

THE WAR.

HARRISON'S VICTORY.

Copy of a letter from Maj. Gen. Harrison to the Secretary of War.

Head Quarters, Detroit, 9th October, 1813.

Sir—In my letter from Sandwich of the 30th ultimo, I did myself the honor to inform you, that I was preparing to pursue the enemy the following day. From various causes, however, I was unable to put the troops in motion until the morning of the 22d inst. and then to take with me only about one hundred and forty of the regular troops (Johnston's Mounted Regiment and such of Governor Shelby's Volunteers as were fit for rapid march, the whole amounting to about three thousand five hundred men. To Gen. McArthur (with about seven hundred effectives) the protecting of this place and the sick was committed. Gen. Cass's Brigade and the corps of Lieut. Col. Ball were left at Sandwich, with orders to follow me as soon as the men received their knapsacks and blankets, which had been left on an island in Lake Erie.

The unavoidable delay at Sandwich was attended with no disadvantage to us. General Proctor had posted himself at Dalson's on the right bank of the Thames (or Trench) fifty six miles from this place, where I am informed he intended to fortify and wait to receive me. He must have believed, however, that I had no disposition to follow him, or that he had secured my continuance here, by the reports that were circulated that the Indians would attack and destroy this place upon the advance of the army; as he neglected to commence the breaking up of the bridges until the night of the second inst. On that night our army reached the river, which is twenty five miles from Sandwich and is one of four streams crossing our route, over all of which are bridges, and being deep and muddy, are unfordable for a considerable distance into the country—the bridge here was found entire, and in the morning I proceeded with Johnston's Regiment to save if possible the others. At the second bridge over a Branch of the river Thames, we were fortunate enough to capture a Lieut. of Dragoons and eleven privates, who had been sent by Gen. Proctor to destroy them. From the prisoners I learned that the third bridge was broken up and that the enemy had no certain information of our advance. The bridge having been imperfectly destroyed, was soon repaired and the army encamped at Drake's farm, four miles below Dalson's.

The river Thames, along the banks of which our route lay, is a fine deep stream, navigable for vessels of considerable burthen, after the passage of the bar at its mouth over which, there is six and a half feet water.

The baggage of the army was brought from Detroit in boats protected by three Gun boats, which Commodore Perry had furnished for the purpose, as well as to cover the passage of the army over the Thames itself; the mouths of its tributary streams; the banks being low and the country generally open (Prairies) as high as Dalson's, these vessels were well calculated for that purpose. Above Dalson's, however, the character of the river and adjacent country is considerably changed. The former, though still deep, is very narrow and its banks high and woody. The Commodore and myself therefore agreed upon the propriety of leaving the boats under a guard of one hundred and fifty infantry, and I determined to trust to fortune and the bravery of my troops to effect the passage of the river. Below a place called Chatham, and four miles above Dalson's is the third unfordable branch of the Thames; the bridge over its mouth had been taken up by the Indians, as well as that at McGregor's Mills, one mile above—several hundred of the Indians remained to dispute our passage and, upon the arrival of an advanced guard, commenced a heavy fire from the opposite bank of the creek as well as that of the river. Believing that the whole force of the enemy was there, I halted the army, formed in order of battle and brought up our two six pounders to cover the party that were ordered to repair the bridge—a few shots from those pieces, soon drove off the Indians and enabled us, in two hours, to repair the bridge & cross the troops. Colonel Johnson's Mounted Regiment being upon the right of the army, had seized the remains of the bridge at the Mill's under a heavy fire from the Indians. Our loss upon this occasion, was two killed and three or four wounded—that of the enemy was ascertained to be considerably greater. A house near the bridge containing a very considerable number of muskets had been set on fire—but it was extinguished by our troops and the arms saved.

At the first farm above the bridge, we found one of the enemy's vessels on fire, loaded with arms and ordnance stores, and learned that they were a few miles ahead of us, still on the right bank of the river with the great body of the Indians. At Bowles's farm, four miles from the bridge, we halted for the night found two other vessels and a large dis-

illery filled with ordnance and other valuable stores to an immense amount in flames—it was impossible to put out the fire—two twenty four pounders with their carriages were taken and a large quantity of ball and shells of various sizes. The army was put in motion early on the morning of the 5th, I pushed on in advance with the Mounted Regiment and requested Gov. Shelby to follow as expeditiously as possible with the infantry, the Governor's zeal and that of his men enabled them to keep up with the cavalry, and, by 9 o'clock, we were at Arnold's Mills having taken in the course of the morning two gunboats and several bateaux loaded with provisions and ammunition.

A rapid in the river at Arnold's Mills affords the only ford to be met with for a very considerable distance, but upon examination, it was found too deep for the infantry. Having, however, fortunately taken two or three boats and some Indian canoes on the spot, and obliging the horsemen to take a foot man behind each, the whole were safely crossed by 12 o'clock. Eight miles from the crossing we passed a farm, where a part of the British troops had encamped the night before, under the command of Col. Warburton. The detachment with Gen. Proctor had arrived the day before at the Moravian towns, 4 miles higher up. Being now certainly near the enemy, I directed the advance of Johnston's Regiment to accelerate their march for the purpose of procuring intelligence. The officer commanding it, in a short time, sent to inform me, that his progress was stopped by the enemy, who were formed across our line of march. One of the enemy's waggons being also taken prisoner, from the information received from him and my own observation, assisted by some of my officers, I soon ascertained enough of their position and order of battle, to determine that, which it was proper for me to adopt.

I have the honor herewith to enclose you my general order, of the 27th ult prescribing the order of march and of battle when the whole army should act together. But as the number and description of the troops had been essentially changed since the issuing of the order, it became necessary to make a corresponding alteration in their disposition. From the place where our army was last halted, to the Moravian towns, a distance of about three and a half miles, the road passes through a brush forest without any clearing, and for the first two miles near to the bank of the river. At from two to three hundred yards from the river, a swamp extends parallel to it, throughout the whole distance. The intermediate ground is dry, and although the trees are tolerably thick; it is in many places clear of underbrush. Across this strip of land, its left appayed upon the river, supported by artillery placed in the wood, their right in the swamp covered by the whole of their Indian force, the British troops were drawn up.

The troops at my disposal consisted of about one hundred and twenty regulars of the 27th regt five brigades of Kentucky volunteer militia infantry under his Excellency Governor Shelby, averaging less than five hundred men, and Col. Johnson's Regiment of Mounted Infantry, making in the whole an aggregate something above 3000. No disposition of an army opposed to an Indian force can be safe unless it is secured on the flanks and in the rear. I had therefore no difficulty in arranging the infantry conformably to my general order of battle. Gen. Trotter's brigade of 500 men, formed the front line, his right upon the road and his left upon the swamp. Gen. King's brigade as a second line, 150 yards in the rear of Trotter's and Chiles's brigade as a corps of reserve in the rear of it. These three brigades formed the command of Major Gen. Henry, the whole of Gen. Desha's division, consisting of two brigades, were formed en potence upon the left of Trotter.

Whilst I was engaged in forming the infantry, I had directed Col. Johnson's regiment, which was still in front, to be formed in two lines opposite to the enemy, and, upon the advance of the infantry, to take ground to the left and forming upon that flank to endeavour to turn the right of the Indians. A moment's reflection, however, convinced me that from the thickness of the woods and swampiness of the ground, they would be unable to do any thing on horseback, and there was no time to dismount them and place their horses in security; I therefore determined to refuse my left to the Indians, and to break the British lines at once by a charge of the mounted infantry; the measure was not sanctioned by anything that I had seen or heard of, but I was fully convinced that it would succeed. The American backwoodsmen ride better in the woods than any other people. A musket or rifle is no impediment to them, being accustomed to carry them on horseback from their earliest youth. I was persuaded too that the enemy would be quite unprepared for the shock and that they could not resist it.

Conformably to this idea, I directed the regiment to be drawn up in close column with his right at the distance of fifty yards from the road, (that it might be in some measure protected by the trees from the artillery) its left upon

the swamp, & to charge at full speed as soon as the enemy delivered their fire. The few regular troops of the 27th regt. under their col. (Paul) occupied, in column of sections, of four, the small space between the road and the river, for the purpose of seizing the enemy's artillery, and some ten or twelve friendly Indians were directed to move under the bank. The Crotcher formed by the front line and Gen. Desha's division was an important point. At that place, the venerable Governor of Kentucky was posted, who at the age of sixty six preserves all the vigor of youth, the ardent zeal which distinguished him in the Revolutionary war, and the undaunted bravery which he manifested at King's Mountain. With my Aids de camp, the acting assist. gen. Capt. Butler, my gallant friend Com. Perry, who did me the honour to serve as my volunteer Aid de camp, and Brigadier General Cass, who having no command tendered me his assistance, I placed myself at the head of the front line of infantry, to direct the movements of the cavalry and give them the necessary support. The army had moved on in this order but a short distance, when the mounted men received the fire of the British line and were ordered to charge; the horses in the front of the column recoiled from the fire; another was given by the enemy, and our column, at length getting in motion, broke through the enemy with irresistible force, in one minute the contest a front was over; the British officers seeing no hopes of reducing their disordered ranks to order, and our mounted men wheeling upon them and pouring in a destructive fire, immediately surrendered. I ascertain that three only of our troops were wounded in this charge. Upon the left however, the contest was more severe, with the Indians. Col. Johnson, who commanded that flank of his regiment, received a most galling fire from them, which was returned with great effect. The Indians still further to the right advanced and fell in with our front line of infantry, near its junction with Desha's Division, and for a moment made an impression upon it. His Excellency Gov. Shelby however brought up a regiment to its support, and the enemy receiving a severe fire in front, and a part of Johnson's regiment having gained their rear, retreated with precipitation. Their loss was very considerable in the action, and many were killed in their retreat.

I can give no satisfactory information of the number of Indians that were in the action, but they must have been considerably upwards of one thousand. From the documents in my possession (Gen. Proctor's official letters, all of which were taken) and from the information of respectable inhabitants of this territory, the Indians kept in pay by the British were much more numerous than has been generally supposed. In a letter to General De Rottenburg, of the 27th inst. General Proctor speaks of having prevailed upon most of the Indians to accompany him. Of these it is certain that fifty or sixty Wyandot warriors abandoned him.

The number of our troops was certainly greater than that of the enemy, but when it is recollected, that they had chosen a position that effectually secured their flank, which it was impossible for us to turn, and that we could not present to them a line more extended than their own, it will not be considered arrogant to claim for my troops the palm of superior bravery.

In communicating to the President through you, Sir, my opinion of the conduct of the officers who served under my command, I must at a loss how to mention that of Governor Shelby, being convinced that no eulogium of mine can reach his merits. The Governor of an independent state, greatly my superior in years, in experience and in military character, he placed himself under my command and was not more remarkable for his zeal and activity, than for the promptitude and cheerfulness with which he obeyed my orders. The Major Generals Henry and Desha, and the Brigadiers Allen, Caldwell, King, Chiles and Trotter, all of the Kentucky volunteers, manifested great zeal and activity. Of Governor Shelby's Staff, his Adjutant General Col. M. Dowel, and his Quarter Master General Col. Walker, rendered great service, as did his Aids de Camp, Gen. Adair, and Majors Barry and Crittenden. The military skill of the former was of great service to us, and the activity of the two latter gentlemen could not be surpassed. Illness deprived me of the talents of my Adjutant General Col. Guins, who was left at Sandwiche. His duties however were ably performed by the Acting Assistant Adjutant General Capt. Butler. My Aids de Camp Lieut. O'Fallon and Capt. Todd, of the line and my volunteer Aids John Speed Smith and John Chambers, Esq. have rendered me the most important services from the opening of the campaign. I have already stated that General Cass and Commodore Perry assisted me in forming the troops for

A British officer of high rank assured one of my Aids de Camp, that on the day of our landing, General Proctor had, at his disposal upwards of three thousand Indian warriors, but asserted that the greatest part had left him previous to the action.

The former is an officer of the highest merit, and the appearance of the brave Commodore cheered and animated every breast.

It would be useless, Sir, after stating the circumstances of the action, to pass encomiums upon Col. Johnson and his regiment. Veterans could not have manifested more firmness. The Colonel's numerous wounds prove that he was in the post of danger. Lieut. Col. James Johnson and the Majors Payne and Thomson were equally active, though more fortunate. Major Wood of the Engineers, already distinguished by his conduct at Fort Meigs, attended the army with two six pounders. Having no use for them in the action, he joined in the pursuit of the enemy and with Major Payne of the mounted regiment, two of my Aids de Camp, Todd and Chambers and three privates, continued it for several miles after the rest of the troops had halted, and made many prisoners.

I left the army before an official return of the prisoners, or that of the killed and wounded, was made out. It was however ascertained that the former amounts, to six hundred and one regulars, including twenty five officers. Our loss is seven killed and twenty-two wounded, five of which have since died. Of the British troops twelve were killed and twenty two wounded. The Indians suffered most—thirty three of them having been found upon the ground, besides those killed on the retreat.

On the day of the action six pieces of brass artillery were taken, and two iron twenty four pounders the day before. Several others were discovered in the river and can be easily procured. Of the brass pieces, three are the trophies of our Revolutionary war, that were taken at Saratoga and York, and surrendered by General Hull. The number of small arms taken by us and destroyed by the enemy must amount to upwards of five thousand; most of them had been ours and taken by the enemy at the surrender of Detroit, at the river Raisin and Col. Dudley's defeat. I believe that the enemy retain no other military trophy of their victories than the standard of the 4th regiment—they were not magnanimous enough to bring that of the 41st regiment into the field, or it would have been taken.

You have been informed, Sir, of the conduct of the troops under my command in action; it gives me great pleasure to inform you, that they merit also the approbation of their country for their conduct, in submitting to the greatest privations with the utmost cheerfulness.

The infantry were entirely without tents, and for several days, the whole army subsisted upon fresh beef without bread or salt.

I have the honor to be, &c.
WILLIAM H. HARRISON,
General John Armstrong,
Secretary of War.

P. S. General Proctor escaped by the fleetness of his horses, escorted by forty dragoons and a number of mounted Indians.

CHAUNCEY'S RUNNING FIGHT.

Copy of a letter from Com. Chauncey to the Sec. of the Navy, dated
U. S. ship General Pike—Off Niagara, October 1st, 1813.

Sir—On the 26th ult. it was reported to me that the enemy's fleet was in York—I immediately dispatched the Lady of the Lake to look into York, and ascertain the fact—she returned in the evening with the information that the enemy was in York bay. I immediately prepared to weigh, but owing to a strong wind from N. E. was not able to get out of the river before the evening of the 27th, and owing to the extreme darkness of the night, a part of the squadron got separated and did not join before next morning at 8 A. M. On the 28th, the Genl. Pike, Madison and Sylph each took a schooner in tow and made all sail for York. Soon after discovered the enemy's fleet under way in York bay shaped our course for him and prepared for action—he perceiving our intention of engaging him in his position, tacked and stood out of the bay wind at east; I formed the line and ran down for his centre. When we had approached within about 3 miles he made all sail to the southward—I wore in succession and stood on the same tack with him, edging down gradually in order to close—at 10 minutes past meridian the enemy finding that we were closing fast with him, and that he must either risk an action or suffer his two rear vessels to be cut off, he tacked in succession, beginning at the van, hoisted his colors and commenced a well directed fire at this ship, for the purpose of covering his rear, and attacking our rear as he passed to leeward; perceiving his intention, I was determined to disappoint him; therefore, as soon as the Wolf (the leading ship) passed the centre of his line and abreast of us, I bore up in succession (preserving our line) for the enemy's centre—this manœuvre not only covered our rear, but bore him in confusion; he immediately bore away, we had, however, closed so near as to bring our guns to bear with effect, and in 20 minutes the main and main top mast and main yard of the Wolf were shot away; he immediately put before the wind and set all sail upon his foremast; I made the signal for the fleet to make all sail; the enemy, however, keeping dead before the wind, was enabled to cut sail most of our squadron. As it brought all the sail upon one mast, he did not feel the loss of his main and main top mast—I continued the chase until near 3 o'clock, during which time I was enabled in this ship (with the Asp in tow) to keep within point blank shot of the enemy, and sustained the whole of his fire during the chase. Captain Crane in the Madison, and Lieut. Brown in the Oneida, used every ex-

ertise to close with the enemy, the Oneida having a heavy schooner in tow, and presented those officers from closing near. The Governor Tompkins kept in the rear station, until her fore mast was so badly wounded as to oblige her to shorten sail; Lieut. Finch of the Madison, who commanded her for this cruise (owing to the command of Lt. Pettigrew) behaved with great gallantry and is an officer of much promise, by the Ontario, which he had in tow, but guns.

At 13 minutes before 3 P. M. I very reluctantly relinquished the pursuit of a beaten enemy; the reasons that led to this determination were such as I flatter myself that you will approve; they were these: At the time I gave up the chase, this ship was making so much water, that it required all our pumps to keep her afloat (owing to our receiving several shot, so much below the water edge, that we could not plug the holes with her foremast gone, and the squadron within about six miles of the head of the Lake, blowing a gale of wind from East and increasing with a heavy sea on, and every appearance of the Equinox. I considered that if I chased the enemy to his anchorage at the head of the Lake, I should be obliged to anchor also, and although we might succeed in driving him on shore, the probability was, that we should go on shore also; I amongst his friends, we amongst our enemies; and after the gale abated, if he could succeed in getting off one or two vessels out of the two fleets, it would give him as completely the command of the Lake as he had 20 vessels. Moreover he was covered at his anchorage by a part of his army, and several small batteries thrown up for the purpose. Therefore, if we could have made out the gale, we should have been cut up by their shot from the shore; under all these circumstances, and taking into view the consequences resulting from the loss of our superiority on the Lake at this time, I without hesitation relinquished the opportunity then presenting itself of acquiring individual reputation at the expense of my country.

The loss sustained by this ship was considerable, owing to her being so long exposed to the fire of the whole of the enemy's fleet, but our most serious loss was occasioned by the bursting of one of our guns, which killed and wounded 22 men and tore up the top gallant forecastle which rendered the gun upon that deck useless. We had four other guns cracked in the muzzle, which rendered their use extremely doubtful. Our main top gallant mast was shot away in the early part of the action, and the bowsprit, fore and main mast wounded, rigging and sail much cut up, and a number of shot in our hull, several of which were between wind & water, and 27 men killed and wounded, including those by the bursting of the gun—the Madison received a few shot, but no person hurt on board. The Governor Tompkins lost her foremast and the Oneida her main top mast badly wounded. We have, however, repaired nearly all our damages, and are ready to meet the enemy. During our chase one, if not two, of the enemy's small vessels was completely in our power if I could have been satisfied with a partial victory, but I was so sure of the whole that I passed them unnoticed, by which means they finally escaped.

The gale continued until last night, but the wind still blows from the eastward. I thought it important to communicate with Gen. Wilkinson, to ascertain when he meant to move with the army. I therefore ran off this place for that purpose, and he thinks that the public service will be promoted by my watching Sir James at the head of the Lake, and if possible preventing his return to Kingston, while he proceeds with the army for Sackett's Harbor. I shall, therefore, proceed immediately in quest of the enemy.

I have great pleasure in acknowledging the assistance I received from Capt. Sinclair during our chase, in using his best exertions to bring this ship into close action. The other officers and men behaved to my perfect satisfaction, and were extremely anxious to close with the enemy even singly, and if he ever gives me an opportunity for close action, they will show that they are not inferior to any of their countrymen.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully,
Sir, your most obedient humble servant,
ISAAC CHAUNCEY,
Hon. Wm. Jones, Sec. of the Navy.

Copy of a letter from Com. Chauncey to the Secretary of the Navy, dated

U. S. ship Gen. Pike, Sackett's Harbor, 6th Oct. 1813.

Sir—I have the pleasure to inform you, that I arrived here this morning with five of the enemy's vessels which I fell in with and captured last evening off the Ducks. These were part of a fleet of several sail, which left York on Sunday with 534 troops on board, bound to Kingston. Of this fleet, five were captured, one burnt and one escaped; the prisoners, amounting to nearly 800, besides having upwards of three hundred of our troops on board from Niagara; induced me to run into port for the purpose of landing both.

I have an additional pleasure in informing you, that amongst the captured vessels are the late U. States' schooners Julia and Growler; the others are gun vessels.

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

A letter from Sackett's Harbor, dated Monday the 16th inst. received at N. York, mentions that Gen. Wilkinson had been prevented from going on his contemplated expedition by the equinoctial gale, which set in on that day—but expected to move forward with his army in two or three days. The troops from Fort George had arrived at Oswego.

New London, Oct. 16. Our squadron have proceeded down the river about three miles, half the distance from where they have been lying to this place. This circumstance I presume is well known to you, and I have no doubt to be charged, or I should not have noticed it for publication. In consequence of this movement the enemy's force, consisting of the merchant vessels, and some say Valiant, Acosta and Atalanta, and some say another frigate, have anchored as nearly within our harbor as their safety will admit.

NORTH CAROLINA STATE LIBRARY