

most who had concluded an armistice with the American general after the surrender of Detroit which enabled those three additional vessels to be withdrawn from under the guns of Fort Wellington (having been built at Ogdensburg) and sent to reinforce the navy at Sackett's Harbor, the destination of this fleet was York, (Toronto) where they landed, defeated the few British troops who destroyed the ship on the stock previous to retreating, blew up the magazine and stores and left comparatively little for the Americans to do beyond burning the public buildings and plundering the private houses both which feats were cleverly and successfully accomplished; they carried off naval stores and a small unseaworthy 10 gun brig the Gloucester returning to Sackett's Harbor in triumph.

On the 6th May the British troop ship Woolwich arrived at Quebec having on board Captain Sir J. L. Yeo, four commanders of the navy, eight lieutenants, and twenty four midshipmen, with 450 picked seamen. In a few days afterwards they reached Kingston and at once manned the fleet there assembled which consisted of two ships, one brig, three schooners besides a few small gun boats.

An expedition against Sackett's Harbour was then planned and 750 soldiers embarked on board the squadron on the 27th May. The American fleet being then cruising off the mouth of the Niagara River from some unexplained cause. At noon the squadron arrived off Sackett's Harbour, lay to and prepared to disembark the troops. Sir Geo. Prevost who commanded in person, hesitated mistook trees for troops, blockhouses for batteries, and ordered the expedition to put back. Just as the ships had got before the wind a party of 50 Indians in their canoes who had been sent on shore to reconnoitre brought off a party of American soldiers which they had captured and from these men the defenceless condition of the place was ascertained. Encouraged by this the squadron was permitted to begin working its way back to Sackett's Harbour. On the 29th some of the light vessels were close in shore and the troops were landed; they drove the American militia before them like sheep—compelled them to set fire to a new frigate on the stocks, the brig captured at York and a barrack containing all their Naval stores and other valuables. Some resistance offered at a log barrack caused the British commander in chief to order the retreat to be sounded, and the extraordinary spectacle was to be seen of the militiamen retreating in one direction while their conquerors were moving off in another. The incapacity, cowardice, or imbecility of Sir G. Prevost was glaringly manifested on this occasion, but as he was an admirable hand at writing despatches the British public remained for a long time in ignorance to whom the repulse at Sackett's Harbour was due.

On the 3rd June, Sir J. L. Yeo sailed from Kingston with his squadron, consisting of the ship Wolfe, 23 guns, 200 men; ship Royal George, 21 guns, 175 men; brig Melville, 14 guns and 100 men; schooners Moria of 14 guns, 92 men; Sidney Smith, 12 guns, 80 men; and Beresford of 8 guns, 70 men; and a few gunboats. On the 8th at daylight the squadron arrived in sight of the American camp at Forty-mile Creek, but as it was calm the only vessels that could get close to shore were the Beresford and gunboats; a smart attack by these compelled the American troops to make a hasty retreat leaving all their camp equipage, provisions and stores at the mercy of the fleet. Troops on board the squadron were then landed who occupied the deserted camp. This was the first seasonable check to the American invaders since the death of Sir Isaac Brock. The squadron captured on the 13th, two American schooners and some boats containing supplies; from the prisoners it was ascertained there was a depot of provisions at the Genessee River (Rochester) towards which the ships were steered and the whole captured. On the 19th another supply was taken at Great Sodus, and on the 29th the squadron anchored at Kingston.

On the retreat of Sir George Prevost's force from Sackett's Harbour the Americans returned and extinguished the fire on the frigate then building; towards the end of July this vessel called the General Pike was armed, manned, and stored, she measured about 850 tons, mounted 26 long 24 pounders on a flush deck, another 24 pounder on a pivot carriage upon her fore-castle, and a second similarly mounted on her quarter-deck, her crew including marines amounted to 400 men. With this ship, the Madison, Oneida and 11 fine schooners, Commodore Chauncey sailed from Sackett's Harbour for the head of the Lake and anchored off Fort Niagara.

Before describing the extraordinary action which followed, it would be well to consider the equally extraordinary tactics which brought it about. Sackett's Harbour, the principal Naval depot of the United States during this contest on the Lake, is situated on its Southern shore opposite and distant from Kingston, the principal British naval station on the Northern shore, 60 miles. The American base of operations for the invasion of Canada was at Albany; the lines of operations were from thence at Lewiston on the Niagara River at head of the Lake at Sackett's Harbour, and at head of Lake Champlain; the two former were reached by the waters of the Mohawk, Onieda Lake and River, precisely the line used in the war of 1754-64, consequently a blow struck at Sackett's Harbour would at once paralyse aggression at Lewiston and seriously retard operations on Lake Champlain by menacing Albany; if instead of desultory predatory raids on the Atlantic seaboard the British fleet made a dash up the Hudson while a com-

bined movement was made on Sackett's Harbour peace could have been dictated at New York without the trouble or odium of burning Washington; even a successful attack on Sackett's Harbour would have compelled the American fleet on the Lakes to risk a general action in which defeat would be destructive to fleet and army. But it is abundantly evident from all the records of this miserably planned invasion that military science had nothing to do with its inception conduct or final defeat; that strategy was totally disregarded on both sides, and that the final success of the British arms is to be ascribed to the courage and endurance of the provincial force.

On the 8th of August the British squadron hove in sight, its force as follows:—Six vessels manned by 717 men, mounting 92 guns, of which two were long 24-pounders, 13 long 18-pounders, 5 long 22 and 9-pounders, and 72 carronades of different calibres, including six 68-pounders. The American squadron consisted of 14 vessels manned by 1193 men, mounting 114 guns, of which 7 were long 32 pounders, 32 long 24-pounders, 8 long 18 pounders, 19 long 12 and 8-pounders, and 48 carronades, 40 of which were 32 and 24 pounders; nearly *one-fourth* of the long guns and carronades were on pivot or traversing carriages consequently as effective in broad-side as twice the number.

The American squadron immediately got under way and stood out with all the vessels in line of battle, but as the British closed the American ships firing their broadsides wore and stood under their batteries light airs and calms prevented the British from closing, but during the night a heavy squall came on which capsized two American schooners, the Hamilton and Scourge, and all their crews perished. On the 9th both squadrons were in sight of each other, and continued manœuvring during that and the next day. On the 10th, at night, a good breeze having sprung up the British Commodore immediately took advantage of it to bear up and attack his opponent, but just as the Wolfe, the leading British vessel, got within gun-shot of the Pike and Madison both bore up discharged their chasers and made sail for Niagara, leaving the schooners Julia and Growler, each armed with one long 32-pounder and one long 12-pounder on pivot or traversing carriages, to be captured without an effort to save them; with his two prizes and without the loss of a man the British squadron with no greater damage than a few cut halliards and torn sails returned to Kingston.

The object the American Commodore appears to have had in view was to cover the operations of the army on the Niagara frontier. The loss of the schooners seems to have arisen from the same vacillation which marked the conduct of his opponents, whose proper place would not have been manœuvring in force in front of Niagara but destroying the stores and batteries at Sackett's Harbour,