

the demonstration, a fact that must not be forgotten when we come to compare American accounts. From the shallowness of the water, the tide being out, some of the boats got aground on a mud bank some hundred and fifty yards from the muzzles of the guns manned by the Constellation's men. In this position it is not very wonderful that two of the boats were sunk and many of the crews killed, especially when we add that the boats were ashore so close to the beach that the American Marines and Militia, by wading in a short distance, could pick off the men while struggling in the water. Admiral Warren's wording of his despatch is about as absurd as some of the American accounts. The Admiral slurs over the real reasons why his men were obliged to abandon the enterprise, but it would have been much more creditable if he had confessed honestly that the attack, injudiciously planned, was a total failure. His account, glossing over the affair, differs so widely from those of American writers that the reader is tempted to enquire farther, and the consequence is, that the Admiral is convicted of the very fault with which we charge—Thompson, O'Connor, Smith and Ingersol.

We have fairly stated the British force, and their loss; we will now examine the American version of the affair. One* makes the British force, that landed in front of the Island battery, consist of four thousand men, but forgetting shortly after his random figures, in the next page he states "that three thousand British soldiers, sailors and marines were opposed to four hundred and eighty Virginia militia, and one hundred and fifty sailors and marines." Mr. O'Connor reduces the force at Crane Island to fifteen hundred men, only thus doubling them, but to make his country some amends for this, he quadruples the force that landed on the main, stating them at three thousand strong. Commodore Cassin in a postscript to one of his letters adopts the same number, and even Ingersol, who from having been the latest writer has had more opportunity afforded of learning the truth, falls into the same error and makes the British troops twenty-five hundred strong, *adding besides fifty boats full of men.*

It is also note worthy that in not one of the accounts is there one allusion to the boats having grounded, the sole cause of the failure, as experience had proved that the militia could not be depended on in an attack by regular troops. The Niagara frontier sufficiently proves the correctness of this assertion. Armstrong's account differs considerably from the others, but even he falls into a mistake. He states, "the disposable force of the enemy was divided into two corps, one of which, embarked into boats, and carried directly to its object, attempted to make good a descent on the northern side of the Island; while the other landed on the main, and *availing itself of a shoal, which, at low water, was fordable by infantry*, forced its way to the western side. Though made with a considerable degree of steadiness, both attacks failed.

The mistake, made in this paragraph, is that the troops crossed from the main land to the Island, and took part in the attack. That this was not the case is certain from the fact that the other writers, whose various accounts we have been criticising, make no mention of a fact which would assuredly not have been lost sight of by them, desirous as they were of making as great a parade of national valor as possible.

Looking at the descent on Craney Island in the most favorable light it can be regarded in no other light than as a badly planned demonstration, to be regretted for two reasons,—one, the loss of life and honor to the British—the other, that an opportunity was afforded to American writers of asserting that the attack on Hampton and the outrages committed there were in revenge for the failure at Craney Island.

We have already stated that large bodies of troop had been collected in and around Norfolk, and as it was supposed that a considerable body was stationed at Hampton, it was resolved that an attack should be made on that post; accordingly, on the night of the 25th of June, about two thousand men, under the command of Sir Sidney Beckwith, in a division of boats, covered by the Mohawk Sloop, landed, and, after some resistance, carried by storm the enemy's defences.

The two despatches from admiral Warren and Sir Sydney Beckwith will be found to contain all necessary particulars of the attack,

*Sketches of the War—p. 216.