

THE WAR.

Copy of a letter from Maj. Gen. Brooks to the Secretary of War, dated at Black-Quarry, Camp Erie, Erie, Sept. 22, 1814.

SIR—In my letter of the 18th inst. I briefly informed you of the fortunate issue of the sortie which took place the day preceding. But it is due to the gallant officers and men, to whose bravery we are indebted for our success on this occasion, that I should give you a more circumstantial and detailed account of this affair.

The enemy's camp I had ascertained to be situated in a field, surrounded by woods, nearly two miles distant from their batteries and entrenchments, the object of which was to keep that part of their force which was not upon duty, out of the range of our fire from Fort Erie and Black-Quarry. Their infantry was formed into three brigades, estimated at 12 or 15 hundred men each. One of these brigades, with a detail from their artillery, was stationed at their works, (these being distant about 500 yards from Old Fort Erie, and the right of our line.) We had already suffered much from the fire of two of their batteries, and were aware that a third was about to open upon us. Under these circumstances, I resolved to storm the batteries, destroy the cannon, and roughly handle the brigades upon duty before those in reserve could be brought into action.

On the morning of the 17th, the infantry and riflemen, regulars and militia, were ordered to be paraded and put in readiness to march precisely at 12 o'clock. Gen. Porter with the volunteers, Col. Gibson with the rifleman, & Major Brooks with the 23d and 1st infantry, and a few dragoons acting as infantry, were ordered to move from the extreme left of our position upon the enemy's right, by a passage opened through the woods for the occasion. Gen. Miller was directed to station his command in the ravine, which lies between Fort Erie and the enemy's batteries, by passing them by detachments through the skirts of the wood, and the 21st infantry under Gen. Ripley was posted as a corps of reserve between the two bastions and Fort Erie; all under cover, and out of the view of the enemy.

About 20 minutes before 3 P. M. I found the left column, under the command of Gen. Porter, which were destined to turn the enemy's right, within a few rods of the British entrenchments. They were ordered to advance and commence the action. Passing down the ravine, I judged from the report of musketry that the action had commenced on our left: I now hastened to Gen. Miller and directed him to seize the moment and pierce the enemy's entrenchments between batteries No. 2 and 3. My orders were promptly and ably executed. Within 30 minutes after the first gun was fired, batteries No. 3 and 2, the enemy's line of intrenchments, and his two block houses, were in our possession.

Soon after, battery No. 1 was abandoned by the British. The guns in each were spiked by us, or otherwise destroyed, and the magazine of No. 3 was blown up.

A few minutes before the explosion, I ordered up the reserve under Gen. Ripley. As he passed me at the head of his column, I desired him, as he would be the senior in advance, to ascertain as near as possible, the situation of the troops in general, and to have a care that not more was hazarded than the occasion required: that, the object of the sortie effected, the troops would retire in good order, &c. General Ripley passed rapidly on soon after, became alarmed for Gen. Miller, and sent an order for the 21st to hasten to his support towards battery No. 1. Col. Upham received the order, and advanced to the aid of Gen. Miller. Gen. Ripley had inclined to the left, where Major Brooks' command was engaged, with a view of making some necessary enquiries of that officer, and in the act of doing so was unfortunately wounded. By this time the object of the sortie was accomplished beyond my most sanguine expectations. General Miller had consequently ordered the troops on the right to fall back: observing this movement, I sent my staff along the line to call in the other corps. Within a few minutes they retired from the ravine, & from thence to camp.

Thus one thousand regulars and an equal portion of militia, in one hour of close action blasted the hopes of the enemy, destroyed the fruits of 50 days labour, and diminished his effective force 1000 men at least. I am at a loss how to express my satisfaction at the gallant conduct of the officers and men of this division, whose valor has shone superior to every trial. General Porter in his official report herein enclosed, has very properly noticed those patriotic citizens who have done so much to honor themselves, by freely & voluntarily tendering their services at a dangerous and critical period.

As the scene of action was in a wood in advance of the position I had chosen for directing the whole, the several reports of commanders of corps must guide me in noticing individuals. Gen. Miller mentions Lt. Col. Aspinwall, Lt. Col. Beedle, Major Trimble, Capt. Hall, Capt. Ingersoll, Lt. Crawford, Lt. Lee, and particularly Ensign O'Fling as entitled to distinction.

Lt. Col. McDonald, upon whom the command of the rifle corps devolved, upon the fall of the brave and generous Gibson, names Adjutants Shortridge of the 1st, and Ballard

of the 2d, as deserving the highest praise for their promptness and gallantry in communicating orders. Of the other officers of the corps, he reports generally, that the bravery and good conduct of all was so conspicuous, as to render it impossible to discriminate. Major Brooks, to whom much credit is due for the distinguished manner in which he executed the orders he received, speaks in high terms of Lieuts. Goodell, Ingersoll, Livingston, and Ensigns Brant and O'Fling of the 23d—particularly of the latter. Also of Capt. Simms, Lieuts. Bissell, Shore, and Brinot of the 1st infantry, and Lieut. Watts of the dragoons.

Lieut. Col. Upham, who took command of the reserve after Gen. Ripley was disabled, bestows great praise upon Major Chambers of the 4th regt. of rifleman, attached to the 21st infantry, as also upon Capt. Bradford, and Lt. Holding of that regiment.

My staff, Col. Stelling, Col. Gardner, Maj. Jones, and my aids de camp, Major Austin and Lieut. Armstrong were, as usual, zealous, intelligent, and active, they performed every duty required of them to my entire satisfaction.

Major Hall, Asst. Insp. Gen. led a battalion of militia, and conducted with skill and gallantry. Lt. Kirby, Aid-de-Camp, to General Ripley, was extremely active and useful during the time he was in action.

Lieuts. Fraser and Riddle were in Gen. Porter's Staff; their bravery was conspicuous, and no officers of their grade were more useful.

The corps of artillery commanded by Maj. Hindman, which has been so eminently distinguished throughout this campaign had no opportunity of taking a part in the sortie.—The 73th infantry under Col. Jessup was stationed in Fort Erie to hold the key of our position.

Col. Brady, on whose firmness and good conduct every reliance could be placed, was on command at Buffalo with the remainder of the 22d infantry. Lieut. Col. M'Bee and Lieut. Col. Wood of the corps of engineers, have rendered to this army services the most important. I must seize the opportunity of again mentioning them particularly. On every trying occasion I have reaped much benefit from their sound and excellent advice. No two officers of their grade could have contributed more to the safety and honor of this army. Wood, brave, generous and enterprising, died as he had lived without a feeling but for the honor of his country and the glory of her arms. His name and example will live to guide the soldier in the path of duty so long as true heroism is held in estimation. M'Bee lives to enjoy the approbation of every virtuous and generous mind, and to receive the reward due to his services and high military talents.

It is proper here to notice that although but one third of the enemy's force was on duty which his works were carried, the whole were brought into action while we were employed in destroying his cannon. We secured prisoners from seven of his regiments, and know that the 6th and 82d suffered severely in killed and wounded, yet these regiments were not upon duty.

Lieut. Gen. Drummond broke up his camp during the night of the 21st and retired to his entrenchments behind the Chippewa. A party of our men came up with the rear of his army at Frenchman's Creek; the enemy destroyed part of their stores by setting fire to the buildings from which they were employed in conveying them. We found in and about their camp a considerable quantity of cannon ball, and upwards of one hundred stand of arms.

I send you enclosed herein a return of our loss. The return of prisoners inclosed does not include the stragglers that came in after the action. I have the honor to be,

JACOB BROWN.

Hon. Secretary of War.

Copy of a letter from Brig. Gen. Porter, to Gen. Brown. Fort Erie, Sept. 22, 1814.

SIR—In executing the duty you have imposed on me, of reporting the conduct of the officers and men composing the left column, which you was pleased to place under my command, in the sortie of the 17th inst. the pleasure I derive in representing to you the admirable conduct of the whole, is deeply chastened by sorrow for the loss of many brave and distinguished men.

Being obliged, from the nature of the ground, to act on foot, it was impossible that my own personal observation should reach to every officer. Some part of this report must therefore rest upon the information of others.

It is the business of this communication to speak of the conduct of individuals; yet you will permit me to promise, although well known to yourself already, that the object of the left column was to penetrate, by a circuitous route, between the enemy's batteries, where one-third of his force was always kept on duty, and his main camp, and that it was subdivided into three divisions—the advance of 200 riflemen, and a few Indians, commanded by Col. Gibson, and two columns moving parallel to, and 30 yards distant from each other. The right column was commanded by Lt. Col. Wood, headed by 400 infantry, under Major Brook of the 23d, and followed by 300 volunteers and militia, being parts of Lt. Col. Dobbin's, M'Burney's and Fleming's regiments, and was intended to attack the batteries. The left column of 500 militia was commanded by brig. gen. Davis, & comprised the commands of Lt. Col. Hopkins, Churchhill and Crosby, and was intended to hold in check any reinforcements from the enemy's camp; or both columns (circumstances requiring it, which frequently happened) to cooperate in the same object.

After carrying by storm, in the handsomest style, a strong block house, in rear of the third battery, making its garrison prisoners, destroying the three 24 pounders and their carriages in the third battery, and blowing up the enemy's magazine, and after co-operating with Gen. Miller in taking the second battery, the gallant leaders of the three divisions all fell nearly at the same time; Col. Gibson, at the second battery, and Gen. Davis, and Lt. Col. Wood, in an assault upon the first.

Brig. Gen. Davis, although a Militia officer of little experience, conducted on this occasion with all the coolness and bravery of a veteran, and fell while advancing upon the enemy's entrenchments. His loss as a citizen, as well as a soldier, will be severely felt in the patriotic county of Genesee. Col. Gibson fully sustained the high military reputation, which he had before so justly acquired. You know how exalted an opinion I have always entertained of Lieut. Col. Wood of the Engineers. His conduct, on this day, was, what it uniformly has been, on every similar occasion, an exhibition of military skill, acute judgment, and heroic valor. Of the other Regular Officers, Lt. Col. McDonald and Major Brock, senior in command, will report to you in relation to their respective divisions. Permit me, however, to say of these two officers, that, much as was left to them by the fall of their distinguished leaders, they were able to sustain their parts in the most admirable manner, and they richly deserve the notice of the government.

Of the militia, I regret that the limits of a report will not permit me even to name all of those, who on this occasion established claims to the gratitude of their fellow citizens; much less to particularize individual merits. Lieut. Colonels Hopkins, M'Burney, Churchhill and Crosby, and Majors Lee, Marle, Wilson, Lawrence, Burr, Dunham, Kellogg, and Gannon, are entitled to the highest praise for their gallant conduct, their steady and persevering exertions. Lt. Col. Dobbin being prevented by severe indisposition from taking the field, Maj. Hall, Asst. Insp. General, volunteered his services to join Maj. Lee in the command of the volunteer regiment; and Maj. Lee and every other officer speaks in the highest terms of the gallant and good conduct of this young officer.

Capt. Fleming, who commanded the Indians, was, as he always is, in the front of the battle. There is not a more intrepid soldier in the army. I should be ungrateful, were I to omit the names of Capts. Knapp and Hull of the volunteers, and Capt. Parker and Lieut. Chatfield of the militia, by whose intrepidity I was, during the action, extricated from the most unpleasant situation. Capts. Richardson, Buell, and Kennedy, Lts. Parkhurst and Brown, and Adjuts. Dobbin, Bates, and Robinson, particularly distinguished themselves. The patriotic conduct of Capt. Elliott with 20 young gentlemen, who volunteered from Batavia, and of Maj. Hubbard with 14 men exempted by age from military duty, should not be omitted. They were conspicuous during the action.

You will excuse me, if I shall seem partial, in speaking of my own family, consisting of my Brigade Major Frazer, my volunteer aid de camp Riddle, (both 1st Lieutenants in the 15th infantry) Capt. Bigger of the Canadian volunteers, Messrs. Williams and Delapierre, volunteer aids for the day, all of whom, except Mr. Williams, were wounded. Lieuts. Fraser and Riddle were engaged for the most of the preceding day with fatigue parties, cutting roads for the advance of the column through the swamp, and falling timber to the rear, and within 150 yards of the enemy's right; which service they executed with so much address as to avoid discovery; and on the succeeding day they conducted the two columns to the attack. Fraser was severely wounded by a musket ball whilst spiking a gun on the second battery. Riddle, after the first battery was carried, descended into the enemy's magazine and after securing (with the assistance of Quarter Master Green of the volunteers, whose good conduct deserves much praise) a quantity of fixed ammunition, blew up the magazine and suffered severely by the explosion. I must solicit through you, sir, the attention of the General Government to these meritorious young men. Captain Bigger is an excellent officer, and rendered me much assistance, but was dangerously wounded. The other young gentlemen are citizens, and deserve much credit for their activity, and for having voluntarily encountered danger. My Aid-de-Camp, Major Dox, was confined at Buffalo by sickness.

On the whole, sir, I can say of the regular troops attached to the left column, and of the veteran Volunteers of Lieut. Col. Dobbin's Regiment, that every man did his duty, and their conduct on this occasion reflects a new lustre on their former brilliant achievements. To the Militia, the compliment is justly due, and I could pay them no greater one, than to say, that they were not surpassed by the heroes of Chippewa and Niagara in steadiness and bravery.

The studied intricacy of the enemy's entrenchments, consisting not only of the breast-work connected by their batteries, but of successive lines of entrenchments for a hundred yards in the rear, covering the batteries and connecting each other, and the whole obstructed by brush, and felled timber, was calculated to produce confusion among the assailants, and led to several contests at the point of the bayonet. But by our double columns and temporary irregularity in the one was always corrected by the other. Our success would probably have been more complete, but for a rain which unfortunately set in soon after we commenced our march, which rendered the fire of many of our muskets useless, and obscuring the sun, led to several mistakes. As an instance of this, a party of prisoners who had surrendered, were ordered to the Fort in charge of a subaltern and volunteers; the officer mistaking the direction, conducted them towards the British camp in the route by which we had advanced, and they were retaken with the whole of the guard, excepting the officer and one man who fought their way back. Several of our stragglers were made prisoners by the same mistake. But, sir, notwithstanding these accidents, we have reason to glory in, at our signal success in inflicting a vastly disproportionate injury on the enemy, and in wholly defeating all his plans of operation against this army.

I have the honor to be, with very great respect, your obedient servant

P. B. PORTER, Brig. Gen. Com'g. Volunteers and Militia. Maj. Gen. Brown. Total Loss—Officers 45—non-commissioned officers, musicians and privates 450—regimental 511.

OFFICIAL.

HEAD QUARTERS, TOWN OF MONROE, September 27, 1814.

UNDER THE CHIEF OFFICER'S ORDER, 7th Military District.

GENERAL ORDERS.

Our companions in arms have triumphed over the enemy. At 4 o'clock P. M. on the 15th inst. Fort Bowyer was attacked by a superior British naval and land force, and the enemy was repulsed at all points. The total force of the enemy consisted of two ships from 24 to 28 guns, mounting 32 pound carronades, two brigs from 16 to 18 guns, mounting 24 pound carronades, with three tenders, all under the command of Commodore Sir W. H. Piercy. The land forces of the enemy consisted of 100 marines, under the command of Col. Nicolls, 300 Indians, under the command of Capt. Woodbine of the British army, and a battery of a 12 pounder and a howitzer, under the direction of a British Captain of the royal artillery. Our effective force opposed to the enemy was about 1,000 men, of whom not more than 90 were engaged.

The leading ship called the Hermes, Commodore Sir W. H. Piercy, having approached within reach of our guns, our battery opened upon her, the guns of which were fired in succession as they could be brought to bear, and at 20 minutes after 4 P. M. the engagement became general. About this time the enemy on shore, with Col. Nicolls at the head of the marines, Capt. Woodbine at the head of their Allies the Indians, and the Captain of the British Royal Artillery with his battery were put to flight by two discharges of grape and canister from a nine pounder.

At 5 P. M. the commodore's ship swung her head on to our battery, when we were enabled to rake her so effectually as to silence her guns. Having cut her cable by our shot, she drifted out and grounded stem on within seven hundred yards, which again afforded us an opportunity of raking her, and we continued doing so while there was light enough to see that his colours were flying, and about sunset the other vessels cut their cables and stood off with a light breeze, under a most tremendous fire from our battery. At quarter past seven we discovered the Commodore's ship to be on fire, and at 10 P. M. her magazine blew up. We cannot ascertain the precise loss of the enemy; but from deserters who came in the morning after the battle, we learn that the Commodore and 20 soldiers escaped from the Hermes; her crew being 170. That 85 men were killed and wounded on board the Charon. The loss on board the brig is unknown, but must have been very great, from the circumstance of one of them being infinitely more exposed than the Charon. Our loss was 4 privates killed, and 5 wounded. During the hottest of the action our flag staff was shot away. The flag was immediately regained under a heavy fire of grape and canister & hoisted on a sponge staff and placed on the parapet.

This achievement of our brothers in arms is dear to us, and calls for and will have the gratitude of a grateful country. Our arms have triumphed over the enemy. The brave officers, non-commissioned officers and privates under the command of the gallant Maj. Lawrence have done their duty, and in point of cool and determined courage their conduct cannot be surpassed. There was but one feeling pervading every grade and rank throughout the whole action, and that was who should be foremost in the road to glory. With them the post of danger was the post of honor.

By order of Major-General Jackson, A. P. HAYNE, Inspector General and acting Adj. Gen. 7th Mil. Dist.