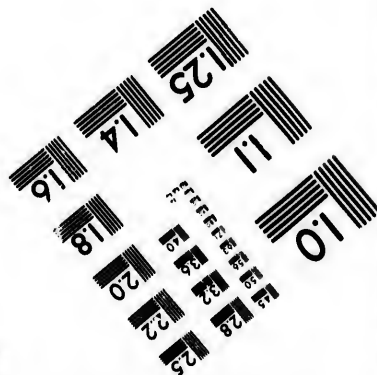
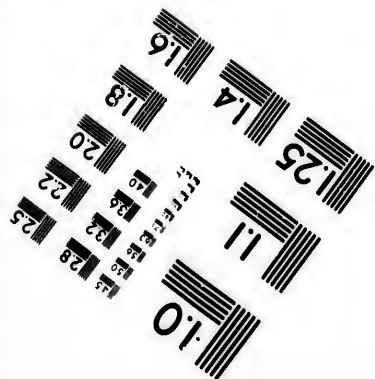


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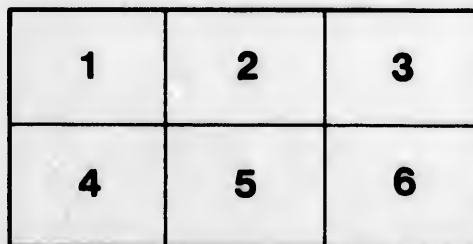
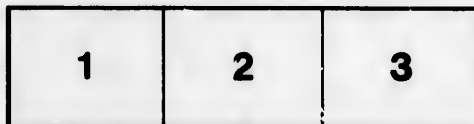
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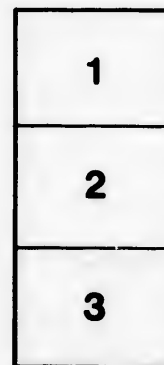
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*Col. Mag. Vol 4 / 1841*

# INVASIONS OF UPPER CANADA FROM THE UNITED STATES.—BATTLE OF POINT AU PELE.

It was our intention to have deferred, for the present, the continuation \* of our account of the proceedings of the Americans, and the repeated invasions of British territory by them, and to have reverted to the bright and cheering prospects now unfolded by the increase of the population, trade, and commerce of Canada, and the gigantic efforts making by its noble inhabitants to encourage the immigration of their suffering, industrious

\* See Colonial Magazine for June, where the righteous destruction of the *Caroline* is described.

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fellow-subjects from the British Isles. The recent capture and detention of a British subject in the state of New York, charged with murder and arson, on the supposition that he was of the party who destroyed the "Caroline," renders it absolutely necessary that the British nation should be well acquainted with the wanton and flagitious insults they have endured from the inhabitants of the United States. As it is perfectly clear that a correspondence is being carried on between the respective governments on the subject, which may end in something more than words, on this account we feel it necessary to resume our narrative.

It is a source of peculiar gratification, that British interests are confided to a minister at Washington whose judgment is sound, principles honest, perception clear and quick, whose knowledge of American character is unsurpassed, and who, if he be properly supported by the British government, will never compromise its honour or its dignity; and who has witnessed, from the beginning to the present time, the baseness and the perfidy which justly attaches to a portion of the American people, from their wanton and unhallowed interference in Canadian matters.

We brought our account down to the period of the destruction of that piratical boat, the Caroline. It will be remembered, that the position of Navy Island, to which the Caroline was conveying Americans from all parts of the States, and supplying them with food and munitions of war, whilst they were in hostile array against Great Britain, was very peculiar. Besides being near the falls of the Niagara, it was immediately adjacent to a very large island belonging to the Americans, called Grand Island, and no intercourse could be maintained with it, or attack made on it, but was thoroughly exposed to this large island. In order to make some feint of resistance to the incursions of the ferocious banditti swarming to Navy Island from all parts of the States, some few companies of militia were gathered together—a more miserable-looking crew than Falstaff's ragged band.

These were stationed on Grand Island and at Schlosser. These men, *sympathizers*, to a man, were under the command of Colonel Ira Ayres, with Lieut.-Col. Amos Avery for his coadjutor, who seemed to consider that the most effectual way to preserve their nation's honour and her good understanding with the British empire, with whom she was in relations of peace and friendship, was to succour, comfort, and sustain the rebels who had conspired, with lawless American vagabonds, to compass her overthrow, and had actually planted themselves on Navy Island, a portion of her territory, whence they were waging open and active war on the sub-

jects of the Queen. This they performed with a zeal, which, if it were the offspring of a goodly conviction, was worthy of all praise; for sundry times they kept starvation from the "Patriot camp" on Navy Island, by very bountiful supplies of rations; they adopted every necessary means to veil their movements from observation, by seizing on all persons, native Americans and all, venturing within their jurisdiction, whom they could in anywise suspect of being spies, and summarily consigned them to the tender mercies of the "Patriots;" they planted guards on the shores of Grand Island, with positive and peremptory orders to fire on any British boat that should dare to venture ever so little from the centre of the channel; which orders were obeyed with the utmost alacrity, and nearly with fatal effect, on one of the bravest men and worthiest subjects of Her Majesty, the Hon. J. Elmsley, who was many times fired on from Grand Island, while in a boat taking soundings, preparatory to a projected descent on Navy Island. The boat was repeatedly struck; but happily the crew escaped without injury; for which thanks were due to Providence, but certainly none to the American officers, Colonel Ira Ayres, or Lieutenant-Colonel Amos Avery; they ordered to be collected and piled together vast heaps of brush, old buildings, stacks of straw and hay, old rails, and other combustible materials, in readiness to be fired the moment any movement towards a descent on Navy Island was apparent on the part of the British, that the "Patriots" might have sufficient light to direct their aim against the "villanous Britishers;" they permitted and partook in a constant round of visiting to and from Navy Island—the mess for both batches of officers being, indifferently, on Grand or Navy Island, where, in tawdry costumes and barbarous paraphernalia, the titles of "General," "Kernel," "Major," "Captaining," and "Lootenant" were reciprocally and incessantly bandied, with all the grimace of ignorant and vain-glorious men, who assume inappropriate titles and undeserved honours; they permitted the sentries on guard repeatedly to fire on the Canadian shore, to which amusement they seemed especially prone, and were several times seen in this nefarious and bloody-minded act—their officers being present; they suffered one poor fellow, whom they had taken up as a spy, to be delivered up, on the solicitation of "General" Van Rensselaer and "Major" Chace, and conveyed to Navy Island, where he was purposely exposed to the British fire for the whole residue of the occupation of Navy Island (seven days) by the "Patriots"—many a twenty-four-pounder shot having miraculously missed his head—and when the victim remonstrated against this enormity, "General" Van Rensselaer replied, "D—n that M<sup>c</sup>Nab, let him kill his own men;" and, finally, when the American militia quitted Grand Island, they conveyed

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away with them, under guard, several persons, American-born citizens, whom they had held in durance, on the sole charge of being spies on the "Patriots," and who did not escape from their brutal and merciless clutches until they had been marched to Tonnawanta, a distance of twelve miles from Buffalo. All these facts have been well attested, on the oaths of persons of unimpeachable veracity, and they assuredly ought to make, and will make, their due impression on the reflecting and virtuous portion of all civilized communities, and interest the British nation on behalf of their now incarcerated fellow-subject, Mr. M'Leod, in the state of New York.

We shall proceed to other unequivocal demonstrations of the rankling hatred, on the part of the American frontier people, towards the subjects of a country, from whom they have received nothing but kindness, and who, till lately, never felt towards them ought but good-will. Besides, it was well and generally known, that the Caroline, the Barcelona, and the New England steamers, were specially and expressly hired for the sole purpose of carrying on war against Great Britain; and the fact was too notorious, even for explanation, that artillery, arms, ammunition, and provisions were constantly and regularly shipped at Schlosser, from whence the Caroline was taken, for the use of the plundering banditti on Navy Island. No testimony can be more valuable than that of eminent persons of the country against whom these charges are preferred. Happily, there were not wanting virtuous individuals in the States who protested against these flagitious proceedings and foul enormities, as will be seen from the following extracts from an eminent judge's (M'Lean) charge, delivered at the Circuit Court of the United States, to the grand jury, at Columbus, in Ohio:—"Great excitement is known to exist at this time in Canada, from serious hostile movements, contemplated by citizens of this country, in conjunction with a few disaffected subjects of that country. Associations of citizens of the United States have been formed along the whole extent of our northern boundary, with the view, at a fixed time, to make a descent upon Canada. These associations embrace an immense number of individuals, who are known to each other by certain signs and pass-words. They are actively engaged in collecting the *materiel* of war, and raising men. Military officers are appointed; and, in anticipation of success, they have appointed civil officers. During the past winter, many of our citizens were engaged in this lawless enterprise. This was proved by the records of our own courts, and of the courts of Canada, and by well-authenticated accounts which have been published. Indeed, it is notorious, that organized bodies of men were marched through the northern part of this and other states on our northern



boundary, with the known object of invading Canada, who were permitted to pass without molestation. In some instances, they were encouraged in their enterprise by contributions of money, provisions, and other necessaries. A government is JUSTLY held responsible for the acts of its citizens. And if our government be unable, or unwilling, to restrain our citizens from acts of hostility against a friendly power, such power may hold this nation fully answerable, and declare war against it. In every community will be found a floating mass of adventurers, ready to embrace any cause, and to hazard any consequences, which shall be likely to make their condition better. And it is said, that the larger portion of our citizens who have engaged in military enterprises against Canada, are of this description. Many *patriotic* and *honourable* men were, *at first*, induced, by their *sympathies*, to countenance and aid the movement, but when they found this course was forbidden both by the laws of their country and by its highest *interests*, they retraced their steps. There are *many*, however, who persevere in their course, in defiance of the law and the interests of their country. They show themselves to be enemies of their country, by trampling under foot its laws, compromising its honour, and involving it in the most serious embarrassment with a foreign and friendly nation. If we disregard the faith of treaties, and our citizens engage without restraint in military enterprises, against the peace of other governments, we shall be considered, and treated, and justly too, as a nation of pirates." Let the British people ponder well on these things—let them ask themselves have they no "*patriotism*"—have they no "*sympathies*?" Will they tacitly endure that one of their fellow-subjects, only suspected of being engaged in the destruction of the *Caroline*, a piratical boat, should be seized, immured in a dungeon, on a charge of murder, by this people, at whose hands we have suffered such dire and unredressed wrongs? That a senator in congress should gloat with a savage satisfaction on the prospect of his conviction, and the certainty of his execution? Will they still preserve the same criminal indifference, and remain under the same delusion as Mr. Webster created, who, after reviling Great Britain, in congress, deriding her strength, and defying her power, on the subject of the boundary; at the public feasts in this country, declared friendship, admiration, and regard for the people and the country? Will they not open their eyes to the conviction of the deep and fixed hatred of this people, when their great oracle, Mr. Clay, in reference to the very attacks so righteously denounced and condemned by Judge M'Lean, should say, and in sight too of the very spot where British subjects

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were murdered by these loathsome banditti, "he was sorry they had invaded Prescott, but having done so, he still more regretted they had not had 1,000 riflemen from Kentucky to back them." But to revert from this digression to the consideration of other outrages. On the western frontier, a gang of pirates, under the command of Theller, Brophy, and Dodge, armed a schooner called the Anne, which they brought into the Detroit River, firing from it on the inhabitants and the villages along its banks. They maintained a cannonade on the town of Amherstburgh for hours, but were ultimately captured with the schooner, by a body of brave volunteers, who rushed into the river, and brought the vessel to the shore. Many invasions subsequently took place, but the account of one, the most striking, and which was accompanied by the greatest loss of life, may suffice as a specimen of the whole—the battle of Point au Pélé. The situation of this large island on Lake Erie, is somewhat analogous to that of the Island of Jersey in the British Channel; Jersey lying between France and England—the Isle of Au Pélé between Canada and the United States. They are both British islands, belonging to the crown of Great Britain, protected by the British flag, settled by British subjects, paying their allegiance to the British crown, and under the control, power, and dominion of the British laws. They are about of the same extent, well cultivated, beautiful, and fertile islands, with smiling corn-fields, luxuriant meadows, thriving orchards, herds of cattle, flocks of sheep, comfortable habitations, owned by peaceable, prosperous, industrious, and well-affected inhabitants. The government of France is not more bound by treaty of amity and friendship with Great Britain, than is that of the United States; let any one ask himself seriously, what, think they, would the government and people of Great Britain say, to a large public meeting taking place at Cherbourg, for the purpose of openly raising recruits to invade and take forcible possession of the Island of Jersey—the French arsenals publicly robbed of artillery, and every description of munition of war—that the civil authorities should stand by with folded arms, and no man killed or captured for gutting the dépôt—that large public subscriptions should be entered into amongst the French people, to defray the expense of invasion and conquest—that the quiet British inhabitants of Jersey should be driven from their farms, dispossessed of their property, and captured by a band of French invaders, marching under the Gallic cock, and carrying with them the tricoloured flag—and that in driving these brigands from the soil, to replace it again in the hands of its lawful possessors, the soldiers of the Queen should be fought,

slaughtered, maimed, and wounded in a regular conflict:—would they not hold, and justly hold, the government of France responsible for so vile, unprincipled, and murderous an aggression? The chivalry, honour, justice, and probity of France forbids, for a single moment, the supposition that her citizens, in any numbers, and in any confederation, would prove such lawless ruffians; but the case may serve for the sake of illustration, to be felt as it ought by the people in Great Britain. Not a British subject was concerned with the sanguinary banditti who invaded the island of Point au Pélé; they were American citizens, to a man!

About the middle of February, 1838, Colonel the Hon. J. Maitland, of the 32d regiment, who had been appointed to the command of the London and Western Districts, arrived at Amherstburgh, and assumed the command of that garrison, which then consisted of one company\* of the 24th, four of the 32d, and one of the 83d regiments, the whole amounting to 300 regular troops, besides several companies of militia and volunteers.

The rivers and lakes between Amherstburgh and the American shores, at that time, were frozen across, which was favourable to the plans of the lawless bands of Americans who were assembling in considerable numbers at Detroit, Gibraltar Point, and Sandusky, for the purpose of invading Canada.

In consequence of the various reports respecting these parties, the garrison for some weeks was kept continually on the alert in nightly expectation of an

At last, about 7 o'clock on the evening of the 24th of February, Colonel Maitland received information, that about 200 armed men had marched from the neighbourhood of Detroit, and taken possession of "Fighting Island."

This small island, which belongs to the British, is uninhabited, and situated in the middle of the Detroit River, about eleven miles from Amherstburgh.

About two o'clock on the morning of the 25th, a party under the command of Colonel Townshend, of the 24th regiment, consisting of a few artillery, with one nine-pounder; one company of the 32d, and one of the 83d regiments, moved along the banks of the river, and arrived about day-break opposite the island, where they were joined by some militia from Sandwich. Fighting Island being within gun-shot of the Canadian shore, the artillery were ordered immediately to com-

\* A small detachment of the royal artillery.

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mence firing on the brigand bivouac—the position of which was easily ascertained from the clouds of smoke rising above the trees.

As soon as it was ascertained that the ice was strong enough to bear the soldiers, the two companies of regular troops, followed by the militia, began to file across to the island; but before they had time to form again, the whole of the brigands were seen flying in all directions back to the American side, leaving behind them their provisions, and several stands of arms. Five of their men were wounded by the artillery. The British sustained no loss.

A few days afterwards, Colonel Prince and Captain Girty, residents on the Canadian frontier, waited on the colonel commanding, and informed him that another band of those armed Americans, about 400 in number, had crossed the ice from Sandusky, and taken possession of Point Péié Island; that they had driven off the inhabitants, taken possession of their farms, and were plundering the island in every direction.

Captain Glasgow, of the royal artillery, was immediately sent to reconnoitre the island, and ascertain if the ice was strong enough to bear his guns across. He returned next day, and reported that it was "perfectly so."

About six o'clock on the evening of the 2d March, Colonel Maitland left Amherstburgh, taking with him the detachment of royal artillery, with two guns, four companies of the 32d, and one of the 83d regiment, with a company of volunteers, some volunteer cavalry, and about six Indians—the whole amounting to about 300 men.

This island is forty miles from Amherstburgh, and directly opposite Colchester, a small village on the lake shore. The party arrived at this place about ten o'clock, and, finding that it was only a distance of twenty miles across to the island, Colonel Maitland decided upon halting there for a few hours; the men were therefore put into the houses, and the sleighs ordered to be in readiness at two o'clock in the morning.

Accordingly, at that hour, the soldiers being all seated in their sleighs, the party began to move across the lake; it had not proceeded far, however, before it was found impossible, from the darkness of the night, to keep the track leading to the island. One of the cavalry was sent back to the village for a lantern, which being procured, the party again moved on without further obstruction.

About day-break, when within three miles of the island, Captain Browne, with a detachment of three officers, six sergeants, and ninety-five rank and file, (being his own and Captain Eveleigh's companies,)

and a few volunteer cavalry, was ordered to branch off to the right, and take up a position about nine miles to the south, the nearest point to the American shore, and where it was supposed the brigands would endeavour to make their escape.

Colonel Maitland, with the guns and remainder of the party, entered the island at the north. On their approach, they observed some armed men, who appeared to be a look-out party, but they immediately disappeared, and, it is supposed, gave the alarm to the others; for although Colonel Maitland's party scoured the woods in extended order in every direction, they did not succeed in coming up with the brigands.

In the mean time, Captain Browne, with his detachment, had reached his destination, and taken up his position on the ice a little more than musket-shot from the island, which was at that part wooded down to the edge of the lake. On his way along, he sent two or three of the Indians into the woods, to ascertain, if possible, where the brigands were. He had reached his position more than an hour before any of them returned; at last, Captain Ironside, their leader, reported "that one of them had just come back, who had seen about four hundred armed men marching down the centre of the island, at a rapid pace, with fixed bayonets; and that he thought they would be down where the British were posted in twenty minutes."

The Indian's information proved to be perfectly correct, for in a short time they began to appear in the skirts of the wood in great numbers, making a great noise, and calling out as if daring the British party to attack them. Seeing, however, that the latter did not move, and knowing that Colonel Maitland's party must be gaining fast on them, their leaders determined on attacking the weaker force, and endeavour, if possible, to cut their way through them, and get to the American shore before the other party should arrive. They accordingly came out of the woods, and formed a line on the ice, directly opposite the British detachment, and, after throwing out some riflemen on their flanks, advanced.

As soon as Captain Browne saw them moving towards him, he extended his men at three paces distance, in light infantry order, and at the kneeling position, commenced firing as soon as the brigands were close enough. The latter immediately halted, and fired a volley, after which the firing continued on both sides for upwards of ten minutes; finding that, from the numbers opposed to him, the men were falling fast, Captain Browne fixed bayonets and charged, driving them back into the woods in great disorder.

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Being totally unacquainted with the localities of the island, Colonel Maitland's party did not arrive at this point until a considerable time after this affair took place; in consequence of which, the brigands, screened from the view of Captain Browne's party by the woods, effected their escape at the extreme south, about a mile to the right of where the fighting took place. Having a number of sleighs concealed about that spot, they succeeded in carrying off a number of their wounded.

The loss sustained by the 32d regiment was severe on this occasion, having two sergeants and twenty-eight rank and file wounded, most of them severely; one corporal and three privates died of their wounds shortly after getting back to Amherstburgh.

The brigands left one of their leaders and ten others dead on the ice. Twelve were taken prisoners, (most of whom were wounded,) besides upwards of thirty wounded who reached Sandusky; and many, it was reported, were drowned during their flight across.

It should be mentioned in honour of the brave Canadian militia, that great assistance was rendered to the regular troops by Colonel Prince, Major Lachlan, and Major Girty, particularly at the expedition against Point Pélé, where they accompanied Colonel Maitland as volunteers, with rifles in their hands. It might appear strange to many reading this account, that Colonel Maitland's party was not up in time to attack the brigands in the rear, when driven back by Captain Browne into the woods; but those only who know the extent of the island, and its localities, can possibly understand the fatigue they must have undergone, and the difficulties they must have encountered, in scouring a wood of that extent.

The insolence lately displayed in Congress on the subject of the Caroline—the refusal of the government to surrender M'Leod—the increasing violence displayed on the boundary question, all proclaim the necessity of vigilance, determination, and union on the part of Great Britain. The British subjects in the North American colonies know their rights, and are resolved to maintain them; they will not be given up to the republicans of America—the throne they honour is their choice—the laws they reverence, are those of the British monarchy and constitution: they seek no changes, least of all the change from a free and limited monarchy, to the license and insecurity of a tyrannical republic.

T. R.

