The Story of the "Nancy" and Other Eighteen-Twelvers

by

C. H. J. Snider

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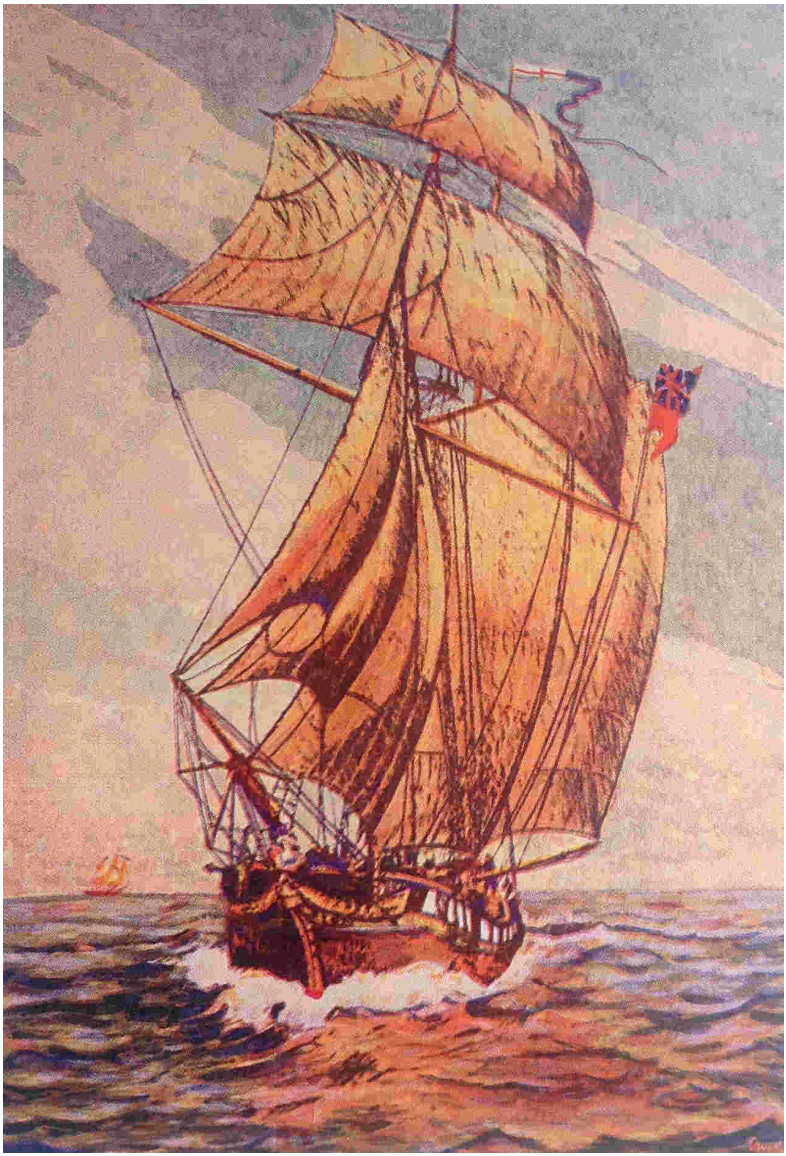
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Illustrations by
OWEN STAPLES



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TO THE TRUE HELPMEET WHO MADE IT POSSIBLE THIS BOOK IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

Bow Wave

Five brimming basins, measured by the hundred mile, plumbed by the hundred fathom, pass down the clear cold waters of eastern North America to the mighty arms of the St. Lawrence. He in turn bears them to the all-receiving sea.

These are the Great Lakes—Superior, Michigan, Huron, Erie and Ontario. They are connected by smaller lakes, by rivers, by straits. Cataracts which once prevented intercourse between Ontario and Erie, between Huron and Superior, have been conquered by canals. The five brimming basins give direct access from the Atlantic Ocean to the heart of the continent. Forty million people live in the states of the American Union and the province of the Dominion of Canada for which the lakes are a frontier highway. Ten-thousand-ton monsters of steel traverse the mighty watercourse, bearing a commerce six times as great as that which passes Suez. The international highway is as much devoted to the purposes of peace as Broadway or the Strand.

But a hundred years ago, pike and cutlass heroes who fought the Battle of the Baltic and triumphed at Trafalgar, the same pigtailed bluejackets who fill the pages of Marryat with glee and glory, these same dare-devil tars ploughed the Great Lakes with plentiful furrows. They locked yardarms and gave broadside for broadside with the Tom Coffins and Barnstaples of Fenimore Cooper's fancy. Despite the cataracts which then isolated Ontario and Superior the Great Lakes were, even in those days, the highway to the heart of North America. With no railways and few roads hewn through the wilderness the waterways of the continent were the all-important means of communication. Thus it came that in the three-year struggle between Great Britain and the United States, known as the War of 1812, these inland seas were the scene of continuous conflict.

In the earlier stages of the war the ships which fought the fresh water fights were often cockleshells of fore-and-aft rig—cutters, sloops and schooners which had been converted from the peaceful pursuits of lake commerce to the purposes of war. Even the largest craft were less formidable than the salt water vessels classed at that time as "sloops-of-war"—a rating below that of frigates. The rapids of the St. Lawrence

prevented the ascent to the lakes of vessels of the regular navies of both nations, but their crews were marched up by sparing handfuls to man such craft as could be bought or built to float guns. Ere the war closed, Ontario, lowest of the five Great Lakes, floated frigates more powerful than any on the ocean, and boasted line-of-battleships rivalling Nelson's *Victory*. Following the treaty of Ghent, which closed the war, came a mutual and wise disarmament agreement, which, taking effect in 1818, banished battle from the Great Lakes for a hundred years; let us hope, forever. But ere the warships went, they left a rocket trail of glory, more brilliant, if less enduring, than the paler paths of peace.

This is a story book. It is not a history of all that occurred in the last war on the Great Lakes. *That* would be a large contract. But it tries to tell truly things which happened during the war; in such a way as to give some idea of the part fresh water played in a conflict which was only a detail in the wars of an empire, but a detail affecting the destinies of a continent.

Lake Champlain is not one of the Great Lakes. It is a side-reservoir, feeding the St. Lawrence by the Richelieu river. Although apart from the main fresh water highway in the War of 1812, Champlain floated battle craft of the same style as the greater lakes. These were manned by seamen who also fought on the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario. Pring, of the fighting *Linnet*, was one of Yeo's captains at the second attack on Sackett's Harbour. Downie himself was commander of the *Montreal* on Lake Ontario before hoisting his pennant over the fatal flagship *Confiance*. The tragedy at Plattsburg on Lake Champlain is not a grateful topic for a British writer, but it is not one which may be fairly passed over in an account of the fresh water fighting of the war. The pious valour of young Macdonough, the American champion in that fray, and the bulldog bravery of the goaded Downie, alike challenge the admiration of the world.

The tales here told come from the logs and letters of the captains and commodores whose broad-pennants waved from Kingston to Michillimackinac a century ago. The dry bones of record have been clothed with the flesh and blood of fancy, but from the price of pork to the colour of fighting flags the ancient chronicles have been faithfully followed. The men and ships named here are the men and the ships named there, and what befell them is told as there recorded. Only in the *why* of things falling as they did has imagination been allowed any play; and then only when the records have been dumb.

TORONTO, 1926.

Table of Contents

DEDICATION

BOW WAVE

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

CHAPTER I.—AN ANCHOR IN A GRAVEYARD

The Midsummer Night's dream of a trading skipper as the century clock was striking.

CHAPTER II.—THE SPOILING OF THE SPOILERS

CHAPTER III.—THE "*Nancy*"

Her story from her Detroit River cradle and her Nottawasaga grave; and what became of the *Scorpion*.

CHAPTER IV.—WHEN CHAUNCEY CAME TO KINGSTON

How the *Royal George* was chased, by the *Water-Spiders*, and the *Simcoe* ran the gauntlet, and a dead hero's name proved a passport for his sword.

CHAPTER V.—THE BURLINGTON RACES

A drawn battle on Lake Ontario in 1813.

CHAPTER VI.—THE NIAGARA SWEEPSTAKES

Nineteen ships play hide-and-seek upon an inland sea.

CHAPTER VII.—THE ESCAPE OF THE SLIPPERY SIX

A sequel to the Burlington Races left untold by the Ancient Yarner.

CHAPTER VIII.—THE BOY COMMANDER AND THE WIDOW

Why the battle of Lake Erie, otherwise known as the battle of Put-in-Bay, was lost and won.

CHAPTER IX.—A RESURRECTION ON THE SHORES OF GRAVEYARD POND

CHAPTER X.—HOW WE TOOK OSWEGO

When the largest American port on Lake Ontario to-day fell into British hands.

CHAPTER XI.—THE CAPTAIN'S GIG GOES GLOVE-HUNTING

CHAPTER XII.—YARNS O' YORK

Being an account of the marvellous reappearance of Malachi Malone upon a centenary-eve in the second city of Canada.

CHAPTER XIII.—APPLES OF ASHES

Giving some of the reasons why the taking of Toronto was not a famous American victory.

CHAPTER XIV.—CHAMPIONS OF CHAMPLAIN

The bitterest chapter of all fresh water fighting—the Battle of Plattsburg, September 11, 1814.

CHAPTER XV.—THE SILENT ST. LAWRENCE

Story of a ship which ended the war without firing a shot.

Illustrations

"*You may imagine what a pleasant sight the 'Nancy' was for us.*"

"*With the leap of a mountain-cat, Alexander McIntosh, the 'Nancy's' old sailing-master, sprang upon him, whirling his cutlass.*"

Map showing northeast corner of Lake Ontario—scene of much hard fighting and hard sailing in 1812-14.

"*They grouped like neophytes around Malachi Malone, the high priest of the tale that is told.*"

"*Boys-oh-Boys, how the splinters did fly.*"

Map showing Lake Ontario, and some of the furrows the war fleets ploughed in 1813.

Map of Lake Erie, scene of the naval operations of 1813 which culminated in the Battle of Put-in-Bay.

"*You fought under Nelson, sir; I shall think of you always as remembering the great signal 'England Expects.'*"

"*Jimmy Richardson . . . wound up as an Admiral of the Sky Pilots. He was a Methody Bishop before he died.*"

Map showing the shore-voyage of a ship's boat.

Map showing the route by Downie's fleet and the place of battle.

"*Lem, the Dreamer, had not risen from his knees when the return wave burst on the beach.*"

THE STORY OF THE "NANCY" AND OTHER EIGHTEEN-TWELVERS

CHAPTER I

An Anchor in a Graveyard

THE MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM OF A TRADING SKIPPER AS THE CENTURY CLOCK WAS STRIKING

Our riding light burned dim and blue in the fog, though 'twas a good bright lantern, hung ten feet above the topgallant forecastle. The shadows of the schooner's spars and gear made thick, whirling, spoke-like rays of darkness in the smothering white as she rolled and plunged. You couldn't see the water heaving and sobbing below us. We were bound down Lake Ontario for Kingston, from Cleveland on Lake Erie, and had anchored somewhere on the Niagara Shoal, when the wind left us and the fog set in at sundown.

It was my watch on deck from midnight till four o'clock. That is to say, the mate and his two men turned in then, and my two lads came shuffling aft from the forecastle, drowsy as opium smokers. I had been up all night before, thrashing down Lake Erie, and had been at the wheel all day, making the passage of the Welland Canal. The lads were dog-tired with the day's canalling, and I sent them below again at "one bell"—half an hour after midnight. A sleepy lookout is worse than none, and they were so heavy-eyed they could not answer their own names. Besides, one was only a Port Hope high-school boy, working in his holidays to pay his winter's board. I myself was tired and sleepy too—"dopey," in fact—but a master *has* to keep awake.

Our ship's bell was a small affair, and clattered foolishly as she dived and rolled in the long uneasy swell. I unshipped the tongue, and slung an iron windlass-brake from the foreboom, so that with every roll it struck the capstan head, giving a deep clang that echoed back through the fog. It was the best way we had of warning steamers of our presence.

Very faint and very far away the bell-buoy off the mouth of the Niagara River answered the clang of the windlass-brake with a mournful toll. The bell-ringing, the sobbing and scuffling of the uneasy water alongside, and

the occasional grind of the anchor chain in the hawse-pipe, were the only sounds of the night except the clatter of the brake.

I trudged slowly forward and aft, forward and aft, staring into the blind fog until my eyes cracked, varying the dreary view with an occasional glance through the binnacle slot at the cracked, comfortable, yellow face of the cabin clock. If you look hard enough into a fog or the blackness of a dark night, or even the clean, crisp line of a sun-swept horizon, you can see almost anything; the brain throws before your eyes a false image of what you *expect* to see. I have noticed that time and again when making a landfall. I have known good lookout men to hail the deck and report headlands or lighthouses hours before they hove above the horizon—just because they were looking for them. But this that I saw and heard, after noting twenty minutes past one on the cabin clock, is not accounted for that way.

I turned suddenly from a peep through the binnacle slot, because I thought I heard a sound like very distant thunder. The fog smothered and blinded me like some great mass of gauze thrown over my head, but again I heard or felt the sound.

"They must be firing rockets at the mouth of the Niagara River," I thought, "to guide some fog-bound passenger steamer in."

And yet somehow the thudding reports seemed scarcely to be that. They were too irregular, sometimes clustered, as it were, sometimes single; and though very faint, they seemed to jar the thick, steaming air with concussions. They ceased abruptly, and again all I could hear was the gasping, gurgling struggle of the water alongside, the faint toll of the bell-buoy, the grind of the anchor chain, and the clang of our windlass-brake.

"Those reports," thought I—"why, a long-range fleet action must have sounded like that in the old days." As the thought took words unconsciously, as thoughts will when one is alone, I sniffed something odd in the fog—a faint, pungent, smoky smell, like gunpowder.

"Here, this won't do!" I told myself. "You think of broadsides and then smell powder smoke. Wake up!"

I walked to the scuttle-butt, dipped a mug of water, and drank it to freshen my brain.

Then, distinct from the resonance of the windlass-brake or the toll of the buoy, I heard the faint tinkle as of "three bells" striking—ding-ding! ding!—half-past one. *We* had no automatic striker aboard the schooner. The sound

was repeated, blurred and faint, as though we were in the midst of an unseen fleet.

Looking up from my drink, I saw something which brought my heart to my mouth. Abeam of us was a vessel—a full-rigged ship, under all sail, with studding-sails out. My first impulse was to call all hands, but I choked down the cry. This was no ordinary one of the ships that pass in the night. She was square-rigged on all three masts; and the last square-rigger vanished from the lakes when I was sailing toy boats in puddles. She had "single" topsails, that is, they were each in one great square of canvas, a rig which became obsolete fifty years ago. She had a spritsail, swinging from the bowsprit, a sail that has not been seen for a century, and her side was broken by a long line of open ports.

But what convinced me above all that this was some trick of my brain and not a real vessel was the way she seemed to be sailing in the sky, making good progress in a breeze so light that we had lost steerage way. As I said, the water, even alongside, was invisible; but she seemed to be floating in the air, above the horizon. Another thing which proved her unreal was the very clearness of every detail in a fog which smothered out sight of our own crosstrees. She radiated a light which illuminated her without casting a shadow. At each port a brightness—perhaps a gunner's match—was glowing. Great horn lanterns pulsed like rising moons at each corner of the taffrail that ended her short high poop. Other lanterns, strung fore and aft, lighted up crowds of men, clustered around the guns, thronging the gangways, manning the yards and fighting-tops.

I could see, as plainly as in summer twilight, the colours of her Stars and Stripes, rippling in a fresh breeze, at her mizzen gaff-end, and a long, twisted streamer, blowing off from her main-truck. And I could see coloured signal lights, blue and white and red, rise and sink on invisible halliards.

She swept by, but a thin black, curved, line vibrated in her place, and moved in the direction she had passed, and in a moment there showed at the end of it, a squat little schooner, with an enormous cannon amidships and spars which raked till the main-truck overhung the taffrail.

I was more interested than startled by what I was seeing. I had a curious feeling of toleration for the whim of my brain which had conjured up such a vision. I continued staring. At a short interval there loomed another old-style full-rigged ship, with deep, wide-shouldered topsails, and battle lanterns ablaze at gunports; and she had a schooner in tow like the first. And then there came a brig, and then more schooners, with raking spars, which went

out of use years and years ago. They all passed within ten minutes, at a quarter-mile distance, each illumined by the strange inner light which made them plain amid the blinding fog. As each vessel drew abreast she put up her helm and wore around on to the other tack, as if in obedience to the signal lights of the flagship. The changed course brought them back across my line of vision, but further away.

I was so absorbed in the illusion that I was keeping as bad a lookout as any of my sleepy watch could have done. Pulling myself together I resolutely turned my back on the phantom fleet and stared over the opposite side. I saw the fog, of course, and more. The reason for the manœuvre was quite plain. Another line of vessels was approaching.

The leader was, I should judge, a ship of about the same size as the first one I had seen—perhaps a hundred tons smaller. She had a high sheer aft, and a light-coloured underbody. I counted twelve gunports in her side. She too had the obsolete single topsails, but, unlike the American flagship, no royals. I noted particularly a large longboat on chocks in the waist. Her figurehead was a soldier in uniform, and there was a red ensign flaming from her mizzen peak. I thought our naval ensign was always white, with a red cross quartering it, and the jack in the corner; but hers was red, blood red.

Another ship, of smaller size, followed her. A lion and a unicorn, and the blue ellipse of the Order of the Garter, were emblazoned between her yawning sternports. Then there passed two brigs, and two schooners; larger, these last, than most of the Yankee fore-and-afters, and higher sided, with longer rows of grinning guns. And all flew the red flag.

I watched the spectacle fade into the fog with that twinge of regret which we experience on awakening from a curious dream. I walked quietly again to the water cask, chuckling to myself at the mildness of the beverage which had produced such an experience. Yet as I again drained the dipper I began to feel an uneasiness that I, a plain vessel captain, should be a prey to such fancies.

"It must have been a mirage," I began to tell myself.

Turning again from the scuttle-butt I saw something which brought the sweat to my brow. Ahead of us was a vessel—apparently right athwart our cable. I now ran forward to call all hands, believing a collision inevitable; but when I reached the forecastle I paused, rooted to the deck. The strange vessel was then exactly the same distance away as when I had been at the opposite end of our ship, about fifty yards from me; but she was high up, as

if floating in water as high as our bowsprit end, and *that* was thirty feet above the real water level.

I had seen many mirages on the lakes, but never before one by night or in a fog. The shadow ship seemed a small two-masted schooner of a hundred tons or so. She throbbed with a dull blue glare as of continuous lightning, which made it easier to note her details than our own, in the thick fog. Her spars raked sharply, her sails were loose-footed. The foresail appeared to brail up to the mast, and she had a square topsail and topgallantsail; a rig which had disappeared on the Great Lakes when I was a youngster. Her freeboard was low, except at the quarters, where her deck rose with a sharp break. Her bulwarks were pierced with ports from which grinned cannon, and other larger guns showed on pivots on deck.

I *knew* there was nothing there ahead of us, nothing but fog. My cheeks were hot with the shame of realizing that I was the victim of the trick of an overwrought mind and body. But I felt a certain satisfaction in that I had not turned out the watch. I could imagine them leaning against the bulwarks, spitting into the fog overside, and muttering about the "old man" and how he was "getting them," "them" being delirium tremens.

I glanced aft into the blank fog, and then turned about for a look forward, fully assured that the phantasy of my eyes would have vanished. But the illusion schooner was exactly where I had last seen her. She seemed under weigh, but did not pass by. Her decks were covered with men—scores of them, at least—and they were all scurrying about in great confusion, pulling and hauling on the gear and lashing the guns into position. They were shortening her down for heavy weather. Her top hamper was clewed in, her foresail brailed, the tack of the mainsail triced up, when they seemed to change their minds. They began to make sail again, until every stitch was spread. Suddenly she heeled till her yardarms brushed the water, or where her waterline should have been.

It was at this moment, and had been for hours, a stark calm; but she acted exactly like a vessel hove down by a sudden overwhelming gust of wind. For a moment she hung on her beamends—then her hull vanished and her spars slowly straightened up, and I knew I was seeing a representation of a vessel foundering. She went down by the stern, but ere the mastheads disappeared she gave a lurch forward which threw aloft, like a tongue of blue flame, a long burgee or pennant. For an instant I watched the letters S-C-O-U-R-G-E as they disappeared one after the other. Then my ears were smitten with a thin, faint wailing, the worst sound they had ever heard—the death cries of half a hundred human beings, perishing under my very eyes.

I beat my head, I shouted to myself: "It isn't real, it *isn't* real! It's a dream, a vision, a nightmare!" but I dared not look any longer. Wheeling about I stared aft along our own solid, fog-drenched decks—and there right in front of me, was being enacted the very tragedy upon which I had just turned my back.

No further away than the end of our foreboom I saw the steep-sloped deck of a vessel, hove down in a squall. A swarm of men were climbing and clawing up to the weather rail. Some had reached it, and were slashing at the rigging with knives and axes, to save her by letting the masts go by the board. Others slipped, grabbed wildly at the hatchcoamings, and disappeared. Four cannon on the weather side had settled back on their lashings with the ship's incline, and as my glance fell on them their tackles parted and they swept down the steep slide of the deck. Two of them disappeared, carrying a dozen men with them; the other two fetched up against a huge swivel-gun, located amidships. The great heap of iron gun-barrels and lignum-vitæ carriages poised for a moment, then whirled over, with a rending of deckplanks and smashing of hatchcoamings, and pitched overboard or out of sight; and at once the slanting deck in front of me began to settle and vanish, as though invisible waves were swirling through the rent made by the crashing guns.

Swiftly it disappeared utterly, leaving a tangled mass of human heads and arms, fighting rabidly for hatch-covers, deck-gratings, bits of board, even rope ends. And the voices! The awful voices! Not one separate word came through the dreadful babel; but shouts and prayers and curses and implorings were all mingled with the gasping coughs a man gives, fighting death in the water, and the smothered gurgle of the drowning victim's surrender.

The memory of the terrible distinctness of those sounds will never leave me; yet, although apparently uttered at a few yards' distance, they were all keyed down, like words over a telephone; and through all I could hear the commonplace clang of our windlass-brake, the toll of the Niagara bell-buoy, the slap and scuffle of the actual water alongside; just as, *past* the vision of the sinking deck, I could see our main and mizzen masts loom in the fog, and mark the faint halo of our lighted cabin.

I admit I was frightened, thoroughly, abjectly scared. I pounded furiously on the forescuttle, unable to speak.

"Aye, aye, sir," I heard sleepy voices rumble below, and then the tousled heads of my watch poked out.

"Hear anything, lads?" I asked sharply.

"Not me," said one.

"Seems," answered the other with a terrible yawn, "as if I—yes, it is. I can hear coween, sir. Dang them gulls, they wail at night like lost souls. Coween, that's what it is, sir. Mebbe our windlass-brake has wakened a flock of 'em, asleep on the water."

I looked sideways, forward and aft. The visions had gone. The sailors had seen nothing.

"Well, keep a good lookout, boys, and call me if you see or hear anything," I managed to say, and walked aft, limp as a wrung rag.

I tramped the quarter deck without ceasing for two hours, grateful as a starving man for food for the snatches of grumpy forecastle slang I could catch from the lads forward. *They* were human, and alive. At "eight bells" (four o'clock) I called the mate and his watch. The fog was thinning. I told him to get sail on her if it cleared, and heave short as soon as the breeze came. Then I flung myself, face downward, on my berth.

I expected a prolonged agony of trying to get to sleep would be followed by a series of terrible nightmares, but I dropped off as though drugged, and knew nothing until nearly four hours later, the mate tapped on my door and said, "'Seven bells,' sir, and we're hove short. Wait for breakfast before breaking out?"

I sprang to my feet. The little stateroom was filled with bright sunshine. Through the port-light I saw the lake sparkling in crisp ridges of blue and green and gold. Looking along the deck I noted our lower sails were up and slatting and banging at their sheets in a cheerful westerly breeze.

"Break out first," I answered. "A fair wind's not to be wasted."

In the galley the cook's bacon and eggs sizzled joyously, and the aroma of coffee rose. Everything made a glad midsummer morning.

Like a flash came to me my visions of capsizing and foundering, but no phantasm could stand such bright sunlight, and the merry clink-clank of the windlass-pauls, while a sleep-freshened crew chantied:

"High-ho up she rises!
High, high, up she rises!
Weigh-heigh, up she rises!
Early in the morning."

"Anchor's a-peak! Anchor's awash!" reported the mate. "Now lads, jib halliards, and get her going, then hook on the burton and cathead our ground-tackle!"

The schooner went off smartly as soon as the headsails were sheeted home—I at the wheel, the crew busy getting the anchor aboard.

"Our hook must have fouled something," I heard one of the men say. "Picked up a plank or the like."

As the anchor flukes were lifted clear of the rail a curved board showed, locked across from one to the other, between the arms and the shank. It was weedy and black from long submersion.

"Looks like a trail-board off one o' them old-style billet-heads," said the mate, hauling it in. "We must have been anchored on a wreck. Yes, there's letters cut in it; it's an old-style nameboard."

He began scraping off the moss with one or the wedge-shaped spikes which fell from the plank.

"You'll find the first letter's S," I called to him from the wheel stand, a sudden idea possessing me.

"Wrong, sir," he hailed back. "It's N—N-O-T-L-I-M—Oh, I'm scraping it from the wrong end. It's *Hamilton*, sir. Ever hear of a vessel called the *Hamilton* being lost?"

"Not in my time," I answered. "Mightn't it be her port of hail?"

"Not likely, from the shape of the board," said he.

"Oh, sir," shouted the high-school lad, running aft, "isn't this the eighth of August, 1913?"

"Sure," I answered, rather nettled at his leaving his work, "and it'll be the ninth of next century before you get any breakfast if that anchor's not stowed on the chocks smartly."

"Why, sir," the youngster went on apologetically, "on the eighth of August, 1813, two vessels of the American Commodore Chauncey's fleet were capsized and sunk in a heavy squall while trying to escape from the British in an engagement off the Niagara river. I've read it in a history of the War of 1812, only this spring. And one of them was called the *Hamilton*!"

"What was the other one?" I asked.

"The *Scourge*," he answered. "They foundered at two o'clock in the morning, and out of a hundred men aboard only sixteen were saved. And to think of us anchoring on top of them and bringing up their old planking a century later, on the very day! Can you beat it?"

"Yes," I said, quietly. But I was very glad "eight bells" and the breakfast call saved me from telling him how.

CHAPTER II

The Spoiling of the Spoilers

Nor'-nor'west and east-nor'east the squadron tacked, ploughing proud zig-zags in broad Lake Huron's bosom; from truck and peak streamed the Stars and Stripes.

They were the victors of Put-In-Bay the year before, bent now, in the glory of the summer of 1814, on fresh worlds to conquer.

The brig *Niagara* led the van, with her twin, the *Lawrence*, rehabilitated after her awful gruelling. The *Scorpion* and *Tigress*, also veterans of the Battle of Lake Erie, were in the fleet, and, like captives chained to the chariot wheels, gracing the victor's triumph, there sailed with them the ex-British brigs *Caledonia* and *General Hunter*—the one carried by boarding in the Niagara river, the other the second ship to strike in the climax of the Erie battle.

If ever vessel felt despair—and who can look a ship in the hawse-pipes and say she does not feel?—it must have been the poor little *Caledonia*. She had been a fur trader, the North-West Fur Company's brig. Through these waters again and again had she stormed her way, up-bound with a cargo of traders' stores in springtime, homeward-bound, late in the fall, deep-laden with costly skins of beaver, otter, fox or bear. Two years ago, on the gallant Brock's bold hazard, her brave red ensign had proudly waved above the troops which surprised Michillimackinac, the American Gibraltar. It was the *Caledonia* that carried the men who struck that daring stroke. And now, with a different flag aloft, and eight cannon cumbering her short, broad deck, she was driving along with a foreign squadron. Theirs was the task of hounding down the last of her sisters and overwhelming the gallant garrison, which, from the first of the war, had kept the red flag flying at the furthest outpost of settlement, Michillimackinac—now trimmed down to Mackinac, the island cliff in the Straits of Mackinaw, where Huron waters mingle with the waves of Michigan.

The expedition was the largest launched by the Americans for the War of the North-West. Perry, the hero of Put-In-Bay, had gone back to the

seaboard. Captain A. Sinclair was Commodore of the fleet. Lieut.-Col. Croghan and Major A. H. Holmes, famous for his Thames raid of the year before, commanded the thousand soldiers who reinforced the five hundred seamen and marines. The troops were picked from the 17th, 19th and 24th regiments of infantry, a battalion of Ohio volunteers, and a detachment of United States artillery. Field guns and howitzers supplemented the battering powers of the sixty long-guns and carronades of the fleet.

Head winds held the vessels nine days in the flats of St. Clair, at the entry to Lake Huron; but once the Narrows were past they ploughed northwards day and night, rounded the prong of Bruce Peninsula, and spread out over that great fresh water sea within a fresh water sea, Georgian Bay, off Lake Huron.

The expedition's aim was broad and simple; to obliterate all trace of British power in the north-west lake country of Upper Canada. The fort at Mackinac was the key to the position. Of it the Governor-General of Canada had written to Lord Bathurst:

> "Its influence extends and is felt among the Indian tribes at New Orleans and the Pacific Ocean; vast tracts of country look to it for protection and supplies, and it gives security to the great establishments of the North-West and Hudson's Bay Fur Companies by supporting the Indians on the Mississippi, the only barrier which interposes between them and the enemy; and which if once forced their progress into the heart of these companies' settlements by the Red River is practicable and would enable them to execute their long formed project of monopolizing the whole fur trade into their own hands."

The recapture of Mackinac was to be the American's crowning exploit. As a preliminary it was proposed to destroy the British depot in Matchedash Bay, where they heard gunboats were being built and supplies deposited for transport to the outlying posts. But *where* was Matchedash Bay? The chart showed it as a corner off the Georgian; but how was it to be reached? No pilot in the fleet had ever been there. They knew the road to Mackinac direct, but not the side passages. Sinclair sickened of groping his way along a shore where, as he wrote, "there is nothing like an anchorage except in the mouths of the rivers, the whole coast being a steep perpendicular rock."

"We've fallen suddenly from no soundings to three fathoms," he complained to Croghan, "and twice to a quarter-less-twain—and the bottom's craggy rock. The water's clear as a bell. You could see the bottom

as you sailed, but for these cursed fogs. It's as thick as on the Grand Bank of Newfoundland!"

So after a week of groping for the Matchedash depot the squadron filled their sails for the open again and steered north-west for the Island of St. Joseph's.

This is the isle, northeast of Mackinac, which marks the entrance to the St. Mary's river, beyond whose falls opens out the greatest of the inland oceans, Lake Superior. Past St. Joseph's went the scanty traffic which then communicated with Superior, Michigan, Huron and Georgian Bay—fur-canoes, bateaux, and the rare sailing craft which war and the wilderness then permitted to navigate those savage waters. There was a British military post on the island; but the garrison, hearing of the squadron's coming, had abandoned it.

"An empty nest," quoth Sinclair, ranging the shore with his spyglasses. "But yonder's consolation for us. See those tops'ls!"

A little trading schooner, swimming deep with cargo, had crept around the point of the island under which the squadron lay with slumbering sails. Like them, she too was quickly becalmed in the lee of the shore.

A pair of the landing launches which the larger brigs towed sped toward her under threshing oars. Not a shot was fired. Resistance was quite useless. In a few moments, through the luck of the failing wind, the North-West Fur Company's schooner *Mink* was a prize to the American fleet, and the *Caledonia* had another sister in captivity.

Search of the *Mink's* papers and cross-questioning of her crew laid the whole situation bare. Mackinac was in a bad way. The American post at far-off Prairie du Chien had just been captured and was being held by volunteers from the Mackinac garrison. This brilliant stroke strengthened the garrison's prestige but left it weak in numbers. Provisions had been scarce, but the supply had been renewed, and the *Mink*, fresh laden at Mackinac, had sailed from there for the St. Mary's River. She was to transfer her cargo of flour and food-stuffs to the *Perseverance*, lying above the "Sault" of the St. Mary's. Thus supplies would be passed on to Fort William on the north shore of Lake Superior, the "grand depot and general rendezvous" for the fur trade with the far west. The *Perseverance* was the only vessel on Lake Superior; and, now that the *Mink* was captured, the only other British vessel on the Upper Lakes—or, for that matter, above the Falls of Niagara—was Lieut. Miller Worsley's schooner *Nancy*. She was the last link between the isolated Mackinac, with its depleted store, and the Georgian Bay, where, in

the Nottawasaga River mouth, supplies were loaded after being brought all the way across the province of Upper Canada from Lake Ontario, or even from Quebec.

Sinclair looked with longing eyes to Fort William, three hundred miles beyond the rapids of the St. Mary's river. There was two million dollars' worth of furs there; plenty, in his time, to build a war fleet; but there was then no "Soo" canal to take his squadron to Lake Superior, and he had to content himself with a raid on the fort and settlement at St. Mary's, sixty miles from where the fleet lay.

On Lieut. Daniel Turner, commanding the *Scorpion*, fell the honour of leading the foray. Sailors and marines, and infantrymen under Major Holmes, embarked in the landing launches, and rowed night and day up the river against the strong current. As they toiled at the oars, nearing the rapids, birch bark canoes pushed on before them. Indians faithful to the Union Jack spread the news of their approach. Some of the canoes were chased and sunk. Their crews were killed or captured; but the word was passed on that the foe was coming, and the fur company's fort was abandoned ere the launches reached it.

But the *Perseverance*, lying above the falls, was captured. Unable to sail her away against the current her crew ran her across the river, scuttled her, and set her on fire. The raiders now became salvagers, and by working might and main, succeeded in extinguishing the flames and in stopping the leak.

"A fine new schooner, upwards of one hundred tons, and she'll be a severe loss to the North-West Company," was Lieut. Turner's comment. "We must take her home."

Three days the raiders waited for a wind that would permit them running the river. At last, on the 26th of July, it came. The *Perseverance*, stripped bare in order to lighten her draught as much as possible, was "tracked" along the river bank with long hawsers. Faster and faster she floated, until the men on the guiding ropes could no longer restain her. The river, it was estimated, dropped forty-five feet in three-quarters of a mile. Into the channel the schooner shot, and, borne on a 30-knot current, approached the river's "sault" or perpendicular leap of ten feet, between three rocks. Past the first rock, past the second, she rushed. Then she sheered towards the third, ripped her bilge on it with a grinding crash, and spun madly on down the rapids. So swiftly did she travel that they were able to run her on the shore below the rapids before she filled; but she was a hopeless wreck, and once more the torch was applied to her. This time she burned to ashes.

All the valuable furs and many portable articles had been carried off by their owners ere the raiders arrived. Still, Turner and his men had counted on loading the *Perseverance* from the goods remaining in the six storehouses of the fur company, and bringing in a rich prize. An abandoned work horse, unable, by force of habit, to keep away from his accustomed stall, strayed back into the strangers' ranks. Soldiers harnessed the beast to a cart they found, and all day long, without food or drink or rest, he staggered back and forth between the river and the storehouses, dragging loads of Indian trading goods to the water's edge. Night came. They loaded four captured boats with their plunder, tied the unfortunate beast in his stall, set fire to the stable, and watched his frantic plunges with shrieks of laughter which matched his screams of pain and fright.

A musket cracked and the beast collapsed, instantly released from the human hell.

"Who fired that shot?" demanded a cursing corporal.

"I did," bellowed a fifteen-year-old midshipman in his face, "and for two pins I'd spatter what brains you have over that roasting horse-flesh!"

They burned the stable and the storehouses, and a hundred thousand dollars' worth of trading goods and provisions, and rejoined the *Scorpion* with their plunder; and the stereotyped report that private property had been respected was duly prepared. The squadron had already sailed for Mackinac, fifty miles from St. Joseph's.

It blew hard, and for days the island of Mackinac was defended by that terror of all sailing craft, a lee shore. But on the first of August the squadron ventured in and sent boatloads of soldiers ashore to capture Indian guides. The wily Menomonees fired on them from the thickets, but promptly scattered whenever a charge was attempted. These savages were the staunch allies of the British. Commanders, more skilled with the ramrod than the pen, wrote enthusiastically in official despatches of their gallant conduct, cataloguing them as "Fallsovines" or "Fallsovians" in an attempt to give them their early French names. The voyageurs had called them the Folles Avoines, or Wild Oats.

Failing to get forced guides the squadron searched the neighboring shores until they found American settlers who had been to Mackinac before the British surprised the garrison. These told them of the western shore of the island, where there was a break in the cliffs, and even the *Niagara* and the *Lawrence* could anchor within three hundred yards of the land. Dense

woods stretched for two miles between this gap and the open space from which the fortress could be assailed.

On the morning of August 4th a thousand soldiers and marines landed. Lieut-Col. Robert McDouall, of the Glengarry Light Infantry, who was in command at Mackinac, marched out to meet them with a hundred and forty white men (Royal Newfoundland Infantry) and a hundred and fifty Indians. He selected a thicket near a clearing in the dense woods, and when the foe appeared he opened fire on them from two field guns.

They tried to outflank him. The flanking party found themselves suddenly surrounded by a whooping crowd of invisible savages, who seemed to be ubiquitous, and picked off man after man without showing aught but the smoke of their rifles. Major Holmes, the raider of the Thames and of St. Mary's, fell at the first fire. Capt. Desha, upon whom the command devolved, was severely wounded and fainted from loss of blood. The attackers tried to charge, but the elusive Wild Oats were here, there and everywhere.

Plunging through the thickets the troops reached a height, only to find their position commanded by another ridge, where artillery behind a breastwork swept their further advance. Capt. Van Horne, of the 19th, and Lieut. Jackson, of the 24th, fell, mortally wounded, and their men retreated. A field gun, dragged up from the landing place, failed to clear the woods of the terrible unseen sharpshooters with the blood-curdling war-cries. The retreat became a rout, and fearing a massacre Col. Croghan re-embarked his troops in the squadron, as fast as they returned to the beach.

The men were terror-stricken. They had scarcely seen an enemy, and not one of the defenders had been hurt; but the assailants had eighteen killed and fifty-nine wounded. As they retreated through the woods they stumbled across the bodies of their own dead, and many were horrible to look upon. The invisible Indians had rushed upon the victims of their deadly aim and scalped them as opportunity offered. This fiendish practice was discouraged by white commanders on both sides, but it was kept up by the brutality of American riflemen. At the Battle of the Thames, for instance, riflemen scalped and flayed completely a corpse which they thought to be that of the heroic Tecumseh. "Tecumseh razor-strops," of human skin were to be found in Kentucky for a generation afterwards.

So great was the confusion that the body of Major Holmes and others of the dead were left behind, and even some of the wounded were abandoned. Next morning a white flag was sent ashore, and with the grim McDouall's

permission the body of the raiding major was secured and borne aboard the *Lawrence*, for burial at Detroit. And the squadron sailed away.

Whither?

That was a question McDouall could not answer directly, but he made a shrewd guess. He might almost have been present at the counsel of war in the *Niagara's* cabin.

"A bad business, colonel," said Sinclair to Croghan. "We'll keep you near this island while the canvas stays in the bolt-ropes, if such is your wish, but I fear you'll never take it. Why, man, the place is a very Gibraltar in front, and from the rear—well, human beings can't pass through those woods filled with red devils!"

"I felt sure the task was too heavy for us, but it would never do to go back without making a try," returned Croghan. "What do you advise?"

"Gently does it," answered Sinclair. "Starve 'em out."

"But," objected Croghan, "we'll starve ourselves in the process, with no supplies nearer than Detroit; and your fleet cannot keep the lake with the autumn gales threatening, you say!"

"No," said Sinclair, "we can't. The loss of an anchor, the chaffing of a cable on this sharp bottom, might put us all in grave jeopardy. We're too far from a base of supplies. But here's the plan. Mackinac's cupboard is bare. They sent away part of their winter's provision to Fort William in the *Mink*. We've that under hatches, and there's only one way they can get more. The four-gun schooner *Nancy* is the only British craft left in these waters. She sailed from Mackinac, to load stores at the mouth of the Nottawasaga, before we attacked the island. Capture her, and we have two fine prizes to show for our expedition——"

"That's all very well for you," interrupted Croghan, "but all I'll have to show will be the body of poor Holmes."

"No, listen," went on the sailor, "you'll have more. With the *Nancy* captured McDouall will just have to starve to death on his rock, or clamber down from his perch this winter, and march away over the ice. Why, do you know what food was worth in Mackinac even before we captured the *Mink*? Flour sixty dollars a barrel, and pork fifty cents a pound. They've been drying fish to help them through the winter. Capture the *Nancy*, and Mackinac falls, as sure as the law of gravitation; and with Mackinac, all the Hudson Bay and North-West fur establishments. What say you, sailing-master?"

The *Niagara's* sailing-master, an old seaman whose experience made him a privileged listener at these councils, shook his head.

"Your plan's good, sir, but I doubt if the *Nancy*'ll ever fly the Stars and Stripes. She's a wonderful lucky vessel, sir, and the men in her are tigers."

"You know her then?" asked the colonel.

"That I do, for I saw her launched. For all she's a Britisher, she was built at Detroit for a Montreal fur-trading firm. They spent a mint o' money on her —nothing but the best of white oak and red cedar went into her, and none of your fresh-cut forest stuff at that, but well-seasoned timber, some of it brought out from England. They brought her figurehead all the way up from New York, full seven hundred miles. Skelling, the noted carver, did it—a lady in the full costume of the day, with hat and feather. The lady's gear may be out o' style now, for the *Nancy* was launched in 1789, but she's sound as a nut yet.

"And her crew! I don't know much of this young salt water lieutenant that's in charge of her, but her old sailing-master, Alex. McIntosh, is one o' the pious Presbyterians that fears neither man nor devil. He brought her down Lake Huron, to load at Amherstburg for Mackinac, just after the Battle of Put-In-Bay. The cautious old boy sent ashore, after crossing Lake St. Clair and getting into the Detroit River, to find out if it was safe to venture down. When he found the whole British fleet had been captured he made sail for home again, but the light wind forced him to anchor.

"A raiding party from Detroit tried to snap him up. They sent him word that they were a party of fifty Canadian militia, and the lieutenant-colonel commanded that he should turn the vessel over to them, for protection.

" 'And if I don't?' he asked the messenger.

" 'We'll be forced to fire on you.'

" 'Hoo mony men hae ye?' he asked.

" 'Fifty,' he was told.

" 'Ower mony for the *Nancy* to ferry,' he said. 'Tell your colonel I'm conseedering, and he'll soon ken ma deceesion.'

"With that the messenger had to go ashore. The old Scot at once began to heave up his anchor. When the party saw what his 'deceesion' was they opened fire on him. He fished his anchor and blazed back at them with his little carronades and muskets. They daren't trust themselves to the small leaky canoe, the only boat they had, and for half an hour they fired on the

schooner from the shore, as she slowly stemmed the current in the light air. Her crew lay down behind the bulwarks and kept up a fusillade, but the old man stood like a lighthouse at the helm, and never dodged, though the shots were splintering the mainboom and railing around him. A cartridge exploded on board, and set fire to her mainsail, but the crew, jumping up with buckets, drenched the canvas, and the schooner sailed clear of the shore at last, and on up the river for Lake St. Clair.

"I have it from one of his crew that all the while they were passing Detroit that night the only light aboard was a slow-match in the fist of Alex. McIntosh. The old man stood by a powder keg at the foot of the mainmast, and vowed he'd blow the *Nancy* to Kingdom Come before an American foot should touch her deck. And *that's* the ship and crew you've got to catch!"

Colonel Croghan had waited impatiently for the end of the yarn.

"Well, Sinclair," said he, "let's catch her!"

"Aye, aye," said Sinclair. "Our course shall be straight for the mouth of the Nottawasaga. We've four hundred and fifty men in the *Niagara* as she is, colonel. Suppose we keep them, and send the rest of the fleet home with the other troops. I'll keep the little *Tigress*, and the *Scorpion*, too—Turner's a good man for cutting-out work, and his schooner's smart. She caught the last fugitive from the Battle of Lake Erie, they tell me."

And so the brig and two schooners steered east, and the other vessels of the squadron held southward for Detroit.

On a bright August morning—the thirteenth—the three bloodhounds backed their topsails and hove-to off the pine-clad sandbanks which mark the mouth of the Nottawasaga in Georgian Bay. They lay far offshore, for the diligent leadsmen warned them that the water was shoal. Equally diligent lookouts in the crosstrees searched the shore with spyglasses and reported nothing but unbroken wilderness—except some deserted Indian wigwams at the river's mouth.

"Perhaps," suggested Croghan, "the *Nancy* has not yet arrived. Could we warp into the river and surprise her when she enters?"

"She's too wary a bird to be caught that way," said Sinclair, "if all the sailing-master says about Lieut. Worsley and Alex. McIntosh is true. But we'll have a closer look for her."

They sent their small boats ashore, but although they found evidences of the wigwams having been recently occupied there was no sign of a vessel. They reported, moreover, that while the sandbanks formed a high ridge

where the river entered the bay, two miles to the westward the shore was smooth and lower, and offered a good camping ground. The idea appealed to the commander of the soldiers, cooped in three companies in a brig one hundred and ten feet long, so the flotilla made sail again and stood west for two miles and anchored.

When the landing party went to prepare the camp site their scouts stared in amazement at what they found among the trees back of the beach. Crossing a small ridge they found the river again; it paralleled the shore, instead of flowing at right angles to it; and there among the pine-tops, gilded by slanting rays of summer sunlight, speared the topmasts of a schooner—the *Nancy*. It could be no other.

Cautiously crawling to the edge of the ridge which overhung the river the scouts noted every detail of her position. She had been warped or towed by her boats this far along the winding stream, and moored against the southerly bank, where the ground was highest. On the ridge above her a blockhouse of fresh hewn logs showed. It mounted three guns—two twenty-four-pounders, and a six-pounder fieldpiece. Screened among the trees, the scouts could count every man of the little company which had quarters there—twenty-one seamen of the Royal Navy, nine French-Canadian voyageurs, and twenty-three Indians. They were all busily engaged strengthening the defences of the blockhouse, as though their position had been but recently taken.

The scouts stole back, as they thought, unobserved. There was no camping on the beach that night for the ship-weary soldiers; but with the first rays of the dawn the fleet was moored in a position in the bay exactly opposite their foe in the river, still invisible behind the sand ridge and belt of trees. Sunrise was saluted with the thunderous roar of the *Niagara's* ten-gun broadside, and the lesser concussions of the schooners' long-guns. If they hoped to annihilate a sleeping enemy Captain Sinclair and Col. Croghan were speedily undeceived. Prompt as an echo came back the answering crash of three guns from the blockhouse; and for hours the tree tops and sand ridge were torn by an exchange of twenty-four pound cannonballs. The liveliness of the replies from the blockhouse proved that the defenders were suffering little damage from the blindfold bombardment; so the fleet landed soldiers and howitzers. The landing party quickly dragged their artillery to the crest of the ridge, and opened a destructive fire upon the schooner and blockhouse on the opposite side of the river, within two hundred yards distance.

The spirited defence ceased with great suddenness. There was complete silence for a few moments on both sides. It was broken by a flaming shell from one of the howitzers which landed fairly inside the blockhouse. The whole place burst into flames. A deafening crash told the Americans that the British magazine had blown up. Soldiers ran cheering down the sand ridge, followed by marines staggering under the smallest of the ship's boats. They pushed across the river, but ere they could gain the deck of the schooner she too was in flames, and small explosions in different parts of her frightened them from boarding. She burned furiously, for she was laden, as they suspected, with flour and fat pork. The brimming river suddenly swallowed her hissing hulk.

Climbing the opposite bank the attacking party found the fort in ruins, and a trail of scattered articles marking the flight of its defenders into the woods. They would have followed, but a spattering fire from Indian rifles, and the grisly memory of the scalpings at Mackinac held them back. The three guns of the fort had been spiked. A bateau which had been moored near the *Nancy* had escaped destruction. With this prize they were forced to content themselves. Among the trees they found the desk of the *Nancy's* commander, hurled thither by the explosion. In it was this letter:—

"Michillimackinac, 28th July, 1814.

> "Sir—The American expedition, destined for the attack on this island, having at length made its appearance, I hasten to apprise you of the circumstance, lest the *Nancy* and her valuable cargo fall into their hands. I have taken such precautions as were in my power to make you acquainted with this event in case you may be on your passage. If so, I would recommend you to return to the Nottawasaga river and to take up the *Nancy* as high as possible, place her in a judicious position and hastily run up a log-house (such as were made when the boats were built, but larger), with loop-holes and embrasures for your six-pounders which will enable you to defend her should you be attacked, which is not unlikely."

"Col. McDouall to Lieut. Worsley, I'll warrant," commented Sinclair. "Well, the colonel was a good guesser. Hope he's pleased at the way Worsley carried out instructions and we've fulfilled his expectations!"

"Not much of a prize, Commodore, that solitary bateau and the three spiked guns," said Col. Croghan, "but we've accomplished a great deal.

With the *Nancy* out of the way, as you said before we came here, McDouall will be starved out, and Mackinac will be ours when we come again in the spring."

And so, well satisfied, Sinclair sailed for home with his brig loaded with soldiers, and the captured bateau towing astern behind his big landing launch. To the *Scorpion* and *Tigress* he had assigned the monotonous task of blockading the river mouth until the fall gales made it impossible for them to remain longer on the lake or for Mackinac to communicate with the river. There was just a chance that some reckless Britishers might still try to reach the island with provisions from York *via* the Nottawasaga, carried in bateaux.

He left strict instructions for the isolated vessels to guard against surprise or loss; warning them to be very careful about anchoring, or sending men ashore, or lying at night without boarding-nettings up. The stealthy redskin in his canoe was never to be given an opportunity of adding to his string of scalps, nor was the desperation of a starving enemy to be ignored.

Left to his own devices, Lieut. Turner, of the *Scorpion*, the senior officer of the pair, had better ways of passing the time than watching the sandbars at the river mouth. He heard that rich-laden fur-canoes were coasting the northern shore of Georgian Bay. It came on to blow very hard—so hard that the *Niagara* herself, hundreds of miles away, now on her home journey, was embayed, and for four hours fought for her life, shipping tons of water, and only escaping from the dread Lake Huron leeshore by cutting adrift her launch and bateau, and sending her guns down the hatches. The gale gave a good excuse for leaving the inhospitable wilderness around the Nottawasaga; so, acting quite within the scope of his instructions, Lieut. Turner despatched the *Tigress* to cruise for fur-canoes in the vicinity of the Island of St. Joseph's, and followed her himself in the *Scorpion*. Ere he left the river he felled trees across it, to blockade its mouth. He did not trouble to explore it further up than the site of the *Nancy's* blockhouse.

When the last sun of August was sinking a canoe came under the shadows of the heights of Mackinac. She was a large Indian craft, filled with a score of warriors, wild-looking as birchbark vessel ever floated. Shaggy of mane were they, and unshorn and red as copper from the flame of the sun; but their features were those of white men. Their clothing might have belonged to any nation; still, he who steered wore tattered blue and white with brass buttons, and had epaulettes on his shoulders. His was a navy lieutenant's uniform.

"By the powers, it's Worsley!" shouted McDouall, running down to the little beach at the foot of the cliffs. "Where's the *Nancy*?"

It was Worsley. "In the Nottawasaga, colonel," said he.

"Praise be——" began the commander of the garrison, but a glance at the wayworn crew who surrounded the young lieutenant silenced him.

"She'll never leave there, colonel," said Worsley quickly. "They tracked us home and shelled us out—two schooners and a brig. We fought 'em for hours—three guns to two dozen, and I had only one lad killed and one wounded. I had laid a train from our blockhouse to the schooner, to blow her up if the worst came to the worst. When they got their howitzers ashore they made it so hot for us we had to spike our guns, and get ready to leave. A shell blew up our magazine, and set fire to the schooner, saving us the trouble. She burned to the water's edge, and her three hundred barrels of flour went up in smoke with her. We retreated through the woods, a mile further up the river to the second blockhouse.

"The brig sailed away next day and left the schooners to keep up a blockade. They cleared out without finding us. Two bateaux and Livingstone's canoe were at the second blockhouse——"

"Oh, Livingstone delivered my message then?" interrupted McDouall.

"Yes, and hurried off across the country to York, and then on to Fort Erie, for help for us," said Worsley. "He had just returned, with a score of Indians he had mustered, when the American squadron appeared. He's a wonder that Indian agent!

"We loaded seventy barrels of flour into the bateaux and dropped down the river with them and the canoe. We lifted the trees the Americans had felled, and passed out unseen. And then we rowed and rowed and rowed, with such help as we could get from the bateaux's lugsails when the wind was fair. We coasted north through the Ten Thousand Islands to the Manitoulin, and passed it and along the North Channel, till we came to St. Joseph's. We've been rowing and paddling day and night for a week—three hundred and sixty miles!"

"But where are the bateaux?" asked McDouall, with a tightening of the belt which indicated that the seventy barrels of flour were the most interesting part of the narrative.

"Fifty miles back, safe hidden in a little island," said Worsley. "When we got near St. Joseph's we sighted the very schooners that had destroyed the *Nancy*. They were cruising, Indians told us, on the hunt for fur traders. I

couldn't pass them in the Detour Channel very well, so I hid the bateaux and came on with the canoe. We paddled within a hundred yards of one of the schooners in the darkness of last night."

"Well, welcome, boy, welcome, to what we've got," said the Colonel. "You must rest to-night, and to-morrow we'll send for those bateaux."

"To-morrow," said Worsley, "I am going for those schooners!"

Next day four large rowboats and a convoy of Indian craft left Mackinac. They reached the hiding place of the flour-laden bateaux, and found the faithful Livingstone on guard. He and Worsley set out in a light canoe to track down their quarry. Ere long, satisfied of the whereabouts of one of the vessels, they returned to the rendezvous and made a selection. Ninety-two picked men were divided among the four boats. They were a fine fighting company—voyageurs, bluejackets of the Royal Navy from the *Nancy* crew, men of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, and three Indian chiefs. Two hundred braves in nineteen canoes had joined Worsley's expedition, for word came in ere he left Mackinac that the American schooners had won over a large body of Indians to co-operate with them in the capture of the fur traders.

"This is like to prove bloody work," said Worsley to Livingstone, "and I'd rather your red friends had no hand in it, unless some of their complexion have actually joined the Stars and Stripes."

Thus it was that the braves, with the exception of three chiefs, remained at the hiding place. The scouting of the two lieutenants had revealed no Indian canoes around the vessel they had seen.

In the midnight darkness of the third of September four boats with padded rowlocks noiselessly surrounded a schooner lying at anchor in the Detour Passage. The long pennant which blew from her masthead, distinguishable even in the night against the faint light of the stars, marked her as a war vessel; but no boarding netting guarded her decks.



"*With the leap of a mountain-cat, Alexander McIntosh, the Nancy's old sailing-master, sprang towards him, whirling his cutlass. . . .*"

The muffled oars brought the boats within ten yards of the doomed craft ere her lookouts detected their presence. The sentries' challenge roused the crowded crew, sleeping on deck for greater comfort. Receiving no answer to their hail, the lookouts fired the schooner's swivel-gun. The flash of the explosion showed the four boats sweeping alongside. Next instant over the port and starboard bulwarks swarmed a crowd of bush-rangers, soldiers, and bluejackets, and the three Indian chiefs. Outnumbered three to one the defenders fought with desperation, back to back. There was so little room on that crowded deck that the dead were hurled overboard as they fell, and

some of the wounded were only saved from following them by the bayonets of the Royal Newfoundlanders which pinned them to the planking.

Around the swivel-gun amidships the fight was fiercest. A negro giant of the schooner's crew resolved on a desperate remedy. Cramming the gun-barrel with a bag of slugs he swung the piece around and trained it so as to sweep the deck of friend and foe alike. The flash of a pistol showed him in the very act of pulling the lanyard. With the leap of a mountain-cat Alexander McIntosh, the *Nancy's* old sailing-master, sprang towards him, whirling his cutlass as he came. The blade made a complete circle, and the gunner's head spun bubbling overside. McIntosh's leap brought him full tilt against the ghastly trunk ere it fell. "Follow your heid, mon!" he roared, and seizing the huge bulk he hurled it, too, over the bulwarks, into the crimsoned water.

Despite the furious resistance of the schooner's crew, numbers prevailed. Her commander was cut down, two other officers fell, and her seamen were driven down the hatches into the hold, where they surrendered, after killing one of the boarders by firing through the bulkheads.

The vessel was the *Tigress*, and she was commanded by sailing-master Champlin, who, in the *Scorpion* the year before, fired the first and last guns in the Battle of Put-in-Bay. Champlin was wounded, but not fatally. His conquerors found the dead bodies of three Americans aboard. They themselves had lost three seamen killed and six soldiers and a gunner and one of their lieutenants wounded. How many of the enemy were killed and thrown overboard could not be determined. Four wounded Americans were found. The *Tigress* had a crew of thirty-one men, and her armament was the twenty-four-pounder swivel-gun which had been near obliterating the boarding party.

Worsley read, with much the feelings of the man who peruses his own obituary, the entries in the log of the *Tigress* telling of the destruction of the *Nancy*.

"Last night," said he to Livingstone, "there was not a masthead left to fly the British flag on the Upper Lakes. This morning we are as strong as we were before the *Nancy* was lost. Surely we can completely balance the poor old girl's account!"

"Then don't be in too great haste to see the good flag flying," was Livingstone's enigmatic answer.

Worsley looked at him, and aloft again at the American pennant which still streamed from the *Tigress's* truck.

"I understand," said he. "The other schooner can't have heard the firing?"

"If she has she will be in all the greater haste to ask the *Tigress* about it," said Livingstone with a laugh.

The skilful scout put off in his canoe and in two hours returned with the news that the other schooner was far off among the islands, slowly beating up towards the *Tigress* in the light breeze. No time was to be lost. The four boats, loaded with the crew of the *Tigress* and a strong guard, were started for Mackinac; and all day long the *Tigress'* pennant continued to wave a fatal welcome in the faint air, while the schooner's anchor still gripped the bottom.

A search of her lazarette showed she had little spare cordage and no signal flags. Apparently the consorts exchanged information merely by boat or hail of trumpet. It was the evening of September fifth before the other vessel rounded the last intervening headland. The weather had been undergoing one of the autumnal lulls which lake sailors call "breeding spells" and the wind was just strong enough to give her steerage way. When it failed altogether at sunset she let go her anchor. She was then still two miles from the *Tigress*.

"Smarter than this one, and heavier in metal," commented Worsley. "At the Nottawasaga she was throwing twelve-pound and twenty-four-pound balls. We shall have to take her by boarding. I'm glad she didn't try to exchange signals!"

It was a quiet night aboard the second schooner, but a feverish one aboard the *Tigress*.

"What worm is our early bird after?" queried the *Scorpion's* gunner—for of course the second schooner was she—as he saw the *Tigress* hoist jib and foresail in the glow of early dawn and stand down towards his own vessel.

The gunner and the watch were washing down the *Scorpion's* decks.

"Pass the word below that the *Tigress* is standing down," he called to the boatswain.

"The Old Man says it's about time," returned that worthy after emerging from the cabin. Lieutenant Turner however remained below.

"Look at them in their great coats while we're shivering around in our bare feet," complained one of the deck-swabbers as a dozen muffled figures showed at the *Tigress's* rail.

"Look out, you lubber!" called the gunner suddenly. "You'll foul us, first thing you know!"

But the *Tigress*, only a dozen yards away, luffed, fired her swivel-gun's charge full into the hull of her late consort, and ranged alongside. Up through her opened hatches poured half a hundred bluejackets and redcoats, who came leaping over the *Scorpion's* bulwarks almost before the two vessels touched. The half-dozen deck-swabbers were killed or wounded by the first volley from the boarders' muskets; and the thirty soldiers and sailors, who formed the balance of the *Scorpion's* crew, were penned below decks with her commander without a chance of escape. She was a much easier prize for Worsley than the *Tigress* had been. In her capture he had only one seaman injured.

With the upshooting of the sun, the signal halyards of both vessels were manned, and the Stars and Stripes came down—to rise again immediately, but never more to reach the truck; for above them soared the meteor flag of England. In the first real awakening of the wind of September the *Tigress* and *Scorpion* came threshing home to Mackinac, the gladdest sight Robert McDouall's eyes had seen since the day he got word of the capture of Prairie du Chien.

Worsley's estimate of the capabilities of his second prize proved accurate. She could outsail the *Tigress*, and she had one more gun, although, its carriage being out of repair, it had been stowed in the hold. Aboard her were many articles of private property, plundered in the raid on St. Joseph's, where the *Mink* was captured, and at St. Mary's where the *Perseverance* was burned. Some of the brave Livingstone's goods were among them. His house and wharf and stores at St. Joseph's had fallen a prey to the prowlers.

The *Nancy's* commander's idea of requital was broad and free. He took these two vessels, which had all but annihilated British power in the Upper Lake region, and forthwith made them the nucleus of a fresh British fleet. The *Tigress* became His Britannic Majesty's schooner *Surprise*, in memory of what had befallen her. The *Scorpion* was renamed the *Confiance*, in honour of the ship Sir James Lucas Yeo, the lake Commodore, captured from the French and commanded before coming to fresh water. Worsley sent the *Surprise* and the *Confiance* back to the river mouth of the Nottawasaga, with their original crews in their holds as prisoners of war. At the depot they were landed and marched across the province of Upper Canada to Lake Ontario, for transportation to Quebec. The schooners, on the return trip to Mackinac, brought enough provisions to keep grim Robert McDouall, his bluenose fishermen-soldiers, and his copper-hued Wild Oats, in plenty for a

twelve-month; and so the Gibraltar of the north was held for Britain as long as the war-flags flew.

CHAPTER III

The Nancy

HER STORY FROM HER DETROIT RIVER CRADLE TO HER NOTTAWASAGA GRAVE; AND WHAT BECAME OF THE *Scorpion*.

Many islands have caused shipwrecks; but rare indeed the wreck which has raised an island. In the mouth of the Nottawasaga River, the "saga of the Nodaway" or estuary whence pounced these invading strangers, the fierce Iroquois, upon hapless Huronia, lies one such islet. It is a thousand feet long and four hundred feet wide, and overgrown with bushes and even small trees. It has the unique distinction of being the self-erected tomb and memorial of one of the inanimate heroines of the War of 1812.

When the *Nancy*, leaning towards the land she loved, sank hissing in the Nottawasaga's tide, the river was apparently clear of obstructions, from the ford of the Oxbow, two miles above this spot, to its mouth, which was then two miles to the northeast. For years the charred wreck was marked only by a ripple in the current. Indians came and fished out barrels of pork and flour. The paste formed by the river water in contact with the outer surface of the flour kept the cores of the barrels dry. As the country was cleared by lumbering operations raftsmen anchored their booms by the stout sternpost and stempost of the sunken schooner. Year by year the river brought its contribution of silt, and a shoal formed around the wreck, increasing more rapidly in the dead-water above it. Below the wreck the hurrying river, once more released, scoured the channel clear.

Thus gradually there grew, first a sandbar, then an island, the increase being more rapid when the bar lifted its head to the surface and caught the logs and ice-cakes whirled down in the spring freshets. The island not only filled a large part of the river above the *Nancy*, but it enveloped the wreck itself; and the obstructed current formed shoals and islands above and below the one where the schooner lay buried. One of these, a little further up the river, won the name of Gunboat Island. By some it was called Payship Island. Legends throve as rapidly as the river shoals. Both had a solid basis,

a sunken log, a scorched keel, but often their origin was completely disguised and forgotten.

Most rapid and widespread in growth was a story of buried treasure; one which appeals to all men at all times. The earliest traceable appearance of it was in 1818, four years after the destruction of the *Nancy*, when a Frenchman came to the cabin which Timothy Haggart, a pioneer axeman, had built near the river mouth. According to the narrative preserved by Timothy Haggart's family, the Frenchman, in broken English, explained he was a voyageur who had taken part in the defence of the *Nancy*. During the conflict, he said, when it became evident that the blockhouse could not be held, the *Nancy's* commander entrusted a chest of money, intended for payment of the troops at Mackinac, to one of the Royal Navy bluejackets, telling him to bury it at some little distance in the woods. The man disappeared, and returned before the blockhouse was abandoned; but before he could tell his commander where he had buried the money he was struck by a musketball and died. The Frenchman said he had made his way back to the Nottawasaga on foot from Quebec, in the hope of finding this pay chest. His story secured him shelter at Timothy Haggart's cabin, and the pioneer joined with him in the search. The money was not found, although dug for all along the trail up to the storehouses near the Oxbow and across the Indian Plains portage. Search for it became a passion with Timothy Haggart, increasing with age. Half the township of Vespra was at one time engaged in treasure-hunting, the favourite spot being among the ruins of a fortified post on the Willow Trail which led from Barrie to the Nottawasaga. Timothy Haggart did find a gilt copper powder-horn, upon the site of the burned blockhouse, and it was in the possession of his grandson, Wm. Van Iderstine of Toronto, in 1925. It was a beautiful pear-shaped flask, richly ornamented, with the figure of a stag embossed on one side of it. It was supposed to be of French manufacture, and had no marks which would identify it as military or naval service equipment.

How the island above that which formed around the *Nancy* came to be called Gunboat Island or Payship Island has not been explained. When Capt. Sinclair sailed away from the Nottawasaga in 1814 he towed with him a "gunboat," a large open rowboat meant to mount a twenty-four pounder carronade. This had been brought from Mackinac for use as a lighter in loading the *Nancy*. The storehouse further up the river, to which Miller Worsley retired, was used as a garrisoned depot until 1818, and a gunboat of the description mentioned may have been attached to it, and may have served as a commissary-headquarters or payship. The establishment was removed to Penetanguishene in 1818. Possibly the "payship" was left behind

in the river. Possibly, also, the name of the island arises from a confusion regarding the story and location of the sunken *Nancy*. Events soon become twisted in the telling. The vicinity of the river mouth abounds in tales of the "two American schooners captured there in the dead of night, after burying their pay chest to save it from falling into British hands." This is evidently a distortion of the account of capture of the *Tigress* and the *Scorpion* at the Detour Passage, two hundred miles away. They were brought to the mouth of the Nottawasaga later, and their wild unshaven crews terrified the pioneers by their unkempt appearance when they were landed to be marched overland via the Willow Trail to Kingston, as prisoners of war. While the buried treasure tale may be only a myth it has exercised the minds of the inhabitants of the Nottawasaga district for generations. First the hunters and trappers, then the lumbermen and farmers and sawmill hands, and lastly the summer cottagers and beach hotel guests have felt its spell; for the Nottawasaga mouth has passed through many phases of occupancy since the *Nancy's* day.

So completely was the *Nancy* identified, in the minds of many, with this Gunboat Island, that the exact site of her wreck almost became lost to memory. Old lumbermen who had fastened their booms to it knew it, of course, and visitors who had examined the old timbers from time to time might have established a chain of remembrance if all else had failed. The writer saw the hull in 1912, and secured some oak planking from it. It was then barely discernible among the lily-pads at the southeastern end of the island, opposite the bare-faced sandbank on which the defending blockhouse had stood. But a pronounced drop in the lake levels, following the operations of the Chicago drainage canal, quite altered the outlines of the river shores and of the island, raised sandbars where there had been channels and made dry land where lily beds and bulrushes had flourished.

In August, 1924, Dr. F. J. Conboy, director of Dental Services under the Department of Health for the Province of Ontario, was summering at Wasaga Beach, as the colony on the shores of Georgian Bay near the mouth of the river had come to be called. While canoeing up the river he noticed a round-topped object in the mud at the water's edge, under a high bank less than half a mile above the highway bridge which crosses the Nottawasaga. On examination it proved to be a cannon-ball, pitted with rust; six inches in diameter, and twenty-four pounds in weight. Having read the story of the *Nancy* in the first edition of *In the Wake of the Eighteen-Twelvers* he communicated with the author and presented him with the relic. He was assured, from the position in which it was found, that it was one of the American roundshot, fired from a carronade, or, more probably, a long-gun,

of the *Tigress*, *Niagara*, or *Scorpion*, in the attack on the *Nancy*; and he was told that the wreck of the schooner would be found almost opposite the spot where the ball had lodged.

Dr. Conboy searched and searched diligently during the remainder of his stay that summer, but as he was in quest of a wreck he naturally confined his search to the water of the channel lying between the high bank and the low island. One does not look for a sunken hull on dry land. His hunt was not successful; and in the summer of 1925, when the writer revisited the Nottawasaga and continued the quest in company with Dr. Conboy, the search was not immediately productive of results. Indeed, the lowered waters had so enlarged the various islands which now dotted the river that it was almost impossible to recognize them after an absence of even thirteen years. With the shrinking of the waters the whole place seemed to have shrunk. However, we persisted. With the assistance of information from Col. J. A. Currie, M.P.P., son of pioneers of the Nottawasaga, a map was worked out. Col. Currie's grandfather, Hector MacAlaster had built a trading sloop opposite the *Nancy's* wreck. The plumbbob which plumbed her timbers was cast from bullets dug from shot-torn tree trunks in the vicinity, and the iron work for the sloop's chain-plates—otherwise she was wooden-fastened throughout—was forged from bayonet blades, cutlass points and hatchet heads picked up on the beach where the invading Americans had landed, and around the blockhouse which they had destroyed. Following map and memory the search was continued. One morning early in July Dr. Conboy, casually probing with an iron bar an apparent tree-root, several feet in from the water's edge on the island, got an answering ring of iron. It was a most unlikely spot to find a ship that had sunk in a river, for it was quite surrounded by dry land over which a heavy sod had grown. Three hours hard spade work however, confirmed his hopes. The supposed tree-root was oak timber, fastened with wrought iron. It might have been part of a wharf, or bridge-abutment, of course; but he dug on until, one after another, he uncovered the lower ends of seven oak ribs, six by eight inches in dimensions, and a seven foot section of keelson. The *Nancy* was found again.

Wasaga Beach swarms with summer cottagers, campers and holiday makers at this time of the year, the fine hard sand of the shore of Georgian Bay offering an excellent automobile drive and bathing place. The river banks and bay shore are covered with hotels and homes. The populace turned out *en masse*, to enjoy the excitement of a relic hunt, and soon half a dozen "test holes" had been sunk along the line of the *Nancy's* keel and treasures galore were being unearthed. As fast as holes were dug the river

water seeped in, so that the test pits rapidly became muddy wells. From these were brought up a great many fragments of charred barrel-staves of oak, on some of which the broad-arrow of government stores could be traced. These, and great quantities of porkbones, and a strong smell of decayed meat and fermented flour, were sufficient to identify the wreck as that of the *Nancy*, for they confirmed the character of the cargo she was known to be carrying. Other confirmation was speedily obtained. Half a dozen cannon balls were found, some six-pounders, such as would fit the *Nancy's* carronades, and some twenty-four pounders, such as her destroyers fired at her. There were also boarding-pike heads, and the brass flintlock of a musket, with the name of the maker "T. Ashton" stamped on it. Evidences of a fierce fire having consumed the wreck to the water's edge were plentiful. Bags of bullets had melted and formed masses of lead moulded to the shape of interstices along the keelson. Ringbolts, cringles, block-sheaves, belaying pins, eyebolts and other ironwork had been burned and colored bright red and bright blue in the process. Many curious oddments were recovered from the vicinity of the cabin, such as the brass catches of uniform clothing, burned in the bales in which it had been loaded for the Mackinac garrison; fragments of the cabin china, with a pattern of dark blue, flowers of yellow and green, and gilt stars; pieces of the officers' wine glasses, fused into blue and green lumps; a tailor's thimble, open at the top; many small bowls, or cups without handles, apparently intended for serving the rum ration; pieces of a cast-iron stove; keys of the cabin and cabin-lockers, and hinges of the doors. Of all the hunters Mr. Wm. Freeman, proprietor of a garage at Wasaga Beach, was most industrious and most successful and, it should be added, most courteous.

So zealous did the relic hunt become—stimulated, to some extent, by the repeating of the myth of buried treasure—that the *Nancy* threatened to disappear piecemeal. Dr. Conboy had already petitioned the Provincial government to set aside the island she had made as a public park, which would serve as a permanent memorial of the ship and her history. He followed this up by securing the attendance of a provincial constable, to protect the remains from thoughtless destruction. From one large oak timber which was loose he had four fine wooden plates carved, and these were presented in due course to the community church at the Beach for the offertory.

At the request of Col. the Hon. W. H. Price, Provincial Treasurer of Ontario, the writer was asked to associate himself with Col. Alexander Fraser, A.D.C., Provincial Archivist, and to prepare a complete report on the *Nancy* for the provincial records. This has been done and thirty photographs

made in connection with it. It was possible to get accurate dimensions of the wreck. From one end to the other, as she lay, she measured 68 feet 8 inches. Probing on either side of her indicated that she had been at least twenty feet wide. She probably drew eight feet of water when loaded, and measured about seventy-five feet from figurehead to taffrail.

With the *Perseverance* lost in 1814 and the *Mink* in the enemy's hands, the *Nancy*, as already told, became the last link in a long chain of communication which stretched from Whitehall in London to Prairie du Chien on the Mississippi. Better link and truer steel were never forged than the *Nancy* and her gallant crew. Miller Worsley, who commanded her, had been first lieutenant of the *Princess Charlotte* on Lake Ontario, and was quite new to his Georgian Bay craft. He had, indeed, marched overland with a few bluejackets from York, and had only met her at the Nottawasaga mouth a few days before he had to defend her so spiritedly and avenge her so nobly.

What manner of craft was this *Nancy*?

Enough has come down to us from the personal correspondence of those who knew her and the public despatches of those employing her for us to have a clear idea of her size and appearance. She was of 100 tons burthen, which is somewhat larger than the majority of large sailing yachts, and she was between seventy and eighty feet in length, as the measurement of her wreck proves. Her stern was square and shield-shaped. Her bow was beautiful with the sweeping curves of an old-time figurehead and trailboards. She had two masts, and they raked, or slanted backward, with a jaunty air, which gave the impression of rapid motion, even when she was lying at anchor. She had a square topsail and topgallantsail, on the foremast, and possibly also on the mainmast, after the fashion of her time. Her bowsprit and jibboom pointed defiantly upward instead of straight out ahead. She had gunports cut in her sides, and sockets for swivels in her rail. Near the stern her deck and bulwarks were stepped up, providing headroom for a commodious cabin, the comforts of which appealed to wilderness travellers as positively luxurious.

"You may imagine what a pleasant sight the *Nancy* was for us. We found her a very fine schooner, with an admirable cabin," wrote a friend to Surgeon W. D. Thomas, 104th Regiment, Kingston. The letter never reached him, being captured among the scattered papers in the Nottawasaga clearing.

The *Nancy* was not new by any means in 1814, but she was exceedingly well preserved. Sept. 24th, 1789, was a gala day at the then British post of

Detroit, when she first kissed the waves. Painted braves with their squaws, buckskin clad voyageurs, red-coated and white crossbelted soldiers, and settlers with their wives, in homespun and gingham, had flocked to the launching ceremony. The Union Jack—without the red saltire of St. Patrick, for Ireland, was not then part of the United Kingdom—floated over the stockaded fort. Detroit had not yet been handed over to the new United States of America, the lusty infant whose independence had only been achieved six years before. The crosses of St. George and St. Andrew mingled with red bunting and boughs of evergreen in decorating the ways which ran down to the broad river; for the launching of the *Nancy* was the most important event thus far in Detroit's marine history. She was the largest trading vessel yet to float on the waters west of the Falls of Niagara.

To New York Detroit looked in those days for the lead in shipbuilding. "The ship-carpenters," wrote the Duc de Rochefoucault de Liancourt, who visited Detroit in 1795, "reside in the United States and return home every winter."

He was speaking, for the moment, more particularly of the conditions under which Governor Simcoe was attempting to secure a navy for Lake Ontario and Lake Erie. The same conditions prevailed at Detroit. The ship-carpenters were British-born colonials of New York state, or English and Scottish workmen who had come out to America.

Richard Cornwall of New York, had journeyed to the western frontier port of Detroit to build a vessel called the *Enterprise*, for Messrs. Sterling and Porteous in 1765, and this seems to have established the custom of the itinerant shipwrights. Schenectady boatmen brought the *Enterprise's* stores and rigging from the seaboard, on wages of £20 each and ten gallons of rum per man. They were twenty days adrift on Lake Erie, coming up. Two of them died from hunger, and their comrades saved their own lives by exposing the corpses as bait for eagles, crows and gulls. It was Skelling of New York, the noted carver, who did the *Nancy's* figurehead—a buxom young lady in complete eighteenth-century costume, including a feathered hat.

Who was the *Nancy* for whom the schooner was named? Quite probably a daughter of John Richardson, a partner in the house of Forsyth, Richardson and Co., of Montreal, who came to Detroit to superintend the building of the schooner, and was delighted with the product. He wrote to his partners from Detroit:

> "The schooner will be a perfect masterpiece of workmanship and beauty. The expense to us will be great, but there will be the satisfaction of her being strong and very durable. Her floor-timbers, keel, keelson, stem, and lower buttock are oak. The transom, sternpost, upper buttocks, top-timbers, beams and knees are all red cedar. She will carry 350 barrels."

From Niagara, again, Richardson wrote of their new schooner after she had been launched:

> "She is spoken of here in such a high strain of encomium as to beauty, stowage and sailing that she almost exceeds my expectations."

"Strong and very durable." Well did Richard Cornwall, or whoever was the master-builder of the *Nancy*, merit the enthusiastic praise of the young ship-owner by his workmanship. When uncovered in the Nottawasaga river, one hundred and thirty-six years after launching in the Detroit, the oak keel and planking of the *Nancy* were as tough as whalebone and as hard as teak. A fragment of the ceiling, or inner lining of the ship was so solid that it dismounted a circular saw set to cut it. Most of the upperworks of the schooner had been destroyed by fire, but enough of them remained to prove that she had been originally constructed of red cedar above and oak below—another corroboration of identity. Heart-of-oak was the *Nancy* and hearts of oak were her men.

It was for the fur trade that the *Nancy* was built in 1789. The fur trade included the freighting of goods of all sorts—food, clothing, rum, meat, powder, blankets, tools, trinkets, weapons and ammunition—as upward-bound cargoes in exchange for the rich treasures of the peltry of the north; a romantic enterprise, in which the captain was part trader, part explorer. There were no charts based upon government surveys for him to follow, no lighthouses to guide him into protected harbours, no steam tugs to berth and dock his vessel, no wireless to direct his movements. He had to trust to his own judgment at all times, from the moment he left his depot at Detroit or Fort Erie with his upward cargo, until he returned, months later, laden with the spoils of the fur country. Lead-line and lookout were his only reliance. He had to feel his way into creek mouths and grope for anchorages on the open shore. The toil of making sail, weighing anchor, warping the vessel into a berth and mooring her, breaking out or taking in cargo, was all done by man-power and the capstan. The Indians with whom he traded might be at the expected rendezvous or they might not; he had to use his judgment as

to where he would find them and when he would find them. He and his vessel went armed, the man with pistol, musket and prudence, above all, prudence,—and the ship with carronade and swivel. The hostility of strange savages and of rival fur traders was as much to be reckoned on as the hostility of the elements. In the wilderness of the Great Lakes, as in the desert, no man met a friend.

Two ports—old Michillimackinac, in the Straits of Mackinaw, the fort and trading post commanding Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and the west, and the "Grand Portage" of Sault Ste. Marie, giving access to Lake Superior and the north,—were the northwestern limits of the Great Lakes trading schooner's range at the end of the 18th century. The locks of the Hudson Bay Company on the St. Mary's river were too small for vessels of burden to reach Superior. On that lake one or two pioneer sloops plied a limited trade. Southward and eastward, Fort Erie, on Lake Erie, at the entrance of the Niagara River, and Chippewa, a few miles down the river, at the mouth of Chippewa Creek, marked the extreme antipodes of the trading schooner's voyage. In the six hundred miles of lake and river between Chippewa and Michillimackinac ports were few and widely distanced, perils were instant and profits great.

Such was the career for which the *Nancy* had been intended. In the year 1812, twenty-three years after her launching, she was still fit as a fiddle, and ready to be taken over by the British government as an armed transport. This was all the more remarkable because the King's ships, built in the royal naval dockyards and arsenals on the lakes, had a life of only a few years. The observant French traveller, already quoted in regard to the ship-carpenters, wrote of the Royal Navy on Lake Ontario at the end of the 18th century:

> "All these vessels are built of timber fresh cut down and not seasoned, and for this reason never last longer than six or eight years. To preserve them even to this time, requires a thorough repair. They must be heaved down and caulked, which costs at least one thousand to one thousand two hundred guineas. This is an enormous price, and yet it is not so high as on Lake Erie, whither all sorts of naval stores must be sent from Kingston, and where the price of labor is still higher. The timbers of the *Mississaga*, which was built three years ago, are almost all rotten."

Sir Alexander Mackenzie of Montreal was associated with Forsyth, Richardson and Co. in the ownership of the *Nancy*, and her first commander,

Capt. William Mills, also had a share in her. After four years Forsyth, Richardson and Co. sold their interest to George Leith and Co., merchants and fur traders, in 1793. They in turn sold her to the Northwest Fur Company. Capt. Mills, however, retained or regained his connection with the schooner, and was in command of her in 1805 in her voyages on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Lake Erie. Capt. Alexander McIntosh was his successor. Capt. Mills was killed at the battle of the River Raisin, Jan. 22nd, 1813.

When the United States of America declared war on Britain in 1812 the *Nancy* was lying at Mclntosh's wharf at Moy, opposite Detroit, waiting for a fair wind for her upward voyage into Lake Huron. Detroit had, ere this, passed into American possession, having been given up by the British in 1796. Col. Matthew Elliot included the *Nancy's* name in a list of vessels prepared for Sir Isaac Brock's information. She had been enrolled as capable of mounting six four-pounder carriage guns and six swivels, the latter being light pieces set in sockets on the ship's rail and moved from point to point as required; ancestors of the modern machine gun. The *Nancy* may not have possessed the full complement of guns she was capable of carrying, but she had some, and these were taken out of her, when the war news came, and placed in the rowboats used to patrol the river. Moy was unfortified, and the schooner herself was brought down to Amherstburg for protection, and taken over as a government transport by Lt.-Col. St. George, who was in charge of the Amherstburg garrison.

The *Nancy's* first war service, after manning the river patrol-boats, was to go down Lake Erie to Fort Erie and bring back the companies of the 41st Regiment which took part in Brock's brilliant capture of Detroit, her birthplace. The *Nancy* was there in the river when Hull surrendered to the handful of British regulars and the handful of Canadian militia tricked out in discarded red tunics, so as to give the impression of numerous regular troops. With the British flag once more flying over Detroit the *Nancy* made many voyages between that port and Fort Erie, carrying down American prisoners and bringing up British stores. When the expedition sailed from Amherstburg on April 23rd, 1813, for the attack on Fort Meigs, Ohio, the schooner was one of the vessels transporting General Procter's division.

Fortunately for her and for the British cause the *Nancy* was at St. Joseph's Island, in Lake Huron, when disaster overtook Commodore Barclay and the British fleet on Lake Erie on Sept. 10th, 1813. Her attempt to secure supplies from Amherstburg, after the battle of Lake Erie, and her narrow escape from destruction then, have already been told. She won back

to Mackinac with sails and gear so strained and worn that she could barely keep the lake. During the winter of 1813-14 she refitted at the depot at Sault Ste. Marie. When McDouall's relief expedition arrived at Mackinac in the spring it was at first proposed to cut the *Nancy* down to the dimensions of a gunboat, and arm her, in addition to her own carronades, with the four field guns which had been brought from the Nottawasaga. The impossibility of offering resistance to the expected invading squadron with one gunboat was apparent, so the *Nancy* was left in her original state, and diligently employed as a cargo-carrier as soon as the Georgian Bay was clear of ice. By the time the American fleet which sailed from Detroit on July 3rd, 1814, appeared off Mackinac, the *Nancy* had made at least three round trips between that island and the Nottawasaga, and was absent on her fourth, the voyage in which Lieut. Miller Worsley joined her at the river mouth and took command.

For the loss of the *Nancy* at the Nottawasaga the Northwest Fur Company was awarded £2,200 by the Admiralty. They were also allowed £1,243 5s for her services in 1813 and 1814, and £500 additional for two round trips from the Detroit river to Fort Erie in 1812, making a total of £3,943 5s for the vessel and her services during the war.

For a century the waters of the Nottawasaga purled and gurgled over the wreck of the *Nancy*. Unlike in life, in death she greatly resembled the two American schooners which had wrought her undoing and which had paid the penalty of capture for their eagerness for spoil. The *Tigress* and the *Scorpion* were appraised at £16,000 by the Admiralty, on being taken into the British naval service, the Lords Commissioners taking into consideration the cost of placing such fine vessels in commission, if they had had to be built and equipped at the then projected depot at Penetanguishene. But with the disarmament agreement which followed the war the two converted prizes were dismantled and laid up in Penetanguishene Harbour. A water colour of the Penetanguishene military and naval establishment in 1818 shows the *Scorpion*, under the name of H.M. schooner *Confiance*, still in commission, under the command of Lieut. Grant, R.N. Apparently H.M.S. *Surprise*, the renamed *Tigress*, had already disappeared. Both vessels fell into decay with disuse, and sank at their moorings. The *Tigress* is said to have gone down off a sandspit known as Point au Barque, on the north side of the harbour, near a spot marked by the cross commemorating the landing of the first Jesuit missionaries. The *Scorpion* sank in a cove nearby, now known as the Northwest Basin, but called Colborne Basin in earlier days; and there she lay for a hundred years, slowly disintegrating. The lowering waters of the lakes did not leave her high and dry inland, as they did the *Nancy*; but they uncovered her old bones to such an extent that the writer was able to walk

about inside her, dryshod, where she lay in the mud. This was in August, 1925. She was much more decayed than the *Nancy*. Her planking, originally two inches thick, had dried and shrivelled down to soft strips, less than an inch through in places, and hardly adhering to the ribs at all. Her ribs, or frames, were massive, eight and nine inches square. Although she was a smaller vessel than the *Nancy* she had been framed much more heavily, or at least, with floors and ribs of larger dimensions. The reason for this was that she had been built for war, not for cargo carrying, and as soft wood was used in her construction greater bulk was required to secure the same amount of strength. She was principally built of white cedar, and the shavings of this wood gave off a pleasant resinous fragrance although it had been submerged since 1813, the year of her launching at Erie, Pa. White cedar had been used for her heavy timbers as well as her planking, inside and out; and even a hundred and twelve years afterwards, the haste employed in her construction was evident. She was a war-time rush contract. Her builders are on record as saying that a strong, plain job was all that was required, for if she and her sister ships defeated the British in one battle they would serve their purpose, and if they were captured by the British fine work would only have been wasted on them. Accordingly they wasted no time selecting natural crooks in their timber, but sawed out the curved parts cross-grained. Some of the ribs had not even been squared, but showed the round of the bark, like cedar posts. The keelson was light, and of a poor quality of oak. The heavy ribs were so close together that they touched. With their ceiling and outer planking they offered a wall of soft wood twelve inches thick, which would have been proof against grape and against roundshot at certain ranges.

From stem to sternpost the wreck of the *Scorpion* measured 58 feet. She was, perhaps, 65 feet long on deck. The remains spread out to a width of at least twenty feet, but it was not possible to gauge accurately the beam of the original vessel, for in her decay the sides had fallen outward, making her appear broader, probably than she really was.

The deep-gashed harbour of Penetanguishene, twenty-five miles from the mouth of the Nottawasaga, and guarded by the Watchers, was selected at the close of the War of 1812 as the naval station for the Upper Lakes. It became a general laying-up depot after the treaty of disarmament, and in addition to the remains of the *Scorpion* bow-timbers of the brigantine *Naawash* and the bottom of the war-schooner *Tecumseh*, are to be seen in the harbour. The *Naawash* and *Tecumseh* were built at Chippewa in 1814 for the Upper Lakes navy, but never participated in an engagement. Many a paying-off pennant has flown in this Haven of the White Rolling Sands, as the long name of Penetanguishene is interpreted; but never one with wilder

history than that which fluttered down when H.M. schooner *Confiance* was towed across into Colborne Basin, to end her days among the reeds, in the bay where Champlain's campfires once blazed among the Huron wigwams of Ihonatiria.

CHAPTER IV

When Chauncey Came to Kingston

HOW THE ROYAL GEORGE WAS CHASED BY THE WATER-SPIDERS, AND THE SIMCOE RAN THE GAUNTLET, AND A DEAD HERO'S NAME PROVED A PASSPORT FOR HIS SWORD

With pipes aglow and hair still sleek from the evening wash-up the *Albacore's* crowd, lookouts and "watch-below" alike, were all clustered on the forecastlehead.

It was that good time in every lake schooner—the second dog-watch in fine weather, the last half hour of summer sunlight, before "eight bells" ushers in the first night-watch. 'Tis a time to "loaf and invite one's soul." The boys in the *Albacore* knew how to do that. In fact, the skipper said they all classed A1 at Lloyds in that regard. Just now, in the sweet, final flame of the level sun, they grouped like neophytes around Malachi Malone, their high priest of the tale that is told.

Malachi on the city street looked a disreputable old wreck; but here, in his proper setting, he looked what he often said he was—the last man alive who'd choked on powder smoke in the War of 1812 on the Great Lakes.

It was not necessary to urge Malachi to yarn. He'd do it if he so willed, were he alone at the wheel in a gale of wind. If he wouldn't, he wouldn't, and coaxing availed not. This evening his messmates had seen the old signal light aglow under the white thatching of his solitary eyebrow, and settled themselves comfortably, on paul-posts and windlass-bitt, to listen.

Malachi had either been through the experiences he related, or he was a good reader of history and a good "rememberer." In any event, he never fell into the pitfall of less expert yarn spinners, telling differing stories of the same thing. He made no secret of the fact that he had, as he called it, "some education." His speech was homely and he was careless about using a singular verb for a plural subject. But he seldom forgot his final g's in his participles, which, after all, is a fair indication that he had attended other schools than the rude one of fresh water forecastles.



Northeast corner of Lake Ontario—scene of much hard fighting and hard sailing in 1812-14.

Not good to look upon was Malachi. He might almost have been called monstrous. A long, lean frame of a man, with shoulders that would have been broad if they had not been so high, and back that once had been mighty but was bent in an ungainly hump. He was very, very old. His grey beard, grown only on his chin, left the wide upper lip and high cheekbones fiercely prominent. His one good eye seemed enormous. The socket of the other was a puckered red scar. His nose was battered, and the lower half of his right ear was missing. His appearance repulsed yet fascinated, as a finger cut, or a catfish, frightens and fascinates children.

To those who knew him his deformities and ugliness seemed a necessary and not inharmonious part of the whole, like the gargoyles of a venerable cathedral. Forecastle tradition told of the half century in which he had been the terror of every ship's company and sailors' tavern, from Dickenson's Landing to Skillagalee, the wildest drinker and fiercest fighter of all the hard-working, hard-fighting, hard-drinking crews of the carrying trade in the days when sail was supreme on the Great Lakes.

It was to waterfront brawls that his mutilations were credited. He would never tell of them, having pasted down those pages of his life-book. But of earlier days, as powder boy in the fighting fleets of 1812, he was fond of yarning in his leisure time. This was usually ample, for the old man's strength was fading out with his century, and he got a place for his dunnage bag in the forecastle solely through his skill as a knotter and splicer and his knowledge of shoals and soundings.

That he was as old as his tales made out many doubted. He was age-worn, but his manner of speech was far from senile. Some suspected him of having made shipwreck of a career in some of the learned professions before going to sea; but his reputation as a fighter, passed down from a previous generation of lake sailors, protected him from the inquisitive in his declining years, and he was usually welcome to spin his yarn without interruptions other than those which indicated friendly interest.

"This happened," began the ancient Cyclops, "when I was a kid playing hookey 'round the docks in Kingston, first year of the war. Kingston was quite a place in them days, the biggest in Upper Canada, with forts and a garrison and a navy yard.

"Queenston Heights was over. Everybody said the Yanks had got enough then to last them till the peace was declared. You know, the first year of the war, it was only Brock and a few others that took the thing seriously. Most everybody else looked for a wind-up every month; and after the old brig *Moira* came into Kingston loaded with prisoners from Niagara, people went about as though the war was over. Commodore Earle went up the lake in the *Prince Regent*, and the *Royal George* and the *Moira* followed. This was afore Sir James Lucas Yeo came up from salt water and took over the squadron. November set in wild, and round the docks they began to wonder whether the Commodore'd get back with the fleet or have to winter in York.

"A fishboat came staggering from the False Ducks, thirty miles to the west'ard, the night of the eighth of November. The *Royal George* had been cut off by the American fleet, the fishermen said, and had to run into the bay of Quinte. Perhaps she'd dodged 'em in the dark. The fishermen guessed right, for at daylight next morning our three-master came bowling down the North Channel, with her sails so full of shot-holes they looked like the cook's colander. On her track like water-spiders crept five Yankee schooners with long sweeps through their ports. The wind was light and their crews was breaking their backs at the big oars. After them lumbered the brig *Oneida*, the flagship of Commodore Isaac Chauncey that year. The *George* stood in and anchored under the batteries, and the schooners hove-to off Snake Island shoal outside the harbour and waited for their flagship.

"Farmers came swarming in with all their worldly goods in wains an' ox-carts. The Yanks had terrified 'em all along the Quinte shore. They had landed at Ernestown. Their biggest schooner, the *Hamilton*—the one that drowned all hands next year off Niagara—she hung behind while the others chased the *George*. She caught a harmless little trading schooner at the Ernestown wharf, stripped her of her sails and gear, and set fire to her. Poor

old Cap'n Conn, he stood there on the shore, wringing his hands, while all he owned went up in smoke. War's no picnic for the losers, believe me, boys.

"On in the afternoon the Yankee fleet off the Snake hoisted brand new battleflags at every masthead and closed in. The *Oneida* had a battery of sixteen twenty-four-pounders, guns as heavy as the *George's*, and almost as many. She was backed by the gun-schooners Chauncey made famous—little water-waggons, each top-heavy with a long thirty-two-pounder amidships and smaller guns at the sides. They was no good in a seaway, but wicked at long range in smooth water. They lay just beyond reach of the *George's* carronades and pelted her with roundshot till the blood ran from her scuppers. Four times soldiers from the fort was sent out to reinforce the spent gun-crews, and all the time the *George's* shot was just making holes in the air and water. Some fetched the *Oneida*, for she *had* to close in, but the schooners went scot-free, all but one. This was the little *Pert*. Her gun burst at the third shot, and the *George* got in a few good ones at her before she hauled off; but in the end they had to slip the *George's* cable and warp her in to the Garrison pier, where the Yanks could only get her by boarding.

"It looked as though they'd try that, for by this time they'd been reinforced by their schooner *Governor Tompkins*, which had spent the day running down a Kingston-bound Niagara vessel, the *Mary Hatt*. But as the sun sank it began to breeze up hard from the sou'west, right into the mouth of the harbour. If we could a' just winged one vessel then she'd a' been ours, for the wind would 'a driven her right ashore once she was crippled. Chauncey was a wise old bird. He knew the *Oneida* sailed sideways like a crab, going to wind'ard, and some of the others wasn't much better; so he hauled off while there was time, and thrashed up to the lee of Four-Mile Point, away across the harbour, and came to an anchor there.

"Boys, it was a great sight to see that fleet, black-winged like bats against the red-striped western sky, beating across that stretch o' snapping whitecaps to the lee of the point. On the way the *Pert* lost her commander. Arundel was his name. Poor chap, he had his ribs caved in with a piece of the breech-block, when her gun burst. He wouldn't go below, and after waiting two hours on deck, through the bombardment, he tried to sail her up to her moorings. He was propped against the taffrail, and the mainsheet caught him when she went in stays and whisked him overboard. Years and years afterwards I heard that, from the man who was at the *Pert's* wheel ——"

"Eight bells!" came the call from the quarter deck. "Eight bells!" echoed the forecastlehead. "Eight bells!" repeated the skipper. "Call the watch and set the sidelights! Wheel-relief! Malachi, it's your trick!" And so the yarn snapped in the middle.

"By-the-wind," rumbled the shell-back whose trick was up.

"By-the-wind," repeated Malachi Malone, after the immemorial shipboard custom, as he took his place on the wheel-grating. The course is ever given and accepted thus when steersmen change.

This was one of the times when nothing but lightning could have permanently interrupted Malachi Malone, and he took up his parable of 1812 just where he had left off. His watch sidled as far aft as they dared, and the good-natured skipper, knowing a yarn was toward, raised no objections to the intrusion on the sacred quarter deck. They're not so brassbound on fresh water as they are on salt.

"There was no sleep for anybody in Kingston that night of the ninth of November," Malachi went on, speaking principally to the binnacle. "Watchfires roared along the waterfront in the gale that blew, and men, women and children huddled around them and stared at the tossing anchor-lights of the Yankee fleet, far across the wind-whipped water. The word was passed that the town would be sacked by morning light; but old sailors said Chauncey'd never come any closer'n Four-Mile Point while the wind held from the west'ard, and they was right.

"Daylight showed the Yankee fleet thrashing out for the open. Lake Ontario was running like a raging river, in grey-green combers. Their fluffy white tops blew off in smoke as they rose; Chauncey crowded every stitch on to his slab-sided old brig, and back an' forth, back an' forth across the narrow channel she sidled. She buried her lee-deck till her gun-muzzles was in the water, and hove up her weather side till we could almost see her grass-grown keel. She gained but a few fathoms every time she made a tack. But he thrashed out, and his schooners followed him, threatening to roll their guns overboard or down the hatches all the while. The *Mary Hatt*, the prize they'd taken, couldn't beat out. So they squared her away before the wind, with one of their schooners, the *Growler*, for company, and ran down past Kingston Harbour, and anchored under the lee of Long Island. The game was to coax the *Royal George* from the shelter of the batteries, in an attempt to recapture the prize. But the *George* had all hands busy driving shot-plugs and tricing boarding-nettings masthead high, and wasn't to be lured to

leeward of the shore guns for all the flour-laden *Mary Hatts* that ever floated.

"Then out past the foot of Amherst Island, up to the west'ard of the harbour, poked another set of heads'ls. It was the little schooner *Simcoe*, running for shelter from the westerly gale, inward bound from York, and knowing nothing o' what waited her. Old Jim Richardson sailed her, father o' the Richardson as was in the *Moira*, and lost an arm at Oswego, and wound up as a Methody bishop afore he died. When the *Simcoe* saw the American fleet thrashing out she hauled her wind and tried to shoot in over Amherst Bar, but three of Chauncey's schooners, the *Julia*, the *Tompkins*, and the *Hamilton*, fore-reached on her and cut her off; so Richardson squared her away before the wind and drove straight for Seven Acre Shoal, that lay 'twixt him and Kingston Harbour. 'Tween the puffs of smoke from the Yankee guns we could see the leadsmen in the forechains, and almost hear 'em singing out: 'By the deep nine! By the mark five! A quarter less four!' and so on as the water shoaled. It fell from fathoms to feet, and still Richardson drove on. The *Hamilton*, leading the chasers, smelt the bottom at nine foot depth, and put her helm down; so did the others, glad of the chance to haul off with whole keels; and as they tacked for the lake again they all together let drive a broadside that made the water boil around the flying *Simcoe*. She had just scraped clear o' the reef and was running wing-and-wing for the anchorage. Everybody but old Richardson dived below when they saw the smoke of the broadside. He stuck to the wheel. But his crew popped up as fast as they'd ducked down, yelling, 'Captain, she's filling!'

"Only the last one of the thirty-two-pound shot had struck her, but it was at close range, and it went in through her starboard quarter and came out under her bows. She went down like a broken bottle. Old Richardson fired the only musket aboard at the Yanks, just as the water chased him from the deck to the rigging. She settled in four fathoms, with the crew at the crosstrees, and her red ensign flapping at the gaff-end above the whitecaps that snarled over the shoal. Boats from the garrison pulled out against the gale and picked the crew from off their perches, just as Chauncey's fleet tacked to the southward, and bore away for Sackett's Harbour."

And here Malachi unarched his huge back, as though shaking off the weight of his century, and lapsed into silence, his one eye concentrated upon the shivering tack of the mizzen gafftops'l, which, as everyone knows, proclaimed that the *Albacore* was getting a just and even "full-and-by," no more and no less.

But the mood of utterance was on Malachi. He whirled the wheel-spokes unnecessarily, cleared his throat once or twice, and finally broke forth:

"Everybody's got a good streak in him, some'eres. Even Isaac Chauncey had his."

"Him as was the American commodore on Lake Ontario?" queried Pan-faced Harry artfully, as though Malachi had not been talking about the very man for the last hour.

"Young feller," answered Malachi impressively. "There never was more'n one Isaac Chauncey. That was *him*."



"*They grouped like neophytes around Malachi Malone, the high priest of the tale that is told.*"

Brutus-like he paused for a reply. None was forthcoming. The oracle proceeded:

"When Chauncey sunk the *Simcoe* in Kingston Harbour and sailed off to the south'ard in the November gale, it wasn't the loss of the vessel that worried old Jim Richardson. She was sheltered some by the reef she'd crossed before the Yanks plugged her, and could be raised. Matter o' fact, she *was* raised and sailed for years afterwards. But when the garrison boats picked up the old man and his crew from the crosstrees o' the sunken packet his first words was: 'Where's the *Moira*?'

"The *Earl of Moira* was a fourteen-gun brig that his son, young Jim Richardson, sailed in. Young Jim was a provincial lieutenant, but that only gave him rank, as sailing-master in the Royal Navy. He was a smart sailorman, and afterwards took to sky-piloting. The brig had sailed from York when the *Simcoe* did, but she was to stretch over to Niagara, and convoy a sloop from there to the St. Lawrence.

"That sloop was only a squat little trader, boys, but she had a cargo money couldn't buy. Brave Sir Isaac Brock had been buried three weeks before in a bastion of Fort George. And that little sloop, sent across from York to Niagara, had aboard of her the dead general's sword, his plate, his books, his papers, his wardrobe, his arms,—all the things his folk in the Channel Islands, across the salt water, would prize for remembrance. You've heard in school, you youngsters, that Brock's last words were, 'Push on, York Volunteers!' Right enough. He said that. And then he asked them that bent over him to send his sister—something. They couldn't catch just what. But *them* was his real last words. And this here sloop, that Richardson's son was helping convoy, had all of Brock's belongings aboard, bound for Montreal, for shipment home to Guernsey.

"We told old Richardson the *Moira* hadn't been sighted, nor the Commodore in the *Prince Regent*, neither. He said the *Prince Regent* was safe in York, at the dockyard. 'But I'd sooner the Yanks 'ud blow the *Simcoe* to staves,' the old chap added, 'than have 'em catch Jimmy; and I'd sooner have 'em catch Jimmy than touch one scrap o' the general's property. Who'll go with me to warn the *Moira* that Chauncey's off the harbour mouth?'

"It seemed a crazy thing to try, with a gale o' wind blowing from the west'ard and it spitting snow, and the *Moira* anywhere between Kingston Harbour and Burlington Bay. But he borrowed a fishboat and drummed up a crew. Nobody was very keen on going, except the old man and me. That was how I got the chance. I dasn't go back to school, for I'd been playing hookey ever since the Yankee fleet showed up off the harbour; and I dasn't go home, for I'd get a whaling there for not going to school. It cost a shilling a week to get schooling then, and my dad was a particular man about shillings.

"Anyhow, we started up the lake, in a half-decked lugger, six of us, pulling her under oars against the headwind, and glad of the chance to keep warm that way. We followed the North Channel from Kingston, up among the islands of the Bay of Quinte, and then pulled across to South Bay Point at the foot of Prince Edward County, by the False Ducks. Old Richardson figgered the *Moira*'d have to pass there on her way down the lake, and he planned to lie in the lee of the islands till she came by, and warn her to pop into the Bay of Quinte. He was a good reckoner, was the old man. We reached the False Ducks by daylight, after forty miles of rowing and sailing —the wind had come fair—and we landed and thawed ourselves out by a driftwood fire, and cooked some grub. There was no wind all day, and the sky began to grease up, as it does ahead of a November snowfall. At sundown we sighted a pair of square tops'ls, and pulled towards 'em. It was the *Moira*. And she had the sloop in tow. She had been delayed coming down the lake, lagging for her convoy. They swung our fishboat in on the deck by the yard-tackles, and Capt. Sampson, R.N., who commanded her, said old Richardson ought to have a medal, and he felt honoured at having the son of such a man for sailing master. They let me swing a hammock that night in the *Moira's* fo'c'sle, and I wouldn't 'a changed places with King George.

"The wind came in from the east'ard. There was no light on the False Ducks in them days, and to clear the islands before stretching north into the bay the *Moira* had to stand out into the lake. It was dangerous, but it had to be done. It was morning afore we'd a safe offing, and then the wind fell light, and the snow set in, smothering down like a thick blanket.

"We lay rolling hour after hour, the empty sails slapping the masts, shaking down snowfalls at every lurch. Sometimes we could see the sloop astern, and sometimes we couldn't. With nothing else to do, the watch fell to guessing where she'd show up next. Sometimes she'd range up on one quarter, sometimes on the other, sometimes almost abeam of us. She was drifting around on her long towline, for neither vessel had much steerage way. She went out of sight in an extra thick smother, and next we heard her hail: '*Moira* ahoy! Have you changed the course?' and a voice answered *astern* of her: 'What ship is that? Stand by to fend off!'

"Then the snow thinned a bit, and we saw the sloop, and right on top of her, blotting out her shape with a towering bulk of canvas and hull, another vessel—a brig—eight heavy guns grinning from either side, and the Stars and Stripes swayin' at the main-peak. The *Moira* was trapped. Not a gun of

ours was manned. And not a gun of ours could bear on her without first blowing the convoy-sloop out of the water.

"Again came the hail, in a deep-sea bass. 'What ship is that?' Captain Sampson sprang to our rail.

"'His Britannic Majesty's brig-of-war *Earl of Moira*. Box your vessel off clear of that sloop, sir, and we'll fight it out with you—but for God's sake don't fire into that convoy!'

"'Why not?' bellowed the bass voice. 'Mind your own funeral—we're double your weight.'

"'The sloop,' answered Captain Sampson steadily, 'carries General Sir Isaac Brock's effects. Whoever you are, hold your broadside till we have both let her drop out of range!'

"'This is the United States brig-of-war *Oneida*,' the bass voice came back, as though nettled at having to introduce his vessel, 'flagship of Commodore Chauncey. The Commodore's compliments, and if you are convoying the effects of the late general, pass on. We'll meet again.'

"'Again, sir,' answered Captain Sampson, stiffly. The Stars and Stripes at the *Oneida's* gaff-end dipped vaguely in a friendly salute. Our ensign dipped in return, shaking down snowflakes as it fell and rose and fluttered out in the reviving breeze. The sloop sidled back astern, the towline tautened, and the tops'ls of the Yankee flagship faded into the snow-mist and vanished."

"Well," admitted Pan-faced Harry, who was a cautious critic of other men's actions, "that *was* rather white of Chauncey."

Note: The schooner burned at Ernestown was *The Two Brothers*.

The sloop with Brock's effects was the *Elizabeth*, commanded by Henry Murney of Kingston. She was actually captured by the U.S. schooner *Growler*—with her convoying brig, the *Moira*, two miles away. The *Growler* took the *Elizabeth* to Sackett's Harbour, and the *Oneida* set out to find the *Moira* but could not, on account of the snow. Brock's brother was captured in the *Elizabeth*. He was released on parole, in exchange for another prisoner of war, and the dead general's effects were forwarded to Kingston with a courteous letter.

CHAPTER V

The Burlington Races

A DRAWN BATTLE ON LAKE ONTARIO IN 1813

"What! You never heard tell of the Burlington races! Then I suppose your education was also neglected in the matter of the Ontario Circuit, the Niagara Sweepstakes, and so on? Salt my old bones, the upbringing of the young has been of a strange sort, in these days of turf-guides and form charts."

Like a Cyclops regarding the captives in his cavern, Malachi Malone glared from his bunkshelf in the schooner's forecastle upon the assembled "watch-below," sitting smoking and yarning on the chain-lockers.

"Fill away, Malachi, on the 1812 tack," Archie Nickerson, the second mate, fired back, folding up the sporting page of the day-before-last's paper, from which the boys were trying to pick the Queen's Plate winner. And Malachi went on.

"Second year of the war I got a berth in the new ship, the *Wolfe*, as powder boy, with an extra shilling a week from the captain of the starboard quarter battery for keepin' his shot-tally for him, because I was handy with the pen. The Admiralty was just as strict with us on the lakes as they were on salt water, with fines for every commander who went beyond his skimpy allowance of ammunition. That was why there was such wild shooting work in action sometimes. The crews never got a chance to exercise at the guns unless a foreign ensign made the target.

"I felt like a lord with my shilling a week for checking bar, chain and round shot, just because I was handy with a pen and could read without spelling every other word; but the new commodore took the wind out of my sails in short order.

"Sir James Lucas Yeo, he was, and he had just come to the lakes after fairly setting the sea on fire with the privateer *Confiance*, which he had cut out from under the French guns at Muros Bay. He was a hummer. Why, the King of Portugal made him a knight for the capture of the town of Cayenne!

He was thirty when he reached the lakes, a long, thin, sulky-looking chap, with a chin as hard as the peak of the anchor, and eyes that spat black lightning. He was a hard fighter, and a hard driver, and a hard loser. He went black in the face every time things went wrong, and that first season he went black very often. That new flagship of his, the *Wolfe*, was chaos afloat when he took her over—fresh from the ways, rigged out by torchlight, armed in the dark, and manned haphazard by hayseeds. First he made her a floating hell, then a progressing purgatory, and, before long, a well-oiled fighting machine; but there was a lot of rawhide used in the process.

"Sir James fumed like a volcano, but took care the lava never scorched his own sides. He had the smaller fleet and fewer guns, and never once could old Chauncey nettle him into——"

"Who was old Chauncey?" piped up Bill Barrymore, the newly-shipped donkeyman, pulling off his last seaboot.

"Who was old Chauncey? Who was George Washington?" snorted Malachi in disgust at such ignorance, "Who——"

"Don't cross his bows when he has the starboard tack, you engine driver," warned Nickerson, "or it'll be 'eight bells' before Malachi gets under weigh again."

"Isaac Chauncey," rejoined Malachi deliberately, "was the American Commodore on the lakes. It's all right boys; he was dead before you were born, so no wonder you don't mind him. He was a jolly old dog was Chauncey—broad in the beam, with a round red face that had seen lots of wind and weather, and never forgot to laugh. There was only one thing he liked better than fighting and that was telling about it.

"He had a queer fleet, had Chauncey. To start with, he had that old waggon the *Oneida*, a brig that crawled like a tortoise going free, and slid sideways like a crab when she tried to beat to wind'ard. But she had sixteen twenty-four-pounders, and that made her a tough nut to crack. She was better at fighting than running away—and that suited Melancthon T. Woolsey, of Sackett's Harbour, the lieutenant who commanded her, to a knockdown. Chauncey built a twenty-four-gun ship, the *President Madison*, in fifty-eight days from the day the timber was felled in the bush. Later on he built another fine ship-rigged corvette, the *General Pike*, and a smart schooner called the *Sylph*. And he had a whole menagerie of little fore-'n'-afters of stone-hooker size—from a hundred tons down.

"They were coasters, bought up when the war broke out, and loaded with deck-jags of cannon. They were slow as molasses and tippy as soda-water

bottles. All they were good for was long-range work in smooth water. Then they were terrors. The guns they carried were all long 'uns, twice as powerful as the carronades our fleet had, meant for nigh-hand broadside work.

"In light weather, at long range, those schooners lived up to their names —*Scourge*, *Asp*, *Pert*, *Growler*, and *Conquest*. In a sailing breeze they were as harmless as might be expected of *Ontario*, *Julia*, *Hamilton*, *Fair American*, *Governor Tompkins*, or *Lady of the Lake*. All told, Chauncey had fifteen vessels that summer.

"Yeo had only eight at the most. There was the *Wolfe*, not quite as big as either the *Pike* or the *Madison*; and the *Royal George*, ship-rigged like the *Wolfe*, but smaller. Then there were the brigs—the old *Earl of Moira*, and the *Lord Melville*—about half the size of the two ships; and the schooners, *Sir Sidney Smith*, *Beresford*, *Simcoe*, and *Seneca*—none of them much bigger than the larger Bay of Quinte traders to-day. The last two were kept for transport duty or harbour work. The squadron sailed in three pairs—two ships, two brigs, two schooners; and they held together like a bunch of trained dogs—after Yeo had sent one or two crews ashore to dig trenches, for shortening sail before the flagship signalled.

"But Chauncey's bunch—Lord love you, the only way he had of keeping them together was roping them up. The smart ones in the fleet could sail circles around the droghers, and what was worse for him, they liked to do it. He'd write home how hard he wanted to fight, but he'd forget to add that he wanted to fight in smooth water at long range. He'd tow that slug the *Oneida* by the hour, and make the *Madison* and the *Sylph*, tow the schooners, so that he would have all his guns for a battle—if he ever got one. And Sir James took good care that they never closed up until it was blowing a good hickory and there was a chance of our short guns and musketry sweeping the decks of the low-bulwarked, wallowing schooners. *That* was why we had what we called the 'Ontario Circuit.'

"Old Chauncey had raised merry—begging your reverence's pardon." This was jerked at the young divinity student who was earning a dollar a day before the mast in the *Albacore*. "He'd slipped out of Sackett's with the ice, and raided York before Yeo reached the lake. He had swamped Fort George, filled the Niagara peninsula with Yankee soldiers, and got the penned-up Buffalo fleet free on Lake Erie by the time Yeo had the *Wolfe* ready and made his fizzle of an attack on Sackett's. Then Yeo had shelled out the American encampment at Forty-Mile Creek at the head of the lake and scoured the south shore, raided the Genesee settlement near Rochester, taken

the fort and the supply depot at Sodus, captured two schooners and a brigade of boats, and gone back to Kingston to refit. While he was on the south shore, young Lieutenant Wolcott Chauncey flipped across in the *Lady of the Lake* and snapped up the transport *Lady Murray*, loaded with soldiers, sailors, and supplies, at Presqu'isle, on the north shore, near the Bay of Quinte.

"Yeo made another stab at Sackett's Harbour with no result. The *Pike* and the *Sylph* were just building then, and if he had destroyed them he would have had the whip hand. But he had to go back to Kingston, and the new *Pike*, the heaviest ship on the fresh water, joined Chauncey's fleet, and the old boy went up the lake, tried Burlington Heights and got his fingers burned, raided York again to fill his flour-bins, and went across to Niagara, to send sailors up to Lake Erie and take on soldiers in their places.

"While we were at Burlington we heard how our whole Lake Erie fleet had been shot to pieces at Put-In-Bay. We found that Chauncey had reached Niagara again, and as he had got the habit of filling his flour-bins over at York we stood down the lake and anchored in Humber Bay in the lee of the Island—York Roads they called it then. Sure enough, next morning, the twenty-eighth of September, the lookouts sighted him, stretching across from Niagara under all sail, with stu'ns'ls out, in a smart east breeze. We hove up our anchors and stood out to meet him, close hauled on the port tack.

"We were about three miles apart when the fleets drew abreast. It looked as though our big chance had come. Here was the enemy, at least fifteen miles from shelter—and a good fresh breeze, rolling the sea ahead of it and promising a strong gale before night,—just our conditions.

" 'One, two, three, four, five, six, seven sail,' I heard Sir James count to the first lieutenant, who was busy plotting out courses. 'A pity he didn't bring the rest of his menagerie, but what's left in Niagara will stay there the rest of the war if this day's work is good!'

"The *Pike* was storming along, far in the lead, with the schooner *Asp* thrashing about after her on the end of a long towline. The *Governor Tompkins* followed under full sail. Next came the *Madison* and the *Sylph*, each with a wobbling schooner fast to them. Then, far back, the *Oneida* lumbered, with enough to do to look after herself. And last of all were two schooners, too far off to be made out.

"As the fleets lapped and began to pass the *Pike* steered for the *Beresford* and *Sir Sidney Smith*, two schooners, in the rear of our line. The *Wolfe* was

at the head, and to give Chauncey a fight with a man of his size Sir James signalled the fleet to wear ship. The *Wolfe* was the first to come round. This brought us and the *Pike* and *Tompkins* in range of one another. They opened with their long-guns, and we tried our carronades.



"*Boys-oh-Boys, how the splinters did fly!*"

"The boys burst into cheers as they saw the *Pike's* main t'gallant mast, with its sail and the royal above it, pitch overboard after our first broadside. The splinters flew from the *Pike's* bulwarks and we knew every shot of ours

was telling. Her first broadside went high, spotting our topsails with shot-holes; and then with a roar her whole forecastle seemed to lift up. When she yawed to give us the starboard broadside the bowchaser burst. That killed and wounded twenty-two of her men. But the rest of her broadside did terrible work with us. It was fired low, and it sheared the bulwarks like a scythe; the *Pike*, you know, threw the heaviest long-range broadside on fresh water——"

"How heavy?" interrupted Pan-faced Harry.

"Three hundred and sixty pounds, thrown a mile and a half; which isn't the weight of one shot maybe of a modern battleship, nor the range of a modern rifle, but it was a stunner in my day.

"Boy-oh-boys, how the splinters did fly! The captain of the port quarter-guns was scattered all over me; poor chap, a split ball fairly made mincemeat of him. I was on my knees, wiping the blood from my eyes and trying to get up, when there was a ripping crash overhead, and the mizzen topmast fell forward, with its yards, into the main rigging. It was blowing hard by this time, and the weight of the wind and the falling spars snapped the main topmast backstays. The maintopmast bent like a whip, and then it too came crashing down, bringing the main yard with it.

"In all my sailing I've never seen such a mess—the deck filled with screaming, groaning, cursing, cheering men, splintered spars as big as tree trunks, tangled ropes, and loosened sails, thrashing about and smothering everything like a collapsed circus tent.

"Sir James, black and bloody, seized the wheel himself. 'She won't steer!' he hissed, as he whirled the spokes over, to keep her from falling into the trough and rolling her one remaining mast out. 'No wonder, with all her after sail gone, and that raffle of stuff dragging overboard! Quarter-master, put her dead before the wind, and keep her there! Sailing-master, set everything you can crowd on to the foremast! All hands to the quarter deck, except the foremast men and the stern-gun crews, to chop clear the wreck.'

"And with that he gave up the wheel and seized a ship-axe. There was another crash from the *Pike*, but the shot this time went whistling into the empty space where our topmasts had been.

"Then, through the powder smoke speared a long bowsprit, crowded with straining sails, and a short, blocky ship ranged across our stern.

" 'Leave him to me, sir!' I heard a grand clear voice call, and peering out of a shattered gun-port I saw it was the *Royal George*, and Sir William

Howe Mulcaster was hanging by the mizzen t'gallant backstays, trumpet in hand.

"Sir James answered something, but I couldn't hear it, for just then the *George's* broadside spoke. Then her headsails fluttered and went dead as they were blanketed, and she wore around, and ranged across our stern again, and gave them another broadside. I heard a distant roar from the *Pike* and the splinters crackled from the *George*, and her fore topmast was shot away, at the head. But the yard stayed aloft, leaving her under control, and Captain Mulcaster kept swinging her, yawing to port and starboard as fast as his crews could load their guns, and covering our retreat.

"Just one glimpse I got at the *Pike* while I helped slash the lanyards of the trailing maintopmast rigging. She was all cut up forward, and steering wild. The schooner that had kept on her quarter, the *Tompkins*, had her foremast dragging over the bows. The *Sylph* and the *Madison* were hanging on to their towing schooners, glad of the chance of keeping out of reach of the spurs of that fighting-cock Mulcaster. Our own schooners and the brigs were running abeam of us, firing their stern guns.

"I've sometimes thought it only needed a little more nerve to have turned on those Yankees with our five fighting ships, leaving the *Wolfe* to sink or swim. The brigs and schooners and *Royal George* might have downed the *Pike*, cut up as she was, in spite of her heavy batteries; and once she was crippled as badly even as the *Wolfe*, the rest would have been easy, for it was blowing so hard the *Sylph* and the *Madison* were the only other real fighters. We could have sailed circles around the old *Oneida*, and the little schooners were rolling so their guns would have gone down the hatches or overboard the moment they tried to fire them.

"Of course, we didn't know then the *Pike* had twenty-seven men laid out, all told. We were hard hit ourselves, and ours was the Commodore's ship. Had Mulcaster been flying the broad-pennant now—but what's the use —they're all dead, now, all but me."

"Go, on, Malachi," said the second mate, "you've got a hundred years of life in you yet."

"Sure I have," answered Malachi, relighting his pipe, "and as I was saying, we ran on and on, with the *Royal George* swinging to port and starboard off our quarters and more splinters flying from Chauncey's fleet every time she did. Flamboro' Head, back of Burlington Bay, loomed up bigger with every lift of the waves.

" 'Pilot, can you take us through the cut in this sea?' asked Sir James.

"'I'm a bit doubtful,' said an old lake sailor, who had a berth in the chart room just for his knowledge of the anchorages. They were all natural harbours then, mind you, and beacons as scarce as hens' teeth. 'Well, if you do, here's five golden guineas,' said Sir James, 'and if you don't, there's the fore yardarm, with a whip rove and a noose at the end.'

"'I'll take the guineas,' said the old chap. And Sir James paid him then and there.

"'Now, Jonathan,' he said, with a look at the pursuing fleet astern, and the breakers bursting on the beach ahead, 'follow as hard as you like. *You* can't make the entrance to the bay, even if *we* can. If we all drive ashore, we are wrecked on our own coast, you on a foreign one, and your fleet is just as much destroyed as if I had captured it in midlake—as I hoped to do this accursed day.'

"You might have thought Chauncey heard him, for the *Pike* was next moment flying a string of flags, and the whole fleet hauled on the wind—the *Oneida* first of all—and started to thrash back to Niagara from the perils of the leeshore. We watched them dip and lunge and roll, and began to make bets that Melancthon Woolsey's old brig would never claw clear, even with six miles offing; but next moment our own troubles engaged us.

"The surf went seething up the beach in great bursts of white foam, retreating in a creamy lacework of sandy backwash, and spouting high again in the next breaker. Straight as an arrow for the gap in the sand the *Beresford* steered. She went through on the crest of a comber, and the *Sir Sidney Smith* followed. We could see them across the sandbar as they rounded up to guard the entrance. Then the *Moira* tried it, and passed, and the *Melville*, with the water spouting from her scuppers, as her crew pumped her of the burden trickling in through the loosened shot plugs. Then it was our turn, for with all our aftersail gone we had to drive straight before the wind, and couldn't turn aside to give the gallant Mulcaster the next chance. A rush on a comber, a sickening pause as the backwash on the bar caught us, then a triumphant forward plunge—and the pilot laughed at the noose on the foreyard, and jingled the guineas in his pocket.

"And in our wake, with never a zig-zag now, the *Royal George* came roaring, bow and stern resting on the travelling crests of two giant seas. Up, up, up she lifted, as the two combined under her keel; a forward spring, a rush like an avalanche, and the last and bravest ship of all was through, safe over the hurdles in the steeplechase that ended the Burlington Races."

"Oh, so *that's* what you call the Burlington Races," said Pan-faced Harry in a relieved voice. "I was wondering——"

But what he was wondering the watch never knew. For on the scuttle hood there was a banging, and the first mate was heard calling:

"Heigh below you sleepers,
Don't you hear the news?
It's *eight b-e-l-l-s*!"

CHAPTER VI

The Niagara Sweepstakes

NINETEEN SHIPS PLAY HIDE-AND-SEEK UPON AN INLAND SEA

"Well," conceded Pan-faced Harry, with the air of a man who yields the last possible inch, "where does the Ontario Circuit and the Niagara Sweepstakes come in? Answer me that!"

This was days after that occasion when the ancient Malachi Malone had yarned himself into a mellow mood over the Burlington Races. The artful Pan-face, knowing that the appearance of opposition always made the old man's fancy flow the more freely, contributed this little obstruction to the current, to the great delight of the divinity student. The other members of the forecastle audience smoked and snored in appreciative toleration. There are many ways of spending a watch-below, and worse ones than listening to an old man's tale, even if you don't believe it.

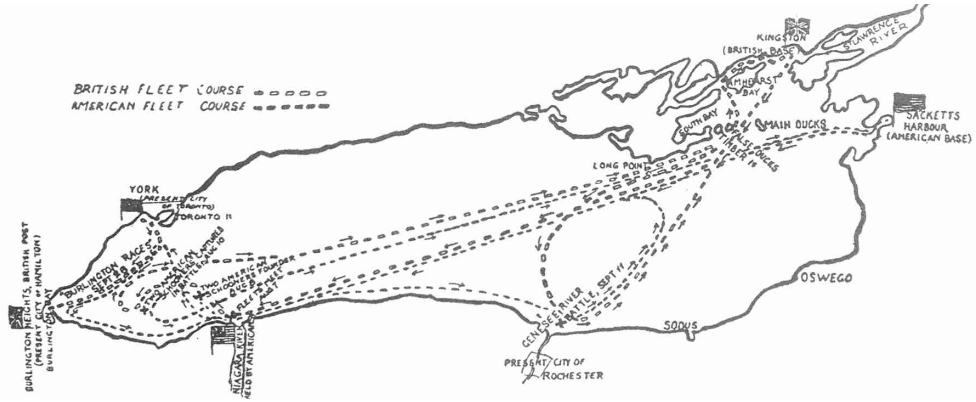
Malachi was not argumentative. He sucked at his pipe until he had picked up the yarn strand at the place he wanted—not where it had been broken by the call of the watch, but at the point where it would give the fingers of his memory a "good holt." Having found this he rumbled on, in a monotone vaguely suggestive of the ceaseless croon of breakers on a sandy beach:

"This was in eighteen-thirteen remember; same year of the war as the Burlington Races, but earlier in the season.

"We catheaded our anchors in Kingston Harbour the second of August, and sheeted home our t'gallants'ls to a nice little air from the eastward that sent us slanting past the Main Ducks and Timber Island, the False Ducks and South Bay Point, and up on the lake till we had sunk the land. The little schooners *Simcoe* and *Seneca* we left behind for harbour defence and transport work. We were a squadron of six—two ships, two brigs, and two schooners, as I told you before, and I was in the *Wolfe*, Sir James Lucas Yeo's flagship.

"It was the seventh of the month before we found Chauncey. He was lying in the Niagara river mouth, at anchor, with his whole fleet, except the little *Lady of the Lake*. She was off somewhere with despatches. The *Sylph* was still fitting out in Sackett's. When we hove in sight he got under weigh, for the water was smooth and the weather just suited him. Of course it didn't suit Sir James; so it was 'wear and stay, stand by tacks and sheets, set stu'ns'ls, take 'em in, clew up and set again,' all that day. When the breeze would freshen, we'd edge in and Chauncey would bear away; when the puffs would lighten he would haul up and we would claw off. Sir James was itching for a fight, but with six vessels to thirteen he knew he would be a fool to let Chauncey choose the conditions.

"Oh that was a dry and dreary day! Sunrise showed us the American fleet weighing anchor in the river mouth. When they made sail we hauled on the port tack and stood offshore to keep the weather gauge the westerly wind gave us. Their flagship, the *Pike*, led the van, with the *Madison* following close up. Either one of them was a match—if she got her own terms for our whole squadron, so we had to be careful of the four dozen heavy guns they carried. The breeze was light and while they gained nothing on us they soon dropped their own heavy-footed little supporting schooners. By nine o'clock their line had strung out until it was six miles long, so around we wore on the chance of a straight set-to with the two big ships before the little ones caught up. But Chauncey edged away inshore again, giving his schooners a chance to catch up, so around we went and stretched out into the lake, to be sure of at least plenty of sea room. By noon the wind had fanned out. The fleets were as far apart as ever, with us lying further out in the lake. The little Yankee schooners ran long oars through their ports, and crawled up towards us under sweeps, but their square-riggers were too heavy to gain on us that way, and the little fellows didn't dare venture far on their own hook.



Lake Ontario, and some of the furrows the war fleets ploughed in 1813.

"Little cats'-paws kept all the vessels changing places, but not once were we really within gunshot. By evening we were in the middle of the lake—fifteen miles off shore, and Chauncey was flying his recall signal, and forming his fleet up in close order for the night.

"The sun set in a purple bank.

"'There's dirt in that,' I heard the captain of the maintop say; 'it looks like Sir James did the last time we was beaten at Sackett's Harbour!'

"'Well, at that I'd sooner have the *Wolfe* under me than one of them gundrays of schooners!' says one of his mates. 'We'll know what *they're* good for afore mornin'!'

"The night settled in thick as pitch. It sort of choked you. We could see the lights of the American fleet strung out in column, as they tacked to keep an offing. We followed to make sure of sea room too.

"When the watch was called at 'eight bells,' midnight, it began to spit rain and breeze up.

'Wind before rain
Clew up and set again,
Rain before wind,
Clew up and take in.
When comes the rain before the wind,
Topsail halliards you must mind.'

"I can hear the topmen singing that yet, and the deafening roar of the bursting thunder-squall that drowned out the chorus. The rain poured as though the bottom had fallen out of a great reservoir overhead, and the

thunder bellowed as though the fleet to leeward of us had opened in broadside fire.

"'Stand by halliards, tacks, and sheets! Let go and clew up all! Man clewgarnets, buntlines and brails!' came from the sailing-master's trumpet, and the bos'ns' pipes shrilled from van to rear as ship after ship began to strip for the wrestle.

"The rain was coming down in straight streaks, and what wind there was had died out. We pulled and hauled and pounded the soaking canvass into the gaskets. The tops'l yards were still on the caps, with the reef-earings hauled out but the points not tied, when the wind burst loose with a roar.

"The *Wolfe* heeled until her yardarms brushed the water, and I slid into the lee scuppers and was almost drowned. I found my feet just as she found hers. Four men were straining on the wheel to get it hard up and square her off before the swelter. There was no other way of saving her, and the rest of our fleet had to follow. On we all swept, like gulls before a hurricane, and right ahead of us loomed the last and largest two of the American schooners.

"One flash of lightning showed them shortening sail, the next showed them trying to sheet home their topsails in an effort to dodge us. They could see our whole squadron bearing down on them and their own fleet tearing away. Then their lights went out; and the next flash showed nothing but tossing water, with the wind whipping the crests off the waves. The squall eased off as suddenly as it had come, and we could hear a wild crying and wailing, like banshees, or the women at the wakes my father used to tell about. Then a hencoop floated by, and a hatch cover, and a wheel-grating, and the wailing died away in the sobs of the diminishing rain.

"'Out boats, lads, and smartly too!' I heard Sir James call from the quarter deck. 'Burn flares and signal the whole fleet to man boats! Something's gone under!'

"All the scowl had gone from his face, and his chin looked a deal less like the peak of an anchor than usual. He overhauled the tacklefall of the port launch himself, eager to get her afloat, and in less time than it takes to tell the lake was dotted with boats' lanterns and lighted up with flares.

"The boats rowed round and round, while the lights of the American fleet grew dimmer and dimmer and faded away. One by one the small craft came alongside. They had picked up floating rammers, and gratings, and provision boxes, and a cap or two; but it looked as though no one was left to tell what had happened, till the *Beresford* ranged across our stern, and her

captain hailed: 'We have picked up sixteen men of the enemy's fleet, sir. Two of their schooners have capsized and sunk!'

"'Send them aboard as soon as they're fit to move,' sang back Sir James.

"Soon a launch came alongside, and a woebegone little crowd trailed through the entry-port and aft to the quarter deck. Our ship-lanterns showed them dressed in misfit British jumpers. Their wild eyes and hair still wet and sticking to their foreheads told pretty plainly that they had just been rescued from the water.

"'Well, my lads,' said Sir James briskly—but not half as sharp as he always spoke to us—'how come you here?'

"'It's not by our choice,' said a ready-tongued fellow they seemed to have elected spokesman. 'Two of us was in the *Scourge* and the rest belong to the *Hamilton*. Ours were the biggest vessels among the fore-'n'-afters, and the last in the line. We'd snugged down for the squall, when we saw you comin' like a flyin' cyclone. The rest of our fleet was droppin' us, so we began to make sail again on a chance of pullin' clear of you. Well—you know how it blew! Before we'd got the tops'l clews to the yardarms we was on our beams ends, and the lee gun-muzzles was in the water. The weather guns broke adrift and took charge of the deck, and next thing we knew the schooner'd left us. Leastways, that's what happened in the *Scourge*, and the *Hamilton* lads'll tell you the same thing!'

"'Yes, sir, that's how it was,' coughed one of the *Hamilton* men, his lungs still raw from the lake water he had swallowed.

"'How were you saved?' asked Sir James.

"'Most of us swum for a capsized longboat,' said the first chap, 'and the rest of us found hatch-covers and what-not.'

"'Very well,' said Sir James. 'Sailing-master, see that these lads are made comfortable forward.' And with that he turned and walked to the binnacle, as though he had no more concern in the matter.

"But he was as foxy as any sea lawyer. Turning those chaps loose in our fo'c'sle meant that they'd be cross-examined by two hundred tongues; and before daylight Sir James knew all there was to be known. Chauncey had lost two of his best schooners, though at that, the *Scourge* and the *Hamilton* were nothing to grieve over. They only measured a hundred and ten tons apiece, and they'd been coasters before they were fitted out for the war fleet. They were heavy armed, too heavy, indeed. It was their deckloads of guns that toppled them over. The *Scourge* had a long thirty-two pounder, and

eight short twelves, and the *Hamilton* had a long thirty-two and a long twenty-four, besides eight twelve-pounder carronades. Between them they drowned eighty-four men; and while the Yankee boys wouldn't admit it, we could see that they had no hope of Chauncey making a rescue of them, with his fleet crippled as it was. There was no doubt about it, the squall had taken the best of his fleet, outside of his square-riggers.

"For my own part I felt glad that the *Hamilton* at least had gone under. I'd a grudge against her, after seeing her work at Kingston, the first year of the war.

"With daylight of the eighth of August came a fresh breeze out of a cloudy sky—a nor'wester, putting us well to windward of the Yankee fleet, though they had beaten all night to gain the weather gauge. Out went our stu'ns'ls like spreading wings, and with every craft a perfect cloud of straining sail we went after 'em.

" 'Just watch us sail rings around your fleet with this breeze,' we told the lads we'd rescued. 'Them little schooners'll be swept clean as a whistle afore they can fire a gun, if this sea keeps up, and *then* for the big fellows!'

"But shucks! No sooner had we begun to raise their hulls above the horizon than puff! out fanned our breeze. There was only enough air left for us to heave-to in. We lay dipping and rolling on the starboard tack, until the swell smoothed out, and the gun-schooners of the enemy began to turn again into reasonable shooting platforms. Soon it was a flat calm. This gave old Chauncey heart again, and instead of edging off he hauled up for us. By noon there was just a trickle of wind from the eastward. It wasn't enough to budge their tubby old brig *Oneida*, so the *Pike*, having the loftiest sails, took her in tow, and the schooners got their sweeps out, and the whole eleven of them stood after us.

"Watch after watch our topmen had to hang in the foot-ropes along the yards, with water-buckets passing up and down all the time, to soak the sails and make 'em draw in the light airs. That's what we called 'skeeting' in the old days. By steady work hour after hour, trimming sail and steering to a hair's breadth, we kept our lead, and the smallest of the schooners under their sweeps began to draw out ahead of their square-riggers.

"Towards sundown the easterly trickle died, and a puff came in from the west. The nearest schooners were within two miles of us then, and their flagship four miles astern. Up went our helm and round our bowsprits swung, and our whole fleet raced to cut the vanguard off from the heavy-weights. The little schooners began firing their long thirty-two-pounders, but

all the good that did was to plough up the water half a mile from us. Under sails and sweeps they scurried back for Chauncey's sheltering wings, and long before we could overhaul 'em the fleet had been re-united.

"Chauncey gave up the idea of a fight and made all sail for the south shore at dark. We didn't follow him in, but we knew where he was going—in to anchor on the Niagara Shoal, and get soldiers from the fort to make up for the men he had lost in the squall. And that's what he did. He got a hundred and fifty riflemen, and stowed them among what schooners he had left. We soon found that out.

"It was a quiet night. We could hear, though we lay miles offshore, the noise of boats bringing the soldiers out from the fort.

"Morning of the ninth showed the same old fleet of square-riggers and fore-'n'-afters standing towards us, and the same old conditions—light breezes and smooth water. No day for a battle for us, thank ye, so again it was wear and stay, set stu'ns'ls and take 'em in, skeet everything from the royals down, and keep a wake like a chalk-line. We got further and further away from them, although much of the time they had their sweeps out. Thank the Lord, even the little *Beresford* of our fleet was almost too big for that, so there was little of *that* backbreaking job for us——"

"D'ye mean to tell me," broke in the second mate, suddenly waking up, "you could drive them warships under oars?"

"Yes we could," answered Malachi, "and we *did*. I've seen the *Beresford*, though she measured a hundred-and-eighty-seven tons, swept along for miles with oars through her bulwarks, four men on each oar. But 'twas a killing job.

"In the dog-watches it began to blow a fresh breeze from the northward. We had stretched pretty well across Lake Ontario by this time, and Sir James stood on, hoping the smooth water on the north shore would tempt Chauncey to follow in, but that wary old bird split tacks with him, and the two fleets kept far apart all night.

"By morning of the tenth, the fourth morning since we'd begun this merry-go-round, mind ye, the enemy was barely in sight, even with glasses from the t'gallant crosstrees. The wind was light again, westerly with a southerly cast, so back across the lake we loped once more on the starboard tack. There was only one thing to do—hold our weather gauge until it blew hard enough to use it. We went across under easy sail, and slowly Chauncey, with stu'ns'ls out, hauled up on our lee quarter. His flagship, the *Pike*, had

the schooner *Asp* in tow, and the *Madison* towed the *Fair American*. The *Oneida* and the rest of the schooners ambled along as best they could.

"When the first dog-watch began that afternoon the wind made a sudden northerly shift that put us to leeward. All our hard-won weather gauge went to nothing. Chauncey had tacked to meet the shift, and he formed his battle-line four miles to windward, and bore away for us, as bold as brass. Sir James took a long chance. He stood on towards the south shore, hoping for two things: either that the rough water there would keep the Yankee gun-schooners muzzled, or that a shift offshore would put him to windward again.

"And when we got in under the land, lo and behold, the wind died out altogether! There we lay, like a lot of target-floats, the sails slapping the masts and our chequered sides mirrored in the glassy water, while Chauncey came stretching in with swelling wings! Our shipmates of the *Scourge* and *Hamilton* wore grins like crocodiles, and Sir James was as black as the squall that had sunk their schooners, when the topmen began to call: 'Faint air aloft, sir! And offshore, too!'

" 'Round in the starboard braces! Larboard stu'ns'ls alow and aloft!' was the cheery answer, and by this time we could see the little cats'-paws crinkling the water. Soon the purring began under the bows, and, ship after ship, our squadron slipped westward out of the calm belt. The little offshore whiff raced out to meet the northerly breeze that was bringing Chauncey in, and by the time we were well under weigh he was in the doldrums, with sails filling both ways. By the end of the first dog-watch we had our weather gauge again, after crossing Lake Ontario twice to hold it!

"This evening was the third one after the big squall. The breeze came in steady from the sou'west. The sun set clear, and there was a bright moon. The enemy hauled on an easy bowline and stood towards Burlington, at the head of the lake.

"It's hard to realize that through this same blue water that the excursion steamers furrow a dozen times a day in summer now—from Toronto to Niagara, Port Dalhousie, Hamilton and Grimsby—our war fleets ploughed their way in them old days. But we did. Boys-oh-boys, the tracks we cut in this Ontario Circuit would make you dizzy if you could only begin to trace 'em in the water!"

"So *that's* it!" ejaculated Pan-faced Harry with a satisfied sigh. "*That's* the Ontario Circuit!"

"Part of it," said Malachi, and went on with his story.

"We took a hitch in towards the south shore, expecting the wind to come fresh off the land, as it usually does there at sundown, and with the first stars out we came around and stood after the Yankee fleet. It was soon blowing a smart breeze, but the water was smooth, and watching their lights, we could see they were getting ready for us once more.

"'At last!' everybody was saying. 'At last we've got 'em!'

"By this time we knew their vessels as well as we knew our own, and as we came up with them we made out the little schooners *Fair American*, *Ontario*, *Asp*, *Pert*, *Growler* and *Julia*, in one line, and the larger *Conquest*, *Tompkins*, *Madison*, *Oneida* and *Pike* in a line to leeward of them.

"We opened with the long-guns—which were scarce enough in our fleet—and the weather line of schooners answered with theirs. As we drew in it got too hot for them, and at eleven o'clock they started their main-sheets and ran down through the gaps of the lee line—all but two of them. The *Julia* and the *Growler* tacked across our bows, heading south. They were the smartest in the schooner fleet.

"The game was to draw us down so that we would be under the heavy guns of the *Pike* and *Madison* and *Oneida*, and the schooners to leeward of them would be potting us at their pleasure. It was a simple trick, and it might have worked in the dark—but this was in bright moonlight, so strong you could make out the different colours of the battle flags; and the crews of the two schooners that led the fleet were so clever they overdid the programme. Instead of running down like their orders called for they tacked, so as to get the weather gauge of us. It would have been a choice target-practice position—if we had done what they wanted us to do. But Sir James was wide awake yet, though he had never left the deck in seventy-two hours. He stood right on, holding the port tack. Old Chauncey saw what was up, and bore away a couple of points more, and started firing his stern guns to get him to edge down; but that was just what Sir James would not do. He sailed along, close hauled on the wind, until he had brought the whole squadron between Chauncey and the runaway schooners. As each vessel passed the Yankee flagship we gave her a broadside, for luck, and then stood around on the starboard tack after the *Julia* and *Growler*.

"They realized the hole they were in, and tried to outsail us, a thing which schooners might do, beating to windward, against square-riggers. But one third of our squadron was schooner-rigged too, and the *Smith* and *Beresford* soon worked out to windward of the ships and brigs.

"The *Julia* and *Growler* thrashed in till they risked running ashore, and then, as the moon set, suddenly doubled, and came running back, wing-and-wing, trying to escape through the whole fleet in the dark. But it was no use. We were too well spread out for them, and after a few plunk-plunks of long-range shot they had to round up and haul their colours down.

"We found them fairly good vessels of their sort. Each had thirty-five seamen, and a couple o' dozen soldiers, taken aboard from Fort Niagara two nights before. They were smaller than the vessels that capsized—the one being eighty-two tons, the other eighty-one—and each mounted two heavy long-guns, a thirty-two and a twelve, on pivots. They were old friends, in a way, for the *Julia* was the first schooner the Yankees armed for the war. I'll tell you about that some other time maybe. She fought off the *Moira* and the *Duke of Gloucester*, once on her way to Ogdensburg; and both she and the *Growler* gave the *Royal George* a red-hot time at Kingston, the fall of the first year of the war; and they had both helped batter us out of Fort George.

"The captured crews weren't sorry to wear our handcuffs, for they said there'd have been something dangling from each squares'l yardarm next morning, if Chauncey had caught them while still hot over their disobeying orders.

"And that, youngsters, winds up the Niagara Sweepstakes, where we picked four off from Chauncey's fleet without parting a rope-yarn; a case of 'wait, sweetly wait, and murmur not.'"

"Go on, Malachi, go on!" urged the forecastle crowd, as the old-timer paused for a long breath. "There's more, ain't there?"

"Well, you've got yourselves to blame if you don't like the rest of it," murmured the old man. "Here 'tis.

"By morning, when the prizes had been remanned and everything made ship-shape after the night's flurry, the cross-tree men sighted the American fleet away down to leeward of us, abreast of Niagara. We made sail, towing our captures, for they were pretty badly cut up in their gear. It breezed up to a gale, with a heavy sea, from the westward. A stern chase is always a long one, and by the time we came up with the dullest of the schooners Chauncey had left his largest vessels were still a long way ahead of us.

"We felt sure we would pick off two more of his fore-and-aft brigade, but the pair we counted on, the *Pert* and *Fair American*, ran for the Niagara river, and dodged in under the guns of the fort. It was touch and go with them, for the seas were making a clean sweep over their weather beam, and

time and again we expected them to roll over. This time there would have been no rescue work—it was blowing too hard.

"What was left of the American fleet drove straight down the lake. We could hear our officers with spy glasses tell how they would ship seas till they spilled over at both sides, and everybody expected them to run under. We got all the washing we wanted ourselves. It was a miracle how those small, top-heavy schooners stayed afloat. We chased them as far as Long Point, and then, feeling pretty sure that Chauncey wouldn't dare take the offensive until he had been reinforced, we ran for Kingston Harbour. We needed powder, shot and provisions, and troops were waiting there for transport to the head of the lake. But we missed a dandy chance of ending the war right then. Chauncey's fleet was down to seven sail. We should have tackled them while it was blowing hard, for we never got so good a chance again.

"It was a month to a day, the eleventh of September, before we next saw Chauncey's fleet. We had been cruising along the south shore, picking up what we could and preventing American water communication with Niagara, when we got becalmed off the Genesee river.

"We made out ten sail to the westward. All afternoon they slowly crawled towards us, while we lay without a breath in the canvas. By sunset they had come within two miles. We saw that Chauncey had got his new ship the *Sylph* afloat. She was a fine big schooner, bigger than the brig *Oneida*, and twice as handy. She had one of the little schooners in tow, and at that she kept up with the rest of the fleet.

"The *Pike* towed the *Oneida*, and the *Madison* had a schooner astern, and the other schooners used long sweeps as usual to help out the light breeze.

"They opened on us at twilight with their long-guns. We were in a hole. The breeze hadn't reached us and we hadn't even steerage way. We couldn't turn so as to bring our few long-guns to bear. There were only six guns in our whole fleet that could have reached them, anyway.

"We were armed mostly with short carronades for broadside work, yardarm to yardarm—the same sort of thick-headedness at the Admiralty offices, I suppose, as sent out the rustproof copper tanks for carrying fresh water, in a fleet that was floating in millions of gallons of it!

"We just had to lie there and get plugged. The poor old *Melville*, on the outside of our line, was nothing but a target float for them. When at last we

began to feel a trickle of air we tried to beat up towards them, but they were to windward of us, and hauled away.

"I've seen Sir James ready to explode pretty often, but never so blue-black in the face as this time. After three hours and a half of being pummelled with his hands tied behind his back he took to his heels, ordered stun's'ls out, and stretched across to the False Ducks on our own side of the lake. He knew that if Chauncey followed him there he would have to fight on even terms, without the weather gauge.

"That running fight kept up for two hours more, and by that time we had outsailed them so far even their longest guns wouldn't reach. But we had been badly cut up, with a midshipman and three men killed and seven chaps wounded, and the *Melville* so hulled that when we got to the shelter of Amherst island in the Bay of Quinte, where we buried our dead, she had to run her guns in on one side and out on the other to get at the shot-holes with plugs.

"And so the Circuit ended for a while. We'd been up and down Lake Ontario's two hundred miles' length and across and back Lake Ontario's fifty mile breadth, until we knew every maple tree on either shore, and the beef-bones from our galleys fairly made a reef along the lake bottom. Our next brush with the striped bunting was the Burlington Races."

CHAPTER VII

The Escape of the "Slippery Six"

A SEQUEL TO THE BURLINGTON RACES LEFT UNTOLD BY THE ANCIENT YARNER

Down the lake came Chauncey rolling—Isaac Chauncey, the broad-beamed old Yankee Commodore, sore as a baited bear from his last brush off Burlington with Sir James Lucas Yeo. After a running fight of thirty miles the mauled British fleet had driven clear to a safe anchorage and given him the slip at the head of the lake. Chauncey was now following them up. Astern of his flagship, the *General Pike*, trailed the schooner *Governor Tompkins*, her bulwarks smashed and foremast gone, thanks to the guns of the *Royal George*. Near her the battered old brig *Oneida* limped along with a badly wounded maintopmast. The *Pike* herself had been through a severe mill. Her main topgallant-mast was gone. Cannonballs had shattered her bowsprit and foremast, and they were "fished" until they looked like broken arms bound in splints. New wooden shot plugs made her sides bristle, but failed to stem the inflow of lake water. Her pumps clanged continuously. Her forecastle deck, where the starboard bowchaser had blown up, was a wreck, and four of her carronades had split their muzzles. Twenty-seven killed and wounded in the fight had been the toll the *Pike* paid. Perforated sails and new-spliced gear showed that the other vessels in the fleet had had their share of the iron shower; but the *Pike* had borne the brunt.

"How *did* they get clear from Burlington?"

That was a question Chauncey asked himself a dozen times and his officers more than once.

He had not seen the perilous pilotage which had carried his foe to safety. All he knew was that they had clustered together in the very backwash of the beach like gulls riding on the undertow. He had watched them disappear while he thrashed his own wounded flagship off the lee shore; but whether they were no longer visible because shattered on the strand, or because, with sails lowered and topmasts housed, they were riding out the gale at anchor in the breakers, he could not tell. They were at least six miles to leeward of

him, at the fading end of a late September afternoon. To make out details at a league's distance was impossible, as he went storming back to Niagara.

The days following the Burlington Races had been sullen, windless, and smooth except for the groundswell of the broken gale. The *Lady of the Lake* toiled, under sweeps, all the forty weary miles from the Niagara River to Burlington Bay. She came back, late at night, her crew dead-tired. The birds, she reported, had flown or foundered. She had not seen any wreckage on the beach, nor had she seen any vessels at anchor in the surf.

Chauncey was almost inclined to believe that the fleet had driven ashore and been broken up and their wreckage burned by their despairing crews. But this he felt was too good to be true. So with the first fair wind he scurried down the lake to learn the worst—the conviction surely forming in his mind that Sir James Yeo was ahead of him, perhaps just beyond the horizon's rim.

Great and small, the Yankee fleet of ten sail went pelting down Lake Ontario before a hard October nor'wester. The Commodore was as uneasy in mind as his ship was in hull. Those six British warships had doubled on him. They were either scurrying along the north shore, to reach their own base, Kingston, at the foot of the lake, for a refit; or else they were scouring the south shore, raiding supply depots and picking up troopships between the Niagara and Sackett's Harbour, the American base.

They were few but fierce, those Britishers. Two ships, two brigs, two schooners, they fought and sailed in squadron with the well oiled regularity of clockwork. Chauncey had had twice as many vessels. His own flagship was gunned so heavily that, on certain terms, she was a match for the entire British fleet combined. Yet he had chased the "Slippery Six" all year, from the day the ice left the lake harbours, and now, at the end of the season, there was nothing to show for his labour except the loss of four of his own vessels. Two Sir James Yeo had captured in fair fight off Niagara, and two had foundered in the same waters, with all hands except the dozen-odd wretches Sir James had rescued.

Past Long Point, the "furthest south" of Prince Edward County, the star-spangled fleet drove, at one o'clock in the afternoon of that grey fifth of October, 1813; past South Bay Point, Prince Edward's "furthest east," they ploughed at three. Then came the joyful lookout-chorus "Sail ho! Dead ahead!" Every stitch the straining spars would stand was crowded on, and the distant specks rapidly took shape.

"Not *their* fleet!" exclaimed the Commodore, glaring through his long brass telescope. "Little sloops and schooners—gunboats or transports at the best. Well, we'll have 'em, anyway. But I wish they were Sir James Yeo's 'Slippery Six!'"

The swift-sailing *Sylph*, heavy with long-range swivel-guns, and the light despatch-schooner *Lady of the Lake* were detailed to hunt the quarry down.

"It's odd," mused Chauncey, "that they don't haul their wind and dodge through the islands into the Bay of Quinte." But the transports, sheeting home stu'ns'ls and fly-by-nights, staggered on past the False Ducks and Timber Island, sheering away from the Upper Gap which led to safety amid the Quinte Shoals, and fanning out in the open lake on opposite tacks. Three drove northeast and four southeast, so as to divide their pursuers, and possibly escape.

"Not by the Great Hook Block!" thundered Chauncey, raging at their impudence. Next moment the dismasted *Tompkins*, cast adrift, rolled drunkenly in the trough of the sea. Signal flags, snapping at the gaff-end, told the *Sylph* and *Lady of the Lake* to follow the three of the chase on the port tack, while the flagship ran down the four on the starboard. Her sister frigate, the *President Madison*, took charge of the squadron remaining.

The great *Pike*, ten times the size of any of the vessels she was pursuing, came swooping upon her prey like an eagle upon a sparrow-flock. Three little ex-coasting schooners and a sloop-rigged gunboat were her quarry.

"Bless my top—lights," chuckled the captain of the maintop to his mates. "Two of them red-flags is the little *Julia* and *Growler*, captured from us off Niagara last August."

The gunboat was the lame duck of the fleet, as one-masted vessels often are when squared dead before the wind. They crowded canvas on to her till she drove her bows under at every plunge and threatened to broach to, but she couldn't hold the pace. Suddenly her sails came flailing down, and two of the schooners ran alongside her. A swarm of redcoats and bluejackets tumbled over the bulwarks, out of the gunboat, and aboard the rescuers. Then the schooners made sail again, leaving their late companion a swaying, reeling pillar of smoke and flame. She burned furiously and sank, a hissing, smoking ruin, as the pursuing battleship swept by.

In the red anger of the October sunset the great ship came upon the three survivors. Towering above them half the height of their mastheads, her twenty-four guns, some of them split-lipped, grinned like the jaws of death.

The red ensigns fluttered down, the transports *Mary Ann*, *Hamilton* and *Confiance*, mounting three pop-guns among them, were lawful prize to the United States ship *Pike*.

"Welcome home, *Julia*!" laughed the maintop men at the *Hamilton's* crew as she rolled in the lee of the big ship. "What you mean by taking such a name? And the old *Growler* too! Frenchified into *Confiance*, no less! Never mind boys, the leg-irons in Sackett's Harbour'll keep you from gallivanting any more."

The tumbled crowd of seasick redcoats in the transports shouted back grim banter in return; becoming prisoner of war had little novelty in the campaign of 1813. A parole or exchange was always possible, and rations in the prison camps were sometimes better than on the firing line. The sea, running mountainous, prevented much transferring of prisoners, but the *Pike's* longboat, at the risk of stove-in gunwales, made her way to each craft with a prize crew and came back from each dragging a hawser. The flagship ran under easy sail for the lee of the Main Ducks, with her prizes towing astern. Here the main body of her fleet rejoined her. Hither, too, haled the *Sylph* another victim, the little cutter *General Drummond*. The *Lady of the Lake* hounded a fifth into the shoals between the Yorkshire Island and the Main Duck, and the *Sylph*, returning, waylaid her there. This last prize, the *Lady Gore*, with three guns, was the largest of the transport fleet. The sixth, a schooner called the *Enterprise*, melted into the gathering gloom among the islands and escaped.

Once the maintop men thought they saw a speck in the wake of the sinking sun. A second look proved that the speck had vanished or had never been. And yet the prisoners seemed to take more interest in watching the sunset than might have been expected from seasick captives facing an alien jail.

The Britishers' story was simple. They numbered nearly three hundred. Two hundred-and-thirty-four of them were soldiers of De Watteville's regiment who had been posted at Burlington Heights at the head of the lake. They had sailed from York on Sunday, and were bound for Kingston. They had heard of the fight off Burlington the week before, and entertained their captors with yarns of how the British fleet had entered the harbour with blood running from their scuppers, and shot-shattered spars falling overboard as they came to anchor. Where the fleet was now, of course, they couldn't tell; probably unable to crawl out of Burlington.

"I'd give a good deal," admitted Chauncey to himself when he heard their stories, "to know that I'd permanently crippled the 'Slippery Six.'"

At midnight, crowded to the bulwarks with British prisoners and their own troops from Niagara, the American fleet rounded old Shiphouse Point and entered Sackett's Harbour with their prizes in tow. The *Lady of the Lake* was sent back by morning light to see if the *Sylph* needed aid. She met that faithful watchdog with the *Lady Gore* at the end of a towline.

But what were those towers of sail far up the Lower Gap, heading for Kingston? A little masthead work quickly answered that question. Sir James Yeo, lying hidden in Burlington Bay till his foe left the field free, had trailed him down the lake and popped into the Bay of Quinte while the fleeing transports lured the enemy past the entrance! The "Slippery Six," the thorns in Chauncey's side, were now serenely entering Kingston Harbour for a refit. The season devoted to their destruction had been wasted. Though this half dozen of small transports had fallen into the enemy's hands, the fighting strength of the British navy on Lake Ontario was unimpaired. The season's game was, at best, a draw.

It was bad news to bring home the morning after a victory!

And how *did* they get clear from Burlington, as Chauncey asked for the last time?

When the gale lulled the hacked and hewed winners in the Burlington Races found themselves in greater peril than they had been, even in the passage of the bar. They were safe in a landlocked harbour, but the water at the entrance had begun to ebb until it threatened to leave them imprisoned forever, like lily-pads in a pond.

"Better wreck than rot!" thundered Sir James Yeo. "Pilot, you brought us in here for golden guineas. Take us out now for the love of the flag!"

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the pilot, "but you must wait till the moon is full."

"Don't try to tell me, man," Sir James answered, "there are tides on these lakes!"

"Don't try to tell me, sir," answered the pilot composedly, "that there ain't."

His companions looked for an immediate call for the "cat," but the man went on.

"There *are* tides on the lakes, Sir James; but they ebb and flow by years, not by the twelve hours. One year the water's three feet higher all over than another. Why, no one knows. But apart from that, an easterly gale raises the water at this end of the lake, and a westerly lowers it, and raises it at Kingston. The water at the entrance is on the ebb now, because the lake's finding its level after the easterly that helped us in over the bar. The moon'll be full the night after next, and we'll get another shift of easterly wind. Then you can kedge out sir, and sail away as soon as it cants around to the nor'west, as it's sure to do here in the fall of the year."

The pilot's advice was taken. The battered squadron hauled far within the wooded banks of the bay, where the towering pines hid even the *Royal George's* topgallant-masts. Here shot-plugs were hastily driven into the scarred sides, and fresh spars cut for the shorn flagship. There was assistance in abundance, for Burlington Heights, the limestone ridge behind the bay, were held by British troops. The peering *Lady of the Lake* ventured as close as she dared, but she could discover nothing from outside the harbour; not even the canoes which waited to carry Sir James Yeo's message to the captains of certain tubby transports lying in York, a dozen leagues to the eastward.

At the full of the moon the pilot's word was fulfilled. A light east breeze blew, foggy and dank. The water in the bay rose. The smaller vessels of the squadron were towed out over the bar. To them were ferried such guns and spars of the flagship and of the *Royal George* as could conveniently be slung by yard-tackles or carried in boats. Next the kedges of the two large ships were planted in the deep water of the lake, and with hundreds of men to help heave the capstans round, the great hulls ground their way out over the bar, furrowing the entrance with their keels.

Then came the welcome breath of the nor'wester, and with guns in place again, yards aloft and topsails sheeted home, the "Slippery Six," battered but not beaten, went boldly on the track of the Commodore who fled while he thought he pursued.

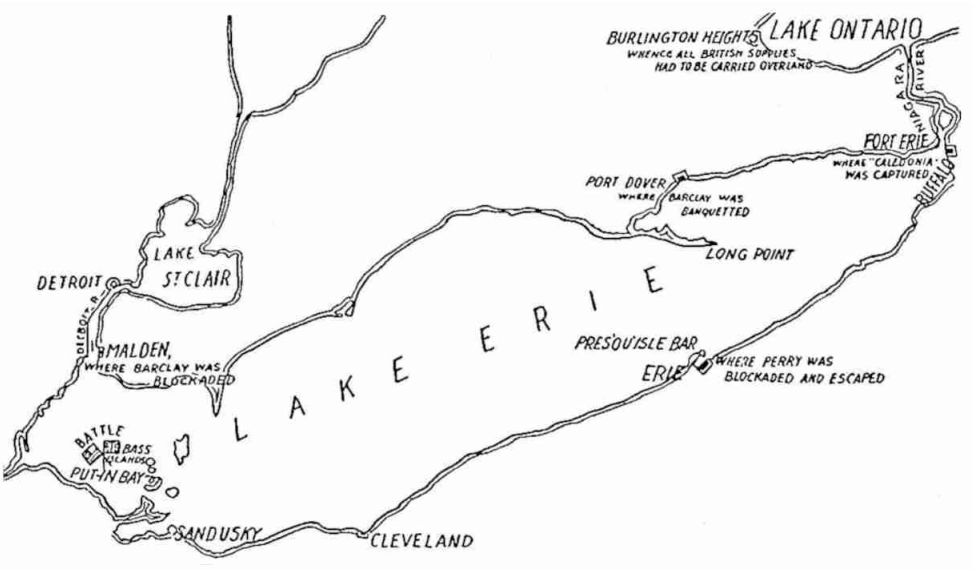
CHAPTER VIII

The Boy Commander and the Widow

WHY THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE OTHERWISE KNOWN AS THE BATTLE OF PUT-IN-BAY WAS LOST AND WON

Up, up, up to the flagship's fore-truck soared a ball of bunting. A jerk on the halliards, and the "blue peter," with its white square, was fluttering in the gentle breeze, and the harbour of Malden, off Lake Erie, in the Detroit River, resounded with the clamour of a war fleet weighing anchor.

Lean and keen as famine-smitten hawks, a motley crew swarmed the decks of the six vessels that formed his Britannic Majesty's squadron under the command of Robert Heriot Barclay, R.N., that fateful morning, the tenth of September, 1813. Canadian militia in green jackets and blue trousers, voyageurs and frontiersmen in deerskin leggings, regulars from the Fighting Forty-first and Royal Newfoundland Regiment—these were there in plenty, with Indian chiefs flaming in warpaint and feathers. There was a sprinkling, too, of lake sailors and boatmen in tarpaulin jumpers and oiled leather boots. And here and there, so rare as to be noticeable, a British bluejacket, fifty of them in the whole fleet, fifty man-o'-wars-men among six men-of-war! The little company of bluejackets was strengthened by eighty Canadian lake sailors, who had never heard a boatswain's whistle till they joined the fleet, nor worked at gun drill in their lives; two hundred and forty soldiers from the dismantled fort; and a handful of savages, selected for their skill as sharpshooters from the hordes which hovered about the harbour.



Scene of the naval operations of 1813 which culminated in the Battle of Put-in-Bay.

Things had gone ill at Malden while the squadron waited for their new flagship. No longer dared the canoes and bateaux coast even the north shore of the lake. The enemy was in control. Not a trading sloop dared venture past Long Point. Everything, even flour for the daily bread, had to travel the terrible wilderness road from Burlington Heights at the head of Lake Ontario, two hundred miles away. It cost a shilling a pound to convey the roundshot for the guns from Quebec to Malden; eight dollars, in American money, for one projectile for a heavy carronade. The guns themselves could not be brought up for less than their weight in silver. A set of anchors was worth the price of the small vessel that would have brought them, had the lake been clear. Ship-spikes were as precious as though they were gold headed. Of food, everything was lacking except beef; the cattle could be driven along the wilderness trail. Even this provision began to fail, for the swarm of uncontrolled Indian allies feasted riotously when they willed, and even killed the precious bullocks for powder horns, leaving the carcasses to rot in the sun.

The last bottle of wine christened the new ship for which the squadron waited. *Detroit* she was named, in honour of Brock's famous success near her birthplace. There was no banquet in celebration of the launching. Hunger snuffled, wolf-like, at the door. All knew that the fleet must be provisioned

for a desperate attempt at re-opening communication with Long Point as soon as the *Detroit* could be equipped.

Where were her guns? At Burlington Heights or some place between there and Quebec. Where were her men? Still sailing the salt water, maybe, or playing hide-and-seek with Commodore Chauncey on Lake Ontario. Message after message was sent through the wilderness; but never did the shrill scream of the boatswain's pipes herald the coming of a reinforcement of man-o'-wars-men.

Desperate cases call for desperate remedies. Barclay dismantled the Malden fort; he gathered up the field guns and battering artillery that had been at the attack on Fort Meigs, far away in Ohio. He took on board everything that would heave shot. In all, the *Detroit* displayed nineteen cannon, of six different calibres; two long twenty-four-pounders; one long eighteen, mounted on a pivot; six long twelves; eight long nines; one twenty-four-pounder carronade, and one eighteen-pounder carronade; the last two, and the eighteen-pounder on the pivot, being the only proper ship's guns. Having armed her, he waited one more day for men. All hands fell to with paint-brushes and arrayed the vessels in glittering black, with white and yellow port-bands, broken by black chequering. Red strakes at the waterline matched the ominous hue of the inner bulwarks and fighting stations. Deep crimson was used to hide the blood which was sure to flow. By night the little squadron of six lay at anchor in painted pride; but no crews had come.

With morning's light the six ships sought the American fleet, lurking for weeks in wait among the western islands of the lake.

"Thank the Lord we'll have a fight!" went the word through the squadron.

"Sooner fight than eat, eh?" rumbled a tattooed man-o'-wars-man, whose pigtail marked him as a Nelson veteran. The sunshine blazed back at him from the buckles which were the only remaining bright spots in the uniform of a Western Ranger. They were in a little group diligently weaving boarding-nettings as the fleet dropped down the river toward the open lake. "Well, if we don't fight soon there'll be no eating, my hearty!" he went on. "How's rations in the garrison?"

"Flour all gone; some beef left; allowances chopped in two," answered the soldier cheerily. "How are you off aboard here?"

"Half rations of hard tack and a little salt pork," volunteered the tar. "Blast my toplights for ever leaving salt water! I'd as soon perish of thirst in

the Horse Latitudes as starve here in the midst of plenty—plenty of fresh water, and plenty of nothing else."

"Lucky there's plenty of that," put in a gaunt pilot, "for after to-day they say the grog tub'll be empty."

"Not unless Perry's turned Methodist," answered the bluejacket with a laugh, "we'll broach the Yankee Commodore's casks to-night."

"That's right my lads," said a quick voice, "a cheery heart's the best sheet anchor."

The old tar tugged his forelock respectfully as an epauletted officer passed the group. He was high coloured, straight as a keel timber, and swung along the quarter deck with jaunty grace despite an empty left coatsleeve. He was only twenty-eight.

"Who's that?" asked the soldier, new come from the wilds of Michillimackinac.

"Who's that? Who should it be but Commander Barclay, who got us into this hole and is going to get us out again, God bless him! He's a fine lad, he is. They do say he lost his arm eight years ago fightin' under Nelson at Trafalgar. *That* was the fight!"

"How did he get you into a hole?" pursued the stranger.

"A petticoat, of course," answered the tar, rather proudly. "Here he comes to this God-forsaken hole this spring from salt water, to take charge of the Lake Erie squadron. Here he meets pretty Mrs. Blue Eyes, whose husband was killed at York, and who's waitin' here with friends till it's safe to go down Lake Erie, to return to her wrecked home in her raided town. She's timid and sweet, and looks like a flower of the wilderness among the bouncing frontier lassies and comfortable officers' ladies at this little port of Malden. She means no harm; neither does he; only he sees all the time, through the long night watches on the lightless Erie shore——"

"Hard-a-lee, matey!" interrupted the pilot. "You're sagging off into Sentiment Shoal. You see," addressing the soldier, "the Commander set about blockading Perry in the port of Presqu'isle. That's two hundred miles to the east of here, on the south shore of the lake. They call the town at that place Erie. That's where Perry, the Yankee commander, harboured the five little vessels he got from Buffalo—four he bought and one he caught under the guns of our shore batteries. And here he built five more, three little schooners, and two big brigs, bigger than either the *Queen Charlotte* or the

Detroit. Barclay set about blockading him. Now, bluejacket, make sail with your 'lightless Erie shore.'"

The tar shifted his quid and went on.

"We lay outside the harbour bar of Presqu'isle week after week, watching the vessels building inside. We couldn't stop them with our misfit, half-manned squadron of ex-merchantmen, and they couldn't drive us away. It all looked a silly waste of time. Their little vessels that could cross the bar could only worry the coasting trade. Their big brigs, of four times the burthen, drew so much water that they were bottled up by the bar quite as tight as we could blockade them. There was never more than seven feet of water on that bar; sometimes only five, for we took soundings.

"Through the long night watches the Commander's thoughts ran back to Malden town, I know, for I heard him talk more and more with the first luff about how the new ship building there would settle the command of the lake, and how he wished to know how they were getting on with her. So nobody was surprised, when a nor'easter churned the harbour bar into a white smother and choked the channel with bursting breakers, that we made all sail for the head of the lake. And I for one wasn't surprised that we brought a passenger back with us as far as Port Dover."

"The supply depot across the lake from Presqu'isle, behind Long Point," explained the pilot.

"We landed Mrs. Blue Eyes there," went on the bluejacket, "after carrying a press of canvas, day and night. The 'Old Man'—poor lad, he's not thirty yet, but every captain's the 'old man' to his own crew—he was worried about the fleet inside the bar, but the bigwigs at Port Dover wouldn't listen to anything but that he should stay over just for the night. They had a banquet for him and his officers. And Mrs. Blue Eyes, trembling with gratitude for the way he had saved her from two hundred miles of the pack trail, she asked him to stay too. And he stayed, and they drank the health of 'King George III., God bless him,' and 'the Prince Regent, God bless *him*,' and 'the bar of Presqu'isle, God bless *it*, and long may it pen up Perry's brigs,' and so on.

"But he came on board after midnight, very straight, very short-tongued. I found out what had happened, never mind how. Mrs. Blue Eyes, with a woman's wit, had guessed something. She was a frightened little thing, but brave. When he tried to raise her fingers to his lips at parting she had gently, so gently, touched his empty sleeve and said, 'You fought under Nelson, sir; I shall think of you as always remembering the great signal "*England*

expects"'—and then she ran away, sobbing, knowing that without meaning it she had made him forget *his* duty. But the words burnt the boy's brain.

"He ordered all sail at once for the south'ard, and with stu'ns'ls set and the canvas dripping from steady wettings to make it catch every breath, the fleet strained through the dark for the Erie shore sixty miles away. He walked the deck all night.

"At sunrise the wind dropped. It was a blazing, cloudless, August morning. The lake was smooth as glass. The south shore was plain in sight. From the deck we could see the blockhouses guarding Presqu'isle, and, terribly plain, one large brig anchored *outside* the bar, with a cluster of small craft around her. From the crosstrees, with a spyglass I soon saw how she had got there.



"*You fought under Nelson, sir; I shall think of you always as remembering the great signal 'England Expects.'*"

"The second large brig was being towed to the crossing. She floated two feet higher than her proper waterline. Barges and boats followed her, loaded with her great guns, smaller spars, gear, anchors and cables. At the bar she grounded. Then two great scows, fifty feet long and ten feet wide and eight

feet deep, I should say, were pushed alongside her and filled with water. Beams were run across the brig's deck, through her bow ports and quarter ports. The ends hung over the sunken scows. The space between the scows and beams was blocked up, and hundreds of soldiers and sailors began to pump and bail. As the scows were emptied they rose, lifting the brig full two feet. She was towed forward until she grounded again. Then they lifted her again with these 'camels' and floated her out into the lake. The small craft swarmed around her, her guns, gear, spars, and anchors were slung aboard with tackles from the masts and yards, and before the faint breeze crept down to us we saw the broad-pennant of Commander Perry fluttering, and knew that the worst had happened. The enemy had command of the lake. All there was left for us to do was to hurry to Malden, to wait until the flagship was ready. And that is how we came to starve in the river mouth there."

The yarn ended abruptly.

The cry of "Sail ho!" from the flagship's main crosstrees was echoed by the lookouts through the fleet, and followed immediately by the throb of drums beating to quarters and the shrilling of boatswains' whistles. Soldiers, landsmen, and fresh water sailors were bundled about by the few bluejackets until they found their stations for pulling and hauling and passing powder and shot. All knew the enemy had been sighted and soon they were in plain view from the deck—nine sail in all, gay with banners of fifteen bars and fifteen stars, the American flag of the day. They tacked clear of the Bass Islands, among which was their lair, Put-In Bay, and then came slanting on. The breeze had shifted from southwest to southeast, giving them the coveted weather gauge, and the British fleet had to await their coming.

"Heave-to!" the hail was passed, and, dipping and rising gently on the smooth swell the fleet lay stationary, pointed southwest, with topsails to the mast. Ahead of the British line lay the seventy-ton schooner *Chippeway*, a mere pilot boat, with one nine-pounder gun, and a crew of fifteen men. Next stood the flagship *Detroit*, of seven times her tonnage and ten times her crew. On her quarter lay the tiny brig *Gen. Hunter*, of eighty tons and ten guns—but her armament included cannon firing two and four pound shot, like the toy guns in modern pleasure yachts. Astern of her rode the former flagship, *Queen Charlotte*, smaller than the *Detroit*, but heaving more shot at short range. Next lay the schooner *Lady Prevost*. She was backed by the one-masted *Little Belt*, a sloop, in size like the *Chippeway* but mounting three guns.

From their station in the maintop, where the bluejacket and the ranger were posted to help work the ship and fire muskets with the sharpshooters,

the whole battle water seemed spread out as a map. The American fleet approached silently in the gentle breeze as fast as a man could walk.

"That clipper-schooner in the lead's the *Ariel*," explained the bluejacket. "Next's the *Scorpion*. The big brig behind her's Perry's flagship, the *Lawrence*—the first one over Presqu'isle Bar. See her big blue flag, with the white letters! I'll lay a day's allowance it says '*Don't give up the ship!*' That's what the *Chesapeake's* captain that she's named for said when they carried him below, dying from the Shannon's broadside. And that little brig fussing along with all sail is the *Caledonia* the fur trader Capt. Elliott cut out for them from under our batteries at Fort Erie. And the big brig, backing her topsail to keep from running over the little tub, is the *Niagara*, the second one that got over the bar. Elliott sails her. I know 'em all. That's the *Somers*, the schooner astern of the *Niagara*. The next schooner's the *Porcupine*, and the next's the *Tigress*. Quills and fangs! I should say so! Look at the big guns those little schooners mount—long thirty-two-pounders, twelve pounds heavier than anything in our fleet. That sloop last of all is the *Trippe*. Where's the *Ohio*? They had another schooner. Must have sent her back for supplies."

There was a loud rapping aloft. The colours were being nailed to the mast. Soldiers, sailors, and lubbers alike burst into a cheer. Then the fifes and bugles struck up "Rule Britannia!" and four hundred voices roared in full-throated chorus:

"Britons never, *never*, NEVER shall be slaves!"

In the hush that followed, the tinkle of "seven bells"—half-past eleven—came floating across the water from friend and foe, solemn as a sexton's knell. Then was heard the sifting, sizzling sound of sand being scattered on the decks—sand to soak up the slippery blood. A puff of smoke sprang from the heavy long-range gun in the *Scorpion*. The report was drowned in the thunderclap of the *Detroit's* artillery—and the battle had begun.

Concussions as of a bursting volcano shook the ship. Her masts tottered like hop-poles. The bluejacket, used to the terrific explosions, jammed his thumbs into his ears and rose on his toes. Blood burst from the soldier's ears and mouth. An Indian chief, placed in the maintop as a sharpshooter, hurled his musket into the lake with a shriek and scrambled down the rigging. As he reached the bulwarks he was drenched by the blood of an unfortunate gunner, whose head was severed at the moment by a plunging roundshot from the *Lawrence's* bowchaser. The savage rushed down a hatchway and hid from the terrible thunder in the depths of the hold.

"Cheer-up, matey, and tip-toe as they fire!" bawled the bluejacket between broadsides. "*We*'ve more long-guns aboard the *Detroit* than both Yankee brigs, and we can hold 'em while the range ain't too short. But sink-and-split me, look how they're working our guns! The tubes and matches won't burn, and the lads have to flash flintlock pistols at the touch holes! Look at 'em! Listen! A pistol volley just afore every broadside!" Then the thick, pungent, powder smoke blotted everything out below, though aloft in the bright sunshine glittered now a Union Jack, now the Stars and Stripes, now the blue flag with the motto in white. The American van schooners with their heavy long-guns, lay just out of range and fired steadily at the largest British targets. The *Lady Prevost*, with captain and lieutenant killed and rudder smashed, fell off, unmanageable, taking with her thirteen guns. The *Lawrence* closed in, until her short, heavy thirty-two-pounder carronades found their mark. With the support of the schooners ahead and the lumbering *Caledonia* astern she was heaving a heavier broadside than the entire British fleet—492 pounds to their 459.

But the two British three-masters, ranged bow and stern, fought like wounded lions with their cubs around them. Their sails were like sieves, their decks so cluttered that the dead had to be thrown overboard to give the living room to fight. In the first broadside the *Queen Charlotte* lost her seasoned commander, Capt. Finnis, and first lieutenant Stokoe was knocked senseless. Irvine, the brave Canadian who took charge, steered her past the little *Hunter*, with her pitiable pop-guns, and concentrated her fire on the thunder-belching *Lawrence*. The second gun in the American *Scorpion* exploded and rolled down a hatchway, and one of the *Ariel's* twelve-pounders burst. Broadside after broadside of shilling-a-pound roundshot the raw British crews hove into the enemy's flagship, with the steadiness of veterans, until her starboard side was a wreck, her gear so cut up that she could not be handled, and every gun aboard but one disabled. Commander Perry, the chaplain, and the purser, fired the one remaining gun. Of the crew of 103 men, twenty-two had been killed and sixty-one wounded. The blood oozed through the deck-seams upon the wretches in the cockpit, and cannon balls, tearing through from side to side, found their victims even under the surgeon's knives. And all the while the *Lawrence's* twin sister *Niagara* sulkily stuck to her appointed station in the line—astern of the waddling little *Caledonia* and out of the battle-brunt.

"Look-ye, Brassbound," exclaimed the bluejacket joyfully. "The blue flag's coming down from the *Lawrence's* truck and Perry's pennant is being lowered too! They're striking!"

"Looks to me not," answered the ranger, ramming home a powder wad. "Her Stars and Stripes are still up!"

"Oh, poor Barclay lad!" broke in the tar. "They're carrying him below. He's been hit eight times this day—I've seen him wince and get his gashes tied, for I've watched him like my own boy. The only arm he's got's all mangled, and now he's hit in the thigh. God help him and God help us! Look at poor Garland, the first luff, lying dead at the foot of the mizzen!"

A lifting in the smoke showed a rowboat shooting from the *Lawrence's* side. Four seamen pulled with might and main. In the stern sheets stood a youth strangely arrayed. He wore the full uniform of an American commander, even the stiff hat; and about him he had draped his own broad-pennant, and the blue silk banner with the words "*Don't give up the ship!*" It was Oliver Hazard Perry. The American commander was transferring his flag in the midst of a battle that had almost proved a disaster; combining a piece of sound strategy with almost unbelievable stageplay. He was young, younger even than Barclay—just twenty-seven. The one was heroic and very human. The other was very heroic and very theatrical.

The deed looked like that of a play-actor. It proved an act of genius. Through the lashing of canister that made the water boil, while roundshot whizzed overhead, the boat reached the *Niagara's* side unscarred. It barely paused there. Perry scrambled over the bulwarks of the new brig; Jesse D. Elliott, her late commander, tumbled into the boat, speaking-trumpet in hand, and pulled off to berate and belabour and bring up the laggards who had been following his own example. There were men, 'tis said, who bore to their dying day scars on their faces of blows from his brass trumpet. The shattered *Lawrence* now floated, unmanageable and flagless, amid thin British cheering. All the small boats aboard the British ships had been shot to staves, so there was no way of putting a prize crew aboard her. Sheeting home her topgallant sails the *Niagara* passed the hulk and steered for the British line.

Young Lieutenant Ingles sighted the fresh foe through the pall, and tried to oppose to her the *Detroit's* uncrippled starboard broadside.

"All hands wear ship!" his order rang. "*Queen Charlotte* ahoy! Bear away and bring your other broadside into action!" Of the ship's company of a hundred and fifty "all hands" who could pull a rope now numbered less than two score. Red coats who knew not the mainbrace from the peak halliards fumbled among the corpses for the ends of running gear, which came loosely down when pulled—shot away aloft. The very wheel chains

were loaded with clustered dead. The *Detroit* swung in a vague circle. The *Queen Charlotte*, staggering as wildly, ranged up on her, and the two wrecks locked their splintered spars.

"Fill the foretops'l and shoot her clear!" the sailing-master was ordered, and every man who could move in both ships forsook the guns to fend off and disentangle the grinding hulls. As they shoved and twisted the terrible thunder of the *Niagara* spoke in double diapason. Three hundredweight of shot from her port broadside crashed into the *Chippeway*, *Little Belt*, and *Lady Prevost*, huddled to one side; three hundredweight of shot from her other broadside ripped and mangled the shattered hulls of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* as they drifted apart. The long-guns of the smaller American vessels were concentrated on the clustered target. The reeking British ships were slaughterhouses. Ninety-four wounded and forty-one killed strewed the decks.

"Tell me what's happening!" groaned the ranger. A musket ball had scored a gash across his forehead. "I can't see for blood!" "Thank God then!" yelled back the bluejacket. "I wish I'd been born blind! The scuppers are choked with human hair and brains, so the deck swims in blood! Bits of cloth, and men's hands, and splintered bones hang on the jagged ends of the planking! And Rough Bruin, the Commander's pet bear, has broken out of his pen, and is ranging around the deck. Oh God! He's lapping blood. He's eating human flesh! Gimme your musket quick or I'll go mad!"

Suddenly the uproar of firing ceased. A boarding-pike was waving above the bulwarks of the *Queen Charlotte*. On the end of it was a white tablecloth, smirched with blood. A bugle screamed like a settling eagle. Then a wild chorus of cheers, near and far—"Free trade and sailors' rights!" "Don't give up the ship!" "Fire faster!" and all the old-time American sea-slogans roared from throats black with powder smoke. Every British ensign had been shot away or hauled down, except aboard the *Chippeway* and *Little Belt*. They crowded on studding-sails and flying canvas, but the *Scorpion* and *Trippe*, under sails and sweeps, hunted them down. The battle ended with the shot from the *Scorpion*, which brought the *Chippeway* to, even as by a shot from the *Scorpion* it had been begun.

The victor proved himself still the actor-hero. To the shambles-ships he sent his barge. In her were gathered the British officers, even the wounded commander. Back she pulled, not to the spick and span *Niagara* but to the battered *Lawrence*, over which the Stars and Stripes again flew. Here, on the quarter deck he had quitted to save the day for himself, Perry, standing like a statue, received the vanquished. They had to make their way to him through

heaps of shot-mangled bodies, amid dismounted cannon and the ruin of deck-fixtures, rigging, and sails, while the wounded moaned in their agony, and new-made prisoners toiled with American tars at the pump-brakes to keep the wreck afloat. The British officers presented their swords. He silently accepted them one by one, and returned them. Doffing his hat he used it as a writing desk for his famous despatch:—

"We have met the enemy and they are ours."

Then, suddenly throwing aside his actor's cloak, he revealed himself as the young, warm-hearted, impulsive sailor, succouring fellow-mariners in distress. No kindness was too great to show his unfortunate guests. The wounded were tended, the hungry fed, the weary rested as though they were his own shipmates. He was many-sided, was the victor of Lake Erie.

When the midnight moon rode high in the heavens fifteen ships with shot-torn sails and tottering spars crawled in long caravan towards the wooded islands on the eastern horizon. In the wake of the fleet ripples spread and widened—ripples not of the furrowing keels, but from bundles dropped overside, sheeted and shot-weighted. The groans of nigh two hundred wounded, the clang of the pump-brakes and sobbing of water in the scuppers, wove the requiem of the seventy souls who perished in the Battle of Put-In-Bay.

And on the other side of Burlington Heights the little widow wept and wept.

Note.—Captain Robert Heriot Barclay fought under Nelson at Trafalgar, but it was not there, but at Moir Montier roads, that he lost his left arm. The belief that he was so wounded at Trafalgar was generally held, both by sailors of his time and by succeeding historians.

CHAPTER IX

A Resurrection on the Shores of Graveyard Pond

Across a stretch of wind-whipped water lies a waste of rocks and sand. Outside, Lake Erie creams, and curls, and croons a ceaseless song. Inside, the wild rice grows, and ducks feed, and great red-hulled whalebacks swing at anchor, awaiting the call of more cargoes of iron ore. In the background loom the steel-plant chimneys and church-spires of the city of Erie against a frieze of Pennsylvanian hills. But the sand-rib itself, which shuts off the harbour from the lake, is wilderness as wild as when the French voyageurs named it the Presqu'isle a century and a half ago.

A loop within a loop, Misery Bay opens off the harbour. An inner loop still, traced by a string of tree-grown sandbar, is Graveyard Pond. Brave the duck-hunter who tarries there long after dark. The corpse-lights dance on the smooth black water every still night, and when the scud racks across the face of the moon and the mighty lake heaves and tosses the woods resound with groans.

It is perfectly in accord with Nature that the will-o'-the-wisp should shine above masses of vegetation decaying in stagnant water when the wind is resting. It is perfectly in accord with Nature that the writhing boughs of oak, and elm, and ash, and maple should creak and complain when the gale stirs the forest. And it is perfectly in accord with phantasy that these things should be in the spot where a century since fever-ships swung drearily at anchor day after day, and night after night landing parties of the smitten crews rowed ashore with muffled oars and carried swathed burdens across the sand-rib to the silent mere.

Any map of Erie Harbour will show you Misery Bay and Graveyard Pond in plain print. They had been thus inscribed so long that men had forgotten why. With the coming of 1913 came also a stirring of old men's memories of their grandfather's tales of the suffering of the crews aboard the Upper Lakes squadron when Great Britain and the United States were enemies. For Erie, you must know, was the American naval base for all the operations west of Niagara in the War of 1812.

'Twas to Erie that Daniel Dobbins, of the Mackinaw packet *Selina*, piloted the little fleet of ex-merchantmen that had been fitted out by the Americans at Black Rock, on the Niagara River, through the winter of 1812-13—the captured British brig *Caledonia*, the purchased sloop *Contractor*, and the schooners *Amelia* and *Catherine*.

'Twas at Erie the *Scorpion*, *Porcupine*, *Ariel* and *Ohio* were built for the war, along with the brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*. The *Contractor* became the *Trippe*, the *Catherine*, the *Somers*, and the gentle *Amelia* the fierce *Tigress*. Such changes does war work.

'Twas to Erie the fleet returned, after a partial refit at Put-In-Bay, with six captured British vessels in tow. In Erie Harbour they often lay; at times in painted pride, flaunting their flags of triumph and making the woods resound with their joyous gunshots, at times surmounted by the drooping yellow pennants of pestilence; and then at last, grim, and gaunt, and ungainly, with decks housed over and brooms at their mastheads, dumbly calling for purchasers. For the war was over, disarmament agreed upon, and even in their day the shrill whistle and clattering paddle-boxes of the *Walk-in-the-Water* had sounded steam's knell for the sailing vessel on the Great Lakes.

Mightiest of all the warships Erie Harbour ever sheltered was the twenty-gun brig *Niagara*, which turned the tide of victory in that great Battle of Lake Erie off Put-In-Bay, September 10th, 1813.

With what terrible splendour must this vessel have burst upon the sight of Robert Heriot Barclay, the gallant young British commander!

Outnumbered in vessels, guns and sailors, this one-armed hero of the Trafalgar school had held his formidable foe at bay. Nay more, he had battered him out of his flagship and forced her to strike. Then, wounded for the ninth time in two hours, his remaining arm shattered, he was carried below. As he passed to the surgeon's cockpit, through the blood-mist and the powder smoke, there loomed at him a vision, a sight he may have attributed to his fainting state. For the brig he had cannonaded till she lay a hulk, unmanageable, flagless and silent, her gear a tangled maze, her scuppers running blood, seemed by some miracle to have sprung into being afresh. She came on, driving straight through the battle-broken British line, belching broadsides to port and starboard. Her sails swelled in smooth unspotted squares, her black-and-white bulwarks showed no trace of shot-splintering, her crew thronged their stations in the tops or at the guns or by the water-buckets ranged along the gangway, without a gap in their ranks.

The sanded deck showed never a stain. From truck and peak streamed the very colours which a few moments before had been fought to apparent extinction—even the Commodore's broad-pennant, and the great square of blue silk with the white letters proclaiming Captain Lawrence's last words in the deadly *Chesapeake-Shannon* grapple: "Don't give up the ship!"

Such was the *Niagara* as Barclay saw her. Well may he have deemed her the ghost of the *Lawrence*—namesake of the *Chesapeake's* captain—which he had fought, broadside to broadside, for "four glasses," or two hard hours. For the *Niagara* was the *Lawrence's* twin sister. By some unexplained whim of conduct the fire-eating Jesse Elliott, who commanded the *Niagara*, had held on the very outskirts of the fighting line, until the *Lawrence*, Perry's flagship, had been bruised to a pulp. Yet his tardiness proved the salvation of the American fleet. The resourceful Perry, hauling down his pennant and motto flag, rowed to the hesitating *Niagara*, bustled her commander off in a boat to hasten the other laggards of the fleet, and took possession of the brig himself. Thus with a fresh ship and crew he sprang upon a foe already gasping from a long-sustained unequal combat, and victory was his.

And now, would you see the *Niagara* as she showed to twentieth century eyes in the keen spring sunlight of 1913?

Boring through the yellow-capped combers that fled before an equinoctial gale the harbour-master's bullet-nosed launch landed us at last on that waste of rocks and sand which fences Misery Bay from the rage of the three-hundred-mile lake. There, high on the wrinkled sand of the peninsula, lay something a round century out of place—a crumpled brown conglomeration of weed-grown, water-sodden timber, scarce held together by the girding chains which had grappled it and raised it from an ancient grave. At first it seemed shapeless, unreal, fantastic as some huge monster haled from the oozy depths of the Graveyard Pond behind the tree-fringed shore.

Yet, as the unaccustomed brain began to interpret what the eyes unfolded, the mass resolved itself into a recognized shape—that of a vessel. The idea gradually unfolded. She was a ship, shorn of her spars, eaten away plank by plank, by eighty-eight years submersion, railing and bulwarks gone, yet still a ship. All trace of her decks had disappeared, save one huge curved beam, the last of the hundred that had helped bear the burden of her twenty carronades.

All her upper works, all her deck-fixtures, had been wrenched and torn by the ice of winter and the waves of summer; and her rudder was gone. She

lay open to the sky as a spilt bean-pod.

Her aged keel showed on the sand with a shoe projecting below her hull to give her a grip on the water, and a narrow keelson inside to stiffen the backbone. Her timbering here was not as heavy as one would expect, the pieces having apparently been not more than twelve inches square originally.

But her ribs were many and thick. Side by side from stem to stern they ran—not spaced on twelve or twenty-four-inch centres, as a modern shipwright would have them in a vessel of this size. They had been timbers six inches square or larger—and, one would say at the first glance, of any tree that came to the builder's hand. You would find a rib of white oak, then one of red cedar, then some more of oak, then chestnut, or elm, then one of black walnut, then perchance one of poplar or cucumber-wood, and back to the first choice, oak, again.

The plan of old Daniel Dobbins and his carpenters of 1813 stands out clearly. They used oak or similar hard woods for structural strength, wherever required. They had all the forests of Pennsylvania growing right up to their shipyard. They used the lighter woods for "fillers" for two reasons: it was more speedily worked, and if rent and gouged by the plunging cannonballs it would splinter less easily. As they worked up from the keel they put more and more of the soft wood into the ship's sides. Thus the more exposed parts would be more easily repaired, and their destruction would result in less injury to the ship's crew. Splinter wounds were always a large surgeon's item in an engagement.

This battered old basket, dumbly waiting there that March morning her restoration, in order to take part in a Great Lakes pageant in celebration of her triumphs of a century ago, told more of the meaning of "wooden walls" than a dozen volumes on naval architecture.

As her hull showed, the builder of 1813 first shaped a ship entirely of upright pieces of timber, six or eight inches thick, contiguous from stem to stern, from breast-hook to transom. These uprights, or "ribs," he covered with a heavy sheathing of hardwood—three-inch oak in the case of the *Niagara*. Inside, he spread another layer of wood—two-inch pine. This made a solid wall of timber, one foot through. The heaviest shot he expected to receive was from thirty-two-pounders. Their balls were six inches in diameter. The majority of the vessels the *Niagara* had to meet threw twelve-pound shot or smaller. The little missiles—no bigger than hand-balls of to-day—may be seen in plenty in the Erie Museum, plucked from the wounds

of the *Niagara's* twin sister, the *Lawrence*. Against such a battering the twelve inches of wood offered fair protection.

Century-old oakum—threads of hemp, soaked in tar—bulged from the seams of the *Niagara's* planking. This caulking revealed another long-lost custom. The seams had been "payed"—that is levelled up—with molten lead. The present practice is to employ tallow or putty. The use of lead goes back to the time of the Spanish Armada.

One of the curiosities of decay in the *Niagara* was the warty appearance of all her exterior planking. The little protuberances, which at first glance seemed to be knots of tougher grain than the rest of the planking, were actually only the wood surrounding the spike heads. The acid of the iron had hardened the oak for a radius of an inch or so, and preserved it against decay, while surrounding surfaces had been ground away by a century of water friction.

Grimmest of all the reminders of the old ship's history were the squares of gunports still showing in her battered sides. The openings for the guns measured three feet wide by four feet high. Between each, somewhat above the level of the long vanished deck and port-sills, were small openings, six inches square. Amateur historians have declared these to be "peep holes," from which the guns could be sighted without exposing the head of the marksmen above the bulwarks. The assumption is reasonable, although it involves the difficulty of taking aim from a position below the level of the gun-barrel and half a fathom on either side of it—a position attainable also only by crouching close to the deck. The squares are explained by others to have been scuppers of the "shutter" type. These are still much favoured on the Great Lakes among vessels which require a rapid clearance of water from their decks. A hinged and slanting lid prevents the entrance of water from without and facilitates its escape from within. Such a contrivance would undoubtedly be appreciated in the old war brigs whose decks literally swam with gore in the Battle of Lake Erie. But the openings are rather high in the bulwarks to have served this purpose.[1]

A model of the *Niagara's* sister ship, the *Lawrence*, in the Erie Museum is vouched for by the signatures of three old sailors who were familiar with her appearance in their boyhood. Their only criticism of it is that its sides should show more tumble-home. The model presents a squat, full-bowed brig, enormously wide and very flat. It quite agrees with the old hull lying on the shore of Misery Bay. Of the authenticity of the hulk itself there could be no doubt. Her gunports and her leaded seams proved her a member of the

ancient war fleet. The size corresponded with the preserved dimensions, 110 feet length, 30 feet beam, and 9 feet depth of hold.

The remaining iron work on her was unquestionably ancient. For example, her rudder was not hung on straps, but by fitting pintles into iron-banded gudgeons. The great eyebolts in her ribs, to which the gun tackles were hooked, offered curious proof of the primitive limitations of shipbuilding in Erie early in the nineteenth century. It was apparently impossible to thread the bolts and tighten them with nuts. The old shipsmiths got over the difficulty by fitting a plate over the end of the bolt, and holding it in position by means of a "toggle," or iron key, driven through a slot in the bolt point.

Another antique bit of ship carpentry was the provision of pairs of great wooden knees, formed from the natural crook of oak roots, to take up the in-pull of the straining rigging just abaft the foremast and mainmast. These were placed immediately below the deck and clamped both to the deck-beams and the ship's ribs. Only three of the original eight were left in the brig.

Dismantled after the peace of 1815 the *Niagara* lost her occupation completely upon the disarmament agreement of three years later date. She was sunk at her moorings in 1825, the unseasoned timber of her hasty construction being then considerably decayed. There on the bottom of Misery Bay, sixteen feet below the surface, she lay for eighty-eight years. Raising her proved a task of considerable delicacy. Divers passed chains under her, and made the ends fast to great beams supported on a little flotilla of pontoons—two of eighty-ton lifting power, and four more of twenty tons each. Link by link the chains were taken up by purchases, and as the hulk rose from her muddy bed she was cautiously edged shoreward, so that she was always nearly resting on the bottom. In this way the wrecking crew tried to avoid straining her, but despite the utmost care the lifting chains gored deeply into her weakened sides.

Taking advantage of the high water caused by an equinoctial hurricane the wrecking crew floated her fairly on to the beach, and then ran her out on "butter boards," or skidways. Their task ended with landing her. A large commission, representative of Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, Rhode Island, Kentucky, and Minnesota states, had undertaken the still more delicate task of rehabilitating the decrepit warship in her ancient splendour, and sending her on a tour of the Great Lakes, culminating in prolonged celebrations at Put-In-Bay, the scene of her greatest triumph.

One of the finds of the wrecking crew was an ancient bayonet, rust-eaten but serviceable, in the brig's forepeak. They also found numerous weapons of a much homelier character—ice hooks, grapnels, pike points, anchor arms—all left by relic hunters. For three-quarters of a century the old veteran had to withstand their attacks. On her reappearance on the surface she was threatened with immediate dismemberment from the same source. But the Inter-State Board of the Perry's Victory Centennial Commissioners took time by the forelock. They not only put the relic hunters to flight, but they issued strict orders that the hulk was not even to be photographed. The wrecking firm swathed their prize in canvas and tarpaulins thoroughly, but March gales were kind to the camera. It was impossible to keep covers over a hundred-foot hulk while the wind was unroofing houses in the surrounding country.

Accurate pictures of the resurrected *Niagara* have a value beyond the mere satisfaction of curiosity. They are the best existing record of the original ship; for she was so far decayed that the process of fitting her for a voyage along the thousand mile waterway to the head of the Great Lakes would necessarily obliterate much of her.

This lifting by pontoons was not the first "camel ride" of the *Niagara*. There was that blazing July day in 1813, when she and the *Lawrence* both crossed the Presqu'isle Bar thus—but that is running into another story.

Let none begrudge the *Niagara* the celebration of her triumph of a century ago. She turned the scale in a battle of nine vessels against six, of a fleet well-manned against a fleet which only boasted fifty bluejackets among its raw crowd of soldiers, frontiersmen, and lake sailors; of a fleet well fed, which hove two hundredweight of shot for every hundredweight fired by a fleet which had been blockaded to the point of starvation. Poor one-armed Barclay's flour-bins were as empty as his coatsleeve. *That* was why he gave battle. It was a fair fight, and the light-weight lost.

And what has befallen the fleets that fought out that bitter struggle?

The luckless *Detroit*, the British flagship captured at a ghastly price, loitered about the lake wharves thirty years or so, and then went blazing over Niagara Falls with helpless wild animals aboard—a spectacle to attract holiday crowds, furnished by gain-seeking publicans.

Her consort, the *Queen Charlotte*, ended her days even less gloriously. She carried cargoes until broken up. Her great iron ship's bell, that once called the watch and relieved the wheel, hangs yet in the town-hall of the

City of Erie. It bears the date 1799. It was a firebell for Erie town from 1828 onwards, and was cracked ringing an alarm.

The *Lawrence*, Commodore Perry's first flagship in the famous battle, lay sunk in Erie Harbour until 1874. Her old bones were raised and sent to the Centennial Exhibition at Philadelphia. Here was a ship whose decks had dripped blood, until even the ward-room assistants of the toiling surgeons could not keep their feet. Like the others, she was a ship men gave the best that was in them, to design, to build, to equip—a ship men laid down their lives to capture or defend—a ship for which men by scores, even hundreds, carried wounds and mutilations to their dying day. And yet her old remains were sold for storage charges!

Sic transit gloria! And now last of that brave armada of fifteen sail which joined battle on fresh water a hundred years ago, the *Niagara*, Perry's second flagship, has again seen the light. May her second incarnation be happier than the first.

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[1] Mr. Henry Piers, custodian of the Province Museum in Halifax, Nova Scotia, offers the interesting and plausible suggestion that these squares were the openings through which the sweeps were worked. Even vessels of the Niagara's size were sometimes propelled by sweeps when the wind failed in those pre-steam days.

CHAPTER X

How We Took Oswego

WHEN THE LARGEST AMERICAN PORT ON LAKE ONTARIO TO-DAY FELL INTO BRITISH HANDS

"A-l-i-a-s," pondered Pan-faced Harry, conning the police-court column of an old newspaper. "What does aye-lie-us mean, anyhow?"

The assembled watch below in the forecastle of the Great Lakes freighter remained silent, diplomatically. Malachi Malone, the mutilated monument of ancient wars, had fixed his Cyclopean orb upon the questioner with a baleful glitter. It was the regard of a basilisk, but it only meant that Malachi was once more searching for something hull down in the horizon of memory.

"Aye-lie-us," quoth the shell-back, "is a switching of names with intent to deceive, which is why you see it mentioned in the police-court column. Some calls it ale-yus, but with them I don't hold. Gimme the Scripter every time——"

"You're thinking of Elias," hastily objected the divinity student, who was earning a dollar a day in his holidays, as before told. You find a very mixed crew in every Great Lakes schooner's forecastle.

"Same thing," affirmed Malachi airily; but, sniffing shoal water to leeward, he hauled his wind adroitly and went on. "Now, in 1814—"

"Lord," objected the second mate. "Another o' them eighteen-twelve hair-raisers!"

"Go on, you interest me, sir," said the divinity student; "I mean," with a painful blush, "fire ahead and be—what-you-may-call-it."

"Ye'll never git fur with nothing stronger'n that, son," advised Malachi grimly; "but, as I was saying, this same aye-lie-us was a handy dodge for us in the King's navee, here on Lake Ontario in 1814.

"I told you about Isaac Chauncey, the Yankee Commodore, and his menagery of schooners at the beginning of the war, and how Sir James Lucas Yeo nipped off four of 'em in 1813. Well, when the fleets laid up that

year the pilots and powder boys got a rest, but the ship-carpenters and sail makers worked double shifts. Lordy, what a time there was in Kingston on our side of the lake and in Sackett's Harbour on the Yankee side. Night and day the saw pits rang and caulking mallets clinked, the pitch cauldrons bubbled and the steam boxes smoked. It was a race to get the biggest fleet ready for the water next spring. We knew they'd started on two twenty-two-gun brigs, the *Jones* and the *Jefferson*—you can see the old *Jefferson's* bones yet bleaching in Sackett's Harbour—and two ships, the *Superior* and the *Mohawk*, as powerful, mind ye, as ocean frigates. We started on two full-sized frigates and a regular line-o'-battle ship—102 guns she was to carry, on two decks, enough to blow the whole Yankee fleet out of the water.

"It took a week then to send a letter from York to Kingston, less than two hundred miles, but it was a perfect miracle how news travelled from one side of the lake to the other. We always knew what the Yanks were doing at Sackett's Harbour, and they seemed to know what we were doing in Kingston even before we begun. There were always deserters coming and going, though ours were branded with a big D under the left armpit, and transported for life, if caught. News of our ship of the line rather staggered the Yanks. They changed the *Superior* from fifty to sixty-two guns as soon as a deserter brought in word of the *St. Lawrence*—that's what the big ship was to be called; and they tried to blow her up with a torpedo later on, like we tried to do with the *Superior*."

"Thought torpedoes were twentieth century," objected the second mate.

"Oh, there's lots of lessons old 1812 taught that they're learning yet," answered Malachi loftily. "Our torpedo for the *Superior* was a raft of powder kegs lashed together, with a fuse running through the top of each keg. It was to be floated alongside of her in the dark, the fuse lit, and the boat that towed it to pull off for dear life. Our boys got as far as Sackett's Harbour one night, and then found the old *Madison* stretched across the harbour mouth, and the new ship still on the stocks, with a guard of marines sleeping under her, and the *Madison's* guns trained to sweep the shipyard with grapeshot in bags and canister in cans. Some liar had told us the *Superior* had been launched, but she wasn't ready for a week later. The boys pulled away, and were chased and pretty near caught by patrol-boats. They had to leave the torpedo on Bull Rock Point, for they were scared of an odd shot blowing the whole thing up.

"As I was saying news passed from Kingston to Sackett's like a man's money melts the first night ashore. Everything we did or planned was matched by Chauncey's moves. Yankee deserters and the chaps trucking and

trading could tell us more about our own fleet than we could squeeze out of 'em about theirs. They knew our vessels, their names, their rigs, and their guns. So Sir James Yeo hit on a scheme. He had the whole fleet renamed. His old flagship, the *Wolfe*—the one I was powder boy in—became the *Montreal*. The *Royal George*, that saved the day in the Burlington Races, became the *Niagara*. The brig *Earl of Moira* was renamed the *Charwell*, and the brig *Lord Melville* shone as the *Star*. They were given thirty-two-pounders for their old eighteens. The schooner *Beresford* was renamed, rerigged, and regunned. She had been renamed once before, for she was the first *Prince Regent*. She blossomed out afresh as the sixteen-gun brig *Netley*, and the schooner *Sir Sidney Smith* faded away into the fourteen-gun brig *Magnet*. One of the new frigates—1,450 tons and 58 guns, mind ye—was christened *Prince Regent*, after the little schooner of the old squadron that had lost her name. Seems a simple trick enough, but it worked fine. The new names and new rigs fooled the tale-bearers, and old Chauncey didn't know whether to believe that we had twice as many vessels as the year before or what. Why, them aye-lie-usses even kept *us* guessing. I've heard the old yellow Stone Frigate a-roaring with the lads argufying——"

"Stone Frigate? What's that?" asked the second mate.

"The old limestone building in Kingston Harbour yet, at Point Frederick, back of the Military College," answered Malachi. "You've seen it many's the time, with the old timber launching ways crumbling alongside of it. In my time its floors were open from end to end like the inside of a three-decker. We rushed it up for sailors' shore quarters and shipwrights' barracks in 1812, and it's about all that's left now to show o' the war—except me," and he dropped the lid of his one eye.

"Well, you're as sound as the old Stone Frigate itself," quoth the second mate encouragingly.

"Sure I am," said Malachi.

"And did the renamed fleet see service?" mildly inquired the divinity student.

"See service!" Malachi snorted. "Young feller, just listen to what one of your Methody parsons went through. Ever hear of Rev. James Richardson, D.D.? 'Course you did. His son was surgeon in Toronto jail down to last year. Well, the Rev. Jim was the sailing-master when I was in the *Montreal*. He wasn't any reverend then, but he was a fine God-fearing chap, who'd sailed the lakes with his father since knee-high. He was a lieutenant in the

Provincial Marine, but that only gave him sailing-master's rank when the fleet was reorganized as part of the Royal Navy.

"We beat old Chauncey in the ship-carpenters' race that winter and had our fleet all ready but the *St. Lawrence* by the end o' April. When the lads who made the torpedo attempt reported how far the *Superior* was on, Sir James Yeo saw it was the time to strike hard. He wheedled old Sir George Prevost, the Governor, into letting things alone for once, and early in May sailed from Kingston Harbour to attack Oswego.

"Oswego's a hustling city now, and was a big place, in a way, then, for it was the nearest lake port to Sackett's Harbour, the Yankee base, and they used to send all their heavy supplies there from the seaboard. They could tote them that far on the inland waterways and float them into Sackett's Harbour from Oswego, when the coast was clear.

"The place had a star-shaped fort then, where the big one is now—high up on the crown of the hill to the east of the river mouth. The town was all on the other side of the stream. The fort was a regular Gibraltar in its way. You boys've seen the wrecks piled up on the boulder beach, around the life-saving station at the foot of the fort hill in *your* time, and you know they were the remains of vessels trying to make the port with all the friendly help of tugs and lighthouses——"

"I've seen five go ashore there in one season," answered Pan-faced Harry.

"Well you can guess what it was to bring a fleet up to that place in the late spring, when all the welcome they'd get'd be roundshot outside, and canister inside the harbour, if they could make it. Sir James thought it over, and he saw, perhaps for the first time, the mistake both sides were making in the war. The new ships were too big for work! The big new *Prince Regent* couldn't have got into Oswego Harbour at all, and had to be left behind to guard Kingston. We went over with the *Montreal* and the *Niagara*, the *Star*, *Charwell*, *Magnet* and *Princess Charlotte*—the second new frigate, 1,200 tons and 42 guns. We towed gunboats—big open barges, some of 'em lugger-rigged, and all with thwarts across, so's two men could pull on each of the three dozen oars. They'd a gun or two on platforms in the stern and bow. We'd a full house, with the Glengarry Highlanders and De Watteville regiment, and the Second Battalion Royal Marines, besides us bluejackets.

"At six bells in the afternoon watch on the fifth of May we hove-to off Oswego, fifty miles across from Kingston. We lay outside of gun range, and sent the galleys in to get the lay of the land. The Yankees blazed away with

their guns from the fort and a battery they'd posted on the beach, but all the harm they did was to stave a hole in the bow of our biggest gunboat. After an hour and a half the Johnny Marines were ordered back alongside, and word was passed that we'd storm the place at dark.

"The sun went down in a splash o' red, and a big bank rose and rose and rose in the nor'west.

"'There'll be no fight to-night, sonny,' sailing-master Richardson said to me. 'But that beggar'll have you busy keeping your powder dry, my boy,' and he pointed to the cloud bank.

"He was right. At two bells in the second dog-watch it was 'All hands make sail!' and we filled the maintops'l and got under way with the gunboats in tow. At five bells it was 'Clew up t'gallants'ls! Stand by tops'l halliards! Reefers away!' and we were hauling out the third reefs in the tops'ls, with the fleet tacking in column offshore, staggering like long voyagers on their first night in port. The wind came down hot and heavy, and through the dark from every ridge ashore the whirl of beacon fires told of the alarm being spread from hamlet to hamlet. It was a bad hole to be caught in with a nor'west squall, with nothing but rocks and ramparts to leeward and the populace waiting to pick up the pieces as soon as you smashed on the beach. Sir James cracked it to the flagship, the *Princess Charlotte*, till I thought her new sails 'ud bust. We could see her looming ahead of us, riding high as a haystack, and sagging one fathom to leeward, for every two fathoms she'd make ahead. She was towing two gunboats, and they helped hold her back.

"'By jiminy, Malachi,' Richardson yelled at me—it was his heaviest swear word; 'they've got to lose those boats or lose the flagship. They'll never thresh her clear.' Just as he spoke the black bulks dropped astern and the *Princess* forged ahead, and we knew they'd cut the painter.

"Then there came a call from the plugged gunboat we were towing. She was a big brute, sixty feet long, and could carry a hundred and fifty men. 'We're in water up to our knees!' hollered a captain o' marines, 'and we can't keep afloat, though we're bailing with our hats!'

"'Haul 'em alongside!' ordered Captain Popham, our Old Man—he had succeeded to the command of the *Montreal* when Sir James Yeo took the new flagship. We tailed on to the towline and hauled the battered hulk up to leeward. She was full to the gunwale and foundering. The Johnny Marines scrambled aboard of us like drowning rats, and we hooked tackles unto her

guns—she had two of 'em—and swung them in, though I thought we'd take the masts out doing it. Then we cut her adrift.

"You know the Big Galloo Island, halfway across from Kingston to Oswego? Well, we fetched to leeward o' the Galloo afore the squall blew out. Soon as it did we all wore 'round and stood back for Oswego. The fleet had blown out a few jibs and split a tops'l or two in the flurry, and in all we lost four of the boats we were towing; but compared with the chance of being scattered in staves all along the rocks from Oswego to Six Town Point, it wasn't so bad; especially as the fleet was lumbered up with a thousand men in all.

"The weather had steadied down by daylight, but the *Princess Charlotte* didn't dare go in close enough to get her guns into action! She drew too much water. But we got close enough! O Lord, yes! The little *Magnet* was sent right into the river, past the fort to cut off reinforcements, for the watch fires had raised the countryside; and the *Montreal* and the *Niagara* sailed into the harbour mouth and went at the fort hammer and tongs. The *Star* and *Charwell* kept under easy sail outside, towing up boatload after boatload of marines, soldiers and sailors to the landing place on the beach.

"We lay closest to the fort, and they hailed red-hot shot on us from the ramparts. We came back with cold grape and round. They slithered our sails to ribbons and cut up our rigging till it hung in tangled bunches of hemp. 'We can't get out o' here, lads,' hailed Captain Popham, 'for our gear's all gone, but—' A ball whizzed, and his right hand, holding the trumpet, dropped, mangled, but he raised the trumpet with the other and finished —'We'll give them the worth of their money, since they want us to stay so badly!'

"Up the steep slope of the hill to the fort swarmed two hundred bluejackets with their boarding-pikes, Sir William Howe Mulcaster, of the old *Royal George*, at their head. Sir James Yeo was ashore, too. Along the back of the fort hill, from the landing place, streamed the kilted Glengarries and the De Wattevilles, in red tunics and white breeches, and the Royal Marines in their silly stiff hats, red coats, and blue trousers. But they could fight, those same Johnnies, and the Yanks, who had potted them from the shelter of the woods, were now on the run for the fort.

"By this time we were on fire. The red-hot shot from the furnaces in the fort made our tarred rigging sizzle and the flame licked up the masts.

" 'Buckets aloft!' called Captain Popham, and the topmen scrambled up the flaming ratlines and laid out along the scorching yards with leather

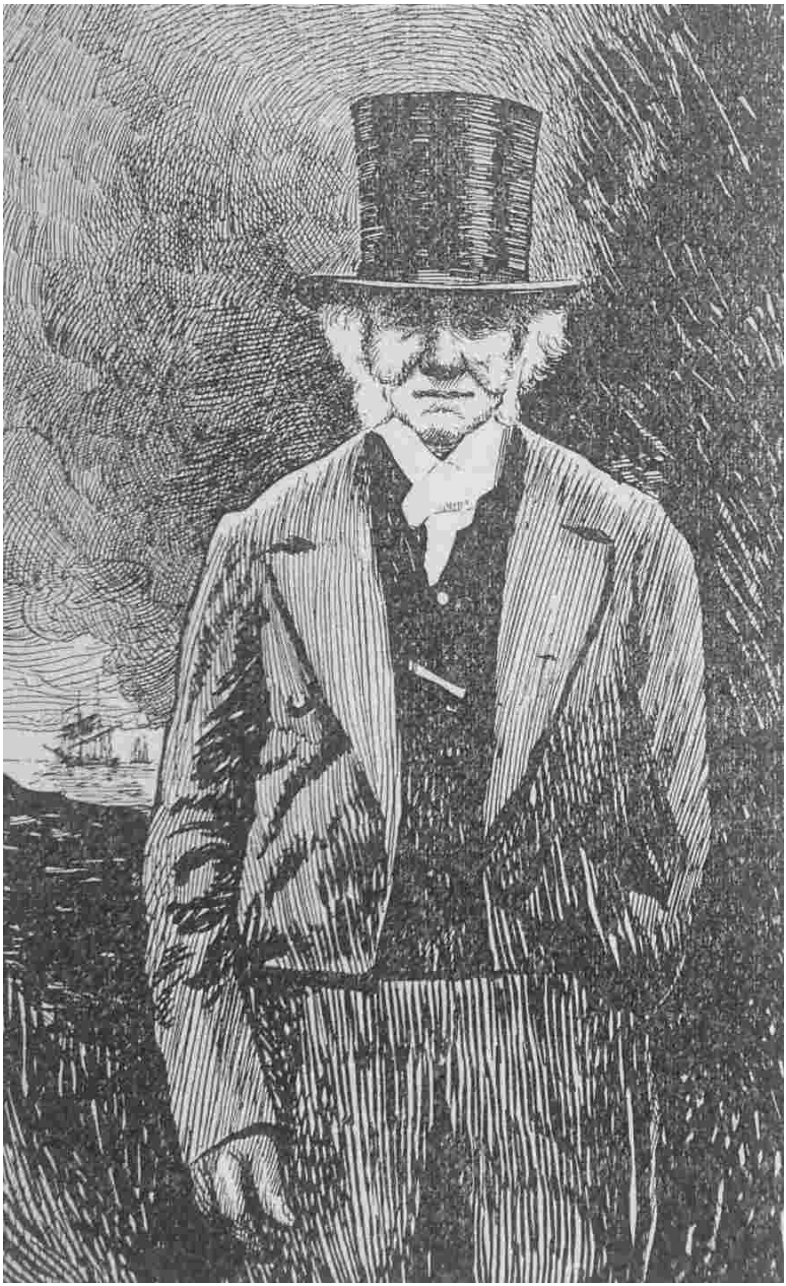
buckets on long lines and soused everything. I could see through the smoke the bluejackets were up the bank now, and Lieutenant Laurie, Sir James Yeo's secretary, was scrambling over the ramparts first of all. Then another burst o' flame along our decks made everybody's heart jump, for fire in a wooden ship, ballasted with gunpowder, is a pretty sure passport to the big beyond!

"The bulwarks had taken fire, but we smothered them with sand and tarpaulins, when there came a yell from aloft. A brace of red-hot chain shot had struck the foretop and sheared away the maintopmast stays'l, where it was stowed there. It floated down like a flaming parachute on to the fo'c'sle head by the powder gangway. The sailing-master rushed forward with a boarding-pike, caught the mass as it fell, and pitched it overboard. Then with a scream he dropped the pike and rolled down the gangway. Where his left arm had been hung a bloody mass of seared flesh and shredded jacket sleeve. A red-hot roundshot had got him.

"I helped carry him to the cockpit. 'It'll have to come off at the shoulder,' I heard the surgeon say. Jimmy Richardson gritted his teeth, and then above the roar of the guns I heard rounds of cheers on cheers. I rushed on deck, sick with the smell of the surgeon's shambles, and there on the hilltop, with his legs locked around the head of the fort flagpole, I could see a marine hanging. It was Lieutenant Hewitt. He had swarmed up, as nimble as a man-o'-warsman, and had torn the big Stars and Stripes down with his hands. The colours had been nailed to the pole.

"The Yanks were on the run for Oswego Falls, twelve miles up the river, and we let them go. The town was good enough for us. We'd twenty-two killed and seventy-three wounded; but, on the other hand, we had the flag, we had the fort, we had sixty prisoners, and we had the stores they left behind. There was powder and shot by the ton, and six spiked guns in the fort. We blew them up, and burned the barracks and public buildings in the place, but we didn't rob one henroost, nor turn one family out. Down by the harbour we loaded cordage and cables enough for a fleet, besides 600 barrels of salt and 500 barrels of pork, and as much bread in barrels, and 800 barrels of flour. And what else did we find, d'ye think? Nothing but our old friend the *Growler*. Mind the saucy schooners in Chauncey's fleet the year before that wouldn't obey orders off Niagara, and got snapped up by Sir James Yeo? The *Growler* was one of them. We turned her into a transport, and, as luck would have it, she was recaptured by Chauncey off the Ducks that fall, along with the *Julia* and three others. She was lying in Oswego loaded with three long thirty-two-pounders and four long twenty-four's, intended for the

Superior at Sackett's Harbour, when we first hove-to off the place. They scuttled her to save the guns, but we found them in her hold, raised her, and towed her home with us, along with a string of bateaux and a trading schooner or two that we found in the place. Boys-oh-boys, there was money rolling on the tavern floors in Kingston when the fleet came in——"



"*Jimmy Richardson . . . wound up as an admiral of the Sky Pilots. He was a Methody Bishop before he died.*"

"But Richardson—what became of him?" asked the divinity student, anxious to steer Malachi away from the shoals of sin.

"Oh, he pulled through the surgeon's hacking, and was made a pilot in the hundred-gunner *St. Lawrence*. There wasn't a better man on the lakes for the job, either. But, as he himself said, he'd been born a square-rigger, but he was only a fore-'n'-after now, with his port spars gone. He waited till the war was over, and then went preaching and wound up as an admiral of the Sky Pilots. He was a Methody bishop before he died—so put that in your pipe, young feller, and follow the smoke of a smart packet, if you'd make a record passage."

CHAPTER XI

The Captain's Gig goes Glove-hunting

On the outside of the south wall of St Mark's Church,
Niagara-on-the-Lake, is a tablet

SACRED TO THE MEMORY OF
CAPT. COPELAND RADCLIFFE
OF HIS BRITANNICK MAJESTY'S NAVY
WHO FELL WHILST GALLANTLY LEADING ON
HIS MEN TO BOARD ONE OF THE ENEMY'S
SCHOONERS AT ANCHOR OFF FORT ERIE
ON THE NIGHT OF THE 12TH OF AUGUST, 1814.

HE WAS A NATIVE OF DEVONSHIRE
AND THIS STONE IS ERECTED AT THE REQUEST
OF HIS MOTHER BY HIS COMPANION IN ARMS
CAPT. DOBBS, R.N.

"Passengers lately, eh?"

The gaze of Lieutenant Alexander Dobbs, R.N., bored its way through the blue tobacco haze to a dainty Spanish leather glove, meant for a slim, left hand, tacked against the cabin carlins overhead.

Copeland Radcliffe, seated opposite, failed to flush, but his merry eyes twinkled.

Dobbs had the *Charwell*, Radcliffe the *Netley*. Their two brigs lay rubbing sides in the swift Niagara current at Queenston, while their commanders "visited" in the *Netley's* cabin, and talked long and earnestly of the turn affairs had taken.

Since Barclay's defeat on Lake Erie in 1813 British naval power above the Falls of Niagara had been almost extinct. At this very moment an express was begging Lieutenant-General Drummond for succour for the *Nancy*, the last British armed vessel on the Upper Lakes, doomed shortly to perish under the guns of an American squadron in the Nottawasaga. Drummond

was besieging Fort Erie, where the American invader, four thousand strong, had entrenched himself. Before the fort lay three armed American vessels, the *Porcupine*, *Somers*, and *Ohio*, part of Perry's squadron which had destroyed the British fleet the year before. The young British officers, ambitious for honours above their narrow lieutenancies, buoyant with the enthusiasm of under thirty, were discussing the possibilities of "cutting-out" these vessels. (The old man-o'-warsmen coined that familiar phrase generations before the slangsters picked it up.) Dobbs' discovery of the glove broke the thread of talk.

"Yes," Radcliffe answered, heartily, "an Oswego lady and her niece. They'd come down Lake Erie in the United States war-schooner *Ohio*, and taken passage in a sloop at Niagara for home. Sir James Yeo captured their vessel and told us to give them passage to the foot of the lake. They were well-bred people, and the niece as trim a packet as ever flew the Stars and Stripes. Lots of ginger in her make-up, too. As she went down the gangway, when we had brought them to Kingston, she dropped that glove.

" 'Keep it, sir,' said she, with the deepest of curtsies, when I hurried after her, 'That is,' she went on, with a toss of her brown curls, 'if you can. I mislaid its mate in the *Ohio*, and her commander may be looking for this to keep it company one of these days.' I was rather hoveaback by her style—these light-draught clippers are hard to follow in narrow, winding channels, you know—and by the time I had filled away on the new tack she was gone. So I nailed the glove up till I get a chance."

"It's the left hand—nearest the heart," Dobbs commented playfully. Then, with sudden earnestness: "You're not in love with her, Rad?"

"The lass I love," answered Radcliffe, with equal earnestness, "won't be so careless of her finger-gear. For all that, I'd like to send the complete pair back to that saucy minx, just the same."

"Well, then, we'll have to cut the *Ohio* out," laughed Dobbs, "and while we're at it we might as well take the other two. By gad, it would be a prime joke to clean 'em off the very moorings where we lost the *Detroit* and *Caledonia*, first year of the war!"

"Lord!" exclaimed Radcliffe, "it makes me boil to think of how cocky the Yanks got over cutting those two out. Of course, it was our own fault, but the glorification! Here we anchor right under the guns of our own batteries at Fort Erie, and turn in as though Black Rock and Buffalo, the American bases, were the other side of the world instead of being the other side of the river. Along comes Jesse Elliott, with a crowd of bluejackets

fresh from Sackett's Harbour, and they pull across, cut the brigs adrift, and sail away with them as though performing a circus trick!"

"They say," broke in the practical Dobbs, "the *Caledonia* had a cargo of furs worth $250,000 in her hold."

"Yes," exploded Radcliffe wrathfully, "and the other was worth as much to us, in point of honours, or more, for she was the prize brig *President Adams*. She was renamed *Detroit* in honour of brave Brock's capture of her and the town whose name she bore. It was a bitter blow to the general to have her recaptured that way. 'This will work incalculable mischief,' he wrote, just before he got his death wound at Queenston Heights, and he was right."

"But the Yankees didn't get clear away with her," Dobbs reminded him. "You remember, they had to run her aground on Squaw Island, and both sides fought all day over her, holding her turnabout until she was burnt to the water's edge."

"Yes," admitted Radcliffe, "but they got the *Caledonia* into Black Rock, and she was made the nucleus of the fleet that wiped poor Barclay out, last September. Dobbs, I'd give anything in the world to square the yards by cutting out those three schooners that are lording it over the river and lake at Fort Erie now!"

"Especially as one is the *Ohio*, and has a certain article of ladies' wearing apparel, to wit and namely, one glove, aboard some place!" laughed Dobbs.

"No," protested Radcliffe, "if it came to a choice I'd sooner take the *Somers* and the *Porcupine*, for their share in Barclay's defeat. Congress gave Elliott a sword of honour and they made him a captain for cutting out our two brigs. What do you think'll happen to us supposing we clean up the schooners?"

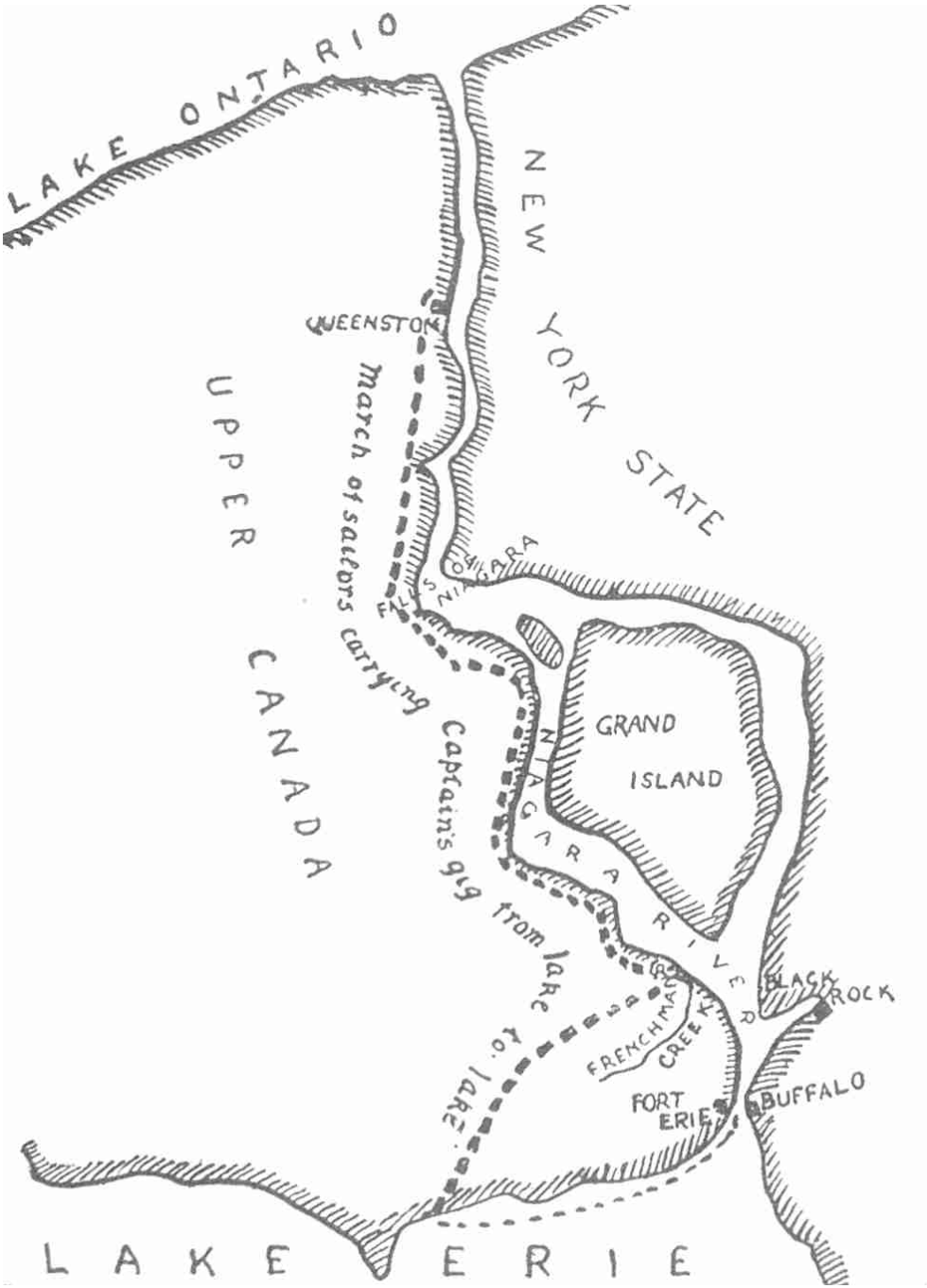
"A wigging from headquarters for acting without orders," laughed Dobbs, "but let's try it!"

"I'm with you," agreed Radcliffe. "But what's your plan? Boarding by night, of course, but we're here and they're there, with the falls of Niagara between us. There's not a British punt afloat above the rapids now, they say —and we can't wade out to them."

"Let's ask George Hyde," suggested Dobbs. "He marched up with Collier from Halifax to Kingston in the dead of last winter. He knows a wrinkle or two about transportation."

George Hyde, gentleman volunteer by condition, midshipman by rank, and mate by occupation aboard the *Charwell*, fulfilled their expectations. Horses were not to be had for love or money, but within an hour a little company of bluejackets and marines, seventy-five strong, was stumbling through the dark up the steep ridge road from Queenston. There was something in the middle of the troop that moved slowly, something that changed bearers frequently; but the group of panting men vanished among the windings of the road before the keenest American scouts on the opposite side of the river could make out who they were or what they carried.

All the short August night they tramped the river road, while the breeze sighed through the leaves overhead and the water murmured and swirled in the chasm below; on past the roar of the Whirlpool, on past the thunder of the mighty Falls. Dawn lighted them into the hollow where Frenchman's Creek flows into the Niagara River—a tired troop of sailormen, sore of foot and sorer of back—for, though marching itself was a penance to men confined to the hundred-foot walk of a brig's deck, they had carried on their shoulders, all the seventeen up-hill miles from Queenston, the *Charwell's* captain's gig!



The shore-voyage of a ship's boat.

You who have watched a ship's boat toss like a cork among the billows—to you it has given a lasting picture of lightness. You who have tallied on to the tackle-falls when the boat has had to be hoisted up to the davits—you know her heaviness, and how it grows, ton upon ton, as the last inch of the davit tackle comes squeezing under the thumb cleat. But it takes the actual experience of having stumbled, mile after mile up a rocky path from midnight till morning, under the crushing gunwales of a shell of white oak, twenty feet long, weighing between one and two thousand pounds and *feeling* as many hundredweight—it takes that to enable one to realize what that march of the *Charwell's* crew meant.

Halting for breakfast at Frenchman's Creek the shore-voyagers made discoveries, good and bad. Five flat-bottomed bateaux had been hauled up on the bank—enough, with the gig, to carry the whole party comfortably. Erie's waves danced, dark blue, in the distance, but it was impossible to reach them by the river, for sentries from Black Rock to Buffalo watched it night and day. Fort Erie could only be approached from the lake—and to reach the lake unobserved meant nearly three leagues of heavy going, through the woods. Hyde spent the morning preparing slings and shoulderpads, and a certain Lieut.-Col. Nichol, quartermaster-general of the militia, proved a good angel. He lent enough of his merry men to pick the bateaux up and walk off with them, though it was eight miles of hard bush-trail scrambling. It was killing work; but when the twilight of the eleventh of August faded into the velvet dusk, the toiling, perspiring procession emerged upon the beach of the lake, seven miles west of the entrance to the river, and so at last the British once more had a flotilla on Lake Erie!

And such a fleet it was! Dobbs led, in the *Charwell's* gig, with a pair of bateaux completing his division. Radcliffe was the proud commander of the remaining trio of leaky flatboats. Just before midnight they turned from the lake to the river. Floating quietly downstream they neared the outlying one of the American schooners and made ready for a swift pull for all three vessels simultaneously.

As the oars dipped a watchful sentry hailed:

"Who goes there?"

"Steady, lads," hissed Dobbs, and Radcliffe, posing as a blundering waterman, stuttered out:

"Pup-pup-pup-provision b-boats with s-s-sup-pup-plies for the schoo-schoo-schooner S-S-Somers. Is that the S-S-S-Somers?"

"Naw," mimicked the sentry, "this is the Pork-pork-pork-you-porcupine. Choose a ship with fewer s's in her name, matey, or you'll bust! Try the *Ohio*."

"We-we-we will!" answered Radcliffe, with such conviction that even his shoulder-galled messmates, huddled there in the shadow of death, could not help tittering.

By this time the boats had drifted past the first schooner. To have turned on her now, with a sentry watching, would have ruined the whole enterprise, so the trail drifted on towards the other schooners. The conversation with the *Porcupine's* anchor watch had allayed the suspicions of the *Somers'* sentries, if they had any, and the first intimation they had of danger was the swish of a British cutlass severing their cable. Next moment a mob of bluejackets, flashing muskets, pistols, cutlasses and boarding-pikes, swarmed over the bulwarks, cut down the anchor watch, and seized all the deck-openings.

"Try the next schooner, Rad!" shouted Dobbs, "she may cut her cable if we wait till we're masters here!"

"This one's drifting towards her, so we'll help you if you need it. Good luck, Alec," returned Radcliffe, and back to his boat leaped the brave lieutenant.

His oars thrashed out, and, followed by two bateaux, he disappeared in the direction of the *Ohio*. A flash and roar of musketry showed that her crew had been aroused by the uproar.

"Pike and cutlass, lads!" shouted Radcliffe, snapping his pistol and tossing it aside as he leaped to the bulwarks.

His figure was outlined against a flame of musketry and plunged forward, inboard. His men followed, hacking, hewing, thrusting, stabbing, and the schooner's deck at once became a pit filled with writhing men, fighting hand to hand.

Now the batteries along the river began to roar excited interrogations. Black Rock and Buffalo on the east side bayed back to Fort Erie on the west, like dogs barking from farm to farm when the midnight bear prowls round the sheep-folds. The flashes of the guns showed nothing, the batteries pounded away blindfold. The gunners knew neither the target nor the range. But the moon, heaving up from behind Buffalo like an aerial fireship, showed the *Porcupine* under sails and sweeps, fleeing for the safety of the lake, while the *Ohio* and *Somers* stood down the river towards Frenchman's Creek—their canvas, mastheaded by British sailors, swelling in the night

breeze and lightening the labours of the towing bateaux. Ere the Black Rock batteries could find the range the newly hoisted British ensigns had passed around the bend in the river.

It was one of those small fights which mean a great victory. The prizes, with their thirty-two and twenty-four-pounder guns, were precious; cannon on Lake Erie were worth their weight in silver; but more precious still was the smashing blow to Yankee assurance and the restoration of British prestige involved. And this had occurred on the very anchorage where, two years before, the Americans had "cut-out" the British brigs *Detroit* and *Caledonia*!

"What luck, Rad?" hailed Dobbs, as the *Somers*, making sail faster, ranged up on the other schooner.

There was an ill-boding silence, then Hyde, the midshipman, hailed from the *Ohio*.

"He's dead sir—killed just as he leaped the rail. Can you send the surgeon, sir? We've a seaman killed, too, and half a dozen sailors and marines wounded; and the Americans are pretty badly cut up—commander and sailing-master hurt, and half a dozen of the crew wounded and some killed. How's it with you?"

"Poor Rad! Poor old boy! That spoils it all! And us with nobody hurt, except two Yanks hit in the first rush. Hyde, I'm coming aboard. I'm sorry it wasn't me."

The *Charwell's* gig brought the *Charwell's* surgeon and the *Charwell's* captain. The latter plunged at once into the cabin of the *Ohio*. There lay, groaning in agony, the schooner's late commander. There lay, stiffening in death, the body of Copeland Radcliffe. Dobbs flashed the lantern on the face, and involuntarily followed the stare of the dead man's eyes. Tacked on the carlins above him was a dainty Spanish leather glove, meant for a slim right hand.

Honest Alexander Dobbs, master now of two American schooners, with sixty or seventy prisoners in their holds, cannon on deck, and provisions, arms and ammunition under hatches—Lieutenant Alexander Dobbs, R.N., who was to be hailed as "Captain," and publicly congratulated by General Drummond before all the forces on the morrow—this gallant, powder-blackened seaman stared and stared at the dainty bit of leather as at a heaven-blazing portent. Suddenly he tore it from the carlins and strode out on deck, rending the glove in fragments.

“Damn the women!” cried he bitterly, strewing the last shred into the purling wake.

CHAPTER XII

Yarns o' York

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF THE MARVELLOUS REAPPEARANCE OF MALACHI MALONE UPON A CENTENARY-EVE IN THE SECOND CITY OF CANADA

He looked like a being from another world; and he was.

The wrinkled, shrivelled old atomy who mumbled to the longshoremen in the waterfront saloon that April evening said he was Malachi Malone—last living witness of the War of 1812. And this is the tale he told, in a gasping, choking treble that kept the noisy bar crowd silent and round-eyed.

"Ye don't believe what the newspaper says? Ye don't believe the 'Mericans captured this here city o' Toronto one hundred years ago to-morrow? Well, the more fools you, for I know they *did*. I was there. Tuesday, April 27, 1813, was the day. I know.

"Ye think I'm a liar. More fools you, again. I'll prove it. I'll tell you how it happened.

"When I was a kid in Kingston the place swarmed with sailors and soldiers, and ships and cannon, for it was war time. I ran away from school and hid in a commissary waggon when night came on, 'cause I was scared to go home. When I woke up the waggon was under weigh, and I was scared to get out, for I didn't know where I was. When the driver *did* find me at daylight he cuffed my ears and gave me a hunk of bread and some corn coffee, and told me not to leave the waggon nohow, if I didn't want to get et up by Indians and bears and things. And so I stayed, and we went on and on, through trees and trees and trees, over a road of frozen mud and snow. At night we'd camp, and we'd go to sleep with the horses whinneyin' around the big fire, and the wolves howlin.' Our waggon was one of a train of half a dozen, haulin' military stores to Burlington Heights, at the head o' the lake. A few soldiers went along with the first waggon, and made log crossin's at the creeks.

"Bime-by—mebbe a week after we started—we came to a big high ridge that showed the lake, clear and cold offshore in the April sun, roily and brown in by the bank.

"'The Highlands o' Scarborough,' Billy the driver told me. 'We kin make York by dark if the road holds out.'

"'Tween the road and the lake on the crest of the ridge stood a tall, notched tree trunk, with an arm stickin' out like a gibbet beam. As we passed the big arm began to move up and down. A sergeant bellowed at us, 'Lick 'em up, Bill, lick 'em up! They've just sighted the enemy's fleet from the telegraph!'

"The waggons went plungin' down the miry road till, at dark, we had to ferry a river, and pulled up at a timber blockhouse on the far bank. We was in Toronto—York as its name went then. *You* find miles of streets wherever you go now, and half a million people. *We* found sixty wooden houses, packed in eight blocks between the Don River and the market square in front of St. James' Church; a few stores, more taverns, and Parliament Buildin's down by the harbour at the river's mouth.

"The town was all a-buzz, with the taverns doin' a roarin' business. Farmers had flocked in, the militia'd mustered, and the place fair swarmed with soldiers—Glengarry Fencibles, Royal Newfoundlanders, a few o' the 49th, and the King's or 8th Foot, with a few dozen Chippewa and Mississaga Indians in warpaint and feathers. There was only a few soldiers of each regiment, but their different uniforms made 'em seem a lot. Nobody was scared. 'Let 'em come!' everybody said, for they'd trimmed the Yanks time and again already in the war—Mackinaw, Detroit, Queenston Heights, and Ogdensburg—and every time against big odds.

"Countin' the three hundred militia and the Indians and dockyard hands, and takin' in the two companies of the King's that had just arrived ahead of us, there was six or seven hundred fightin' men to make the town roar and ring that night.

"I saw the General himself—Sir Roger Hale Sheaffe—sittin' at a table, talkin' and laughin' with his officers. He puffed a big fat cigar as if he hadn't a care in the world.

"We slept that night in the market square. The militia bivouacked there. Afore daylight we was routed out and told to take our horses down to the navy yard.

"This was away west o' the town, near the bottom of a military road called Yonge street. High and dry here on the stocks, like the Ark on Mount Ararat, loomed the hull of the big new frigate *Sir Isaac Brock*, half planked up and ready for caulkin'.

" 'That's what brings them Yankees,' I heard a dockyard man say. 'They've set their heart on gettin' her, for she's better'n anything they have afloat. If *she* was in commission with her thirty guns they wouldn't be a-hangin' around the harbour!'

"Hard aground on the beach beside the launchin' ways lay the dismantled hulk of the old brig *Duke o' Gloucester*, refittin' as a transport. They'd stripped the *Prince Regent* war-schooner of her guns to fit out the *Brock*, and had shifted the *Gloucester's* six-pound pop-guns into the *Prince*. She'd sailed for Kingston three days before. All around the frigate, like swine in the mire, lay her own eighteen-pounder carronades and the long twelves taken out of the *Prince*, dismounted and buried above their muzzles in ice and frozen mud. It was a late spring.

" 'Twas to get the cannon out to the garrison that all the waggoners was routed out so early, but all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't budge them frostbound guns. They worked with picks and pries and crowbars and tackles, but hadn't raised one when the call came for all hands to the fort.

"For a mile and a half we rode west, along a rough road back from the Bay front, through gardens and apple-orchards and past houses in clearin's from the native bush, till we came to the Garrison Creek. Across it was a barracks and blockhouse and palisades; then a big low buildin' called the Government House, where the governor used to live. The garden in the hollow around it was filled with soldiers as we passed. Everywhere, except to the south, was bush. *There* was the lake.

"Billy's horses was hitched to a six-horse team to drag to the Western battery, half a mile from the garrison, a rusty old eighteen-pounder gun-barrel, lashed to the fork of a tree.

"When we reached the Western battery, some of the Royal Newfoundlanders took our old eighteen-pounder and clamped it to some pine logs with iron hoops. Another gun had been mounted that way. 'They ain't been used since the French left 'em at their old fort,' Billy said, 'and we'll be lucky if they don't blow us to bits when they go off. And to think of all them guns layin' in the mud in the shipyard!'

" 'Where's the 'Mericans'?' I asked, too interested to think of it before.

" 'Here they come,' he said, and pointed out over the lake.

"Two miles out, with sails lighted by the risin' sun. Stars and Stripes flappin' and long streamers o' red, white and blue blowin' off to leeward, the fleet was roundin' the point of the sandbar that sheltered the harbour from the south and west. The water was smooth in the lee of the bar, but the wind was keen and freshenin', and they came on fast. The Commodore's ship, a square-rigged three-master, led 'em. A brig followed. And then fourteen schooners, mostly little ones. But from every one flashed the gleam of guns, and their decks was crowded with men. They towed ships' boats and big bateaux.

"The enemy seemed to be steerin' for the clear space on the bank to the west'ard, where the French used to have a fort and the big exhibition's held now. We tried our new-rigged eighteen-pounders on 'em, without any damage on either side, and forty Indians and a few townspeople ran along the high bank and peppered the ships' boats as they pulled in. The boats stopped to let the riflemen fire, and the high east wind drifted them on up towards Humber Bay, past the rough foreshore of what's now South Parkdale. Where the bank got low and formed a beach the riflemen rushed a landing, dropped both the Indian chiefs, killed some of the braves and drove the others into the woods.

"Most of the militia was back in the market square yet, or guardin' the town blockhouse, three miles away. A few of 'em had been sent off with a six-pounder through the bush to keep the enemy from circlin' round. The sixty Glengarry men that raced out to support Major Givens' Indians went along the track of the six-pounder and only got to the beach, too late, by following the sound of the firin'.

" 'There go the King's!' shouted Billy, and the Grenadier company of the Eighth went flashin' past—a hundred and nineteen o' the finest fellows that ever wore army leather. Captain McNeill, handsome as a prince, was at their head. The other company was still back in town.

"Things got so hot just where we was ourselves that we forgot what was goin' on at the landin'. The big thirty-two-pounders in the Yankee square-riggers began to heave shot into the garrison and Government House, and every broadside we'd see the splinters fly there. The schooners beat into the shoal water and ripped the woods with grape and canister shot. The little balls flew over our heads, like buckshot above a hidin' duck, but they cut down the troops that marched through to the beach and stalled the six-pounder that was started for the landin'.

"Wounded men began to drag past us, bound for the garrison.

" 'The woods is full of riflemen,' they told us. 'They tree'd one Indian chief in a big pine, and killed him, but he picked off a dozen of 'em afore he dropped!'

" 'Donald McLean, the clerk o' the House of Assembly's been killed,' said another.

" 'The 'Merican infantry got orders to use nothin' but pike and bayonet,' another chap said. 'The man that fires is shot dead! Only the riflemen use their powder, and once they get among the tree trunks with their green clothes there's no spottin' em'!'

"From the landin', against the breeze, came the throb o' drums and the top notes o' 'Yankee Doodle.' Then by one and twos, by dozens, by scores, Glengarries, Newfoundlanders, King's men, and Third Yorks kept poppin' out o' the clearin', some stoppin' to form line, some draggin' themselves along, wounded, or carryin' their comrades. They crowded in around the battery and tried to dress their ranks.

" 'Where's the general?' one'd ask.

" 'Back on the road near the old French fort,' another'd say.

" 'He'll be captured sure, for they're drivin' right in!'

" 'A cannon-ball from one o' the schooners killed his aide's horse under him, but he won't budge,' another'd chip in.

" 'They've cut the 8th Grenadiers to pieces,' says another. 'The riflemen just picked 'em off in their scarlet coats like prize birds at a shootin' match.'

" 'Yes,' said a grenadier, with the blood smearin' all his white cross-belt, 'Captain McNeill calls, "Bayonets, lads! Charge!" and spins round, throws up his hands, and falls flat, like this!' And the big, tall chap dropped dead in the battery as he told it.

" 'But the Grens. went over their captain and got to the boys in blue,' said a Glengarry man with a great gash in his neck. 'They drove 'em down the hill, through the line o' sharpshooters, and we fought with bayonets in the gravel on the beach, boatload after boatload landin' all the time. Zeb. Pike, their general, led a charge and drove us back. They was six to one. Half McNeill's company is stretched on the slope.'

" 'Now lads,' broke in an officer, 'we'll get that schooner standing in,' and he hopped up on the bastion to sight the guns.

"The bombardier, the one soldier in the crowd who hadn't forgotten his drill, saluted and came to attention, thrusting his match behind him. With a crash like a lightnin' bolt explodin' the whole battery filled with flame. Legs, heads and bodies scattered through the air, and the gun platform turned upside down, rollin' the eighteen-pounder over. I wasn't hurt; just sick, awfully sick and dizzy. When I opened my eyes the smoke was clearin', and I saw a heap of writhin' things, human bodies, burnt black, shapeless, runnin' blood.

"The artilleryman had been crowded close to the truck that carried the cartridges, and had stuck his match into the portable magazine—that's what had happened.

"That blow-up killed eighteen men. A lot more was awfully mangled. They commenced to carry 'em off in stretchers and wheelbarrows, and the way their limbs waggled about as they were moved made me sick again.

"I crawled around and looked for Billy and called to him, but nobody could tell me where he was. I just thought he had gone away. He had. But it was only hours afterwards that it came to me that he was part of that horrible pile of human butchers' meat in a corner of the battery.

"They got the cannon clamped down again, and then at last—we'd been expectin' 'em for an hour and a half—the Yankees began to show in the spaces between the trees to the west of the battery clearin'.

"'We'll have to shift them guns somehow,' a non-com. bellowed.

"'What's the use?' answered an artilleryman, 'we've got nothin' but roundshot, and you can't stop 'em without grape.'

"'Gallop to the garrison and tell 'em to rush up grape and canister,' yells the other to a driver.

"Before the man was mounted someone shouted, 'The General's orders are to rendezvous at the Government House battery!' and then there was a general scatteration. They spiked the two old eighteen-pounders and trailed off in a long procession towards the garrison.

"The 'Mericans by this time was comin' on in column, cheerin' as they ran.

"Some o' the troops faced about at the Half Moon Battery, and fired a few rounds from behind the embankment, but it was only with muskets. There was no cannon there. Soon they was all huddled around the pair of twelve-pounders in the Government House square. Shells from the fleet had

set the roof on fire, and nobody seemed to know whether they was to make a stand here or not. 'On to the garrison,' somebody called, and the two twelve-pounders, and another old cannon that had been rigged up like the eighteens, out of logs and iron hoops, was all spiked.

"The garrison was all in an uproar. The soldiers' wives and children had been driven out of the barracks-square quarters by the shot from the American schooners, and the place was littered with scattered household goods, stray animals and wounded men. Here again nobody knew what to do. The General seemed keener on bein' always the last man to back up from the enemy than on keepin' his own men from backin' up. And so they fidgetted around the garrison blockhouse, until suddenly somebody seemed to straighten things out, and the wrecked ranks of the regulars formed up and marched off through the garrison gates, across the bridge towards the town. The militia followed 'em in steady marchin' order, and I trailed along behind, my legs still wobbly from the sickness of my stomach; and besides, I hadn't had any breakfast, and it was now near two o'clock in the afternoon. The blusterin' east wind seemed to go through me, as I faced the full force of it in the top of the bank of the harbour, after crossin' the Garrison Creek bridge. I heard a clatter of hoofs, and the General and his aide came along. Captain Loring, the A.D.C., had found a fresh horse. As they passed me I heard another awful roaring and felt the ground lurch under me, like a deck in a seaway. 'This must be what it's like to faint,' I thought to myself, and wondered why I didn't fall down.

"Something big whizzed past me and rolled the aide-de-camp's horse over, and him under it. I looked back, and there above the garrison hung a huge round cloud, like a balloon just burstin'. It rained down men and horses, and timbers, and iron, and stones, and great masses of earth. Splinters of wood and pieces of stone even fell where I was, and on the backs of the last of the militia ahead of me.

"The garrison storehouse had blown up. The General had had a fuse laid, to destroy the five hundred barrels of gunpowder and the tons of shot there. The Yankees hadn't got into the garrison when the magazine went, but it was at the southwest corner of the place, and caught them that was crowdin' forward. Two hundred and sixty of 'em was laid out, I heard afterwards—forty or fifty of these was killed on the spot. Pike, their General, was smashed by a flyin' stone, while he sat on a log questionin' a big sergeant they'd captured. The pieces o' the magazine was thrown so far they fell on the decks o' the vessels. It was a big blow-up, but yet it didn't jar me so much as the little one I'd been in.

"Soldiers hauled the bruised A.D.C. out from under his second dead horse, and carried him with them to the last stand, on the far side of a ravine in front of a place called Elmsley House. It's a C.P.R. freight-yard now, but for years and years the old Lieutenant-Governor's house stood on the spot.

"Here they all lined up, and stood around. Some began to gnaw biscuits and raw pork, and most of the volunteers, stiff with the cold, tired out and hungry as bears, wandered off to the houses that showed here and there in the clearin's. I remembered our commissary waggon 'way back in the market square, and the grub there was stowed in it, and set out to cover the half mile or so under all the sail I could stretch.

"There was lots o' women and kids in the market square, but the only men was old cripples. Everybody who could carry a shootin'-iron was with the troops. I was only a kid myself, but I felt sort o' shamed to be where I was. But soon militiamen, in uniforms and in overalls, began to amble in, bloody, muddy and mad.

"'Sold out, I tell ye! Sheaffe's a Yankee born and Yankee at heart!' yelled one.

"'Yer a liar!' says another. 'I fit under him at Queenston Heights and he was brave as Brock himself. 'Tain't his fault he was born in New England! Ain't he been fightin' for King George since he was ten years old, first at sea and then on shore?'

"'Well,' says the first, 'What d'ye think o' his fightin' to-day? What did he do when Major Heathcote said in front o' Elmsley House he was for another try at the Yanks? Gave the order to retreat to Kingston, that's what he did.'

"'Huh,' says the other, 'Only mistake he made was ever tryin' to hold this place. There's two thousand o' them Yanks ashore already—three to one of us an' worse—one third of our six hundred's killed or wounded.'

"I never heard the end o' the argument, for the next minute the redcoats came poundin' by in loose order an' almost on the trot. Somebody fetched up a team o' horses and hitched 'em to our waggon—and that was what you might call the end o' the Battle o' York. Sheaffe and his regulars was off full-pelt for Kingston, leavin' behind pretty near everything except what they marched in. The militia'd done their share o' the fightin', but they had to face the music o' the surrender all alone.

"And mebbe the 'Mericans wasn't mad! Three hundred and fifty killed and wounded, and most o' *them* in a blow-up they thought was treachery!

The frigate they'd brought ship-carpenters all the way from Sackett's Harbour to finish for their own fleet burned before their eyes! All the powder and shot destroyed, and the best o' the British army they'd hoped to capture clear escaped. I don't wonder they burned the garrison buildin's and the Houses o' Parliament, and the town blockhouse, opened the jail and plundered the treasury! Lucky they stopped at that.

"That's a part, though, I didn't see, altogether. When the regulars was trampin' past the market square a squad led up a team o' horses, hitched 'em to our waggon, tossed out our bundles o' stores, and dumped a load o' groanin', bleedin' men into it. I was at the bottom o' the heap, and the waggon started.

"A grey-whiskered man, with sleeves rolled up and arms all bloody like a butcher, grabbed me.

" 'Out o' this,' says he, 'unless you're an amputation case. Hold on. Tear me up bandages, and be quick about it.'

"He tossed a roll of white cotton and opened up a case of knives that made my blood run cold. And there on the bottom of that joltin' waggon he began to hack and to carve his screamin' victims, tossin' a hand or an arm or a foot overside like a fisherman sortin' a catch. Army surgeons in the days before ether didn't specialize on cultivatin' the finer feelin's.

"I was so scared o' that man with his knives that I tore off bandages and helped him bind up the stumps of his work as though I liked it. And this went on by the hour along the terrible road. The sun was gettin' low when a thin, white-faced chap on a drippin' horse overhauled us.

" 'Hold hard, Hackett,' he called, 'You're carryin' off my instruments, and God knows we've enough wounded left on our hands to keep a dozen sets goin'.

" 'Well, I've had what you might call a fair amount of business myself,' returned Surgeon Hackett, 'but I'm through, I think, and I really didn't mean to carry off your set, Aspinwall. 'Fraid they'll need some grinding. But here they are, and good luck to you.'

"The man called Aspinwall leaned forward, grabbed the heavy case, and wheeled back for the town. He was an American doctor who'd set up practice in York. All day long he'd worked, helpin' the British surgeons, and that's how they'd come to carry off his knives. And all that night and the next day and the next, he worked like a Trojan with the wounded left behind

in the town, and not till they was all cared for would he take the big post held open for him as surgeon in the American fleet.

"I know this, for Hackett drove back to the town next mornin', takin' me with him. He'd cleaned up what wounded they was carryin' in the retreat, had them stowed in wayside houses, and drove in to do what he could for the left-behinds.

"He was a great man. Even in that awful shambles-cart on the road, I'd been amazed at the way the wounded blessed him while at work. And the poor maimed beggars of the King's that he found in York, with wounds mortified and frozen from lying hours on the cold ground—they cried like babies when the word went down the ward, 'Surgeon Hackett, our own surgeon, has come back for us.'"

The old man's cracked, quavering monologue suddenly ceased. The wasted figure huddled over the little beer-table, then straightened with a brisk jerk.

"That's about all of the capture of York to-night, gentlemen," a youthful, business-like baritone announced. "Perhaps another member of the Students' Volunteer Movement will address you on some later occasion—also in costume. Thank you for your patient hearing. Good-night."

And through a side door gaily vanished into the darkness the college boy impersonator of Malachi Malone.

"What the——?" gasped the first longshoreman who found his voice. "Honest-to-goodness, I thought that was the real Malachi Malone! Oh, them college chaps! You never can tell what they're up to."

"Might've known *he* wasn't Malachi Malone," chuckled the bar-tender. "By his own account he was twelve years old or so when this thing happened a hundred years ago, so he'd be a hundred and twelve years old if he was a minute. But I don't mind sayin' I thought he was a real old man, yarnin' away for a drink. It beats play-actin', what them students'll do."

"I knew it wasn't the real Malachi," said a quiet old chap who had been grinning throughout the narrative, "for a mighty good reason. There *was* a Malachi Malone, sure enough, that used to spin yarns in the lake schooners' forecastles about the War of 1812. But I went to his funeral, ten or twelve years ago, so I know he's not spinning yarns in these parts. Everybody on the lakes had heard of him and his tales, and ten years back that student lad would have been welcome anywhere, if he pretended he was the old man. But where he made a slip was in his language. Old Malachi had had quite an

education, after a sort, and you'd never catch him dropping his g's, like the lad did so carefully. That's where our college boy went too far."

"Well, he told a good yarn, anyway," said the dispenser of liquid joy, and all agreed with him.

CHAPTER XIII

Apples of Ashes

GIVING SOME OF THE REASONS WHY THE TAKING OF TORONTO WAS NOT A FAMOUS AMERICAN VICTORY

Watch them round Toronto Island point, with the foam bursting in great yeasty masses under their crushing bows.

The keen east wind swells their sails into arching, straining areas of curving canvas that swallow or shoot back the rays of the sunrise in purple shadow and golden flame.

To leeward stream from peak and truck the Stars and Stripes and ribbon-like pennants of red, white and blue.

Ahead of all speeds the light-armed clipper-schooner *Lady of the Lake*, a pretty toy, of the size of a modest gentleman's cruising yacht of these present days. They thought nothing of driving the *Lady of the Lake* with long oars or sweeps when the wind fell light.

After her storms a heavier craft, the flagship *President Madison*, square-rigged on her three masts like an ocean frigate. Her bulk suggests the six-hundred-ton cargo-carrier that still persists on the Great Lakes and is known as the "old Welland Canaller," but from each side, through square ports, grin an even dozen of twenty-four-pounder cannon, and from her main-truck flies the fighting broad-pennant of Commodore Isaac Chauncey.

Next in line swings a smaller square-rigger, with two masts, the slab-sided wallowing old sixteen-gun brig *Oneida*, sailed, or driven, you might say, by Lieutenant Melancthon T. Woolsey. These leaders haul into the smooth water in the lee of the island sandbar and steer straight towards the clearing around the site of the old French fort of 1749—in what is now a park, the grounds of the annual Canadian national exposition.

A mile out—for they distrust the shallows of the shore water—the square-riggers come to anchor with a great threshing and flailing of loosened topsails. The big bateaux that have trailed astern of them are drawn up

alongside, under the boat-booms, and the gangways are rigged for the disembarking of the soldiers.

The saucy *Lady* stands inshore with leadsmen in the forechains bellowing "By the deep nine!" "By the mark seven!" "A quarter less four!" and so on, as the fathoms shoal.

From the bank at the Western battery an ancient eighteen-pounder roars at her from its bed of pine logs to which it has been clamped with iron hoops. She whirls on her heel, spits back from her swivel-guns, and stretches out to regain her fleet.

The rest of them have come up now. They swarm around the brig and the flagship like settling gulls when the leader has found a fishing hole.

They are picturesque, but not powerful. Except for the *Madison's* cloud-crossing square rig, there is little hint of the grandeur of the battleship about them. Although their decks are crowded with sailors and soldiers and top-heavy with cannon they look like a fleet of fishers or coasters. And appearances do not deceive. They are all little schooners, not unlike the fifty- or hundred-ton stone-hookers which now ply their trade on the shores of Lake Ontario—except that they boast square topsails, a detail of rig long since vanished from the lakes.

In spite of brave names and battleflags, of the fleet of sixteen sail only three—the *Madison*, *Oneida* and *Lady of the Lake*—were built for war. The *Raven*, *Lark* and *Fly* are transports, pure and simple—lake coasters hired for the service. But then there are the lordlier *Conquest* and *Governor Tompkins*, six-gun schooners of war. A year ago these were the humble traders, *Genesee Packett* and *Charles* and *Ann*. The little schooner *Pert*—about the size of a harbour-tug, or small ferry-steamer—was the coaster *Collector*, before she donned her warpaint. Her sisters, the *Fair American*, *Ontario* and *Asp*, were St. Lawrence River packets, trading to Ogdensburg, when the war broke out. Indeed the *Ontario* was one of the first vessels seized under the Embargo Act which preceded the war.

That formidable *Growler* was a river schooner, too. She used to bear the name *Experiment*, and she is fated, ere four months pass, to change her name again to *Confiance*, when Sir James Yeo captures her and her consort *Julia* in a midnight fight off Niagara. And, later still, she will be renamed *Growler* again, on recapture, off the Ducks, and again she will lose the name, on a second recapture at Oswego by the British!

Her consort the *Julia* is with her now. Old Matthew McNair, of Oswego, built her for a cargo craft, and called her after his daughter. When the war

broke out he had her loaded with riflemen and cannon and sent down the St. Lawrence to Ogdensburg—the raiding base which long remained a thorn in our British flank.

Even Homer failed to make the catalogue of ships that sailed for Troy interesting. Your patience for just another pair in the fleet that felled York.

Look well at the largest of the lot of converted coasters, the *Hamilton* and the *Scourge*. Above them the *Madison* towers, six times the size, but they are typical of the make-up of the fleet. The one used to be the Ogdensburg trader *Diana*. The other is a captured British coaster, the *Lord Nelson*. Both are fated, as elsewhere told, soon to drown their crews of eighty men in the blackness of an early morning thunder-squall off the Niagara River, when Sir James Yeo's fleet swoops down on them. See how they roll, even in the small swell in the lee of the island point! They have been built to carry a hundred tons of cargo under their hatches. The weight of nine or ten heavy guns on deck is far above their intended centres of gravity. That is what dooms their laughing crews to a watery grave ere four months pass.

This *Scourge*, the renamed *Lord Nelson*, is the immediate cause of the present raid. Early in 1812 her owner, Mr. Matthew Crooks, a Niagara merchant, started her from the river for Kingston, at the foot of the lake, loaded with a general cargo. In order to cross from the south side of the lake to the north side she had of course to sail through American waters. She was picked up as a prize under the Embargo Act, towed to Sackett's Harbour, and condemned.

Bluff Lieutenant Melancthon T. Woolsey, commander of the still bluffer brig *Oneida*, drew the line at robbing a bride, even in war time. Part of the *Nelson's* freight was a set of silver ware belonging to the trousseau of a young Kingston lady. When they put *that* up at auction he protested. In vain "Five hundred dollars," somebody bid. "Five thousand," said Woolsey. The auction was off. He sent the bride her silver ware.

But the *Lord Nelson* dangled, a tempting bait, at anchor in Sackett's Harbour for weeks before Commodore Chauncey decided to burden her with a deck-load of cannon, and an expedition sailed across the lake from Kingston to recapture her. It was bungled, and failed as badly as anything that champion soft-hitter, Sir George Prevost, ever did. The expedition sailed home empty-handed, leaving behind them the *Lord Nelson*, sundry killed and wounded, and some of their officers' steeds, to make a name for Horse Island, where the landing had been attempted. The damage done in this first

raid on Sackett's was just great enough to embitter the enemy, and little enough to encourage him to hit back.

And so, as soon as the ice leaves the lake this following spring, Melancthon Woolsey's wormy brig buffets her way out for revenge, and fifteen fore topsails follow her.

It has been a terrible voyage in those crowded 'tween-decks. Many of the schooners were no larger than ferry-craft, but the fleet loaded seventeen hundred troops, beside their own fighting crews.

Imagine the smallest ferry-steamer you have ever used, loaded to her full capacity, and then imagine yourself detained in some way aboard her for forty-eight hours, and you will realize why the green-coated riflemen and blue-capped infantry hail with joy the call to the landing-bateaux.

They pull ashore with fifes and bugles shrilling merrily amid the spitting bullets of Major Givins' scanty band of redskins and the handful of Glengarry men and 8th Grenadiers. It is a picnic for them, this shore excursion. They drift to leeward of the clearing of the old French fort, of course, in the high wind, but they tumble out on the beach of a sheltered cove to the westward—known in these days as Sunnyside—and scamper into the bush like schoolboys on a frolic. Once in the woods they are "as the air, invisible," among the evergreens and mossy logs. The Yankee sharpshooters mow down the gallant handful of charging Grenadiers, and their infantry form, platoon after platoon, a thousand strong, ere they march.

Lightened of their seventeen hundred soldiers, the square-riggers and the transports ride high at straining cable-ends. But the gunboats, or armed schooners, tack to and fro like restless gulls, ever working inshore, ever eating towards the tortuous harbour-entrance—the only one—which opens to the west. They do not know the road in to the town which huddles defenceless two miles away, at the eastern end of the bay enclosed by the island sandbar; but their leadsmen are finding it for them, fathom by fathom.

The great guns of the *Madison* and *Oneida* thunder long-distance menaces at the feeble batteries that guard the shore; but it is the cannon of these sheering schooners that do the deadliest work.

Each of the little ex-coasters wallows under one or two heavy long-guns, pivoted in the bow or amidships; in addition their sides bristle with short-range carronades. They swoop in and rip the sheltering woods with murderous blasts of grape and canister, follow it up with the crash of thirty-two-pound roundshot, and tack offshore ere the batteries can find them.

The batteries! Historians write as if the British defence of York was conducted behind a crowded arsenal. But read the record of the men who did the work behind the guns and you will find that there were in action altogether *five* pieces of artillery—two twelve-pounders at the Government House near the fort, then called the Garrison; a superannuated gun-barrel of the same calibre, without trunnion, and clamped to pine logs in place of a carriage; and two more old condemned eighteens which the French had left sixty years before. These last were at the Western battery, which blew a score of defenders to bits before the invaders arrived.

Five guns against a fleet! The *Madison* alone hurled in one broadside as much as the combined British batteries in four volleys. Cannon enough to have lined the Lake Shore from the garrison to the Sunnyside landing place, lay, unhappily, frozen in the mud of the shipyard inside the bay.

After seven hours of fighting, General Sheaffe, outnumbered four to one in men and twenty to one in cannon, has abandoned a hopeless defence.

The antiquated eighteen-pounders and talkative twelves are dumb—spiked by their own gunners.

Clusters of blue and green uniforms on the lake bank thicken for a final rush upon the western gate of the silent Garrison. Suddenly a tremendous cloud, slashed by a vivid streak of flame, blots all from view.

A roar as of a thousand thunderclaps dazes the beholders. The great cloud rises, balloon-like, and a shiver sweeps through the water, as the tremor before a tidal wave.

And then from the blackness overhead there rains on the decks of the most shoreward ships a dreadful downpour—blood, and fragments of flesh, mingled with splinters of timber, and stone, and iron. The great magazine of the garrison has blown up, hurling to instant death fifty of the foreign foe.

Through the rolling smoke sweeps a boat from the shore to the nearest schooner, the little *Pert*. In the sternsheets lies the mangled form of the discoverer of Pike's Peak, the leader of the American advance, Brig.-Gen. Zebulon A. Pike.

"It's the General!" hail the rowers. "His back's crushed in by a flying stone. Take him to the flagship and hurry surgeons ashore. We've more than two hundred wounded at that garrison gate."

Mastheading the last scrap of canvas, the *Pert* swings off and flies before the wind to where the *Madison* rides at anchor. Swiftly she runs, but on her quarter deck lies Pike, weltering in his blood. In this very spot, five months

before, sailing-master Arundel lay bleeding from his wounds, while the *Pert* threshed out from Kingston Harbour. He had been mangled, as Malachi Malone has already told, by the bursting of her swivel-gun in a fight with the Kingston batteries, but refused to quit the deck. As the schooner tacked in the fresh breeze he was knocked overboard and perished.

The vigilance of hero-worshippers saves the wounded General from the fate of the *Pert's* commander; but life had almost fled by the time they hoist her passenger to the *Madison's* deck.

"Do not carry him below," say the surgeons, quietly. Those who hear them understand. The crowding seamen withdraw. A little knot of officers, naval and military, lingers.

The sound of cheering comes from the shore now, on the wings of the windy afternoon. Sheaffe, not knowing how hard a dying blow his abandoned magazine delivered, has burned his stores and marched for Kingston. The shaken Yankee troops are pounding towards the town in a frenzy of fear and exultation. A pinnace grinds alongside the *Madison*, and a powder-blackened head appears above the rail, waving a smudged and shot-torn banner.

"Their flag, sir!" he shouts at blunt old Commodore Chauncey. "We've just torn it down. The town's surrendered, but the troops have escaped; their stores are destroyed, and they've set fire to their new frigate on the stocks, so we won't get much."

"*What?*" thunders the sailor. "They've burned the very vessel we brought ship-carpenters all the two hundred miles from Sackett's to complete. And I've twenty killed and wounded here afloat, and you've three hundred killed and wounded ashore—"

He halts in his harangue of the military men, for they are bending over their General, arranging the tattered flag under him. The dying man's eyes brighten, then a film sweeps over them, and they glaze.

The burly sea-dog is all hove aback.

"A damn dear piece of bunting," he begins. Then he blushes furiously under his forty-year coat of tan, and kneels bareheaded on his own quarter deck in the presence of the dead.

When the redcoats marched out as the bluecoats marched in, Prideaux Selby, the Receiver-General of the Province, lay dying. William Roe, his

clerk, feared the worst for his master and his funds.

Leaving weeping relatives to guard the death-bed, young Roe loaded on to a waggon the Receiver-General's iron chest, three bags, a large packet, and a spade.

"Straight for the Kingston road," he told the driver, "and don't you look behind you!"

It was only human nature for the driver to half turn. His cheek touched the muzzle of a pistol. Jerking his head he "turned the other cheek also" against a pistol muzzle.

"Eyes front!" commanded Roe, and did not have to command again.

A companion of the young clerk rode with him in the waggon box. As they ploughed past the masterless house of Donald McLean, killed at the landing that morning, the driver heard a scraping as of something being dragged along the floor of the waggon box. "Eyes front!" he was reminded, "and drive slowly!" One of the young men got off and staggered with the iron box into the house of the late clerk of the Legislative Assembly. "Keep that safe!" he whispered, and rushed to overtake the waggon.

Three times, as the vehicle jolted and pitched along the "Kingston Road"—now Queen Street—in the track of the retreating troops, the driver heard a shuffling and scraping, as of someone getting off and getting on again. Each time "Drive slow. Eyes front!" and the pressure of cold steel on either cheek kept him looking forward.

A fourth time he heard the shuffling. This time there was no "Eyes front!" The unwelcome passengers seemed strangely silent. He drove very slowly. He allowed the horses to halt. It was dark. He swayed cautiously in his seat. No side pressure on his head. He turned around. William Roe and his companion were gone. The package was gone. The chest was gone. The bags were gone. The spade was gone. The April twilight blurred everything to an indistinct violet.

"Well, I'll be shot," exploded the driver. Then he chuckled to himself. "No, I won't, but I pretty near was."

The packet and the chest had held the public provincial papers and one thousand silver dollars. Plunderers, in that first wild night in York, broke into the house of the dead clerk of the Assembly and robbed it. The iron-bound chest was of course burst open, and the silver dollars only whetted the appetite of the invader.

"King George's gold, or the town in flames!" was the choice Captain Jesse D. Elliott gave the peace commissioners in a moment of wild excitement.

They did not know where the treasury had been emptied, but a merry waggoner was found who conducted a search party out along the Kingston road. Crossing the Don he brought them to the farm of the Chief Justice. By the roadside they found fresh spade marks. They dug, and unearthed a large, neatly wrapped package. It contained £2,500 in Upper Canada army bills; about as useful to the Americans as the paper Confederate currency they captured in plenty fifty years later.

"But the gold, the gold!" they clamoured.

"That's all I know about it," said the driver, with a solemn wink. "Here's where the young gentlemen vanished."

The Americans searched high and low, rowing up the Don river till their boats became lost in its windings; but with the army bills they were forced to content themselves.

Some weeks later, when the affairs of the town, deserted alike by British defenders and American invaders, were slowly settling into a semblance of order, there was a gathering in the Rev. Dr. Strachan's little parlour—this was six years before he built the "Palace" that long stood on Front street opposite the Union station. Young William Roe was there. And to the future prelate he handed over—taking his receipt, like the thrifty business man he was—three bags of gold, smelling of fresh earth, which he had just dug up from nooks and corners along the road that led to Kingston.

Like a beacon in the gloom shines out the conduct and conversation of the Rev. John Strachan, D.D., when things were at their worst. This is the man who afterwards became the great Anglican Bishop of Upper Canada, whose name and fame lives in Trinity College and Bishop Strachan School. In 1813 he was just a plain doctor of divinity in York, upon whom was hastily thrust the unenviable task of helping the militia officers make peace. The enemy was furious over the escape of the regulars and destruction of the new frigate, which they intended to tow home in triumph. In fact, the capture of this vessel was the main object of the raid. They were, moreover, maddened by a list of three hundred and twenty killed and wounded, which included their Brigadier-General and comprised one-seventh of their entire force. They ignored the protection Major Allan, one of the militia officers, expected from his flag of truce, and took his sword and marched him off a

prisoner. The other militia officers and their men, who had been promised freedom on parole, were herded in the barracks-square like convicts in a prison-yard. And all the way from Sunnyside to the garrison, along two miles of lake front, lay British killed and wounded.

Rev. Dr. Strachan sought General Dearborn, the surviving American commander. He was treated with all the contempt a blustering military man could display towards a humble cleric who had taken upon himself to mediate for the vanquished. And this is how the Scotch preacher flashed out, if the dry bones of ancient manuscript may be clothed with the flesh of inverted commas:

"A new mode, this, sir," turning from the top-lofty Dearborn to the more genial Commodore Chauncey, "of treating people clothed in public character.

"I have had the honour of transacting business with greater men without meeting with any indignity. 'Tis easy to see through these miserable subterfuges for delaying the ratification of the capitulation. Perhaps the General, after allowing his troops to pillage the town, may be induced forsooth to ratify terms, so that when he returns home in triumph he may have it in his power to say he 'respected private property.'

"We have been grossly deceived already, sir, but we shall not be so duped and insulted. If the conditions are not complied with immediately there shall be no capitulation. *We will not accept it*. You may do your worst, but you shall not have it in your power to say, after robbing us, that you respected our property!"

With that the fuming divine turned his back on the whole company, and strode off to the barracks. He announced to the officers assembled there that "naught was to be expected from a General who, instead of acting up to the articles agreed upon, had insulted their negotiation."

His words to Commodore Chauncey had by this time burned through the crust of Dearborn's pride—as was intended—and ere the clergyman had finished speaking to the officers the General made his appearance, ratified the articles of capitulation, paroled the militia, and allowed the sick and wounded to be removed. By sunset of April 28th, twenty-four hours after the flag came down, all the prisoners were free; but even in parolling them the temper of the exasperated victor was shown. The prisoners *released* were the officers and men captured; the prisoners *paroled* were all the officers and men on the muster-roll, whether they had been captured or not, wherein the pen again proved mightier than the sword.

Years ago below old Yorkville, the northern suburb since swallowed by spreading Toronto, there was a fenced-in-plot on the crest of a sandy ridge, known as the Indian Grave. Before the white man came the Mississagas had buried their dead there amid the tiny shells which proved the rise to be an ancient beach. By 1813 the burying place had been abandoned, but to it was borne, by reverent white hands, the mangled body of the Mississaga chief who shared the death and glory of the fight at the landing place. To guard his sleep with his fathers the white men built a fence about his resting place, and so for years the old burial ground regained its name.

The chief was a sharpshooter, and, perched in the thick boughs of a pine tree, he picked off rifleman after rifleman as the first troops leapt from the boats. Unable to retreat with his followers he was surrounded in his eyrie. He held his foes at bay till his last bullet was gone. Then they rained volley after volley into the pine tree top, and the brave redskin fell to the earth like a dead eagle.

Some say his corpse was scalped; not impossible, for the riflemen bore the roughest of reputations, and scalps torn by human teeth from the heads of victims were not unknown trophies in the War of 1812.

It is undisputed that a human scalp *was* one of the trophies carried away after the battle of York. At the Naval Institute in Annapolis, Md., may be seen to this day the Royal Standard, the carved lion from the canopy of the Speaker's Chair, and the royal mace from the House of Assembly, all carried away from York by the Americans. General Dearborn wrote to the Secretary of War:

> "A scalp was found in the executive and legislative chamber, suspended near the speaker's chair, in company with the mace and other emblems of royalty. I intend sending it to you, with a correct account of the facts relative to the place and situation in which it was found."

This "correct account" has never been found. Historians have indulged in guesses all the way from the speaker's wig to the Indian chief's scalplock, to explain this gruesome trophy. The most reasonable explanation is Robert Gourlay's. He says, on the authority of a member of the House of Representatives, that an army officer had sent the clerk of the House a human scalp in a letter as a curiosity. The clerk, in disgust, tossed the letter into a drawer when he opened it. Here it was found when the place was plundered.

A riff-raff of disloyal renegades followed on the heels of the American sailors and soldiers, and pillaged and stole from their own countrymen to such an extent that the magistrates of York had to issue a proclamation calling on all honest men to avert anarchy. General Dearborn was an honourable foe, and gave them assistance. After the first outburst he seemed to have held both his own men and the disloyal rabble with a tight rein. The burning of the Parliament buildings may have been the work of the liberated jailbirds, who played upon the credulity of the conquerors by producing the scalp as an example of inhuman ferocity. Gourlay, quoted above, says:

> "A party of American sailors, without the knowledge or orders of their commanders, set fire to the two wings of the Parliament House and consumed them, with the adjoining clerks' offices and the library and papers deposited there, under a pretence of irritation on account of a scalp alleged to have been found suspended as a trophy."

It would not take much persuasion to inspire a party of sailors on shore leave, with a "heavy press of sail and no rudder" to burn the buildings in maudlin resentment for the wrongs of mankind, as typified by the scalp produced; and of course the burning of the buildings meant further opportunities for plunder.

CHAPTER XIV

Champions of Champlain

THE BITTEREST CHAPTER OF ALL FRESH WATER FIGHTING—THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURG, SEPTEMBER 11, 1814.

Through the cabin windows flamed the dying crimson of the September sunset.

"Tell Sir George," rumbled the Commodore in a deep-sea bass, "to—no, service is service. Tell his Excellency we will be up with the first fair wind, and scale our guns as a signal to the troops that we are under weigh. Wait, I'll write it." And he did, adding that he hoped he required no reminder to do his duty.

The aide to his Excellency Sir George Prevost, Bart., Governor-in-Chief of Canada and Captain-General of his Britannic Majesty's forces for the invasion of New York State, accepted the note, saluted, clicked his heels and departed. Captain George Downie, plain commander of his Majesty's ship *Confiance*, and commodore-by-courtesy of the British fleet on Lake Champlain, was left to his thoughts. They were bitter. He was not slow to express them, for he had a sympathetic audience. Another officer, a cheery little man, also in captain's uniform, stood staring out of the port-light at the glory reflected in the waters of the lake.

"That letter doesn't deserve an answer, Pring," muttered the senior officer. "Damme, I'm sorry I sent any at all. *You'd* have told Sir George ——"

"Yes," assented Pring frankly, "that's why they wouldn't give me command of the squadron."

"I know you should have had it, old friend," returned Downie.

"But I'm glad I haven't; captain of His Majesty's brig *Linnet*, rough as rawhide and big as a minute, is good enough for me while *that* man's cock o' the walk," returned Pring.

"Here we are at Isle la Motte," ruminated Downie, "after two days sweating at towing the ship with her boats and kedging her with her anchors, against current and head-winds. She's no more fit for action than I'm for heaven. And every stop we make, a red-coated, brassbound, pipeclayed Solomon-in-all-his-glory comes aboard in a shore-boat, with—'His Excellency's compliments, and he hopes nothing else than adverse winds prevents co-operation of the fleet with the army.' Despatches, sir! Damme, it's heart-breaking. If we only had a week to fit out— —"

"I know, I know," the veteran who had been passed by said, soothingly. "The *Linnet's* so unfinished we have to hitch the gear to stanchions and timberheads, for we haven't our belaying pins made yet. Your ship, sir, must be worse off, for she's still newer and much bigger. But I should be getting aboard, sir, if there's no further orders"—the friend and subordinate curiously mingling in his tone.

"Good-night, Pring, old man," said Downie slowly, the tone of the superior officer utterly absent from his voice. "We'll lie at anchor here till dawn, and then if the wind is fair, on to Plattsburg, ready or not."

"Good-night, sir," said Pring, and made his way carefully along the decks, cluttered with ship-carpenters toiling by torchlight. He slipped down over the flagship's side to his gig, and the boat pulled off in the dusk of the September night to where a short pair of square-rigged masts marked his own brig *Linnet*.

"Poor Downie," the captain murmured softly as he turned in. "They're driving him pretty hard. Well—better luck in the morning."

Like sheeted ghosts hastening to their narrow homes ere cockcrow the sails of the British squadron shone through the mist as the sun rose on Lake Champlain, September 11, 1814.

Eleven thousand Peninsular veterans were ploughing their furrow through New York State, turning neither to the right nor the left, never even breaking column for the attacks of the terrified American defenders. After two years of vexation the British lion was roused, and the invaders of Canada found themselves defending their own firesides. A desperate American rally was made at Plattsburg, on the lake, a last stand of army and fleet combined. They had to be attacked by land and water. Captain George Downie, R.N., was on the way to do his part.

His flagship towered above the small craft that accompanied her like some vast cathedral amid the humble shops and houses of burghers. She was as big as an ocean frigate—an enormous craft for the narrow lake, ten times

the size of the original contestants on it, like the *Chub* and *Finch*—the little sloops which crept along demurely on either quarter, with mainsails broad off to starboard before the light breeze. Her armament was in keeping with her size. The low rays of the morning sun flashed back from thirty-seven heavy carronades and long-guns—two on her short poop, thirty on the main deck, and five on her roomy topgallant forecastle. They were all the most modern, all of heavy calibre, throwing shot up to forty-two pounds in weight. *Confiance* was the flagship's name, and confidence embodied she seemed to be.

Yet never commander went into battle with heavier heart than George Downie. He neither feared danger nor expected defeat; but the man had been maddened by nagging message after nagging message from the Captain-General of the land forces. He was rushing to battle like an experienced bulldog, who knows the time to spring is not yet, but winces under the excited urging of an unwise master.

As the flagship floated along, the thud, and clink, and ring of ship-carpenter's tools rose from her decks. They were fitting quoins and slides for the great guns, and pinracks and belaying pins for the running gear even on the morning of the day of battle.

QUEBEC
BOUNDARY
BRITISH DEPOT
ISLE AUX NOIX
CUMBERLAND HEAD
PLATTSBURG
AMERICAN LINE
OCRAB ISLAND
NEW YORK STATE
CHAMPLAIN
LAKE

The route taken by Downie's fleet and the place of battle.

The *Confiance* had only been launched on the 25th of the preceding August. Building her had been a labour of Hercules. The British station at Isle aux Noix on the lake was surrounded by American territory. The very spars of the *Confiance* had to be bought in New York State. Though at war with Great Britain American farmers did not scorn British gold for beef for the army and timber for the navy; but such supplies, while obtainable, were subject to interruption. The first set of spars for the *Confiance*—foremast and mizzen, mainmast and topmasts—were seized in this way by army officers while American oxen were dragging them to the border.

The wind had come fair through the night, a gentle trickle of breeze from the nor'-nor'east. With the first dawn the fleet got under weigh, and the echoing crash of blank cartridges carried the news to the army that Downie was doing his duty.

Immediately astern of the flagship sailed the little brig *Linnet*, equally new, equally ill-prepared. Close up with her were the two sloops, American vessels captured the year before. Behind them thudded the rowlocks of a dozen gun-gallies, rowed by crews of thirty or forty men, receiving small help in their low sails from the light, lofty air.

The sun was not yet high when the last bargeload of carpenters left the flagship's side, and the flotilla rounded Cumberland Head and opened Plattsburg Bay. Here, of course, the fair wind which had brought them up the lake was adverse for further progress. A cool commander, fighting in his own style, would have made light of this. He would have stood off and on, compelling his opponent to come out and give battle or lie blockaded in port. Had his opponent attacked, he would have crippled him with his long-guns before he could come to close grips. Had his opponent lain at anchor he would have used him for target practice for the same "Long Toms." But Downie was not fighting in his own style. He merely hove-to until the toiling gunboats overhauled his four sailing vessels, and then he filled away on the starboard tack, close hauled for the heart of the foe.

His foe was as brave as he; of as much physical courage, and perhaps of more moral valour. Young Thomas Macdonough, twenty-eight years old and a commodore, knew what depended on him. If *his* fleet of four vessels were broken, the army would break too. The invaders would blow up the fortifications from the water, land marines and bluejackets, effect a junction with the Peninsular veterans and wipe New York State off the American map. So he did the best he could. He reasoned that the British fleet would

come with a northerly wind. Therefore he anchored his own flagship, the *Saratoga*, as far north in the mile-long gap of the harbour entrance as he could put her. He had anchors down ahead and broad off either bow of his ship. She was too deep to get very close to Cumberland head, so beyond her he placed a pair of gunboats, under sweeps, and the brig *Eagle*, of nearly double the size and treble the broadside weight of Downie's second vessel, the *Linnet*. The *Saratoga* was of not much more than half the tonnage of the *Confiance*, but her armament was almost as heavy, though of short range. Astern of the *Saratoga*, and further within the harbour, Macdonough placed a row of three gun-gallies. Next he moored the schooner *Ticonderoga*—of fighting strength equal to the two British sloops combined. She was the pioneer of the steam navy, but her wheels would not always go round, so Macdonough had her schooner-rigged, and armed with eight long twelves, four eighteens, and five thirty-twos. She was overloaded with guns, but she was a formidable fighting machine when at anchor. Astern of her, and more inshore, lay six more gunboats and the sloop *Preble*; these last, combined with the shoals of Crab Island, opposite Cumberland Head, were Macdonough's reliance against the rear of his line across the harbour mouth being broken.

Decked with bunting as for a bridal, the fleet lay in silent splendour, with sails furled, the vessels at anchor, the gunboats under sweeps. And, having done all that man could do, young Macdonough doffed his cocked hat and knelt on his quarter deck with his officers in prayer.

The gallant Downie charged like an infuriated bull with shut eyes. The memory of "*nothing else* than adverse winds" made him see all things red. The brave little *Linnet* brig, whose long-guns could plump a hundredweight of roundshot at a broadside for a mile's distance, was sent right in to fight at point-blank range with the sturdy *Eagle*. The tiny *Chub*, gnawing to windward better from her sloop rig, supported her. The *Confiance* steered for the *Saratoga's* bows. The little *Finch* and a trail of gunboats steered for the *Ticonderoga*, meaning to break the rear of the line.

The roar of the *Eagle's* long twelves and short-range thirty-twos opened the battle. Much of the shot fell short, but the *Linnet's* long guns bellowed back and found their mark.

Amid the rending of splintered planks and the smoke of the first discharge was heard the clear crowing of a gamecock. The fighting bird, released by a spent sixteen-pound ball which smashed his coop on the *Saratoga's* spar deck, leaped to the nearest gun-slide, beat his wings on his sides, and crowed vigorously. The sailors laughed and ran the guns out with

a cheer. Macdonough himself leveled and sighted the first twenty-four-pounder, and the flagship spoke.

The shot struck the *Confiance* as she was approaching, bow-on. It entered the hawse-pipe and ploughed the length of the main deck, knocking down sailors and marines like tenpins. It was a terrible example of the greatest peril of old-time naval duels—a raking fire. But never an answer from the great ship. On she came, like floating doom. Twelves, twenty-fours, and forty-twos barked, screamed and roared at her, gashing her planks, rending her sails, cutting away both port bow anchors, mowing down her men. It was only the flaw of the variable wind inside Plattsburg Bay which baulked her commander's evident intention of laying the *Saratoga* aboard. The baffling breeze headed her off until it was seen she would fall to leeward of her foe. So Captain Downie put his helm alee, braced his yards aback, and anchored with springs on his cable and all the deliberation of mooring at squadron drill in the Downs.

Then, double-shotted, at point-blank range, the great guns of the *Confiance*, sighted by the Commander in person, bellowed in broadside chorus. The five hundredweight of hurtling round shot staggered the *Saratoga* as would a violent gust or a heavy sea. Her bulwarks were beaten in. Her men were mowed down at their stations. Half her crew were laid low —killed, wounded, or stunned. The windage of a passing cannon-ball knocked Macdonough over; but high above the rending of wood and the groans of the wounded, shrilled again the defiant clamour of the undismayed gamecock, and the strong, even tones of the young Commodore, scrambling to his feet with a "Steady, lads! Load quick and fire low!"

Through the battle smoke came a fleeting glimpse of a pair of topsails hurriedly sheeted home, and the scarred and splintered *Eagle* slowly floated by. The *Chub* and the *Linnet*, anchoring close in, had battered her out of her place. Her cables shot away and her starboard guns disabled, she had to make sail and run down under her flagship's quarter. She let go anchors from her sternports, thus riding tail to wind and bringing her intact larboard battery into action.

Through the smoke drifted past another ragged shape, the British sloop *Chub*, with mainboom and bowsprit gone and sails in ribbons. Unmanageable, she floated through the enemy's line inside the harbour, and there, galled by gunboats and pummelled by shore batteries, hauled down her flag.

Thus the battle of the van was left to the anchored *Saratoga* and supporting galleys, and the thundering *Confiance* and spitfire *Linnet*.

The rearguard action was equally hot. The *Finch*, though bristling with eleven guns, was not much larger than the dozen galleys which followed. The wind baffling her, she drove in with them under sweeps and engaged the *Ticonderoga*, *Preble*, and supporting gunboats. The cannonading was furious. Back and forth, back and forth, on the ex-steamer's taffrail strode her commander, Lieut. Stephen Cassin. He seemed to bear a charmed life. There were no locks for one gun-division, and the matches would not work. Sixteen-year-old Hiram Paulding, midshipman, flashed pistols at the touch holes and so exploded the charges. Again and again the British gunboats gained within oar length of the schooner. Again and again they were riddled with grape and musketry, and forced to draw back, some so crippled they had to man the oars with their wounded. Man-of-warsmen in both navies have sneered at gunboats crews; but while it took courage to work great guns and ply pike, and musket, and cutlass, behind bulwarks and boarding-nettings, in the old fighting days, it must have taken still more courage to pull an oar, shoot, hack, load, aim, and fire in a crowded open boat, heavy and slow to manipulate, and rocking violently with every discharge of its one or two cannon. The gunboats might have done better. They did well.

In that desperate attempt to turn the rear of the American line the cable of the Yankee sloop *Preble* was cut, and she drifted into the bay, helpless, her seven long nine-pounders *hors de combat*. But the *Finch*, in manœuvring, grounded, and lay even more helpless, raked from ahead by the stern guns of the pitiless *Ticonderoga*, and from astern by the one cannon the patients in the hospital on Crab Island crawled out to man. She, too, hauled down her flag, and her supporting gunboats, thus deprived of a head and rallying point, failed to turn the stubborn defence of the *Ticonderoga* and pulled out of range.

At the head of the line the thunderous double duel between the *Linnet* and *Confiance* on one side and *Eagle* and *Saratoga* on the other, raged on. After routing the *Eagle* the *Linnet* hauled on her springs until her broadside raked the American flagship. The escaped *Eagle*, anchoring off her Commodore's quarter, brought her uninjured port battery to his assistance against the *Confiance*.

The *Saratoga* needed help. Her spars splintered, her bulwarks stove in, her exposed battery a wreck, she seemed all but beaten. Twice the shot, heated red in the furnace on the *Confiance's* deck, had set her on fire. A ragged bundle of bloodied feathers in the scuppers was all that was left of

her brave gamecock. As Lieutenant Peter Gamble kneeled to sight the starboard bow gun for a shot at the tormenting *Linnet* a ball entered the bridleport and split the quoin. The fragments killed him. Aft, on the quarterdeck, while the Commodore cheered on his men, another shot cut the spanker-boom in two. One half of the falling spar knocked Macdonough to the deck. He rose, bloody and dazed, only to be hurled down again by a horrible missile—the head of the captain of one of the quarter-guns, knocked off by a roundshot! But one gun of the thirteen on the starboard side remained in place. Macdonough loaded, aimed, and fired it. The naval-bolt broke with the recoil, and the gun leaped from its carriage and tumbled down a hatchway. The starboard side was defenceless.

Aboard the *Confiance* affairs were not much better. Downie had been killed. Like the *Saratoga's* lieutenant, he had been kneeling, sighting a gun, when a shot entered the muzzle, burst the piece, and killed him instantly.

"Lads," said the captain as they had rounded in the braces two hours before for the tack to the enemy's line, "we shall be immediately assisted by the army ashore. Let us show them that our part of the duty is well done."

He never learned how his own death-signal, the scaling of the guns, had been answered by the imbecile who had nagged him to destruction. "*Cook breakfast!*" was Sir George Prevost's order to the Peninsular veterans when the boom of the blank cartridges rose on the morning air. They were only beginning their march on the fortifications of Plattsburg when Downie got his deathblow.

Little knew the rugged tars of the display of insanity ashore, and little they care whether the crossbelted redcoats supported them or not, now that their blood was up. But, losing their captain, they fought with more fury than skill. The new quoins, loosened by repeated discharges, let the gun-muzzles rise, and the shot flew higher and higher. Of the hundreds of hammocks stowed in the nettings above the *Saratoga's* bulwarks only twenty were unpierced, when they counted them after the battle; indicating that much of the British roundshot ploughed through just above the heads of the American crew.

Aboard the *Confiance* guns were double-shotted, treble-shotted, crammed till the balls protruded from the muzzles. They heated under the heavy charges and burst. Others were loaded with double charges of shot and wadding and no powder, with cartridges and no shot, and with the wadding below the cartridge.

"Disabled! Knocked out! Try the next one!" the dripping gun-crews would roar as the lanyard was pulled and no explosion answered. And so, between the terrible destruction of the *Saratoga's* forty-twos and the *Eagle's* thirty-twos, the British flagship's port battery was silenced.

"Wind her, sailing-master; she's lost if you don't!" called the first lieutenant.

"Aye, aye, sir," answered the master. "Lay forward and tail on to the starboard spring every man that can move a leg!"

They swarmed forward from the useless guns, led the spring cable inboard, and, some toiling "heave-and-pull" at the capstan bars, others straining at the "stamp-and-go," tried to walk the hawser home, so as to twist the ship around until her starboard battery bore. It was useless to try to turn her around by canvas. She had not enough gear left aloft to sheet home one sail. And through the bitter grinding toil of heaving on the hawser shrieked and sang the *Eagle's* roundshot.

From the smoke that swathed the *Linnet* a rowboat appeared. 'Twas the *Linnet's* gig, and her first lieutenant was in it.

"Captain Pring's compliments to Captain Downie," he roared up, as his little craft found temporary shelter from the shot under the *Confiance's* side. "How long must we keep it up?"

"Captain Downie's dead, and the ship's a wreck," returned the first lieutenant of the big ship. "If we can wind her we can keep the colours aloft. Are you hard hit?"

"Hulled through and through. Even the wounded are at the pumps. Not a rope-yarn uncut, to make sail with. We only keep afloat by running the guns in on one side and out on the other, so as to heel her till the shot-holes are out of water. What's the matter with the red-coated land lubbers? What's the matter with those sons of sea-cooks in the gunboats that they won't tow us off?"

"Afraid of their own skins," answered the *Confiance* man. "And God knows the army should have carried the shore batteries long ere this! But tell Captain Pring to keep his flag flying fifteen minutes longer, and we'll have the *Confiance* around and her sound side in action. Can you do it?"

"God help us, we will!" roared back the *Linnet's* lieutenant, and the gig pulled away.

But all the heaving on the hawser failed to wind the *Confiance* round. As she hung a helpless hulk, in the wind's eye, there came a boom from the silenced *Saratoga*, then a tremendous roar. Macdonough's resource and foresight had been equal to the fervour of his prayers. He had succeeded in winding his ship. He let go a stern anchor and paid out a tremendous scope of cable, attached to one of the kedges that had been planted broad off his bows. When the ship hung, stern to wind, she was terribly raked by the sinking *Linnet*, so much so that her crew were all rushed to the forecastle for protection. But the long kedge hawser was successfully passed under the bows and to the quarter, and, all hands tailing on, the ship was turned until the whole uninjured port battery bore on the foe, and she was once more a fighting machine.

The execution aboard the still defenceless *Confiance* under the renewed cannonade was terrible. It was no longer a battle, it was a shipwreck and slaughter. Blood poured from her scuppers as would water after shipping a heavy sea. The dead so lumbered the decks that they had to be thrust through the shattered ports. One hundred and seventy killed and wounded were found on board. One woman was among the victims. She was a steward's wife, and when the overworked surgeons despaired of handling the wounded she came up from the shelter of the lazarette to the fighting deck. A wretch lay writhing by the companion ladder, one leg mangled by a cannon-ball. The woman stooped, tore off the folds of her skirt, and began to bind up his wound. A roundshot ploughed through the bulwarks, struck her in the breast as she knelt, and hurled her a huddled corpse, clear across the ship's deck.

The *Confiance's* guns had long been silent. Amid the continuous thunder of the *Saratoga's* broadsides her shot-torn ensign fluttered down—and the battle was over.

But not for the fighting *Linnet*. Fifteen minutes her first lieutenant had promised, and for fifteen minutes after he had regained his ship his promise was kept. The little brig was a target for the guns of the *Eagle* and *Saratoga* combined, now; but, defying despair, Captain Pring kept his flag aloft. Perhaps some gunboat would pluck up the courage of very shame and tow him beyond the reach of that deadly pair! Surely the eleven thousand Peninsulars would capture the batteries soon and pummel the *Eagle* and *Saratoga* to pieces at their moorings! But Pring forgot one thing: Sir George Prevost was in command ashore.

Out of her ship's company of one hundred and twenty-five, fifty were killed and wounded aboard the *Linnet*. Captain Pring could not see the

wounded drown. When the water was a foot high above the little brig's deck he struck his flag, and the last British ensign settled down.

Sir George Prevost, who had arrived at last within striking distance, saw the fluttering colours. To the equal amazement of his own army and the enemy he right-about-faced and marched away—and the tragedy of Plattsburg was completed.

CHAPTER XV

The Silent St. Lawrence

STORY OF THE SHIP WHICH ENDED THE WAR WITHOUT FIRING A SHOT.

> "On the 15th of October the St. Lawrence sailed, bearing Sir James Yeo and more than a thousand men. She was accompanied by four ships, two brigs, and a schooner, and from that time the baronet, with his great ship, was lord of the Lake."—LOSSING.

"Lem the Dreamer," they called him in the Kingston shipyards; but no man swung a heavier spike-maul than the young giant whose blue eyes always seemed to be looking *past* whatever they were bent upon. He was "Brother Lemuel" to the little sect known as the Children of Peace. They looked askance at his labour in the Royal dockyard at Point Frederick, upon those unholy wooden monsters of war and destruction; and Sir James Yeo, commander-in-chief on the Great Lakes, looked blackly at him when the dockyard master described him as "one o' those Quakerish people." Lemuel's strength and skill made him welcome among the shipwrights nevertheless, just as his gentleness and humility preserved his place among the chosen few who formed the congregation with which he worshipped.

Lemuel lived with his aunt, a thrifty housewife whose wealth was reputed to be greater than her charity. Be that as it may, she was a good housekeeper, and if his soul lacked sympathy, his socks were neatly darned.

Nine o'clock struck one winter's night. Lemuel's aunt had gone to bed. He was poring over a draughting-board in the cheerful living-room of their cottage, slowly working out the sheerplan of a brig which was to carry more guns on less draught than aught yet built on Lake Ontario; and yet to have an unexcelled turn of speed. Lemuel had ideas. His aunt derided his "paper ships" which never sailed further than the desk in the living-room, but Lemuel smiled and only said, "Some day."

This night he had an extra hour's candlelight, because someone had to watch the great ham set to boil on the unique treasure of the household, the iron kitchen stove. In 1814 cooking in Canada was done almost exclusively at the open fire-place.

A tapping, cautious but persistent, brought Lemuel to the door. He admitted a shivering rat-faced wretch, garbed as a sailor and reeking of whisky. Yet he was glib enough of tongue. "For the love o' God, matey, give us a bite to eat and a bare board to lie on," he implored. "I've tramped all the way from York to find a berth, and I'm dead beat. For the love o' God——"

"A sacred name, friend," said Lemuel. "Be warmed and fed." He seated his unsavoury guest by the radiant stove and set bread and meat on the table, and flanked the repast with a flagon of maple syrup and another of milk.

"Thee must lie on the rug by the stove," Lemuel explained apologetically. "For my bed is narrow and I am not a small man."

"Right-o, matey," responded his guest from the depths of his milk-mug. And Lemuel slipped back to his draughting-board.

"Lemuel?" called his aunt, "what do you mean by leaving a tramp in the kitchen?"

"I thought thee was asleep," answered Lemuel guilelessly. "But there is naught the poor wretch can take, once he has had his meal, save a boiling ham, and a red-hot stove."

And so he went on with his calculation of bearings and buoyancy, and the clock struck ten unheeded. Lemuel was recalled to the present somewhat abruptly by the night-gowned figure of his aunt appearing from the kitchen.

"*Well*," she announced with much emphasis, "your friend has left the red-hot stove!"

Lemuel looked into the kitchen with amazement. The supper was done—naturally; but the man was gone; and the ham was gone; naught remained but the glowing stove and an odour of whisky. His aunt's wrath found vent in a diatribe against Children of Peace, who mooned over pictured warships, while the enemy, the real enemy, the ravager of homes—and hams—was in the gate; and Lemuel went to bed with a heavy heart. He was sorry for the mishap to his aunt's larder; he was sorry for the thieving sailor; and his conscience reproached him in a blind unreasoning way, that he, a Child of Peace, should be finding his bread by day and delight by night, in building ships of wicked war, from wood and on paper.

Homeward bound in the early twilight from the shipyard the day following, Lemuel found a great crowd in the market square. His height gave him a view of that which attracted them. Seized to the pillory, which men then thought a necessary adjunct of any market-place, stood the rat-faced wretch who had visited his house the night before. Lemuel recognized him, although his sailor's jacket had been stripped from him and he stood, naked to the waist, in the January air. His back was criss-crossed with a hideous diamond-pattern in purple and scarlet. A lusty boatswain stood by him, negligently swaying back and forth the terrible "cat." The naked one had just been publicly flogged. He stood or hung at the pillory, as though incapable of further feeling; his arms, bound to the cross-beam, upraised as in some horrible mockery of blessing.

The boatswain stepped aside, and a sooty smith took his place. He had a brazier, and he blew on his coals with a bellows until the whole pan glowed. Suddenly he plucked forth from the midst an iron rod—black at the handle, ruddy further down, and blazing, white-hot at the end, with a capital "D." He thrust it at the naked man's armpit. There was a shriek, and the nauseating stench of burning flesh. Then the figure was loosened from the pillory, flung into a sleigh, and covered with a sack. The sleigh started for the jail.

"Served him right," Lemuel heard the people muttering. "A deserter, a drunken, thieving deserter! Like as not he was bound for Pirate Bill Johnston's gang down the river. He'd sell us to the Yankees, I've no doubt!"

But Lemuel went home, white as the snow he trod, his blue eyes blazing like the winter sky when the sun gives all light and no heat.

He sat late over his draughting-board that night. His aunt, vaguely apprehensive, knitted silently at the opposite side of the table until it was long past bedtime. The white-faced giant drew in and rubbed out gun-port after gun-port in the brig's side; but past the paper the blue eyes always saw the human being like a trapped rat, the relentless executioners, the approving mob. It was war made men like that, he felt; war made the deserter, war made his executioners, war made the mob. He himself had been a spectator of war now these two years. He had seen the widow's tears and heard the orphan's wails after battle; he had seen the riot of triumph around the blazing bonfires when the fleet came steering in from the Ducks with prize-ships in tow. But behind all the grandeur and the glory and the pathos and the patriotism he saw the degraded deserter, with outstretched arms in mocking benediction; and there beat in his ears, louder than the piercing shriek, a promise in thunder: "There shall be no more war!"

Rising suddenly the giant carefully unpinned his draught from the board, ripped it in two, and crumpled the fragments in his mighty fists.

"You will feel better, Lemuel," said his aunt, with gentleness rare for her. "I don't mean you have been doing wrong, but if your conscience is ill at ease, don't go against it."

The dreamer smiled at her indulgently. He smoothed out a fresh sheet on his board and another and another, until his whole board was covered. Then, swiftly ruling off base-lines and sections, he sketched in bold profile the outline of a vessel many times as large as the brig on which he had laboured; a ship with double decks of guns, so many guns that her side looked like the combined cannon-tiers of all the fleets on Lake Ontario.

"They talk, aunt," said he, "of making war support war. We must make war destroy war, instead!"

After six nights Lemuel strode to the house of John Dennis, master-builder, with a great roll of lined paper under his arm.

"Another brig?" asked the master pleasantly. "I fear the Children of Peace will be losing a promising infant. King George, however, will be the richer."

"Nay, Mr. Dennis, 'tis not another brig," answered Lemuel unrolling his scroll. "Thee knows, as I know, how this strife drags on—each of us building a new ship a little larger than our last, and finding, when we come to launch, that our new ship must not leave the harbour because the enemy have a bigger one waiting outside. And so the war grinds on. Its grist is human beings stamped with the likeness of beasts and crawling things!"

"Thanks, Dreamer-boy," laughed honest John Dennis, "but whatever you may think of the rest of us, remember you are a product of the war-mill yourself. D'ye think, lad, you could come here to your boss, head thrown back, chest out, and your blue eyes blazing like one of the Old Testament prophets, if war hadn't inspired you? War is a melting pot, lad. The scum and dross may seethe and simmer on the surface, but the gold and the steel of strong, true men like you is found at the bottom!"

"Ay, but the price!" urged Lemuel. "Wounds, and widows' tears and the hunger of babes, the destruction of men's bodies, the ruin of their souls! No, this war, all war, must end. And here is how. We must build a ship so big that opposition to her will be useless, unthinkable—a ship able to blockade and batter the entire fleet of the enemy; and here she is!"

John Dennis stared as though thunderstruck; not at the draught of the battleship Lemuel unfolded, but at Lemuel himself.

"Young man," said he, slowly, "if I did not know you were true I would kill you with my own hands. You have uncovered by chance the deepest design of His Majesty's government. Such a ship as you describe, such a ship as you have drawn, has already been determined on. I thought myself the only man who knew, except Sir James Yeo!"

"Praise Jehovah!" exclaimed Lemuel, blithely rolling up his plans. He felt not the slightest twinge of disappointment at being forestalled in a great idea. "Praise Jehovah!" he repeated. "Sir James need have no fear of the knowledge of this design passing my lips." And for the second time in seven days the dreamer tore up and crumpled his heart's best gift to the world.

All that winter the axe and the saw rang in the surrounding forests, and sledges toiled through the deep snows with enormous logs of elm, oak, cedar and pine. The Royal dockyard was piled high with shorn trunks of forest monarchs. Day and night the forges roared, night and day the sailmakers plied the palm-and-needle, the riggers knotted and spliced. The entire original squadron was renamed and regunned.

On the launching ways beside the yellow "Stone Frigate" two new ships speedily took shape. They were larger than anything yet attempted—one twelve hundred, one fourteen hundred, tons; twice as large as the old *Royal George* or the *Wolfe*, which had in turn borne the commodore's pennant; but Lemuel's blue eyes twinkled quietly when his comrades expatiated upon them. *He* knew, and the master-builder knew, why the thickest oak logs were set aside, and why twice as many keel-blocks as the whole yard had hitherto boasted were prepared.

With February came the first loosening of the winter's grip. In the pools of snow-water in the shipyard they began to line up the keel-blocks, and the ship-carpenters gaped at the result. "Are we to build two ships on one keel?" they asked. And one more deserter slipped way across the rotting ice at the foot of Lake Ontario, and told Chauncey, the American Commodore at Sackett's Harbour: "They have two ships well under way, one to carry forty-two guns and one for fifty-eight; but what the third keel they've laid is for, the Lord only knows. The keel-blocks stretch a hundred and ninety feet already, and the space kept clear around them is wider than any city street!"

Chauncey pondered and sent for Henry Eckford—he who afterwards built a navy for the Sultan of Turkey.

"How many keels have you just laid, Master Eckford?" asked the Commodore.

"Three," answered Eckford, "two for brigs of twenty-two guns, and one for a fifty-gun ship."

"Can we add to the guns?"

"Not of the brigs," said the builder slowly, "their scantling won't take more. But maybe the ship would stand another dozen."

"Then sixty-two guns let her be," said Chauncey, "and speed your men night and day. We will have something rare to meet this year—something rare, I know not what."

"I'll launch the brigs in forty days from the cutting of the keel timbers," promised Eckford, "and the ship will be afloat within a month of them." And he kept his word, wonderful as was the promise.

But over on the Canadian side of the lake, in the Royal dockyard in Kingston, a mightier miracle was in progress. When the kiss of April banished the ice from Navy Bay the two new frigates, *Prince Regent* and *Princess Charlotte*, plunged into their intended element. Swiftly their lofty spars rose above their new-caulked decks, and gleaming wings of canvas greeted the first airs of May. A squadron sailed and pocketed Chauncey and his new brigs in Sackett's for a while, and stormed Oswego, and came back laden with pork and powder, cannon and gear intended for Chauncey's sixty-two gun ship *Superior* and for a sister frigate, the *Mohawk*, which the magician Eckford had also undertaken. Prize-schooners trailed in the wake of the home-comers. The joy bells rang and money clinked and tavern lights blazed all night long, and the groans of the wounded and weeping of widows and orphans were forgotten of all men—save Lemuel.

There followed a time too when straggling survivors crept in to tell of the capture of the gunboats and ships' cutters which had attempted to waylay and destroy the flotilla ferrying the *Superior's* second outfit from Oswego to Sackett's; still later the *Superior* herself and the *Mohawk*, and the new brigs, *Jones* and *Jefferson*, and all the vessels of the older American fleet, hovered off Kingston Harbour, with their fever-smitten Commodore aboard, sending challenges from his sick berth to the fuming Sir James Yeo; challenges which Sir James dared not in reason accept.

Now up, now down, swung the beam of the scale. British gun-galleys were captured on the St. Lawrence river. American scout-boats were taken among the Thousand Islands. Word came of the surprise of the *Ohio* and

Somers in the Niagara river, of the *Tigress* and *Scorpion* at the Detour; but through triumph and tribulation Lem the Dreamer swung his spike-maul in the Kingston dockyard with a quiet cheerfulness which might have been mistaken for thoughtless good-humour were it not for the fire which burned in the eyes of blue.

Such a work as he toiled on fresh water has seldom seen. A hundred and ninety feet, as the deserter had said, stretched a line of keel-blocks. Upon them were laid and scarphed the squared trunks of three of the tallest white oaks in Upper Canada. From this backbone grew ribs of timber, each a foot square. At either end sprang stempost and sternpost forty feet high, each a whole tree in the forest the winter before. The gigantic skeleton was clothed with layers of planking within and without, much of it fifty foot "flitches" of oak, six inches thick and a foot wide. The pit-sawyers sawed the oak-trunks from roots to branches, and the curves and bends of the tree were shown in the planks. These again were cunningly fitted to the curves of the ship's swelling sides.

Only sixty-foot logs were long enough to furnish the scores and scores of deck-beams which tied her together athwartships. She had two complete gun-decks running from stem to stern, and above these rose her quarterdeck, poop, and topgallant forecastle. An army of joiners toiled on her cabins and living-quarters; for she was to be the floating home of a thousand fighting men. A whole grove of stately pines disappeared to provide her three lower masts, their topmasts, the mighty bowsprit, the long spanker-boom and gaff. Another grove vanished to supply her topgallant masts and royals, and her yards and booms. Her mainyard alone used all the timber of a hundred-foot tree.

Ever about the dockyard-wharves hovered a fleet of small craft—flat-bottomed boats which could be tracked up the rapids of the St. Lawrence, round-bottomed coasters which could dodge the prowling American fleet; bateaux, scows, "Durham-boats," schooners, even canoes. Everything British which could navigate the river came loaded with cannon and cordage, canvas and chains, eyebolts and anchors, oakum and tallow, powder and lead. When the river was blockaded the wilderness roads had to serve. But steadily, surely, month after month, was gathered together the complete equipment of the mightiest warship fresh water ever floated.

"I hear she has ninety guns, none smaller than thirty-two-pounders," one spy told Chauncey.

"She is pierced for a hundred and two guns," averred another, "and they say she can carry a hundred and twelve on her calculated draught of twenty-seven feet!"

"Twenty-seven feet!" exclaimed Eckford. "How many harbours on this lake can she enter, then?"

"She won't have to enter," answered Chauncey bitterly. "She can blow us all to Kingdom Come while she lies outside."

"Then," said the practical Eckford. "I'd blow her to Kingdom Come first!"

Happiest of all the hundreds labouring on this terrific engine of destruction was Lem the Dreamer, Brother Lemuel of the Children of Peace. Every spike he drove was to him not an item in the doom of fellow men serving the Stars and Stripes, but a nail in the coffin of the monster—War. When the great planks came smoking hot from the steam-box, and the mighty clamps gripped them to their places along the ribs, Lemuel felt like shouting "Praise Jehovah!" Every hammer-stroke which tightened the wedges overcoming the rebellious oak was to him a "Hallelujah!" The clink-clink-clink of the apple-tree mallets on the caulking irons was to him the music of angels beating on the crystal spheres. The grinning cannon, piled in heaps about the yard, seemed to open their mouths only to say. "There shall be no more war!" He felt as though he were treading on air. And he did the work of ten men without tiring.

"A skulker, eh?" Sir James Yeo had asked when the fleet came back with the spoil of Oswego, and Lemuel's serene contentment was uninterrupted by a single huzza. "Perchance the 'cat' would liven him!"

"You will think differently of him, Sir James," said John Dennis.

"You were right," said Sir James a month later, when things were very black and stragglers were coming in with evil tidings. "Your Son-of-Peace, or whatever you call him, puts spirit into his fellows by smiling through dirty weather. Give him more pay, and place him in charge of a few of the faint-hearted."

Still later Sir James said: "Make the Peacepusher foreman of the hardest gang you have to handle. It will be to the profit of the Dreamer and of his Majesty's Government. That man works so hard and so merrily he will make an end of all hanging back."

"He would give his life," said John Dennis, "to see the ship afloat. He believes she will end the war."

"For his sake," answered Sir James with his rare smile, "I hope you are a worse prophet than he."

More pay and the approval of the mighty left Lemuel just as they found him—abstracted, eager, smiling quietly from blue eyes which seemed to look *past* what they saw. The vision of agony which had made their gaze all light and no heat had faded: rather, it was displaced by a newer vision of a noble ship, the mightiest yet planned in the new world; a vision swiftly shaping into reality grander even than fancy had pictured. The ship on the stocks was to Lemuel's naive mind infinitely more glorious than the ship he had put on paper. He cherished no illusions as to the superiority of his own ideas. A noble name had been chosen for her—*St. Lawrence*, commemorating the river which began its seaward journey opposite her birthplace.

Soft September's moon began to wane. The glorious news from Mackinac had been followed by the terrible tidings of the Battle of Lake Champlain. If that defeat were to be retrieved at all the *St. Lawrence* must be launched forthwith and sweep Lake Ontario; for the foe had heard enough about her to attempt to outbuild even her during the coming winter. So day and night, as in the times ere the fitting out of the spring fleet, the whole Royal dockyard rang with the labour of caulker, carpenter, armourer and artizan. Boarding-pikes were hammered out, gun-carriages hewn, spars shaped, and sails cut, even by torchlight. And night and day, tireless, alert, a blue-eyed giant swung a spike-maul and cheered on his flagging fellow-workers in a fashion which fairly shocked the rough-hewn shipyard folk by its mildness.

"She must be afloat by the twenty-first," Sir James had said.

"Then I'll have Lem the Dreamer promise it," wisely concluded the master-builder. And he gained Lemuel's pledge.

There was much to be done when the twenty-first dawned. But Lemuel and the whole dockyard staff toiled like Trojans. All the soap-fat in the countryside, all the tallow, all the grease, was lavished on the launching ways. Late in the afternoon it was announced that everything was in readiness. Towering over the water like some great timber blockhouse of many embrasures and many stories, the ship stood on the harbour-shore, with the hundred ports of her several decks all closed. On a staging built up by the bow were Sir James Yeo and the official party, with the traditional bottle of wine. Around the yard, at a respectful distance, were ranged all the inhabitants of Kingston.

"Now, lads," called the blue-eyed giant, "with a will!"

A swift chorus of hammer-strokes on wedges answered him. The stern rose slightly and a restraining hawser became taut as a harp-string.

"Cut!" called the giant, and a stroke of a ship-axe severed the hemp. The ship began, almost imperceptibly, to glide forward, with a hollow sound, between a creak and a rumble.

Lemuel dropped to his knees. To pray? Rather, to work. A swift glance along the launching ways showed him why the ship did not gather speed. A workman had failed to knock one of the bow-wedges completely clear. That insignificant splinter of oak might block the ship or hurl her on her side as she gained momentum. At the best the wedge spelt delay; and the worst, disaster. The fall of a ship upon the land is as perilous as the fall of a house into the water.

Crouching, Lemuel ran along under the slowly travelling bilge of the ship, maul in hand. As he passed the staging he heard the words. "St. Lawrence!" the crash of glass, the hurrah of a few voices, taken up by the loud cheers of many. Three swift strokes of his maul, and the wedge flew into matchwood. The great body above him gathered motion so quickly he was forced to drop panting beside the launching ways. The hollow creaking overhead turned into a rumbling roar—and then he saw the stern of the ship, and a forty-foot burst of dazzling spray springing heavenward from her cleaving bows. The people cheered and cheered. "Good launch! Good luck!" each man shouted to his neighbour. And the displaced water came rushing back to the shore.

Lem the Dreamer had not risen from his knees when the return wave burst on the beach. He was hot with his run and the tremendous strokes which none had seen. The prospect of a drenching was far from disagreeable. The spray leapt up and fell on him; it even spattered the launching stage. The official party laughed. But the Dreamer stayed on his knees by the shore.

"Try that as a cure for a wetting!" called Sir James Yeo as he hurried past the crouched figure. They were warping the *St. Lawrence* up under the great sheer-legs, where her mainmast hung ready for stepping. But the chink of the guineas failed to attract the Dreamer's attention. Sir James stooped, not over the gold but over the man.

The blue eyes were wide open, staring towards the noble ship, riding easily on the last of the waves she had created.

“Her shotted guns shall never speak,” the Dreamer murmured. “Without a word she ends the strife. And there shall be no more war!”

With that he died.

“Apoplexy,” the surgeon said. “The man appears to have been somewhat abnormal, physically and mentally. Over-wrought by mental excitement and prolonged physical exertion. The shock of cold water in his overheated state was a contributing factor.”

There came to Chauncey a messenger who said: “The *St. Lawrence* is afloat and rigged and her hundred guns are being slung aboard!” And the harassed Commodore, fighting fever, Sir James Yeo, and personal enemies all at once, recalled his blockading brigs from far and near and concentrated all his ships around the ancient base, Sackett’s Harbour.



"*Lem, the Dreamer, had not risen from his knees when the return wave burst on the beach*."

"Three thousand tons that battleship measures," he told Eckford. "Big enough to swallow our *Superior* and *Mohawk* at one gulp without bulging her sides. We should have taken your advice and blown her to Kingdom Come before she got afloat."

"Never too late to try," responded the builder, "and as the British tried to strew powder-kegs under the *Superior*, why not try a new torpedo plan on the *St. Lawrence*?"

By the light of a waning moon a large gig crept stealthily from Sackett's Harbour. She was rowed by a picked crew of seamen. A daring midshipman named McGowan was in charge. Beside him crouched a high cheekboned young man of Dutch-Irish parentage who had already become famous in the war. He had been a settler in the Bay of Quinte district at Bath, above Kingston, but with the outbreak of hostilities he made common cause with the Americans, and, gathering together a band of British-haters on Amherst Island, made an escape with them from Canada and landed at Sackett's Harbour. He was quick, resourceful, and loyal to any enemy of Great Britain. From his knowledge of the St. Lawrence river he was an invaluable guide in the many forays made from Ogdensburg. His nickname, "Pirate Bill Johnston," was given in jest, but was confirmed in deadly earnest years later when, with a gang of helpers disguised as red Indians, he seized and burned the British mail steamer *Sir Robert Peel* among the Thousand Islands. This was during the Canadian rebellion. For two years the pirate was hunted among his islands, with a price set on his head by both governments, British and American. The light skiff of his devoted daughter saved him time and again from starvation and capture, ere at last a hard-won pardon came.

The gig which stole from Sackett's carried one other passenger, inanimate, but more to be dreaded than the most valiant midshipman or most desperate pirate. It was a forerunner of the modern torpedo. A large copper cylinder contained a quantity of gunpowder and a fuse attached to clockwork, released by a spring. The cylinder was buoyed with balks of wood, so that it could float almost submerged; and a light tough line was attached to it and to a stout harpoon. The latter had to be fired from a heavy blunderbuss installed in the sternsheets of the gig.

"Remember," McGowan repeated, "first steer us into a position where the wind or the current runs from us to the ship. Then stand by the clockwork spring while I fire the harpoon. If it fastens, release the spring, throw the whole thing overboard, and lie flat in the bottom of the boat if you can't lend a hand to the rowers. They'll have to pull away for dear life. Our harpoon-gun will wake the sentries, and next minute the sentries and the whole ship will go aloft with noise enough to wake the dead!"

"A hellish business," said the pirate. "I hate it." Despite his name and adventures he never took a life.

"War's war," was the midshipman's answering philosophy.

Daylight found the gig skirting the foot of the lake. To avoid notice she turned east and lurked among the islands. At dusk they rowed again, and very early in the blackness of the autumn morning after moonset, they crept into Kingston's Navy Bay.

The port was silent as a city of the dead. The "Stone Frigate's" walls loomed against the velvet darkness like mountain ramparts on the edge of the world. They dipped their oars softly and pulled into the cove with beating hearts, expecting every second a sentry's hail and a sheet of flame from levelled muskets. Beyond the mountain ramparts straight, black lines speared heavenward. The *St. Lawrence's* spars? They rowed closer. No, it was only the sheer-legs of the dockyard.

Navy Bay was empty.

The searching gig-crew circled round from shore to shore. Some small hulks at moorings at the inner end; some ships in frame on the stocks—these they slowly disentangled from the gloom; but warfleet there was none.

"Out, and back to the islands ere the day breaks," whispered the midshipman.

"Why not try your torpedo on one of the hulks?" muttered the pirate.

"Risk holes in our heads or Dartmoor prison to blow up a condemned hooker?" snorted the officer. "Have sense. Perchance the light will show us the *St. Lawrence*."

The light did. In the shelter of a creek behind Garden Island, opposite Kingston, the gig lay, when the dawn burst in full glory; over autumn woods flaming with scarlet sumach and maple; through glades where the fresh-cut stumps showed what ruin had been wrought among the oak and elm, cedar and pine; and out upon the glad blue waters of the broad Lower Gap leading to Lake Ontario. Down the wide passage to the open lake moved with the stately tread of a new-crowned monarch, unhasting and unhesitating, the ship they sought. The sunrise flame winked and burned back from cabin window and carving, from polished brazen cannon-lip and fresh-scraped spar. From truck to deck she was clothed in the white raiment of new sail-cloth. From her loftiest masthead floated the Commodore's pennant, from her gaff-end the hated flag of England. Before her, dwarfed by the distance and the contrast with the newest ship, floated the largest square-riggers of preceding seasons, flying dutiful answering pennants to the *St. Lawrence's* signals. Steadily, rapidly, with no apparent effort at motion, the squadron

drew away from the watchers. For all their quietness they were travelling over the smooth water at a speed no oars could match.

"Bound up the lake for Niagara," ground out McGowan between his teeth. "Oh, if we had been twenty-four hours earlier. The war—the war is at an end!"

"You did your best, lad," said Chauncey, when the disappointed gig returned. "But you're right. The war on Lake Ontario *is* ended until we can match that marvel. And that will not be till next spring at the earliest!" For all the remainder of that year, while the lake was free from ice, the British fleet winged its way up and down, from Burlington Bay to Garden Island, without let or hindrance. The ships carried troops and stores with the regularity of package freighters. Huddled under the menace of those hundred silent guns under one broad-pennant the fleet of the foe lay cooped in Sackett's Harbour, until the fetters of the winter made their imprisonment assured till spring.

The magician Eckford wove his mightiest spell. The forests of the south shore of the lake began to vanish as had the forests of the north shore the preceding winter. Sackett's Harbour too has its Navy Bay, and on the stony point of the spit which shelters it the December snows fell on the keel-blocks of a ship which was to out-timber the still silent *St. Lawrence*. One hundred and eighty-seven feet was her keel, thirty feet her depth of hold, three thousand two hundred tons her burthen, and one hundred and twenty was the number of guns her decks would bear. Further inland from the lake, on the shores of Black River Bay, was laid another keel of similar size, for guns as numerous, and a ship as great. Through storm and shine, by torchlight and by day, soldiers and sailors toiled continuously to outbuild that fleet which floated on one keel amid the ice sheets of Kingston Harbour.

Came Christmas Eve, 1814. In the homes of Kingston candles gleamed an answer to the lanterns of the fleet. In Navy Bay the tallsparred hulls snuggled as for warmth. Stripped of their sails and running rigging they looked, amid the sifting snowflakes, like some leafless forest. High above all others towered the mighty masts of the *St. Lawrence*. Sentries paced her decks and from their elevation watched the lesser hulls lying around her.

In the shelter of the break of the quarterdeck the relief watch yarned away the time ere it should be their turn to face the wintry night.

"What was it Lem the Dreamer said at the la'nch, afore he died?" asked a rawboned marine. "Didn't he say this ship'd never fire a broadside?"

"He said, 'Her shotted guns shall never speak. Without a word she ends the strife. And there shall be no more war!'" answered a dour Scots salt, with all the fervour of the Shorter Cathechism. "Why?"

"Mebbe it's the time o' the year," said the marine humbly. "Peace-on-earth you know, and all that; and mebbe's it's just bein' lonesome. We both was in Sir James's guard, that day o' the la'nch, and I helped pick Lem up, like you did. And somehow I got to thinkin' how this ship's never had to fire a shot yet, and then about him and his blue eyes. Wonder if he was a prophet?"

"He was a good man," said the Scot soberly.

"Ding-ding! Ding-ding! Ding-ding! Ding-ding!" struck the ship's bell.

"Eight bells, and sentry relief!" commented the marine. "Into the snow along with me, and a Merry Christmas to ye, Glengarry—that is, if you Scotch *keep* Christmas!"

They turned out into the storm-swept night. And far away in the city of Ghent, across the wintry Atlantic, the Christmas chimes were ringing the message eighteen centuries old: "Peace on earth, goodwill toward men." To it could be added, "And in America, peace, and goodwill between Great Britain and the United States!" For certain commissioners, who had argued, and coaxed, and menaced, and pleaded for ten months in the neutral city of the Netherlands, had set the seals of two nations to a writing; the war was ended—forever. And although the imaginative marine knew nought of this as he traced his sentry-track along the snowy deck, he had a strange feeling that the great ship was happy and Lem the Dreamer was at peace.

THE END

TRANSCRIBER NOTES

Misspelled words and printer errors have been corrected. Where multiple spellings occur, majority use has been employed.

Punctuation has been maintained except where obvious printer errors occur.

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[The end of *The Story of the "Nancy" and other Eighteen-Twelvers* by C. H. J. Snider]