

in his rear, as he stands on the elevated bank of the magnificent river of Detroit, and about a mile from its point of junction with Lake Erie, was the fort of Amherstburg, its defences consisting chiefly of stockade works, flanked, at its several angles, by strong bastions, and covered by a demi-lune of five guns, so placed as to command every approach by water. Distant about three hundred yards on his right, was a large, oblong, square building, resembling in appearance the red, low-roofed blockhouses peering above the outward defences of the fort. Surrounding this, and extending to the skirt of the thinned forest, the original boundary of which was marked by an infinitude of dingy, half blackened stumps, were to be seen numerous huts, or wigwams of the Indians, from the fires before which arose a smoke that contributed, with the slight haze of the atmosphere, to envelope the tops of the tall trees in a veil of blue vapor, rendering them almost invisible. Between these wigwams and the extreme verge of the thickly wooded banks, which sweeping in bold curvature for an extent of many miles, brought into view the eastern extremity of Turkey Island, situated midway between Amherstburg and Detroit, were to be seen, containing the accumulated Indian dead of many years, tumuli, rudely executed, it is true, but picturesquely decorated with such adornments as it is the custom of these simple mannered people to bestow on the last sanctuaries of their departed friends. Some three or four miles, and across the water, (for it is here that the river acquires her fullest majesty of expansion,) is to be seen the American island of Gros Isle, which, at the period of which we write, bore few traces of cultivation—scarcely a habitation being visible throughout its extent—various necks of land, however, shoot out abruptly, and independently of the channel running between it and the American main shore, form small bays or harbors in which boats may always find shelter and concealment.

Thus far the view to the right of the spectator, whom we assume to be facing the river. Immediately opposite to the covering demi-lune, and in front of the fort, appeared, at a distance of less than half a mile, a blockhouse and battery, crowning the western extremity of the island of Bois Blanc, one mile in length, and lashed at its opposite extremity by the waters of Lake Erie, which, at this precise point receives into her capacious bosom the vast tribute of the noble river connecting her with the higher lakes. Between this island and the Canadian shore lies the only navigable channel for ships of heavy tonnage, for although the waters of the Detroit are of vast depth every where above the island, they are near their point of junction with the lake, and, in what is called the American channel, so interrupted by shallows and sandbars, that no craft larger than those of a description termed "Durham boats," can effect the passage—on the other hand the channel dividing the island from the Canadian shore is at once deep and rapid, and capable of receiving vessels of the largest size. The importance of such a passage was obvious; but although a state of war necessarily prevented aid from armed vessels to such forts of the Americans as lay to the westward of the lake, it by no means effectually cut off their supplies through the medium of the Durham boats already alluded to. In order to intercept those, a most vigilant watch was kept by the light gun-boats despatched into the lesser channel for that purpose.

A blockhouse and battery crowned also the eastern extremity of the island, and both, provided with a flagstaff for the purpose of communication by signal with the fort, were far from being wanting in picturesque effect. A subaltern's command of infantry, and a bombardier's of artillery, were the only troops stationed there, and these were rather to look out for and report the approach of whatever American boats might be seen stealing along their own channel, than with any view to the serious defence of a post already sufficiently commanded by the adjacent fortress. In every other direction the island was thickly wooded—not a house, not a hut arose, to diversify the wild beauty of the scene. Frequently, it is true, along the margin of its sands might be seen a succession of Indian wigwams, and the dusky and sinewy forms of men gliding round their fires, as they danced to the monotonous sound of the war