

**CENTENNIAL ANNIVERSARIES OF THE
WAR OF 1812.**

J. VROOM.

VIII.—THE BATTLE OF RAISIN RIVER.

January 22.—There was no winter truce in the west. Colonel Procter—the correct spelling of the name—had been left in charge of the Detroit frontier by Gen. Brock. He had called for more troops, but no more had been sent for there were no more to send. On the Maumee, or Miami, which runs into the western end of Lake Erie, there was an encampment of United States troops under General Winchester; and on the Sandusky, a few miles to the eastward, was the headquarters of General Harrison (afterwards President Harrison), who, when General Hull was made prisoner, had succeeded him in command of the army of the west. About half way between the mouth of the Maumee River and Detroit, there is another stream entering the lake. This is the Raisin River, or River au Raisin, (Riviere aux Raisins,) so called by the French because of the abundance of wild grapes along its banks. Here a small company of British troops held a little French village, known in the history of the war as Frenchtown, now the city of Monroe.

Harrison's plan was to unite his two forces for an advance on Amherstburg and Detroit. Winchester was the first to reach the mouth of the Maumee, the appointed place of meeting. Learning there that Frenchtown was occupied by the British, he sent a strong detachment which drove them out and took possession of the village. He then moved forward to Frenchtown with his whole division, though without orders, and encamped there to wait for Harrison.

This occurred on the eighteenth of January. Colonel Procter was at Amherstburg when he heard of the movement, and he was prompt to take advantage of the situation. On the following day, he led all his available men across the Detroit, which here is four miles wide. One who was present tells of the weapons of the soldiers gleaming in the sun, as they wound along a rough pathway over the frozen river; and of the rumbling of their cannon wheels, which made the ice resound like the roll of distant thunder. Next day they were joined by the militia and Indians who had been driven back from Frenchtown; and by the evening of the twenty-first they were within five or six miles of the enemy's position. They were again

in motion on the twenty-second, two hours before dawn; and had reached their destination and were half formed for attack before their presence was discovered.

Thus taken by surprise, the United States forces were defeated with terrible slaughter. Few escaped. Nearly half of those engaged were either killed in battle or overtaken and slain by the Indians as they fled from the field. General Winchester himself was taken captive by Roundhead, the Wyandot chief; who, in the absence of Tecumseh, was in command of the Indian allies. To save the lives of the rest of his men, Winchester arranged with Colonel Procter for their immediate surrender; and thus it happened, in a little more than six months from the time of the first invasion, that a third United States general and his army became prisoners of war.

When the battle was over, both armies retreated. General Harrison, who had hurried to Winchester's assistance, but found himself too late, fell back to reoccupy his strong position on the Maumee believing that Procter's force was stronger than his own. Procter, hampered by his prisoners, returned to Amherstburg because he had not men enough to follow up his victory.

It has been said by United States historians that in this battle all the prisoners were killed; and even so eminent a writer as Fiske repeats the statement. No doubt this was the story told by fugitives who made good their escape. One man even told, with gruesome details, of seeing General Winchester killed.

Frontiersmen of Ohio and Kentucky formed the greater part of Winchester's command. They were of the sort of men whose hatred of everything British had been a chief cause of the war. Their attitude towards the Indians has left its influence upon the boys, old and young, who read cheap tales of adventure in which the test of valour is to go out and shoot a redskin. Unmerciful themselves they could neither expect nor believe that the Indians would be merciful to them. Yet Winchester, in his official report of the battle, has said that thirty-five officers and about four hundred and eighty-seven non-commissioned officers and privates were prisoners in Procter's hands; and that the Indians had still a few prisoners in their possession, who, he had reason to hope, would be given up to Colonel Procter at Sandwich.

Procter, then, had live prisoners in his care. They were in fact, more in number than the white