

Vol. XIV.

THE WAR.

CAPTURE OF FORT GEORGE.

Copies of letters from Com. Chauncey to the Secretary of the Navy.

U. S. Ship Madison, Niagara River, 27th May, 1813.

Sir—I am happy to have it in my power to say, that the American flag is flying upon Fort George. We were in quiet possession of all the Forts at 12 o'clock.

It is the honor to be, very respectfully, Sir, your most obedient servant, ISAAC CHAUNCEY, Hon. Wm Jones, Sec'y of the Navy, Washington.

U. S. Ship Madison, Niagara River, 28th May, 1813.

Sir—Agreeably to arrangements which I have already had the honor of detailing to you, I left Sacket's Harbor with his ship on the 22d inst. with a boat of 250 of Col. M'Combs regiment on board—the winds being light from the westward, I did not arrive in the vicinity of Niagara before the 25th, the other parts of the squadron had arrived several days before, and landed their troops. The British American and Port I had ordered to Sacket's Harbor, for the purpose of watching the enemy's movements at Kingston. I immediately had an interview with General Dearborn for the purpose of making arrangements to attack the enemy as soon as possible, and it was agreed between him and myself to make the attack the next morning (as the weather had moderated, and had every appearance of being favorable.) I took on board of the Madison, Onida and Lady of the Lake, all the heavy artillery and as many troops as could be stowed. The remainder were to embark in boats and follow the fleet—at 3 yesterday morning the signal was made for the fleet to weigh and the troops were all embarked on board of the boats before 4, and soon after Generals Dearborn and Lewis came on board of this ship with their suites. It being however nearly calm, the schooners were obliged to sweep into their positions. Mr. Trent in the Julia and Mr. Mix in the Crowler, I directed to take a position in the mouth of the river and silence a battery near the light house which from its position commanded the shore where our troops were to land. Mr. Stephens in the O'Farlo, was directed to take a position to the north of the light house so near in shore as to enfilade the battery and cross the fire of the Julia and Crowler. Lieutenant Brown in the Governor Tompkins, I directed to take a position near the Two Mile Creek, where the enemy had a battery with a heavy gun. Lieutenant Pettigrew, in the Conquest, was directed to anchor at the S. E. of the same battery, so near in as to open on it in the rear, and cross the fire of the Gov. Tompkins. Lieutenant M'Pherson in the Hamilton, Lieutenant Smith in the Asp, and M. Osgood in the Scourge, were directed to anchor close to the shore, and cover the landing of the troops, and to sweep the woods and plain whenever the enemy made his appearance. All these orders were most promptly and gallantly executed. All the vessels anchored wither in musket-shot of the shore, and in ten minutes after they opened upon the batteries, they were completely silenced & abandoned. Our troops then advanced in three brigades, the advance led by Colonel Scott, and landed near the fort, which had been silenced by Lieutenant Brown. The enemy, who had been concealed in a ravine, now advanced in great force to the edge of the bank to charge our troops. The schooners opened so well-directed and tremendous a fire of grape and canisters, that the enemy soon retreated from the bank and immediately ascended the bank and charged and routed the enemy in every direction, the schooners keeping up a constant well-directed fire upon him, in his retreat towards the town—

Owing to the wind's having sprung up very fresh from the eastward, which caused a heavy sea directly on shore, I was not able to get the boats off to land the troops from the Madison and Onida, before the first and second brigades had advanced. Captain Smith with the marines landed with Colonel M'Comb's regiment, and I had prepared 400 seamen, which I intended to land with myself, if the enemy had made a stand—but our troops pursued him so rapidly into the town and Fort George, that I found there was no necessity for more force; moreover, the wind had increased so much & drove such a sea on shore, that the situation of the fleet had become dangerous and critical. I therefore, made the signal for the fleet to weigh, and ordered them into the river, where they anchored immediately after the enemy had abandoned Fort George. The town and forts were in quiet possession of our troops at 12 o'clock, and the enemy retreated in a direction towards Queenstown.

Where all behaved so well, it is difficult to select any one for commendation, yet in doing justice to Lieut. Macpherson I do not detract from the merits of others. He was fortunate in placing himself in a situation where he rendered very important service in covering the troops so completely, that their loss was trifling.

Captain Perry joined me from Erie on the evening of the 23th, and very gallantly volunteered his services, and I have much pleasure in acknowledging the great assistance which I received from him in arranging and superintending the debarkation of the troops; he was present at every point where he could be useful, under showers of musquetry, but fortunately escaped unhurt. We lost but one killed and two wounded, and no injury done to the vessels.

I have the honor to be, &c. ISAAC CHAUNCEY,

Hon. Wm. Jones, Secretary of the Navy, Washington City.

U. S. Ship Madison, Niagara River, 29th May, 1813.

Sir—Deeming the command of Lake Erie of primary importance, I dispatched Captain Perry yesterday with 53 seamen to Black Rock, to take the five vessels there to Erie as soon as possible, and to prepare the whole squadron for service by the 15th of June. Gen. Dearborn has promised me 200 soldiers to be on board of the vessels at Black Rock to assist in protecting them to Erie. Mr. Eklord has with uncommon exertions prepared these vessels for service since the capture of York, and I think that Captain Perry will be ready to proceed for Presque Isle about the 3rd or 4th of June. The 2 brig's building at Erie have been launched.

The Queen Charlotte and 3 others of the enemy's vessels came down to Fort Erie on the 26th inst., but as soon as they heard of the capture of Fort George, and its dependencies, they proceeded up the Lake, I presume for Malden.

I have the honor to be very respectfully, Sir, your most obedient servant,

ISAAC CHAUNCEY,

Hon. Wm Jones, Sec'y of the Navy, Washington.

Copies of letters from Major General Dearborn to the Secretary of War.

HEAD-QUARTERS,

Fort George, U. C. May 27, 1813.

Sir—the light troops under the command of Colonel Scott and Major Forsyth, landed this morning at 9 o'clock. Major General Lewis's division, with Colonel Porter's command of light artillery supported them. General Boyd's brigade landed immediately after the light troops, and Generals Winder and Chandler followed in quick succession. The landing was warmly and obstinately disputed by the British forces; but the coolness and intrepidity of our troops soon compelled them to give ground in every direction. Gen'l Chandler, with the reserve, (composed of his brigade and Colonel M'Comb's artillery) covered the whole. Commodore Chauncey had made the most judicious arrangements for silencing the enemy's batteries, near the point of landing. The army is under the greatest obligations to that able naval commander for his co-operation in all its important movements, and especially in its operations this day. Our batteries succeeded in rendering Fort George untenable, and

when the enemy had been beaten from his positions, and found it necessary to re-enter it, after firing a few guns and setting fire to the magazine, which soon exploded, he moved off rapidly by different routes. Our light troops pursued them several miles. The troops having been under arms from 1 o'clock in the morning, were too much fatigued for any further pursuit. We are now in possession of Fort George and its immediate dependencies—to-morrow we shall proceed further on. The behaviour of our troops, both officers and men, entitles them to the highest praise; and the difference in our loss with that of the enemy, when we consider the advantages his positions afforded him, is astonishing. We had 17 killed and 45 wounded. The enemy had 90 killed and 160 wounded of the regular troops. We have taken 100 prisoners exclusive of the wounded. Colonel Meyers of the 49th was wounded and taken prisoner. Of ours only one commissioned officer was killed—Lt. Hobard of the light artillery. Enclosed is the report of Major General Lewis.

I have the honor to be, Sir, with great consideration and respect, your most obedient servant.

H. DEARBORN.

Hon. Gen John Armstrong, Secretary at War.

On the field, 1 o'clock, 27th May 1813

DEAR SIR—Fort George and its dependencies secure. The enemy, beaten at all points, has blown up his magazines and retired. It is impossible at this moment to say any thing of individual gallantry—there was no man who did not perform his duty in a manner which did honor to himself and country. Scott's and Forsyth's commands, supported by Boyd's and Winder's brigades, sustained the brunt of the action. Our loss is trifling, perhaps no more than 30 killed, and twice that number wounded. The enemy has left in the hospital 124 and I went several on board the fleet. We have also made about 100 prisoners of the regular forces.

I am, dear Sir, most respectfully, your obedient servant,

MORGAN LEWIS.

Major Gen. Dearborn, Com. in Chief of the Northern Army.

HEAD-QUARTERS,

Fort George, May 29, 1813.

Sir—General Lewis was ordered to march yesterday morning with Chandler's and Winder's brigade—the light artillery, dragoons and riflemen in pursuit of the enemy by the way of Queenstown. I had received satisfactory information that the enemy had made a stand on the mountain at a place called the Beaver Dam, where he had a deposit of provision and stores, and that he had been joined by three hundred regulars from Kingston, landed from small vessels near the head of the lake. I had ascertained that he was calling in the militia, and had presumed that he would confide in the strength of his position and venture an action, by which an opportunity would be afforded to cut off his retreat. I have been disappointed—although the troops from Fort Erie & Chippewa had joined the main body at Beaver Dam, he broke up yesterday precipitately, continued his route along the mountains, and will reach the head of the lake by that route.

Lt. Col. Preston took possession of Fort Erie and its dependencies last evening; the post had been abandoned and the magazine blown up.

I have ordered Gen. Lewis to return without delay to his place, and if the winds favor us we may yet cut off the enemy's retreat.

I was last evening honored with your dispatch of the 15th instant. I have taken measures in relation to the 33 prisoners who are to be put in close confinement.

I have the honor to be, &c.

H. DEARBORN.

Hon. John Armstrong, Secretary of War.

THE FRIGATE CHEESAPEAKE TAKEN!

Copy of a letter from Comm. William Bainbridge, now at Boston, to the Secretary of the Navy.

Navy-Yard, Charleston, Mass. June 2.

Sir—It has become my painful duty, as commanding officer on this station, to convey to you the unpleasant intelligence of the capture of the frigate Che-

saapeake, by the British frigate Shannon. The particulars of this unfortunate occurrence are, from what I have been able to collect, as follows:

Yesterday forenoon, the frigate Shannon appeared in the bay, full in sight in the harbor. At meridian, the Chesapeake got under way from President Roads, and stood out with a fair wind. Mr. Knox, the pilot on board, left her at 5 p. m. the light house bearing W. half N. distance 6 leagues, the Shannon then in sight, and the Chesapeake, prepared for action, standing for her. At 6 P. M. Mr. Knox informs, the Chesapeake opened a fire, which was returned; and at 20 minutes past 6, both ships were laying along side of each other as if in the act of boarding; at that moment an explosion took place on board the Chesapeake, which spread a fire on her upper deck from the foremast to the mizen-mast, apparently as high as her tops, and enveloped both ships in smoke for several minutes. After the smoke cleared away, they were seen separated, with the British colors hoisted on board the Chesapeake over the America; both ships standing to the eastward. The well proved courage and skill of Captain Lawrence, and the bravery of the officers and crew, justify a full belief that the loss of the Chesapeake has been entirely owing to some fortuitous event happening on board of her, and not to any superiority of skill or bravery in the enemy. But should they improperly impute it to the latter, they will find it necessary to give more than one salutary instance to convince our officers and brave tars that they are superior. We have lost one frigate, but in losing her, I am confident we have lost no reputation.

I have the honor to be, Sir, with the greatest respect, your most obedient servant.

Wm. BAINBRIDGE.

Hon. Wm. Jones, Esq., Secretary of the Navy, Washington City.

AUTHENTIC STATEMENT.

The following statement of the rencontre between the U. S. frigate Chesapeake, of 36 guns, capt. Lawrence, and the British frigate Shannon, of 38, Comm. Broke, which took place on Tuesday afternoon the 1st instant, within about 12 leagues of Boston light house, is furnished by Mr. R. Knox, the pilot who took out the Chesapeake. It is published at the request of Com. Bainbridge, and may be considered an official statement, so far as the circumstances can at present be known.

A 5 p. m. I left the Chesapeake—Boston light-house bearing about west distance 6 leagues; the Shannon then in sight, and the Chesapeake prepared for action, standing for her. At 6 p. m. the action commenced, and in 12 minutes after, both ships were yard-arm and yard-arm along side of each other, as if in the act of boarding. At that moment, an immense explosion took place on board the Chesapeake, which spread a fire from the foremast to the mizen-mast, apparently as high as the tops—on which both vessels were enveloped invisibly in smoke, and on the smoke clearing away, the English colors were seen flying on board the Chesapeake over the American, and both vessels were standing to the eastward. From every appearance, it was evident to me that the loss of the Chesapeake was owing to the unfortunate explosion that took place on board of her.

ROBERT KNOX.

Navy-Yard, Charlestown, June 1, 1813.

CONSCIOUS INFERIORITY!

The late action between the Chesapeake and Shannon, may justly be considered as a victory on the part of the Americans. While it was conducted upon fair and honorable principles, the advantage was evidently on the side of the Chesapeake. That her fire was much more vivid and effectual is proved by the fact of its having carried away the jib boom and fore and mizen masts of the enemy, while it does not appear that the Chesapeake lost a single spar. When the frigates closed, the Shannon fired on board the Chesapeake an immense body of combustibles and inflammable matter (like an infernal machine) which enveloped the Chesapeake in a volume of flame to her very tops. Of the destruction and confusion which must have ensued, it is not probable that any one who was not present can form an adequate idea. Immediately after the explosion, the Shan-

non boarded; and from the all destroying effect of the combustibles, doubtless had it been possible to take quiet possession.

It is said that all strategem is justifiable in war; yet in cases like this, the maxim will not apply. Had the Shannon been a vessel of inferior force, it might have been admissible, but as she was unquestionably superior, her conductor was disgraced the British flag, more than any thing that has yet happened. When we reflect that the Shannon was a 38 gun frigate of the first class, the Chesapeake only a 36, that the former sent a challenge to the latter, and of course must have been in perfect preparation exclusive of the "infernal machine," and that her commander was an old experienced officer who had long been accustomed to a frigate; we cannot but look upon the resort to "explosions" as base and cowardly in the extreme. It proves that they felt themselves inferior to the Americans, and were afraid to contend with them on any thing like equal terms. Had the Shannon conquered the Chesapeake by fair fighting, although she is a heavier frigate, and probably had a greater number of men, we would have acknowledged it to have been a victory. But as it is, it must be viewed as a striking evidence of conscious inferiority on the part of the British, and that they dare not engage upon equal terms, and honorable terms. The British officers feel that their naval energies are rapidly on the decline, and they resort to dishonorable means to preserve the appearance of their former superiority.

OF DECATUR'S SQUADRON.

Extract of a letter from an officer on board the Macedonian, to his friend in N. York.

Dated Frigate Macedonian, June 1. We this morning made an attempt to put to sea, which had like to have proven fatal to us. In consequence of observing neither lost evening nor this morning, any of the enemy's force, except a 74, we bore down towards her—but unfortunately just at the time we were congratulating ourselves on the prospect of doing something handsome, a 74, a razer, and a frigate made their appearance from behind Montauk Point—in consequence of this, we were constrained to tack about, and make the best of our way for New London. They gave us chase as far as the mouth of the harbor—some times nearly within gun shot. Our ship being the best sailer, was of course in the least danger during the chase. The United States was so near at one time, that she found it necessary to give the razer a few shots from her stern-chasers.

We are now at anchor at N. London—the citizens of which are much alarmed. Drums are beating through the town to call out the militia. I believe the citizens of this place would rather see almost any thing coming in than us—being fearful that it will invite an attack upon the town. The enemy are macovering about the mouth of the harbor; we are at a loss to know whether they are coming in to attack us or not. We are, however, prepared to meet them and give them a warm reception.

Gov. Smith has arrived and is making every possible preparation for repelling any attack, which it is expected the enemy will shortly attempt. The forts are in tolerably good state, both as to guns and men. Two regiments of militia are in New London, and the Gov. has 10,000 men ready to assist in defending the place, if their services should be required. Some families have removed out of town, and a great quantity of goods, &c. Commodore Decatur has taken five guns out of his ship, and moved his squadron a short distance above the town. One of the enemy's 74's and a frigate were at anchor within 12 or 15 miles of the town, from which position they can look into the harbor!

A gentleman arrived at N. York, in the ship Wm. Penn, from Jamaica, informs that he left Kingston on the 9th of May where he had been detained on board a prison ship eight months and four days, upon a short very short allowance. Provisions were very scarce—Flour 53 dollars per barrel; beef 38— pork 38—lumber 72 dollars per thousand and so on—although an American, without a name, arrived two days before our infant sailed, laden with lumber entirely.