

Early in April an expedition was organized, having for its object an attack on a new post established at Matchadash, and the recapture of Michilimackinac. The expedition, however, in consequence, says Armstrong,* of a discrepancy in the Cabinet

* *Letter from the Secretary of War to the President.—April 31st, 1814.*

SIR: So long as we had reason to believe that the enemy intended and was in condition to re-establish himself on the Thames, and open anew his intercourse with the Indian tribes of the west, it was, no doubt, proper to give to our naval means a direction which would best obstruct or defeat such movement or designs. An order has been accordingly given by the navy department, to employ the flotilla, in scouring the shores of the more western lakes, in destroying the enemy's trading establishment at St. Joseph's, and in recapturing Fort Michilimackinac. As, however, our last advices show, that the enemy has no efficient force westward of Burlington bay, and that he has suffered the season of easy and rapid transportation to escape him, it is evident that he means to strengthen himself on the peninsula, and make Fort Erie, which he is now repairing, the western extremity of his line of operation. Under this new state of things, it is respectfully submitted, whether another and better use cannot be made of our flotilla?

In explaining myself, it is necessary to premise that, the garrisons of Detroit and Malden included, it will be practicable to assemble on the shores and navigable waters of Lake Erie, five thousand regular troops, and three thousand volunteers and militia, and that measures have been taken to produce this effect on or before the 10th day of June next. Without, however, the aid of naval means, this force will be comparatively inoperative, and necessarily dispersed, but with such aid, competent to great objects.

Lake Erie on which our dominion is undisputed, furnishes a way scarcely less convenient for approaching the heart of Upper Canada than Lake Ontario. Eight, or even six thousand men landed in the bay between Point Abino and Fort Erie, and operating either on the line of the Niagara, or more directly [if a more direct route is found], against the British post at the head of Burlington bay, cannot be resisted with effect, without compelling the enemy so to weaken his more eastern posts, as to bring them within reach of our means at Sackett's Harbour and Plattsburgh.

In choosing between this object and that to which the flotilla is now destined, there cannot, I think, be much, if any, hesitation. Our attack, carried to Burlington and York, interposes a barrier, which completely protects Malden and Detroit—makes doubtful and hazardous the enemy's intercourse with the western Indians, reduces Mackinac to a possession perfectly useless, renders probable the abandonment of Fort Niagara, and takes from the enemy half his motive for continuing the naval conflict on Lake Ontario. On the other hand,

at Washington, was not despatched until the 3rd of July, at which time a detachment of regular troops and militia, under the command of Colonel Crogan, was embarked on board of the fleet, which sailed soon after from Detroit for Matchadash.

The idea of attacking Matchadash was very soon abandoned, in consequence of sundry impediments, writes Armstrong, "arising from shoals, rocks, dangerous islands, perpetual fogs, and bad pilotage," and the safer and easier plan of an attack on the North-West Company's settlement at St. Mary's substituted. This part of the expedition was entrusted to Captain Holmes of the United States Army, and Lieutenant Turner of the United States Navy, and very effectually the work entrusted to them was executed, as every house at the post was destroyed, no public buildings of any description being there to warrant this atrocious outrage. The horses and cattle were killed, and even the provisions and garden stuff, which could not be removed, were destroyed, with a view of thoroughly ruining the post.

Messrs Thomson and Smith are particularly reserved as to the conduct of their countrymen at St. Mary's, but Mr. O'Connor boldly declares that "the property destroyed was, according to the maritime law of nations, as recognized in the English courts, good prize, as well as because the Company's agent, Johnson, acted the infamous part of a traitor, having been a citizen and magistrate of the Michigan territory, before the war, and at its commencement, and now discharging the functions of magistrate under the British Government."

This position of Mr. O'Connor's, that *merchandise on shore as well as afloat is good prize*, must not be lost sight of, as the same writer will be found laying down a very different interpretation of what constitutes "good prize," when the proceedings of the British in the Chesapeake are under his consideration.

take Mackinac, and what is gained, but Mackinac itself.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

(Signed,) JOHN ARMSTRONG.