General Hunter* was in the port of Amherstburg, when its commander perceived an American vessel. It immediately struck Rolette that the enemy's corvette might have something valuable on board for Hull, and that a great service might be rendered if he could succeed in capturing it. But how was he to effect this. He had only eight men with him. However, he did not hesitate: his marines were Canadians, and he knew them. We leave to Colonel Reynolds the recounting of that truly remarkable exploit:—

"On the 3rd of July, a brilliant achievement was performed by Lieutenant Rolette, a courageous little French Canadian, of Quebec. He was a lieutenant in the Provincial Navy. He found himself out of his vessel, in a canoe with eight men, when he saw a vessel approaching with the American colours. He boarded it, and found himself in the midst of Yankee uniforms. Without saying a word, he placed a sentinel upon chests of arms, one at the ladder of the poop, and one at the wheel; then he gave in a loud voice the order to fire upon whoever might shew resistance. Besides the crew, there were on board thirty-three soldiers. Recovering from their first surprise, the Americans began to cast threatening glances at their captors: but, fortunately, the vessel was near a windmill on the Canadian coast. Rolette, with the greatest presence of mind, commanded the steersman in a loud voice to bring the vessel under the guns of the battery. This *sung froid* had the desired effect. Happily, a boat came up at this moment, with some men and an officer, who aided him in keeping his prize, which was the pack: *Cayuga*. It contained the military chest, extra baggage, military stores, and all the correspondence of the American army of Hull. This achievement was of much service to Brock. This action, which displayed such boldness and imperturbable coolness was justly appreciated by the leaders. Hear in what terms it is spoken of by the commander of the Provincial Navy at that time, George B. Hull:—

'On board the *Queen Charlotte*,  
Amherstburg, December, 1812.

'I certify, by these presents, that Lieut. Rolette, of Her Majesty's Provincial Navy on the lakes and frontiers of Canada, was in command of the brig *General Hunter* on the morning of the 3rd July, 1812: with a portion of his crew he left the port and boarded "The *Cayuga Packet*," an American schooner, which had on board, besides the crew, four officers and fourteen men belonging to the American army; and that he seized the said schooner, freighted with munitions and baggage belonging to Governor Hull, or to other officers. It was his zeal for the service which induced him to quit the *General Hunter*, for the purpose of

performing that splendid action, which he accomplished before he had received any assistance from the fleet of the port."

Several letters of congratulation were addressed to Rolette on this occasion, from persons who took various ways of acknowledging, in the most marked manner, the services which he had rendered. The Americans themselves who had been made prisoners by him could not help admiring his courage. Years afterwards, Colonel Johnson, Major Longham, Lieutenant Kingsbury, all of St. Louis, receiving as their guest the son of Rolette, expressed to him their admiration of his father's conduct, and said that they could not understand how they had been enchanted by that man. His countenance was stern, said they, and we beheld him with awe, as soldiers who receive the orders of their captain.

Meanwhile, Hull, frightened and defeated, under pretext of concentrating his forces, occupied Detroit with his army, before which place General Brock appeared unexpectedly. Lieutenant Rolette was among the number of those who forced the American General to surrender himself and his army as prisoners, and to deliver up the fort of Detroit and the vast territory of Michigan. Here, again, Rolette distinguished himself, and Brock, who had his eyes upon him, expressed much satisfaction. "I have observed you," said the General, "during the combat. You looked like a lion. I shall remember you." But the fate of that brave officer is known already: he was killed a short time afterwards, before he could do anything for Rolette. The enemy's forces consisting of three divisions, had been alternately vanquished and pursued beyond the lines, at Detroit, Queenston, and Lacolle.

Notwithstanding these reverses, the Americans did not yield to despair, but resolved upon invading Canada again, and made three divisions of their forces: the army of the West, commanded by General Harrison, charged with operations on Lake Erie; the army of the Centre, under the command of General Dearborn, charged with operations on the Niagara frontier and on Lake Ontario; and the army of the North, commanded by General Hampton, directed against Lower Canada. Harrison had collected his forces at the head of Lake Erie, for the purpose of attacking the English at Detroit and at Malden, a little below the left bank. Gen. Winchester had come up to take possession of Frenchtown, on Raisin River. Proctor appeared suddenly before Frenchtown, Jan. 22, 1813. A battle ensued. The Americans gained possession of the arms; but the victors had two hundred men killed and wounded. Lieutenant Rolette, who served in this action as a commissioned officer of the artillery, distinguished himself. Some testimonials from Proctor prove that here, again, he did not disgrace his past conduct, but upheld his own name and that of the nation.

After the taking of Frenchtown, some struggles of less importance took place, but nothing decisive was undertaken without the co-operation of the navy. The two coasts were defended by fleets. Sir James Yeo took the chief command of the English fleet and gave the command of the forces on Lake Erie to Captain Barclay (1). Lieut. Rolette, since June 8th, 1813, served as commander on the schooner *Chippewa*, and received orders to cruise near the American coast, and to keep a journal of all his operations since he had been on the sloop *Little Belt*, the 8th June, 1813, and on the brig *General Hunter*. On the 17th of August, 1813, he received command of the vessel *Detroit*, and the Major-General pronounced

the most flattering encomiums on his good conduct and military abilities.

It was on the 10th of September, at Putin Bay, that the two fleets met; the action was general and the combat lasted for four hours. The English fleet, overpowered by numbers and by the wind, and greatly crippled by the enemy's shot, was obliged to surrender. The Canadians distinguished themselves throughout, and Rolette fought here again, although wounded when the powder magazine of the schooner *Lady Provost*, on which he served as Lieutenant, exploded. Considerably burnt by the accident, he was made prisoner of war and taken to the United States, where he was kept as a hostage by the American Government for nearly a year.

Throughout that war, Rolette conducted himself bravely, and made, on various occasions, eighteen prizes of different values and descriptions. "During all the time that he served under my orders," said the Commander, Barclay, "his good conduct merited my warmest approbation, and I congratulate him as an officer and as a sailor." What mental suffering must not the brave Rolette have endured during that long captivity.—Hostilities had not yet ceased, and he was obliged to await in silence the result of the war. As usual, those around him did not fail to inform him of any news disadvantageous to his country, and often misrepresented that which was good. Otherwise, justice must be rendered to the Americans; for Rolette had reason to felicitate himself on the good treatment which he received from them, and the respect they shewed for his merit. Shortly after the battle of Frenchtown, General Proctor addressed to him the following letter:—

"Sandwich, Jan. 23rd, 1863.

"SIR,—Major-General Proctor having particularly remarked your bravery in the action of Frenchtown, on the 22nd instant, has desired me to offer you his sincere thanks and the assurance that he will let no occasion pass to recompense you as much as shall be in his power.

"I have the honour to be

"FELIX TROUGHTON, L. R. Art."

During the action, Rolette had been dangerously wounded. Whilst levelling a field piece, a musket-ball struck the back of his head and fractured a portion of his skull; the wound was deemed very dangerous, as was proved by the certificate of the surgeon, Dr. Richardson, bearing date the 1st of March, 1813. Reynolds gives the following account of the circumstance:— "At the siege of Frenchtown, Proctor had placed a gun at each flank of his column, and one in the centre of the front, in such positions that the balls of our own muskets often touched our gunners. During the action, Rolette came to me and said he was ill, and that he suffered very much from a pain in his head. I recommended him to retire. The brave little Frenchman turned towards me as if I had insulted him. He told me that he had been chosen to serve a gun, and that it would be an eternal disgrace should he absent himself. "Hold," said he, handing me a thick pocket handkerchief, "bind this tightly round my head." I rolled it closely round and bandaged his head. "I feel better already," he said and left me. After the action he returned; "That handkerchief," said he, "has saved my life; look." In the folds of the handkerchief a musket-ball was found. It had partly pierced the silk, and was flattened on one side against the skull. That skull must have been very solid; nevertheless, it was all swelled and blackened to the right where