



















OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

AND THE

BATTLE *of* LAKE ERIE

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OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

From a portrait in the collection of the late Jay Cooke,  
Gibraltar Island, Lake Erie

OLIVER HAZARD PERRY  
AND THE  
BATTLE *of* LAKE ERIE

BY  
JAMES COOKE MILLS  
AUTHOR OF "OUR INLAND SEAS"  
"SEARCHLIGHTS ON AMERICAN INDUSTRIES"

ILLUSTRATED WITH  
PICTURES OF BATTLE SCENES FROM RARE  
OLD ENGRAVINGS



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TO  
THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY,  
WHOSE DEEDS OF VALOR, IN PEACE AND  
IN WAR, WERE INSPIRED BY THE  
NOBLE EXAMPLE OF THE  
HERO OF ERIE





## PREFACE

**A**MONG the noblest traditions of the nation is the memory of its great men and heroes of war. For who among all true Americans does not cherish the memory of Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Grant, and Farragut, and of other patriots, whose deeds of valor and achievements of state have moulded our national progress? Among these patriots was another — the immortal Hero of Erie — upon whom was bestowed all the attributes that give lustre to valorous action and chivalrous self-devotion to the cause of his country; blended with modesty, kindness, courtesy, and with lively sympathies for humanity.

To place the deeds and public services of Oliver Hazard Perry before his countrymen, of the present and succeeding generations, in a complete and enduring form, to show his true character, to depict his virtues without concealing his faults, is the purpose of this work. It is not intended to be an eulogy upon him, but a faithful history of the events of his life, so far as they are deemed of interest or of any importance in appreciating his character. If, however, some passages may seem to be unduly laden with praise, it is because the author has found it impossible, after delving into old and authenticated records of a century ago, to give a true account of the short but troubled life of Commodore Perry, without indulging in enthusiasm for the nobility of his character and for the important nature of his public services.

In narrating, therefore, the events of his active and useful life, this work becomes much more than a mere biography of a great man; it is a faithful history of

## P R E F A C E

the naval operations on Lake Erie in 1813, and of the subsequent movements of the army under the command of General William H. Harrison, in the peninsula of Upper Canada. The success of these operations resulted in the overthrow of British power in the Northwest, maintained the integrity of the United States, and promoted the great material expansion of the vast territory now known as the Middle West.

In celebrating the centenary of these glorious events, which added so much lustre to the American arms, it is not intended to reflect the least feeling of exultation over a conquered foe, but rather to celebrate the greatness of our country. It is to commemorate above all things the one hundred years of uninterrupted peace with Great Britain, a peace which was made possible by Perry's decisive victory on Lake Erie. In no other naval engagement were the consequences to the whole country of such momentous character. The Hero of Erie was only twenty-eight years old at the time of that crowning event in his career, and he was but thirty-four when he gave up his final command; but his life was filled with fine things finely done. In his life he was subject to the respect and admiration of his countrymen; in his death to their deepest sorrow. The universal esteem which was felt for his many virtues was translated into reverence for his memory, into veneration for his example. He still lives in the hearts of his countrymen, clothed in perpetual youth, just as he stood on the quarter deck of the *Niagara*, when he saw that his efforts were crowned with success, and could send them this glowing message: "We have met the enemy and they are ours."

J. C. M.

Saginaw, Mich.  
February 22nd, 1913.

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# OLIVER HAZARD PERRY

AND THE

## BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

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### CHAPTER I

#### HIS ANCESTRY AND BOYHOOD

**A**LL persons, while living, possess some influence which extends beyond themselves, and are in some way useful to others. Certain persons are so eminently distinguished for talents and good works that the limit of their influence is extended beyond their lives, and there are a few whose usefulness does not cease with their existence. Their example is consecrated by death and rendered sacred in its influence, forming a mantle of inspiration which exalts the mind, elevates the views, and gives to ambition its proper course. But how rare are the characters who by a single great event, in which everything seemed to flow from their personal prowess, have determined the destiny of the nation, and embossed their names upon the pages of history. In the deeds of the great American naval commanders, Jones, Perry, Farragut, and Dewey, the trait of initiative and executive talent, coupled with a high sense of efficiency, were most conspicuous. To these qualities the Hero of Erie added a generous humanity to a conquered and suffering foe, and won the lasting admiration of his countrymen.

A study of the ancestry of Oliver Hazard Perry leaves no doubt, that he possessed the noblest traits of character and qualities of a high and commanding

nature, through the divine law of heredity. His paternal ancestor in the fifth generation, Edmund Perry, was born in Devonshire, England, about the year 1630. Brought up in the environment of high-minded gentle folk of honest and sturdy stock, he was a gentleman of education and refinement, and was gifted with considerable literary attainments. He was an influential member and one of the public speakers of the Society of Friends, and became an object of persecution which was so rife during the domination of Cromwell, against the Quakers. This eventually led to his emigration to Plymouth, in Massachusetts, about thirty years after the founding of that colony.

But the persecutions which had driven him from his native land he found, raged with equal fury in the colony in which he had taken refuge, and, in order to be able to worship his Creator according to the dictates of his conscience, he was compelled to flee still farther from the haunts of civilized man. With others of his persuasion he at length found a haven in South Kingstown, on the waters of Narragansett Bay. On the beautiful promontory, which is almost encircled by the Atlantic, Long Island Sound, and the bay, they formed their little settlement founded on the dictates of peace and good will to all. In this place there were none but Indians to dispute their rights, and from whom they amicably acquired their estates by purchase; in all their intercourse treating them with conciliation and kindness. The estate of the elder Perry remained in the possession of the family for succeeding generations, long after the advent of Oliver Hazard Perry; and the descendants of the peaceable Indians continued in the vicinity in a civilized state. It was a remarkable fact that one of these, a full-blooded native of the Narragansett tribe, followed Commander Perry to Lake Erie, and fell in the desperate defense of the *Laurence* in the naval engagement on that lake.

In the direct line of descendants, Freeman Perry, great-grandson of Edmund Perry, and grandfather of the naval hero, was born on the second of February, 1732. At the age of twenty-four he married a daughter of Oliver Hazard, a gentleman of large property, of liberal education and cultivated tastes, who was a descendant of one of the original Quaker settlers of Narragansett. Society in Rhode Island at the time resembled that of Virginia, the soil being cultivated by slaves, and commerce created wealth, with its luxuries and refinements. Freeman Perry was educated in the law, in the practice of which profession he attained distinction, filling various offices of trust; and was a member of the Colonial Assembly and a judge of the Court of Common Pleas. He died at the family homestead in October, 1813, at the advanced age of eighty-two, having lived to witness the blaze of glory which surrounded his able descendant — his grandson — after his famous victory.

The third son of this sturdy patriot, named Christopher Raymond, and father of Oliver Hazard Perry, was born on the fourth of December, 1761. Although still in his youth when the revolution broke out, he participated in the dangers and hardships of that trying period, in fighting the battles of his country, both on land and sea. He first served in a corps of volunteers from his native town, called the Kingston Reds; and afterward entered before the mast in an American privateer, commanded by Captain Reed. Later, in the course of a cruise in the sloop-of-war *Mifflin*, in which he was second in command, he was captured and confined for three months on board the Jersey prison-ship, where he suffered all the hardships and studied barbarities by which the Britons sought to punish the colonists for cherishing the love of freedom and defending their liberties. At length he escaped, the emaciated victim of the contagion which swept through the ship, to

recount the horrible story of British captivity. As soon as he had recovered his health, with resentment against England quickened into fresh intensity by his terrible experience, he entered on board the United States man-of-war *Trumbull*, commanded by Captain Nicholson; and was in the memorable engagement with the British ship *Watt*, of superior force, in which the enemy, having ninety-two killed and wounded and about to surrender, escaped by the topmasts of the *Trumbull*, which were badly wounded by their lofty firing, going by the board. This action was said to have been one of the severest of the war.

Upon the conclusion of the revolution, in 1783, Christopher continued on the sea, and soon after made a voyage to Ireland as mate of a merchantman. On the return voyage to Philadelphia, among the passengers on board was a lady of Scotch descent, named Sarah Alexander, who was descended in a direct line from William Wallace. The acquaintance thus begun on the broad expanse of the ocean, soon developed into the romance of a strong attachment; and in October, 1784, they were married in Philadelphia. The sturdy young sailor-man, though as yet only twenty-three years of age, had risen to the command of a merchant ship employed in the East India and other trade; and on this occasion he took leave from his ship for sufficient time to remove with his bride to his old home in Narragansett. There they were joyously received by Perry's extensive family circle, and the young wife was soon so comfortably settled in the old homestead as to be most favorably impressed with the good people among whom her lot was now cast. The estate of Judge Perry, the captain's father, consisted of about two hundred acres, and the house stood at the base of a hill overlooking a wide extent of country interspersed by picturesque lakes, with the waters of Narragansett separating it from the opposite shore of Newport, and the broad Atlantic stretching





BIRTHPLACE OF COMMODORE PERRY, NEAR SOUTH KINGSTON, R. I.

far away to the southward. A short distance from the house was the old post road between New York and Boston, which in colonial days followed the circuitous line of the coast to be out of reach of Indian depredations. In the neighboring wood were white stones which marked the graves of the Quaker, Edmund Perry, and several generations of his people.

In these pleasant surroundings the young captain lingered for a brief period of retirement; but ere long resumed his voyages to many distant lands. His young wife, who was welcomed in his father's household as a beloved daughter, was exceedingly intelligent and well-informed as well as beautiful, and to a sweet and happy disposition she added a degree of force of mind and energy of character, which were brilliantly reflected in the eventful life of her first born son. This child, named after his great grandfather, Oliver Hazard, was born on the twenty-third of August, 1785. In early life he gave little promise of physical energy, being slender and feeble, and his health was extremely delicate. Yet he was of more than ordinary size, and it was supposed that his constitutional weakness was due in a great measure to the rapidity of his growth. His chief characteristics were an uncommon beauty of mind, a gentleness of disposition, and an utter disregard of danger. He knew no fear, a quality which was nobly exemplified throughout his life.

In his childhood all strangers were friends in whom there could be no guile. An incident revealing his confident and thoroughly courageous disposition is still preserved in the family. When scarcely more than two years old, he was playing one day with an older child in the road in front of his grandfather's house. A horseman was rapidly approaching when the older boy, seeing the danger, ran out of the way calling to Oliver to do the same. But the little fellow sat still until the horse was almost upon him when, as the man drew rein, he

looked up and lisped to him, "Man, you wud'nt wide over me, wud yuh." The horseman, who was a friend of the family, dismounted and carried Oliver into the house, where he related the occurrence with great interest, and with as much pride as if it had been his own child. He thought the boy's conduct gave token of some very worthy qualities.

When yet in his babyhood Oliver was taught by his mother the letters and a few simple words, and it was not long before he could read quite well. At five years of age he was sent to school kept by a kind old man of the neighborhood, endowed with liberal acquirements, though more noted for his goodness of heart and child-like simplicity. But the old master was notoriously lazy and insisted on holding sessions while reclining in his bed, around which the children stood to recite their lessons. As the school was at some distance from his home, Oliver used to take his cousins, who lived on an adjoining farm, to and from their lessons. They had no brother, and, although they were older than Oliver, were glad to accept his boyish protection in adventures on the road. No one thought it strange, as he was large for his years, and inspired a confidence in his manliness which was amply justified. From his earliest boyhood he seemed to exercise an influence over those who approached him, which was soon converted into affectionate regard by his graceful manners, and by a display of quiet firmness and calm self-composure. The distinction which he afterward acquired excited no astonishment among the friends of his youth; it seemed but the realization of the promise which his early years had inspired.

An anecdote, illustrative of his generous sympathy and the consistency of his character in boyhood and in maturer years, was often related by his mother. One day, when his father was home from the sea and was busy with the accounts and papers of a long voyage,



his little sister, who was about two years younger than himself, found a paper which had fallen from the table and tore it into pieces. When the paper, which was of some importance, was missed, the children were directed to search for it. Oliver soon recovered the fragments and handed them to his father; while the guilt of the little girl was manifest in her shame-faced air. His father, in the irritation of the moment, lifted his hand to inflict the usual trifling punishment, when Oliver rushed between them and, pushing his little sister aside, raised his arm to ward off the blow, saying in a firm, yet deprecating tone, "Oh, papa! don't strike her." The captain was so impressed by this act that he was completely disarmed of the least resentment, and the little mischief-maker was at once received into his favor. The mother spoke of her son's manner of performing this act as being so protecting and kind towards his sister, and yet so firm, so earnest, and so respectful towards his father. It increased the affectionate confidence of the little girl in her brother; and the parents ever after freely intrusted her, as well as their other children, to his guidance and protection.

As Oliver grew and became proficient in his studies, he was placed in the school at Tower Hill, about four miles from his home; but neither he nor his cousins, who accompanied him back and forth, thought anything of the long tramp through the woods, over the hills, and across the fields. The master of this school, called "Old Master Kelly," was so old that he had once taught Oliver's grandfather; but he was not lazy, and it is recorded that he was never known to have lost his temper. While Oliver was attending this school the old man was obliged to retire from sheer physical incapacity, and a Mr. Southworth was engaged in his stead. He also was an excellent teacher and kind to his pupils. Both Oliver and his cousins afterward referred to the period under his tuition, as the happiest of their school

days, and recalled with evident pleasure their wayside adventures in their daily rambles. After a year or two their teacher left the neighborhood, and Oliver's uncle procured the services of a Mr. Bryer, a Scotchman of education and talents, to tutor the children. The teacher resided in the Perry family, and, as Oliver also had the benefit of his instruction, he, too, lived for awhile with them.

Meanwhile, Captain Perry, having made many successful voyages to Europe and South America, as well as to the East Indies, found himself in possession of a snug fortune. His income for those times was large, and he was amply able to provide better schooling for his children, amounting now to four, than the country district afforded. About 1794 he therefore removed his family to Newport, where Oliver was placed in the school of Mr. Frazer. Under the careful and judicious instruction of this teacher, the boy made more rapid progress in all his studies. The relaxed discipline, however, of the rural school furnished but a poor preparation for the stern rule which the master found necessary to exercise among his more numerous pupils. For some trifling violation of the strict rules, Oliver one day received a sharp blow on the head from a heavy ferule hurled by the schoolmaster, in an uncontrollable fit of passion, such as he had often given way to. This violent chastisement was too much for the proud and high-spirited boy, who had been brought up upon the principle of brotherly love, and, seizing his hat, without asking leave, he at once went home; and in telling his mother of the affair said that "*he could never enter that school again.*"

Although his mother was possessed of strong feelings, and was indignant at the treatment of her boy, she was not much edified by his declaration that he would not return to school, nor disposed to yield to it. So she made no reply but quietly bound up his wound

and soothed him with her motherly solicitude. She was too sensible to withdraw him from the authority of Mr. Frazer, even though he had abused it, as she wisely reflected if she yielded to Oliver's determination in this instance, he would likely expect the same indulgence whenever he felt discontented from motives less well-founded, and might weaken her control over him. She therefore wrote a note to the schoolmaster, in which she expressed her indignation at the outrage upon her boy, stated the motives which led her to keep him in the school, and concluded with the hope that her renewed confidence in the schoolmaster would not be violated. The next morning, at the usual hour for going to school, she called to Oliver, as if she knew nothing of his resolve, handed him the note and told him she did not think he would be mistreated again. The proud spirit of the boy was stirred to its depths, his lip quivered, and tears came to his eyes; but he started off without a word, as the thought of disobeying his mother never entered his head. During the lifetime of this noble exemplar of womanhood, she reared five sons, all of whom entered the naval service of their country, having been fitted to command others by learning themselves thus early to obey.

The schoolmaster, meanwhile, had become conscious of his own culpable violence and want of control, and, being a man of generous feelings, he keenly regretted the incident and resolved to atone for it. He appreciated the good sense and magnanimity displayed by Mrs. Perry, and henceforth devoted himself untiringly to Oliver's improvement, becoming thereby warmly attached to the boy, and winning in return his confidence and friendship. Newport was then a commercial port of some importance, and, as many of the older boys in the school intended to follow a seafaring life, Mr. Frazer had an evening class in which he taught the application of mathematics to navigation and nautical

astronomy. In initiating Oliver into these sciences he took great pleasure; and between school hours and on holidays he was wont to take him to the beach, where a horizon could be obtained for astronomic observations, in order to render his lessons of the utmost practical value. When Oliver left the school the master remarked, with much satisfaction and pride, that he was the best young navigator in Rhode Island.

During his boyhood years passed in Newport, his manliness, his modesty, and the gentleness of his demeanor, won him many true friends. Among these to be attracted by his bearing was Count Rochambeau, son of the distinguished general who commanded the French auxiliary army during our war with England, having been driven from his native country by the terrors of the Revolution. This nobleman had found a residence in Newport very attractive, as many of the inhabitants were wealthy and highly educated, and the tone of society was elegant and intellectual. Notwithstanding Oliver's extreme youth, his pleasing manners and amiability soon converted the attraction to his person into a sincere friendship. The Count frequently invited him to dine in company with older friends; and, upon leaving Newport, he presented him with a little watch of fine workmanship as a token of his regard.

In 1796, shortly after Oliver had entered upon his twelfth year, Bishop Seabury came to Newport to confirm the young members of the Church. It was thought that the boy had not reached an age of discretion, in which he could fully appreciate that solemn rite; but the bishop, being greatly pleased with his manners and seriousness of his conversation, requested that he might be presented for confirmation of his early vows. After the ceremony, when about to take leave of Oliver's parents, the bishop, who was impressed by the evident depth of the boy's mind, solemnly laid his hands on his head and blessed him in a manner so emphatic, that

an impression was conveyed to his mother that the blessing had been heard and answered, and would follow him through life.

The following year Captain Perry retired from the sea and moved his family to the Village of Westerly, in another part of the state. Oliver's education, due to his diligence in his studies under the tutorage of Mr. Frazer, was unusually advanced for his years, and, as he had acquired an unbounded fondness for books, his mind was stocked with a liberal share of general information. As books of a frivolous nature were not so abundant or widely distributed as now, his reading was confined to Plutarch, Shakespeare, the Spectator, and works of similar character, intended to instruct and elevate the mind.

In the early part of 1798 the relations of the United States with France began to assume a hostile character, owing to a false construction of the alliance entered into during the war of independence. The unprincipled government of France was provoked by the cautious neutrality of the United States, and sought to involve them in the war as allies by infringing their neutrality and complicating their relations with England. The representative of France even undertook to fit out privateers in the United States to cruise against British commerce, and actually succeeded in sending several vessels to sea, which captured the enemy's merchantmen on the American coasts; and soon after seized our own merchant ships within our navigable waters. As there was no ready redress for these aggravated grievances, Congress authorized the president to purchase, hire, or build twelve ships of war, of not more than twenty guns each, which were to be added to the six frigates then constituting the navy. Only three of these frigates, the *United States*, the *Constitution*, and the *Constellation*, were then launched; but soon after authority was given for the purchase of twelve addi-

tional ships to carry from eighteen to thirty-two guns. A separate department was then created to attend to the affairs of the juvenile navy, which hitherto had been under the control of the war department; and Benjamin Stoddert was duly appointed the first secretary of the navy under the Federal Constitution. The commanders of the ships of war were instructed to capture any French cruisers that might be found on our coasts, and recapture any American ships which might have been seized by them. Such was the origin of the difficulties known as the French disturbances.

At the first outbreak of hostilities with the nation which had so grossly trampled on the commercial rights of his country, Captain Perry was prompted to offer his services in the marine thus created. By the earnest solicitations of influential friends in Rhode Island, the president was induced to at once direct that a commission of post-captain in the navy be issued to him; and this was dated the seventh of June, 1798. Two days after, the secretary of the treasury forwarded instructions to Mr. George Champlin, of Newport, to procure such a ship as Captain Perry should approve of. But no ship suitable for the purposes of war could be found, and it was decided to lay down such a vessel at Warren, in Rhode Island, in the vicinity of which ship timber abounded. Captain Perry at once repaired to Warren to superintend the construction of the new ship, which was to be named *General Greene*, after one of the distinguished sons of Rhode Island.

As Mrs. Perry had accompanied her husband to Warren, Oliver, who was then almost thirteen years old, was left in entire charge of the family. He attended to the household purchases, looked after his sister and younger brothers, and kept his mother informed of all that was passing. In these new duties and responsibilities he received from his younger brothers and the servants the unqualified obedience which they were

accustomed to manifest toward his parents. Yet, while conducting the affairs of the family with prudence and regularity, he was still a boy, with all the tastes and aspirations of the American youth. At this period his favorite amusement was sailing boats and planks on the shallow waters of the Pawcatuck, near his home. It is recorded by one of his school-fellows and play-mates in Westerly, that the only time he ever saw Oliver really angry was in one of their friendly contests on the river, when they were representing a sea engagement. Oliver's raft happened to be run down by that of his play-mate, who was the opposing admiral, when Oliver's rage became ungovernable, and for a minute or two was anxious for an actual set-to, to recover the lost advantage of the day. His closest companions at this time were his brother Raymond and his cousin, George Perry, who then lived in this family, and with them he joined in games of ball with the greatest avidity and activity. His sisters afterward remarked that they observed with pleasure that the control which Oliver so early exercised over others in their games was owing to his calmness, gentleness, and habits of self-command, rather than to any undue assumption of manhood.

While thus occupied with manly duties and boyish pleasures, Oliver was seriously meditating the plan of his future life. Some time before, he had formed a high regard for the profession of arms which, no doubt, was fanned into a strong desire for service by the devout patriotism of his mother. Although Protestants and of Scotch descent, the friends of her girlhood had been involved in the Irish rebellion; and she had experienced, in the accounts which she had heard of skirmishes and battles in their neighborhood, a lively enthusiasm in the cause of liberty. The achievements of her countrymen, whom she insisted were the bravest people in the world, she recounted over and again to Oliver who was fasci-

nated by deeds of valor, and his mind was fired for active service in the defense of his country. Having been born almost on the shore of the Atlantic, and having spent his early boyhood with water and ships constantly in sight, he had also formed a liking for such pursuits, and, coupled with the influence of his father's connection with seamen and a seafaring life, his young mind was filled with the romance of the sea. It was but natural, therefore, with his strong desire for military service blended with his craving for the sea, that he should have wanted to follow the calling of his father in the established navy of his country.

The commencement of hostilities with France, and his father receiving his commission as post-captain in the navy, provided the means of gratifying Oliver's desire for service, which was prompted by his double tastes for war and for the sea. Shortly after his thirteenth birthday, he therefore wrote to his father asking leave to enter the navy. Before deciding the matter his father requested him to state the motives which influenced him in his choice of a life occupation. This he did in detail, and the good reasons that were given, and the motives and manly terms in which they were expressed, made a deep impression on his father and also on those who read his letter. It is to be sincerely regretted that this letter, as well as others relating to the youth of Oliver, have not withstood the tooth of time. Of what interest it would be to know, after a lapse of more than a century, how far the motives with which the boy entered upon his life profession were borne out by the actual results, and of the comparison of his hopes with their fulfillment. Would not a comparison prove a youthful air castle expelled by the splendor of the real structure, and aspirations for glory outdone by the reality?



## CHAPTER II

### OLIVER AS A MIDSHIPMAN

**D**URING the fall and winter of 1798 the work of building the new ship-of-war, under the supervision of Captain Perry, proceeded with diligence; and in the spring it was launched and soon made ready for sea. The *General Greene* was a trim and fast-sailing frigate, mounting about thirty-six guns; and the officers were appointed chiefly from Rhode Island, the selection being intrusted by the secretary of the navy to Captain Perry. Upon receiving, therefore, the letter from Oliver, stating his reasons for wanting to enter the navy of his country, the father decided, with the consent of Mrs. Perry, to accede to the boy's desire. As no further difficulty was encountered, Oliver's name was placed on the list of midshipmen to fill stations on board the *General Greene*; and in April, 1799, he received his warrant and orders to report for duty. Soon after, the captain removed his family from Westerly to Tower Hill, in order that they might be near his relatives during his absence at sea. Oliver then bid farewell of his mother and the companions of his childhood, and embarked with his father on board the new frigate, for the commencement of his naval career.

The first cruise of the *General Greene* was to the Island of Cuba. In the West India waters the French cruisers mostly abounded, and it was there that American commerce had suffered most severely from their depredations. For several weeks the frigate was engaged in convoying merchant vessels flying the Stars and Stripes, from Havana to our southern ports. Early

in the summer several cases of yellow fever broke out on the ship, and Captain Perry was compelled to quit the Cuban coast and proceed to the north, in order to check the progress of the dread disease. Sailing far out to sea he laid his course for the northern coasts and arrived at Newport toward the close of July.

While his father was occupied in refitting the ship and devoting himself to restoring the health of his crew, Oliver remained at home where he was a personage of great importance in the eyes of his younger brothers and sisters. It is related that they often went forth early in the morning to pick berries for his breakfast, while the dew was still on them, and that they followed the young sailor boy in all his rambles with devoted affection. His bright uniform and jaunty, confident manner created a feeling of awe among them and the children of the neighborhood, who liked nothing better than to tramp with him through the woods and across the fields. They would sit by his side for hours fascinated by his stories of adventure in southern climes, or listen to the simple melodies of childhood played on the flute, an accomplishment which he had picked up on shipboard.

Early in the autumn the health of the crew of the *General Greene* was completely restored, and Captain Perry soon resumed his station off Havana, where he was exceedingly useful in convoying our vessels bound either through the Bahama Channel or into the Gulf. At about this time, however, the disturbed conditions in St. Domingo, where a revolution then existed, encouraged the piracies being committed on our commerce by the negro chieftain Rigaud, and our government was forced to take action against him. He was seeking to establish a rival power to that of General Toussaint, who commanded the military forces of France in the island; and for protection of American interests the *General Greene* was soon after dispatched to those

waters. The frigate was then placed under the orders of Commodore Talbot, who had been sent there in the *Constitution*, a frigate of forty-four guns. Captain Perry was thereupon directed to cruise around the island keeping a close watch of the shores, in order to be of the utmost protection to American merchantmen which might be in those parts. He arrived at Cape Francois early in October, and was informed by our consul-general in St. Domingo of the state of affairs in the island. This official also pointed out the difficulties in the way and suggested the means by which our commerce might be protected.

It had been the policy of the British and American consuls, during the civil war then raging on the island, to grant passports to the cruisers fitted out by Toussaint, whose upright and honorable character inspired their confidence. This had exempted the cruisers from capture by the ships of these nations, although they owned the allegiance of France and bore the French flag. The government of the United States had approved of this course, and Captain Perry was instructed not to disturb these cruisers while engaged in defending the coasts of the island against the barges of Rigaud, and to aid Toussaint in putting down the naval forces of the rebels. On the ninth of February, 1800, while cruising off Cape Tiburon, a number of Rigaud's barges were discovered at anchor under the protection of three forts on the coast. Captain Perry at once stood in, and, after a spirited bombardment of the forts for about thirty minutes, they were silenced with a loss to them of a number of killed and wounded, the *General Greene*, meanwhile, receiving only a few shots in her hull and rigging. When about to take possession of the gun vessels lying at anchor, a large frigate was seen in the offing; and, in order to avoid being caught between two fires, the captain got the ship under way and stood for the strange sail, which, after a short

chase, proved to be a captured French vessel in the service of England.

Soon after this incident Toussaint sent an urgent request to Captain Perry that he proceed with his ship off the port of Jaquemel, which was then under siege by his forces. This port was a stronghold of Rigaud, into which his cruisers brought their prizes, and Captain Perry, believing that he could be of aid there, at once complied. He not only maintained a strict blockade of the port and intercepted the entry of supplies and provisions, but also took an active part in the siege. By the fire of the *General Greene* the enemy at length abandoned their strongest position, which led to the surrender of the garrison numbering five thousand men. The success of these operations was attributed by Toussaint wholly to the efficient co-operation of Captain Perry, who received his sincere thanks with assurance of his "determination to extend his friendship and protection, on all occasions, to the citizens of the United States," a promise which he ever faithfully observed.

Continuing his cruise around the Island of St. Domingo, Captain Perry arrived early in April at Cape Francois, the port from which he had set forth. There he rejoined the force under the command of Commodore Talbot. After being relieved by him of twenty-four of his best Rhode Island seamen, who had enlisted in his command fully expecting that they were to remain on the *General Greene* and return to Newport, he was directed, under orders of the secretary of the navy, to proceed with his ship to the mouth of the Mississippi. He immediately sailed on this service and arrived off the river about the twentieth of April, where he received on board General Wilkinson and his family for conveyance to a northern port. On the tenth of May he sailed for Newport, giving convoy by the way to an American brig bound for Havana. When off

that port an incident occurred which showed the mettle of Captain Perry, and gave Oliver his first lesson in naval honor.

Upon approaching the harbor a British line-of-battle ship, which lay off the entrance, fired a shot across the bow of the merchantman to bring her to. The brig, however, under instructions from Captain Perry, paid no heed to the hostile summons, but continued on her course. The wind being light and uncertain the commander of the Britisher thereupon dispatched a boat to board the brig, for the purpose of examining her manifests, but a carefully aimed shot from the *General Greene* placed between the brig and the boat brought the latter alongside. The line-of-battle ship at the same time bore down, and her commander hailed Captain Perry to demand in no uncertain tone why his boat had been fired on. "To prevent her from boarding the American brig which is under my convoy and protection," the captain promptly replied. This brought the rejoinder that it was very strange that one of his majesty's seventy-four gun ships could not board an American brig. "If she were a first-rate ship with her hundred and twenty guns," replied Captain Perry in thundering tones, "she should not do so to the dishonor of my flag." Thus, in a few words he expressed the whole principle and profession of naval honor, which was creditable alike to him, his fellow officers in the service, and to the future renown of his son.

The foregoing incidents, relating to the protection afforded our merchant marine in those days, serve to illustrate the spirit of daring, the promptitude of action, and the high sense of national honor, which has characterized the American navy. It was a thorough school of hard and practical experience in which Oliver Hazard Perry received his early naval training, a school in which the lessons of warfare and naval honor were taught by example as well as by precept. Although the

son of the commander, he had taken his place among the other midshipmen naturally and without the least assumption, and he saw no more of his father than did the others of his grade. But he was diligent in his studies, attentive to his instructors, and soon became the leader in performing the active duties of his station. One of the duties in the daily routine of ship life, for practice in agility and steadiness of head, was to lay over the maintop by scampering up the shrouds on one side and falling back to the deck on the other side. This exercise was often repeated several times. The hardy life of the sea was beginning to have a salutary effect on Oliver; his muscles were becoming developed and hard, his shoulders and chest were broadening, and his face was rounding out, indicating a robust state of health and strength. Before the end of the cruise he was a very different looking lad than when he began his naval career, a fact which his father noticed with satisfaction. He believed there was the making of an officer in his son, and often his eye lightened with pleasure and pride as a junior officer spoke well and complimentarily of him. As for Oliver, his admiration and affection for his father increased daily, and, in his boyish estimates of men, he came to believe that with his good and brave father in command, no enemy, however powerful, could ever take the ship, no storm, however violent, would overwhelm her, nor misfortune, however threatening, would overtake them.

Proceeding northward without further adventure the *General Greene* arrived at Newport toward the close of May, 1800. The southern cruise was thus terminated, and Captain Perry was instructed to pay off his crew, retaining in service only such a number as might be needed to take care of the ship while undergoing repairs. As the public services of the *General Greene* had been too important to admit of the ship being kept out of commission for any length of time, the secretary of the

navy urged the captain to hasten the necessary work of making repairs and re-equipment for sea, advising him when the ship should be ready to receive her crew, in order that the usual orders might be given for recruiting it.

At about this time an adjustment of our difficulties with France began to assume the appearance of amicable settlement. For this reason there seemed to be no need of increasing our naval force abroad, as had been contemplated, and the sailing of the *General Greene* was delayed from week to week. Early in 1801 the treaty agreed upon in Paris was ratified by the Senate of the United States; and, with the change of administration which occurred shortly after, it was determined to reduce the small navy to about its status when the difficulties with France had made necessary its increase. The ships of all rates were accordingly reduced in number from forty-two to thirteen. This policy of Mr. Jefferson, which was owing, no doubt, to the state of the national finances, resulted in a wholesale discharge of officers and midshipmen. It is recorded that of forty-two post-captains, many of whom had sacrificed their profitable pursuits to come forward in defense of their country's rights, only nine were retained in the service. Of the masters-commandant, next in rank, none remaining to serve their country in time of need, while of three hundred and fifty midshipmen more than one-half were dismissed.

Among the large majority thus excluded from the service was Captain Perry, to whom the circumstance was not a little unpleasant. Although the announcement of dismissal by the secretary was couched in words well suited to sooth the annoyance thus created, he, with others of rank, must have regarded the reduction of the naval force as unfortunate, as affecting the permanent welfare of the country. The order of dismissal was as follows: "The act providing for the peace estab-

lishment of the navy of the United States has imposed on the president a painful duty. It directs him to select nine gentlemen from among the captains of the navy of the United States, and to permit the remaining commanders to retire from public service with the advance of four month's extra pay. I have deemed it a duty, therefore, as early as possible to inform you, that you will be among those whose services, however reluctantly, will be dispensed with. Permit me to assure you that the president has a just sense of the services rendered by you to your country, and that I am, with sentiments of respect, your most obedient servant." Fortunately for Oliver and his career of glory and honor, as well as for the added lustre of his country's flag, his name was among the one hundred and fifty midshipmen retained in the navy.

The reduction of the navy to a peace footing had scarcely been effected, before the unprotected state of our commerce, which extended over the civilized world, created new enemies for the United States. The troubles then confronting the young republic were with the piratical Barbary States, whose depredations covering many years had wrought much damage and loss to its merchant marine. As incomprehensible as it may seem, the government had been so weak as to bribe the various regencies with presentations of arms and other goods, and in some instances with money, thus providing them with the very means by which the pirates might continue their hostile demonstrations against our commerce. On one occasion, the Dey of Algiers had carried his insolence so far that the government had tamely suffered one of its vessels of war to be impressed in the degrading task of carrying tribute of the dey to a third power; and afterward had agreed to pay tribute to the Bey of Tunis. This proceeding soon aroused the Bashaw of Tripoli, who, after setting forth the various grievances that he fancied he had



suffered from the United States, demanded of the American consul a present of money, with a threat of commencing hostilities against American commerce if the sum was not forthcoming within six months.

The government and the people, however, encouraged by the recent success of the American navy in the struggle with France, resisted this insolent demand, and at once began refitting the dismantled ships and preparing them for sea. Late in the summer of 1801, Commodore Dale set sail for the Mediterranean with the frigates *President*, *Philadelphia*, and *Essex*, and the schooner *Enterprise*. Upon arrival there he found that the bashaw, in fulfillment of his threat, had caused the flagstaff of the American consulate to be cut down, an act which, with those piratical people, was a solemn declaration of war. But the commodore's orders confined him to defensive tactics, and the most he could do was to blockade the Tripolitan cruisers in their own ports and elsewhere they might be found. These operations had the desired effect, however, of leaving the merchant marine nearly free from the danger of despoliation; and only one encounter occurred on the sea. It was between the *Enterprise*, of thirteen guns, and the *Tripoli*, of fourteen guns, and lasted for three hours when the latter, having fifty of her crew killed or wounded, was captured and disarmed.

After a little more than a year of inactive service, Oliver Perry early in 1802, to his great delight, was ordered to the frigate *Adams* which lay in the harbor of Newport. This vessel was commanded by Captain Hugh G. Campbell, and sailed in June for the Mediterranean to join the new squadron, consisting of the *Chesapeake*, *Constellation*, *New York*, and *John Adams*, and the schooner *Enterprise*, under the command of Commodore Richard V. Morris. The *Adams* arrived at Gibraltar about the middle of July, and, after a short cruise to Malaga with a convoy, was stationed at

Gibraltar to keep the two Tripolitan cruisers, with the admiral of their navy on board of one of them, safely bottled in port. There they remained for an indefinite period, during which the other vessels of the fleet were engaged in convoying American merchantmen to and from ports in the Mediterranean.

While on this service the long and wearisome duty was relieved for Oliver by one redeeming circumstance. On the twenty-third of August, 1802 — his seventeenth birthday — he was promoted to an acting lieutenant, an event in his life which must have filled him with joy. Soon after, to the satisfaction of all on board, the *Adams* was ordered to lift the blockade and proceed up the Mediterranean with a convoy of ten merchant ships. In touching at Malaga, Alicant, and Barcelona, in Spain, and later with the remainder of the convoy, at Leghorn and Naples, Oliver seized the opportunity thus afforded, by the indulgence of his captain, to see something of these ports. He was enabled, with other officers, to make short excursions to points of interest in the vicinity of these places, from which he derived both pleasure and instruction. Afterward they rejoined the commodore at Malta, from which port the whole squadron eventually sailed for Tripoli, for the purpose of beginning active operations against the freebooters.

In the month of May, 1803, as the squadron approached this port a number of small barges were discovered making for the harbor, under the protection of a flotilla of gunboats. In the chase which immediately ensued, the barges were cut off from the port, but they succeeded in entering a small harbor at one side, the gunboats, meanwhile, escaping along the shore and getting within the mole under cover of the batteries. The barges, being small, were quickly unloaded of grain, which composed their cargoes, and were drawn up on the beach, while breastworks were thrown up for their

defense. In addition to these preparations for a siege, a large stone building near by was hastily fortified and filled with soldiery.

On the following morning Lieutenant David Porter, with a strong force from all the ships, pulled gallantly into the small harbor, and, under a heavy fire of musketry from the shore, succeeded in reaching the barges on the beach and firing them. During the few minutes thus engaged they were so close to the enemy that the unarmed rabble in the rear of the combatants assailed them with stones; but they drew off in good order and reached the ships with a loss of twelve killed and wounded, among the latter being the brave Porter who had led them. Although there is no positive record extant that can be verified of Oliver Perry taking part in this daring exploit, his rank as a young lieutenant and his heroic spirit make it extremely unlikely that he was absent from the scene of danger.

Shortly after this occurrence, the commodore made an effort to arrange the difficulties with these barbarians by negotiation; but, as they had no very formidable idea of our naval power, all overtures were rejected with added insult. He thereupon established a rigid blockade of the port with the *John Adams*, commanded by Captain Rodgers, the *Adams*, commanded by Captain Campbell, and the *Enterprise*, by Lieutenant Isaac Hull, and sailed himself for Malta. There he learned of renewed activities against the American commerce by the Algerians and Tunisians, and deemed it expedient to raise the blockade of Tripoli and collect the vessels of his squadron at Malta, for operations against them. In the subsequent movements the *Adams* cruised down the Barbary side of the Mediterranean, and eventually rejoined the squadron at Gibraltar. Commodore Morris was soon after recalled, when Captain Rodgers hoisted his flag on the *New York*, and Captain Campbell re-

placed that officer on the *John Adams*, the commodore sailing for the United States on the *Adams*, where they arrived at the close of November, 1803.

The long cruise having ended, the young lieutenant, Oliver Perry, after an absence of a year and a half, in which he had witnessed some stirring scenes of daring and valor, returned to his home and friends. He had formed the habit of studious thought and reading for the improvement of his mind, and now devoted himself to advanced courses in mathematics and astronomy. It was said by those who remembered him at this period that he was quick and excitable in temper, though not disposed to unjustified anger, nor implacable in his resentments. To the friends to whom he was devotedly attached he was ever faithful and generous, and ready to go to any length to serve them. In conversation he appeared exceedingly well, and his well-timed remarks were enhanced by the absence of all pretensions. He was fond of the society of good women, of whose character he had a nice sense of honor, and frowned on any who trifled with their affections. To these cultivated and refined tastes he added a liking for horses, to which he had been accustomed from his earliest childhood. He was a fearless and well-poised rider, and on shore he always possessed one of the finest specimens to be found. While verging from youth to manhood, it was said of him that he played an admirable game of billiards, fenced dexterously, and was generally skilful in the use of arms.

While thus enjoying for a season the diversions of life ashore and the comforts of home, Lieutenant Perry was foregoing, although unconsciously, some rare opportunities for gaining renown. In the very waters which he had left but a short time before, there was then being enacted a vigorous series of naval operations put into execution by the command of Commodore Preble, who had succeeded Commodore Morris on the

Mediterranean. The presence of his squadron before Tripoli had been marked by continuous bombardment, conceived in a true spirit of naval enterprise; and the boat-attacks executed with brilliant daring, supported by the guns of the squadron, were characterized by personal heroism of the highest stamp. The hand-to-hand struggles with a barbarous foe, the self-devotion to succor or to save, the hair-breadth escapes, all invest the period of Preble's command with heroic interest. It was the ill-fortune of young Perry to have been detached from the squadron during these thrilling scenes which, under the glory of Preble, brought renown to Decatur, to Somers, and other heroes of the Tripolitan war.

The earliest news of the achievements of Commodore Preble's command fired the imagination of Lieutenant Perry, and, having wearied of professional inactivity, he resolved to seek renewed service abroad. The loss of the *Philadelphia*, shortly after, only increased his desire to be present in the thickest of the fight, and he at once applied for extended sea duty. As the *Constitution* was then the only heavy ship before Tripoli, the government, which was determined to prosecute the war to an issue of peace, began to fit out four additional frigates for that purpose. One of these was the *Constellation*, placed under the command of Captain H. G. Campbell, under whom the young midshipman had received his advance to a lieutenancy. Upon learning, therefore, of Oliver Perry's desire for service in the Mediterranean, his partiality and friendship for the promising young officer induced him to procure an order for him to serve as one of the lieutenants on his ship.

The ship was fitting out at Washington, to which place Perry at once proceeded. It was his first visit to that part of the country, but the intelligence, frankness, and unaffected good-nature of the people with

whom he was thrown prompted him, between intervals of his official duties, to accept numerous invitations extended to him by prominent families in the town. From the earnestness with which his society was sought it is evident that his youth, his erect and military bearing, enhanced by his intelligence and modesty, were qualities that made him no less a favorite with the young ladies than with their discerning sires.

Early in June, 1804, the *Constellation* was ready for sea, and in company with the frigate *President*, bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Barron, proceeded to the Mediterranean. In September the ships arrived off Tripoli, thus augmenting the squadron to five frigates and five brigs, which was the most formidable force that had ever been brought together under an American officer. But with only a single frigate and a few small gunboats, Commodore Preble had accomplished more toward peace than the new commander was likely to realize with more than five times his force. It was the master spirit of Preble that had done heroic things, and had he been retained in command of the new squadron, Tripoli would soon have been reduced to ruin or unconditional submission. His dismissal at a critical time in the war was a grave error of judgment, and only reflected the weakness and imbecility which marked the early conduct of the navy department.

Instead of pursuing the aggressive warfare against the enemy, which had been inaugurated by Preble, nothing was now done beyond maintaining a blockade of the port, a service which would have been equally effective with the former force. Thus Perry and other young officers, with their imaginations aflame by the matchless heroism so recently displayed in the arena before them, were destined to follow a period of inactivity, while admiring deeds of valor which they were not permitted to imitate. Not long after the assump-

tion of command by Commodore Barron, operations of an exceedingly romantic character took place on land. General Eaton, our consul at Tunis, with the aid of the deposed bashaw and a motley company of about five hundred adventurers, had succeeded, after a sharp and spirited attack, in capturing the seaport town of Dearne. In this insurrection against the power of the reigning bashaw, they had had the support of the American government to the extent of being furnished with arms and ammunition from the brig *Argus*, and schooners *Nautilus* and *Hornet*. Being besieged in their stronghold by an overpowering force of the enemy, they were in hard straits when the *Constellation* opportunely appeared in the harbor, and drove the barbarians away with the loss of their heavy baggage. More extensive aid was then urged by General Eaton from the naval forces, to follow up the advantage thus gained, but Commodore Barron declined doing so, and the expedition was brought to a close. Soon after, the commodore retired because of ill health, and the command of the squadron devolved upon Commodore Rodgers, who was able in a short time to conclude a treaty of peace. All claims of tribute were abandoned by Tripoli, but ransom was paid for the American prisoners remaining in possession of the regency after the exchange had been made.

While the squadron still lay off Tripoli, young Perry was ordered to the schooner *Nautilus* as first lieutenant, and he was in command of this gunboat when Commodore Rodgers sailed soon after for Tunis. The bey had threatened our consul and otherwise showed a hostile spirit toward Americans, and the presence of an armed force was deemed necessary for his pacification. The squadron then comprised thirteen vessels, including the gunboats, and presented a formidable show of force which greatly impressed the bey, and he expressed a wish to send a minister to Washington to

represent his government. This desire was soon gratified by his minister embarking in the *Congress*, commanded by Lieutenant Decatur, in its return to the United States. At about this time the *Nautilus* was dispatched to Algiers and arrived in time for its young commander to witness one of the frequent uprisings of which the regency was noted. He then proceeded to Gibraltar to receive the commodore's dispatches and procure supplies. Upon the conclusion of this service Perry was ordered to the flagship *Constitution*, the commodore having been attracted by his manly appearance, his courteous manner, and thoughtful conversation.

In his service on the flagship it was soon observed by the commodore that the young officer was an excellent seaman, while his manner was at all times admirable, calm, dignified, and self-possessed. He was then, as ever after, rigorous in the observance of naval etiquette which, it may be noted, is one of the most useful safeguards against familiarity and insubordination. Perry's manner and mode of carrying on duty at this early period in his career was a matter of remark among the officers of the ship, and in manoeuvring the *Constitution* as officer of the deck, the admirable skill which he displayed was enhanced by his ease and grace, and by the matchless clearness and melody of his voice. This so secured the approbation and kind feelings of Commodore Rodgers that when, upon settlement of all difficulties with the Barbary powers, he shifted his flag to the *Essex* to return to the United States, he took young Perry with him.

The *Essex* sailed from the Mediterranean in August, 1806; and in the voyage homeward Perry found in Daniel Murray a brother officer of congenial spirit. A warm and lasting friendship sprang up between them, and the latter afterward gave his impressions of the character and manners of his friend at this period:



“My intercourse with him previously had been slight and casual; although on the same station, we had rarely been thrown together. On examining the dates of our commissions, I found that he ranked me, and he came home second lieutenant of the *Essex*. During our passage home, which was a very long one, within a few days of two months, I had great pleasure in cultivating Perry’s acquaintance. His fine temper, gentle manners, and manly bearing, soon attracted and attached me to him strongly, and I believe our regard for each other was as sincere as it was lasting, having been uninterrupted to his death. His age when in the *Essex* could not have been more than twenty-one, and he was then an excellent seaman, an accomplished officer, and a well-bred gentleman. His subsequent glorious career was just what I had anticipated.”

## CHAPTER III

### TRAINING FOR WAR

THE conclusion of the war with the Barbary powers left the United States nominally at peace with all the world. It was a period of violent unrest among the nations of Europe, which now looked upon the subjugation of the lawless barbarians of the Mediterranean by the Americans, as a remarkable achievement. All the weaker powers had long paid tribute to these pirates, in order to save their commerce on the sea from spoliation; and now to note that the infant republic across the ocean had in a short time brought the freebooters to abject submission, filled them with amazement. They consequently began to have a wholesome respect for the small but efficient navy of the United States, and a certain degree of admiration for the daring, the skill, and the intrepidity of its officers and men.

At this time the war between the maritime nations of the world had become almost universal, and had resulted in throwing the carrying trade very largely to the American shipping. Exempted from the evils of war and deriving immense profit from their neutral position and pacific relations with all nations, the United States was an object of jealousy of England and France, the two principal belligerents. These powerful nations, perceiving the naval force of the republic reduced to a peace footing, took advantage of the unprotected state of its commerce thereby to pursue towards it strong measures of legalized spoliation.

commerce of the United States, therefore, was constantly subjected to the most unwarrantable seizures and condemnations by Great Britain, and for a part of this period by France.

England had led the way by adopting the rule of war of 1756, which regarded all trade carried on by a neutral nation with the colonies of a belligerent, during war, which was not permitted by the belligerent nation during peace, as illegal. This order to the commanders of her ships of war was ostensibly intended to distress the French colonies in the West Indies and elsewhere, but, as no notice of it had been given to the United States, its immediate effects fell almost entirely on their commerce. As a result, vessels and property, aggregating an enormous sum, were seized, carried into British ports, and condemned. This violation of the neutral rights of the nation caused great indignation throughout the United States; and meetings were held in the commercial towns, and memorials presented to Congress urging that body to adopt such energetic and decisive measures as would be most likely to obtain redress. Although a law was adopted on the eighteenth of April, 1806, prohibiting the importation into the United States of certain manufactured articles of Great Britain, it produced no favorable effect upon the action of that nation, which only advanced other equally novel and unjust pretensions, thereby adding insult to injury.

One of these pretensions was a declaration that the coasts of France, Holland, and Germany, from Brest to the Elbe, an extent of more than eight hundred miles, was in a state of blockade; and they so far enforced it as to make captures of such vessels as accidentally approached these shores. France soon after followed the example of England, and her cruisers and privateers captured neutral vessels on a coast where they themselves were fugitives and in imminent peril of capture. Such a predatory warfare directed against a

nation at peace with them, in violation of all the hitherto established rights of neutrals, had, as intended, a ruinous effect upon the trade of the United States, and threatened it with utter annihilation. This deplorable state of affairs had been due wholly to the improvidence of the government, and the sordid policy which it had pursued towards the navy, which left it without the means of convoying its merchant ships, and causing its rights to be respected.

Even then, for maritime defense, such ships as the United States possessed might have been fitted out, and others built, and sent forth to restore the tarnished honor of the flag by protecting its commerce. But it was more consistent to the narrow and timid policy of the time, to recall what shipping remained from the ocean, than to follow and protect it there. Thus the embargo act was proclaimed toward the close of 1807, which added evils not less ruinous by blockading our own ports and harbors, and defending their egress by means of gunboats. Instead of sending forth line-of-battle ships and frigates to convoy American ships, wherever they had a right to go, the policy and method of defense only invited the aggression of belligerents at home by so futile a preparation to resist it.

During this unsettled period in the commercial life of the country, Lieutenant Perry was busily engaged, by official appointment, in supervising the construction of seventeen gunboats in the harbor of Newport. It was highly creditable to him, and reflects the confidence of the navy department, based, no doubt, on the favorable reports of the various commanders under whom he had served, that he should have been entrusted, while as yet scarcely twenty-two years of age, to build, equip, and command this considerable array of gunboats. In June, 1807, he was ready to proceed with his force to New York, a fact which shows that he must have used great energy and dispatch in carrying on his shipbuild-

ing operations. Associated with him in this work was his intimate friend and former shipmate on the *Constellation*, Samuel G. Blodgett, with whom in every obligation as an officer and man he freely sympathized.

While thus employed with the full flotilla in blockade duty of New York harbor against American vessels, the British added still another sanguinary outrage on our flag. This was the attack on the frigate *Chesapeake* by the double-decked ship *Leopard*, in the waters of Lynnhaven Bay, for the purpose of taking from her certain alleged deserters. There was a wanton slaughter of a number of American seamen, and no effort was made to maintain the glory of the flag before it was lowered in dishonor. The national sense of honor and justice was stung into keen resentment by this mortifying affair; and the feeling with which Lieutenant Perry learned of the cold-blooded attack, is well expressed in a letter written soon after to his father, who was then in foreign waters as captain of a merchantman: "You must, ere this, have heard of the outrage committed by the British on our national honor, and feel with us all the indignation that so barbarous and cowardly an act must naturally inspire. Thank God! all parties are now united in the determination to resent so flagrant an insult. There is but one sentiment pervading the bosom of every American from North to South. The British may laugh, but let them beware! for never has the public indignation been so completely aroused since the glorious revolution that made us a nation of freemen. The utmost spirit prevails throughout the United States in preparation for an event which is thought inevitable, and our officers wait with impatience for the signal to be given to wipe away the stain which the misconduct of one has cast on our flag."

After the command for a season of the flotilla in New York harbor, Lieutenant Perry was ordered to superintend the construction of additional gunboats laid

down at Westerly, on the Pawcatuck River. In this service he was actively employed from February, 1808 to April, 1809, when all the vessels were completed. He was then appointed to the command of the schooner *Revenge*, of fourteen guns, which was attached to Commodore Rodgers' command. This squadron, consisting of four frigates, five sloops, and a number of gunboats, had wisely been placed in commission to assist in protecting the sovereignty of our own coasts; while the probability of war with England quickened the zeal of all naval officers in preparing for the struggle, with the chivalrous hope of wiping away the stain on the honor of the flag cast upon it by the encounter of the *Chesapeake*. Under the watchful guidance of the skilful and intrepid Rodgers, the squadron was brought to a high order of discipline, efficiency, and readiness for action which has seldom been surpassed.

Cruising with the squadron along the Atlantic coast, during the summer and winter, Lieutenant Perry was ordered, in April, 1810, to sail with the *Revenge* to the Washington navy yard, where the schooner was to undergo extensive repairs. In passing up the Potomac, when off Mount Vernon, a salute was fired from the vessel in honor of the country's noblest patriot, whose remains reposed there. This thundered tribute to the memory of the nation's hero had become an honored custom, since the beginning of the American navy. On the twentieth of May, the repairs to the *Revenge* having been completed, Lieutenant Perry was ordered to sail for Charleston for duty in the neighboring waters. Touching at Norfolk he proceeded to sea and, after a boisterous passage, arrived safely in port. The only adventure of note recorded in the log-book was the falling overboard of one of the crew, who, though the schooner was running free under a press of canvas, was rescued. The particulars were sententiously recorded as follows: "At ten, thirty, Johnson Dickson, marine,

fell overboard. Rounded to, out boat, brought him safe on board."

The duties of the Charleston station, upon which Perry now entered, included cruising on the coast to protect our merchantmen, and those of other nations, within one marine league from the shore, from capture or molestation by British or French cruisers which abounded in southern waters. The difficulties of the situation were many and the orders governing his movements somewhat complicated. In July a United States marshal boarded the *Revenge* with a warrant for the seizure of the ship *Diana*, of Wiscasset. It was claimed by her owners that the master of the ship, James Tibbetts, had fraudulently retained possession of the vessel for his own gain, and had refused to return to the United States as repeatedly ordered. The vessel was then lying in Spanish waters, off Amelia Island, and bore English colors. The Spanish authorities, convinced of the justice of the claims, had readily granted permission to take possession of the vessel which, however, was lying under the battery of the gunbrig *Plumper* and the schooner *Jupiter*. Lieutenant Perry immediately yielded to the request of the marshal that he would go after and take possession of the *Diana*, and, with the aid of three gunboats, he proceeded to the island, seized the ship from under the guns of the British cruisers, and stood out to sea. Before clearing the coast, however, a large sloop-of-war was discovered bearing down, and soon proved to be the H. B. M. ship *Goree*, Captain Byng. The ship rounded to and sent an officer on board the *Revenge* to learn the character of her convoy. This information Lieutenant Perry refused to give; and, having little hope of resisting successfully a ship of twice his force, he took a fair position for boarding the other, should he offer the least hostility. With his whole crew armed with cutlasses, pistols, and battle-axes, he was prepared to make an

assault over the bulwarks into the midst of the enemy with a suddenness and audacity which might well have rendered it successful. An eye-witness of this scene on the *Revenge*, by whom the anecdote was recorded, was one of the midshipmen, and concluded with: "Our crew consisted of about ninety good men; and, although the attempt to board might appear desperate, yet it was our belief at the time that, considering the *Gorce* would not be expecting such an attempt, our gallant commander would have succeeded. His cool self-possession and admirable command of feature inspired every soul with enthusiastic confidence, and foreshadowed that gallant exploit on the lake which has rendered his name immortal." But Captain Byng was a reasonable man, and the whole difficulty was amicably adjusted without the firing of a gun, by Lieutenant Perry sending one of his officers on board the *Gorce*, to explain the mission of his own ship.

Early in August, 1810, the *Revenge* was ordered from Charleston waters to New York, where she was soon after again attached to the efficient squadron of Commodore Rodgers in the patrol of the coast from Cape Henry to the eastern limit of the United States. Kindly favoring Perry's expressed desire to be employed near Newport, the commodore now assigned him to the extent of coast between Montauk Point and the south shoal of Nantucket as his field of operations, with Newport as his rendezvous. He at once proceeded to this station where he remained during the autumn, occasionally making a cruise along the coast. The log-book of the *Revenge* during this period bears evidence, that the training of his crew was not merely confined to the usual exercise of the great guns and small arms, but that targets were frequently sent out, at which the crew were exercised in firing under the swell of the ocean and other influences, which they would feel in an actual encounter at sea. In December Perry rejoined



the commodore at New London, and was entrusted with the important duty of making a correct survey of the ports of Newport, New London, and Gardiner's Bay, including the intermediate navigation, with the bearing of the various headlands, for the purpose of forming a single sheet chart of the whole on a large scale. Although the winter season had set in and was unsuitable for such work, Perry set about the task with a good will, and with perfect indifference to exposure, determined, despite the severity of the weather, to complete the survey within the time specified in his orders.

At the end of a fortnight of strenuous work Lieutenant Perry found it necessary to return to New London, and accordingly set sail from Newport on the eighth of January, 1811. It was midnight, the weather was clear, and the wind light from the northwest, which would enable him to pass through the Race, the dangerous strait between Fisher's Island and Watch Hill, in daylight. The *Revenge* had scarcely been under way an hour, however, before the weather became foggy and the wind uncertain; but the pilot, who was an experienced navigator of that coast, assured the commander that he could take the schooner safely into port. Before daybreak the *Revenge* passed Point Judith in fourteen fathoms, sailing about three knots steered a point off shore. At nine o'clock, when the fog was thickening fast, the leadsmen suddenly gave eleven and then ten fathoms, when the helm was put to starboard, and the schooner rapidly rounded to heading south by west. But she continued to shoal water to five, three, and to two and a half fathoms, showing that they were embayed by a reef. The anchor, which had previously been made ready for instant use, was then let go which checked her bows round so that she headed out clear of the rocks. A light breeze springing up just then the sails were trimmed, the cable was cut, and the vessel ranged a short distance ahead in the wintry fog which

enveloped all in almost total darkness. But at this critical moment the wind failed, and the swell and flood-tide coming in strong, despite the utmost efforts of the crew, canted her bows high on the reef.

Although it was the top of high tide, and the weather was extremely unfavorable, Lieutenant Perry hoped to save his ship. Boats were at once hoisted out and sent to make soundings, while a kedge and hawser were carried out in the direction of deepest water thus indicated. When the hawser had been hove taut, eight of the heaviest guns and other heavy articles were cast overboard, and minute guns were fired as signals of distress. But the schooner was leaking badly, and water was gaining on the pumps, which were worked incessantly; and she labored and pounded heavily on the rocks. As a last resort Perry ordered the masts cut away, but within twenty minutes after the vessel struck, she bilged in two places. As no hope now remained of saving her, Lieutenant Perry turned to the task of saving his crew. Several boats had put off from the shore, into which the sick were first lowered with infinite care, and after them the marines and boys, and all sent safely to land. To save what he could of the sails, rigging, small arms, and articles of most value, was his next task. With his officers and crew he toiled throughout the day, though the cold was intense and the surf dashed over the hulk, and at sunset, when she was fast going to pieces, nothing of much value remained to be swallowed up by the angry waves. At last it was with difficulty that they lowered themselves into the boats tossing under the stern, Perry himself being the last to leave the wreck. Upon reaching land the crew was mustered, every man reporting, and were cared for in various houses in the neighborhood during the night.

As a conclusion of this disaster, which deprived Lieutenant Perry of his command, at his own request a court of inquiry was ordered to examine into the cir-

cumstances attending the occurrence. This court, which was composed of Captain Hull, and Lieutenants Ludlow and Morris, after a full investigation of the facts, decided that the fault of running on the reef rested with the pilot alone, and that the conduct of Lieutenant Perry was not only free from censure, but was highly meritorious. His judgment and activity in saving his crew and much of the public property, and his cool intrepidity during the whole of the trying scene, elicited their highest admiration; and contributed, in no small degree, to raise the estimation in which he was held by the government. The impression produced by the evidence adduced before the Court, is reflected in a letter of the secretary of the navy to Commodore Rodgers, in relation thereto: "Having attentively examined the proceedings of the court, I derive much satisfaction from perceiving that it is unnecessary to institute any further proceedings in the case. With respect to Lieutenant Perry, I can only say, that my confidence in him has not been in any degree diminished by his conduct on the occasion. The loss of the *Revenge* appears to be justly chargeable to the pilot. This accident will no doubt present to Lieutenant Perry considerations that may be useful to him in future command. An officer, just to himself and to his country, will not be depressed by defeat or misfortune, but will be stimulated by either cause to greater exertions. If there should be any situation in the squadron to which you can appoint Lieutenant Perry that may be consistent with his just pretensions, and not interfere with the rights of others, you will appoint him to it; if not, he is to be furloughed, waiting the orders of this department."

The whole conduct of Lieutenant Perry in the moment of disaster, reveals not a few of the qualities which afterward were displayed on a more brilliant as well as a more fortunate occasion. During the hours

of peril he exhibited the same calmness, the same self-possession, the same indomitable power over circumstances, the same sympathy with the suffering, which characterized his command on the lake. The storms and intense cold, which so often benumb the faculties of the strongest men, the perils of rocks and waves, had no power to unman him or turn him from his duty. Having saved his crew he remained on the shattered wreck to recover the property entrusted to him, clinging to the last remaining remnants of his once proud ship with unyielding tenacity. Then, having returned to Newport, exonerated from all blame of the loss of his ship, he made a visit to Washington to ask as a simple favor in the time of peace, that he might remain for a season free from a call to duty, which would take him far from Newport.

In making this request for an extended furlough, he had a laudable as well as a good and sufficient reason. In January, 1807, at a social assembly, he had first met the lady, in the first bloom of loveliness, sparkling with intelligence and talent, and gifted with rare qualities of truth, simplicity, fortitude and affection, whom he was now about to make his bride. This charming person was Elizabeth Champlin Mason, the daughter of Doctor Mason, of Newport. Perry's professional employment at Newport, immediately after his return from the Mediterranean, favored their frequent meeting, and, when he left for New York in June with his flotilla of gunboats, he became her pledged and accepted companion for life. Thus, being assured of an extended leave of absence, Oliver Perry returned to Newport with a light heart. On the fifth of May, 1811, an attachment tested by so long a probation, was consecrated by marriage. With ample opportunity for observation of each other's character and qualities of heart, they entered upon a life which promised a fair share of wedded happiness. In perfect understanding and with

unbounded sympathy this promise was amply redeemed until death interposed to separate them.

Meanwhile, the embargo act had proved so ruinous to American commerce, and so difficult of enforcement, that it was revoked in March, 1809. A policy of non-intercourse was adopted instead, from which practice France suffered to the extent that Napoleon was forced to relax his predatory spoliations on our commerce. England, however, was less sensibly affected by the suspension of trade with the United States, and continued her offensive measures with no regard whatever for justice or the recognized usage of nations. She destroyed our commerce, because it interfered with her own shipping interests, by making the most exasperating attacks on American vessels, not only on the great highway of nations, but upon our own coasts and often within our own waters. The most serious offences were the impressing of our native seamen under the plea of their being Englishmen, and hundreds of Americans were annually seized from under their national banner and forced to serve on British ships, in numerous cases losing their lives in the unjust cause of their oppressors, in fighting those with whom they owned no enmity. A system of license and plunder had so long been carried on by the British navy, that it had engendered a predatory and freebooting spirit among the seamen, while the absence of opposition from their weak victims had fostered an insolent, contemptible, and unbearable manner among them.

Under such conditions the affair of the frigate *President*, early in 1812 when, in search of the *Guerriere*, she fell in with the *Little Belt* in the night with an encounter in which the latter was the greater sufferer, added new intensity to the hatred which existed between the two nations. Great Britain still showed no disposition to cease her aggressions against our flag, or to respect the persons of American citizens,

hence it became imperative that the government should adopt the only alternative measure that remained, that of declaring war, which was finally enacted on the eighteenth of June, 1812. England's attitude was well expressed in the president's message: "She carries on a war against the lawful commerce of a friend, that she may the better carry on a commerce with an enemy; a commerce polluted by forgeries and perjuries which are, for the most part, the only passports by which it can succeed."

In anticipation of war Lieutenant Perry, some time before, had hurried to Washington to seek active employment at sea. As no vacancy suited to his rank then offered, he was ordered to the command of a flotilla of twelve gunboats stationed at Newport for the defense of the harbor and adjacent waters. The crews of these vessels, which numbered about three hundred and fifty enlisted men, were supplied with officers of Perry's selection, among whom were Lieutenant S. G. Blodgett, Midshipman Daniel Turner, Acting-Masters W. V. Taylor and Stephen Champlin, and Purser Samuel Hambleton, all but one of whom were conspicuous in the battle of Lake Erie. The gunboats were generally armed with a single twenty-four pounder, two of which were stationed off Stonington, and the others at or about Newport. As the service that could be rendered by such a force was small and inconsequential, being of purely defensive character, it was highly uncongenial to the high spirit and daring of the youthful Perry; nevertheless, he devoted himself to his duties with earnest zeal, and was untiring in his efforts for the defense of the coast entrusted to his vigilance.

In July, 1812, an order was received by Perry from the navy department for the discharge of all but eight of the twenty-four men, exclusive of the officers, composing the crew of each gunboat. The crews had not yet worked out their advance, but economy was the

watchword of the administration, and it was proposed to trust to chance in procuring volunteers in time of need to supply the vacant places. As the young lieutenant's reply, dated at Newport on the twenty-seventh of July, evinces a lively interest in the welfare of his native state, and a just sense of the responsibilities of the situation, it is transcribed herewith :

“Having received an order a few days since to discharge all the crews of the gunboats under my command, except eight men of each, I consider it a duty to inform you of the probable result of that order. From the peculiar situation of this town, a ship may, from the time she is discovered in the offing, be at anchor in this harbor in less than an hour and a half. The water up the bay is sufficient for vessels of the heaviest draft, and the towns of Providence, Bristol, Warren, Wickford, and Greenwich are without fortifications of any kind. There are very few seamen in this place at present, most of the ships belonging to it being absent. It will, therefore, be impossible to expect any assistance, or, if any, very trifling, on an emergency, from them. But, sir, if volunteers could be procured, the enemy would give us so little time — for no doubt they would take a favorable wind to come in — it would be impossible to beat up for them, get them on board, and station them before probably the occasion for their services would be entirely over. From the circumstance of the gunboats here being for the defense of so many valuable towns, totally defenseless in other respects, and from the singularly exposed situation of this town to the sudden invasion of an enemy, I hope, sir, an exception may be made in favor of the boats on this station, and that they may be permitted to retain their full complement of men. I forbear to say anything of the situation of an officer who commands a large nominal force, from whom much is expected, but by whom little can be performed.”

While thus actively engaged in training his crews in the exercise of the great guns and small arms, with the use of the cutlass and pike, he occasionally assembled his gunboats for drills in the various evolutions in fleet formations. He often divided them into opposing squadrons, one under his own orders, the other under Lieutenant Blodgett, for the purpose of carrying on a mimic naval engagement. His studies in fleet formations, no doubt, were a useful preparation in facility in manoeuvring a number of vessels, and in forming a conception of advantages to be seized on in the encounter of fleets, which were afterward of utmost value to him. The secretary of the navy, meanwhile, in recognition of Perry's services, in August advanced him to the grade of master-commandant, a rank which he held until the smoke of battle had blown away in the memorable engagement on the lake.

The commencement of actual warfare was signalized by the capture of the *Guerriere* by the *Constitution*, a brilliant action which spread the greatest enthusiasm over the whole country. In participating in the acclamations accorded the victors, the government took a very unusual and unwise course in advancing Lieutenant Morris, first lieutenant of the *Constitution*, two grades to the rank of post-captain. This manifest violation of the rights and feelings of the whole grade of masters-commandant, in promoting over their heads a lieutenant who had merely performed his duty in a subordinate character, occasioned much ill-feeling among the numerous officers above Morris. The dissatisfaction was increased by the greater injustice to the veteran commander of the *Constitution*, under whose orders the victory had been won, for there was no promotion for him, the government not being equal to creating a new grade in advancement to which he might be honored. The agitation over the affair became so offensive and the discussion so pointed as to seriously affect the health



of Lieutenant Morris, who had been dangerously wounded in the engagement.

Commander Perry was one of those over whom the young officer had been thus summarily advanced, but instead of cherishing feelings of resentment of this act, his generous and magnanimous nature led him not only to acquiesce in it but to take a pointed way of showing it. Mr. Morris was then in Providence recuperating from his illness and the effects of his wound, and Commander Perry proposed to his friend, Mr. Rogers, who was afterward a purser in the navy, to make a visit there in order that he might personally express to the fortunate officer his own views on the subject. This he accordingly did, accompanied by his friend, who has recorded that the interview was singularly interesting. After inquiring with solicitude into his state of health, Perry cordially congratulated the young officer on the brilliant victory, in which he had played so conspicuous a part, and told him that his promotion to post-captaincy met with his hearty approbation, all of which relieved Mr. Morris of the painful feelings which the opposition of those superseded had aroused in him. But Perry's generosity did not end there, for, when Captain Morris was subsequently appointed to the command of the *Adams*, for a cruise on the high seas, he allowed the best of his men, including Daniel Turner, to volunteer for that service, even sending them forward without waiting for the formal orders for their transfer, which he was assured were on the way from the navy department. The generous self-denial of Oliver Hazard Perry on this occasion was as rare in the service, as it was in every way worthy of admiration and imitation.

The loss of his true and faithful friend, Lieutenant Blodgett, by drowning with nine others, when his gun-boat was dashed on the rocks of Connamicut, was a most distressing occurrence of Perry's command at Newport. In narrating the circumstances to the secre-

tary of the navy and to the officer's father, he was able to assure them that in the last trying scene of his life, the brave officer and son acted with a firmness and decision most honorable to his memory. Had Lieutenant Blodgett lived he would doubtless have been second in command on Lake Erie, and shared the glory of the victory which the presence of so courageous and true-hearted an officer would have more quickly achieved.

Toward the close of November Commander Perry renewed his efforts to secure more active employment, and addressed the secretary as follows: "I have instructed my friend, Mr. W. S. Rogers, to wait on you with a tender of my services for the Lakes. There are fifty or sixty men under my command that are remarkably active and strong, capable of performing any service. In the hope that I should have the honor of commanding them whenever they should meet the enemy, I have taken unwearied pains in preparing them for such an event. I beg, therefore, sir, that we may be employed in some way in which we can be serviceable to our country." At the same time he wrote to Commodore Chauncey, who had recently assumed command on the Lakes, offering his services on that station.

A week after, the British frigate *Macedonian*, the prize of the frigate *United States*, arrived under the command of his friend and former shipmate, Lieutenant William H. Allen, whom Perry also received with congratulations, and lent every assistance in providing for the comfort of the wounded; and also furnished Allen with thirty of his men to assist in getting the ship to New York. In January, when he learned of the appointment of Lieutenant Allen to the command of the brig *Argus*, of twenty guns, he was not a little annoyed, in view of his often expressed desire for sea service, and wrote the secretary making a formal application for command of that ship. To the senator from Rhode Island he also wrote explaining the injustice to him of

the appointment of his junior to command ahead of him, and urged the senator to use his influence in his behalf, possessing, as he said, "an ardent desire to meet the enemies of my country." To his friend Allen he frankly stated all that he had done, and enclosed a copy of his letter to the secretary. For some time he had cherished the hope of ultimately obtaining the command of the *Hornet*, should Captain Lawrence, her commander, be promoted to a larger ship upon his return from the cruise, in which he had captured the *Peacock*. But week after week passed and, as the captain still kept to sea, this hope grew small indeed.

## CHAPTER IV

### CREATING A NAVAL FORCE ON LAKE ERIE

**A**S the winter of 1812 wore on, Commander Perry relinquished all hope of obtaining command of the ship *Hornet*, of twelve guns, or other sea service; nevertheless, he kept diligently at his task of training the seamen of his little flotilla. By his intense energy and radiant enthusiasm he soon brought the most promising of them to a high state of efficiency and discipline. Often he turned longing eyes toward the West for renewed hope of satisfying his "ardent desire to meet the enemies of his country," little realizing that Fate was even then weaving circumstances in his favor, and that the means of distinction were being provided for him. On the first of February, 1813, he received a most welcome letter from Commodore Isaac Chauncey, who commanded the naval forces on the Great Lakes. This was in reply to his of the preceding November, in which he stated that he had applied to the secretary of the navy for service on the Lakes. The letter informed him that the commodore had followed up the application with a request to the secretary that the young master-commandant be sent to him.

With what joy and delight must he have read the kind and earnest words, which plainly indicated that his character was already recognized in the service and understood by his superior officers. "You are the very person," wrote the commodore, "that I want for a particular service in which you may gain reputation for yourself, and honor for your country." The particular service referred to was the creation and command of

a naval force on Lake Erie, a service for which, as later events proved, he was eminently fitted by training and skill. A few days after he was overjoyed to receive an advice from his friend, Mr. Rogers, who was then at Washington, that the new secretary of the navy had readily acceded to Commodore Chauncey's request to order him to the lake station. He was to take with him a detachment of the best men under his command at Newport, and was directed to create an effective fleet of war ships on Lake Erie. "You will doubtless command in chief," continued his friend, "this is the situation Mr. Hamilton mentioned to me two months past, and which, I think, will suit you exactly; you may expect some warm fighting, and, of course, a portion of honor."

On the seventeenth of February Commander Perry received the formal orders, which he had long hoped for, attaching him to Commodore Chauncey's command. He was directed to proceed at once to Sackett's Harbor, the naval station on Lake Ontario, where he would receive further instructions from the commodore with regard to the creation of the fleet on Lake Erie. The little force under his command was in such a state of preparedness to move in any direction, and he was so eager to reach the scene which held out to him the prospect of hard fighting and attendant honor, that he dispatched that very day, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, a detachment of fifty men and officers under the command of Sailing-master Almy. Two days after he dispatched a second detachment of fifty men under Sailing-master Champlin; and on the twenty-first the remaining fifty were sent out under the command of Sailing-master Taylor. This divisional arrangement was adopted to increase the facility of procuring conveyance and accommodation on the road. They were directed to proceed to Albany by the way of Providence. As the streams were completely frozen over they were

obliged to travel by land; and at that period in the settlement of our country, this was a journey of no little hardship and fatigue. The best of order and good humor, however, prevailed among the bands of adventurers, to whom the whole expedition, which they termed a "land cruise," seemed more a frolic than a movement of stern war.

On the morning of the twenty-second of February, a day which augurs well for the success of an American enterprise, the commander himself was ready to depart; and he turned over the command of the little flotilla to the officer next in rank. Tearing himself from the comforts of home and endearments of a young wife and promising son, he set off on his expedition into the wilderness, sharing the hardships of the journey in like manner with his intrepid followers. In crossing to Narragansett in his open boat, he encountered a violent rain storm, but continued on to Pawcatuck, and thence to New London and Lebanon. At the latter place he stopped for a few hours to visit his father and mother, before entering on so perilous a service from which he might not return. Early in the evening he left for Hartford in an open sleigh, taking with him a young brother, James Alexander, then a lad of less than twelve years. Travelling thus until midnight they arrived at Hartford, having suffered severely from the intense cold. From there they took the mail route to Albany in a somewhat more comfortable manner.

At Albany the young commander learned that Commodore Chauncey, who had been on a trip to New York, had not yet returned to the bleak and dreary shores of Lake Ontario. So he resolved to await his coming before proceeding further, in order that he might sooner become acquainted with the commodore's plans. In three days the commodore arrived at Albany, and the same afternoon, being the twenty-eighth of February, Perry set out with his followers for Sackett's Harbor.

Turning their backs on the borders of civilization and plunging into the wilderness, the little band of patriots made their way along the valley of the Mohawk, for the most part travelling in rude sleighs through the dense woods and over corduroy roads, but at times breaking through thick underbrush on foot. Nothing relieved the loneliness of their journey as they hastened onward, save the occasional whir of birds startled from their covert by the unwonted sight of man, or the less frequent howl of wild beasts from the depths of the forest. Sometimes they caught fleeting glimpses of savages as they hovered around the trail, with the desire for plunder and murder depicted on their scowling visages.

Journeying under such difficulties they at length came to Lake Oneida, which they crossed on the ice, and followed the trail along the Oswego River to its mouth, thence, skirting the bleak shores of Lake Ontario they arrived at Sackett's Harbor on the night of the third of March. The reception they met by the town-folk was anything but cordial, as the principal business of the settlers was smuggling, and the arrival of United States officers was looked upon with suspicion and distrust. Commander Perry had scarcely reached his quarters when the alarm gun was fired to announce an attack by the British who hovered near. He hastened on board the sloop-of-war *Madison*, only to find the crew at quarters and everything in good order; and was informed that the alarm had been occasioned by a sentinel firing at someone who had attempted to pass his post. Commodore Chauncey, who had followed hard after the first party, arrived on the scene a few hours later.

It was indeed fortunate for the American arms that, soon after the commencement of the war, the government perceived the importance of securing the command of the Great Lakes. A sanguinary conflict had been raging for months, and its commencement on the Niagara frontier and in the Northwest was character-

ized by defeat, disaster, and disgrace. The inglorious surrender of the fortress of Detroit, and the consequent uncontrolled possession of the vast Northwest Territory by the enemy, smote the nation with dismay, and covered the whole land with conscious humiliation. Our whole extended frontier from Lake Ontario to Arkansas was at once thrown open to the stroke of the tomahawk, and laid bare and defenseless to the merciless incursions of the savage foe. The course of the enemy, leagued with their savage allies, was everywhere marked with rapine, massacre and devastation. The heartrending tragedy of the River Raisin and other doomed localities, followed in succession. Consternation and alarm everywhere prevailed. Thousands of settlers were compelled to flee from their peaceful abodes, and leave their cabins, villages, and crops to wanton conflagration. Deeds of cruelty and unutterable horror were enacted, which filled the nation with despair. The authority and protection of the United States had almost ceased within its borders; and the entire possession of the Lakes remained in undisputed control of the foe, with power to descend at any moment, with their combined forces, upon any portion of our exposed frontier. The crisis demanded vigorous action, combined with valor and talent to direct it. The command of the Lakes had become indispensable to the recovery of the Northwest. In view of this, the creation of the American fleet, the timber for which was then growing in the wilderness, was ordered by our government as well for the purpose of protection as invasion.

Such were the scenes along the lake shores, and such were the conditions of warfare, when Commodore Chauncey was designated to command the naval forces on the Lakes. In October, 1812, he had proceeded to Lake Ontario, where at Sackett's Harbor, a small naval station had been established. The location of this post was at the lower end of the lake, and not far from where



its waters pour into the St. Lawrence. Here he had found a force of about seven hundred seamen and one hundred and fifty marines, besides a number of ship-builders and carpenters who displayed the greatest activity in building and fitting out of a fleet which might give them the dominion of Lake Ontario. Out of the primitive forest they had made their shipyard, from green timber and newly-felled trees they had constructed a few vessels, the noise of the hammer and saw resounding from morning until dark. The season, however, was far advanced, and no naval operations of any importance were undertaken during the remainder of the year.

Further westward, on Lake Erie, the British, after the unfortunate surrender of General Hull at Detroit, had undisputed command; and the American brig *Adams*, afterward called the *Detroit*, had fallen into their hands. This vessel and the brig *Caledonia*, both well armed and manned and having forty American prisoners on board, sailed down the lake, and on the morning of the eighth of October, 1812, anchored at the head of the Niagara, under the protection of the guns of Fort Erie. For several months previous, Lieutenant Jesse D. Elliott had been actively engaged in fitting out a few small schooners for naval service, the little dockyard and base of supplies being located at Black Rock, directly across the river. Prompted by a very laudable impulse, and with the conviction that, with the two British vessels added to those he already had, he would be able to meet the remainder of the enemy's fleet on the upper lakes, he resolved to make an attack, and, if possible, capture them.

On the morning of their arrival, he learned that a detachment of seamen, for which he had long waited, was approaching over the rough post road from the East. To hurry them on, in order that he might make

an immediate attack on the British vessels, he sent a courier to the officers, urging them to use all possible dispatch in getting to this place. But they had travelled more than five hundred miles through the almost unbroken wilderness, and arrived at the post of Black Rock worn out and disheartened by the hardships of the long journey. The sun was then at meridian, and there was little time for rest and refreshment. To add to the difficulties the fifty seamen were poorly clad, some being in rags; and they were poorly armed, having only twenty pistols and neither cutlasses nor battle axes. The well fed and conditioned soldiers of the little post looked upon this motley crowd of sailors, once the jaunty tars of the Atlantic, with pity and compassion. They shared with them their scanty supplies of clothing; and, upon request, General Smyth of the regulars and General Hall of the militia, supplied Lieutenant Elliott with a few stands of arms. The former at once detached fifty of the regulars armed with muskets, to aid in the enterprise. Late in the afternoon Elliott had his little company, thus reinforced, stationed in the two boats, which he had previously prepared for the purpose, and ready for the hazardous undertaking.

At one o'clock on the morning of the ninth, they set off from the mouth of Buffalo Creek, and with muffled oars moved silently out into the lake. By keeping close to the shore they soon entered the river, and at three o'clock were alongside the *Detroit* and *Caledonia*. Taken completely by surprise the small force on each vessel at once surrendered. "In about ten minutes," says Lieutenant Elliott in his official report, "I had the prisoners all secured, the topsails sheeted home, and the vessels under way. Unfortunately the wind was not sufficiently strong to get me up against the rapid current into the lake, where I understood another armed vessel lay at anchor, and I was obliged

to run down the river by the forts, under a heavy fire of round, grape, and canister from a number of pieces of heavy ordnance, and several pieces of flying artillery; was compelled to anchor at a distance of four hundred yards from two of their batteries. \* \* \* The *Caledonia* had been beached in as safe a position as circumstances would admit, under one of our batteries at Black Rock. I now brought all the guns of the *Detroit* on one side next the enemy, stationed the men at them, and directed a fire which was continued as long as our ammunition lasted and circumstances permitted. During the contest I endeavored to get the *Detroit* on our side by sending a line (there being no wind) on shore, with all the line I could muster, but the current being so swift, the boat could not reach the shore. I then hauled on shore and requested that warps should be made fast to the land, and sent on board, the attempt to do which proved useless. As the fire was such as would, in all probability, sink the vessel in a short time, I determined to drift down the river out of the reach of the batteries, and make a stand against the flying artillery. I accordingly cut the cable and made sail with very light airs, and at that instant discovered that the pilot had abandoned me, when I was brought up on our shore on Squaw Island; got a boarding boat made ready, had all the prisoners put in and sent on shore with directions for the officers to return for me and what property we could get from the brig. He did not return owing to the difficulty of the boat getting ashore. Discovering a skiff under the counter, I sent the remaining prisoners in the boat, and, with my officer, I went on shore to bring the boat off. \* \* \* During the whole morning both sides of the river kept up, alternately, a constant fire on the brig, and so much injured her that it was impossible to float her. Before I left she had received twelve shot of large size in her bends, her sails in ribbons, and her rigging all cut to pieces."

As evening approached, observing an evident intention of the enemy to board the *Detroit* and remove the ordnance and stores, with which she was charged, Elliott determined at once to save what he could of these supplies and to set the vessel on fire. There were five 12-pounders in her hold, and six 6-pounder long guns on deck, besides a quantity of muskets, pistols, and battles axes, all of which were much needed in the defense of Black Rock. He therefore set off from shore under cover of darkness, recovered what he could of the supplies before the enemy appeared, and set the ship afire in a dozen places. As the flames leaped and roared through the rigging, lighting up the river from bank to bank, the intrepid seamen pulled with might and main for our side, and landed in safety. The brig *Caledonia*, which had been saved intact, mounted two small guns, called "blunderbusses," and had a supply of small arms and a cargo of furs valued, it was estimated, at two hundred thousand dollars. Besides the release of the forty American prisoners, conveyed by the captured vessels, the night attack of Elliott and his valiant followers resulted in the capture of seventy British seamen and officers, who were turned over to the military force. Although this narrative of the exploit of Lieutenant Elliott has little to do with the story of the renowned Perry, it is important as showing the calibre and character of the men who afterward were in his command; and it records the beginning of the effective naval force on the lake. The *Caledonia* was a valuable prize and afterward was one of the principal vessels of Perry's fleet in the Battle of Lake Erie.

On the very day, the twenty-second of February, that Commander Perry left Newport for Sackett's Harbor, the British crossed the St. Lawrence and, after a sharp conflict, succeeded in capturing Ogdensburg. For some time after, considerable anxiety was felt for

the safety of Sackett's Harbor, as it was believed that the British would follow up the advantage thus gained by attacking this place, in order to destroy the small squadron and the vessels on the stocks. This result would give them the command of the lake during the approaching campaign. On this account Commander Perry was detained at Sackett's Harbor, although it was his extreme desire to proceed at once to his new post on Lake Erie. Commodore Chauncey told him, however, that it was probable that an attack would be made on the vessels in the harbor, in which event he would need his services, and presumed that he, Perry, would want to be there. This, the young master-commandant assured him, was conclusive. But the expected attack did not take place, and the enemy soon after recrossed the river into their own territory.

As soon as it was known that the British had abandoned the supposed enterprise, Commander Perry was dispatched to Presq'ile, or Erie, where a naval station had already been established. He left Sackett's Harbor on the sixteenth of March, with instructions to hasten the construction of the vessels then building and to provide for their equipment. This was exactly to his liking, and, hastening on, he arrived at Buffalo on the twenty-fourth. After spending a day examining the gunboats at the little dock yard at Black Rock, which formed the neucleus of his fleet, and making arrangements for having stores sent to Erie, he set out in a sleigh over the last stretch of his long journey. Traveling over the frozen lake he reached Cattaraugus at nightfall. There he learned from the innkeeper that the British were planning to attack and destroy the vessels under construction at Erie. His informant had recently been on the Canadian shore, and particular inquiries had been made as to the vessels building at Erie, and of the force stationed there for their protection.

At this point in the narrative it is interesting to trace the origin of these first vessels built for war, which comprised Perry's famous fleet on the lake. Late in the Spring of 1812 three hardy voyageurs left the struggling settlement of Erie on a trading expedition to Michilimackinac, at which place they arrived in time to see the post fall into the hands of the British, and to find themselves prisoners of war. Their little vessel was taken as a transport to convey the prisoners and non-combatants to Fort Erie, but at Detroit it was overhauled, only to be recaptured soon after when Hull surrendered that post. The traders, however, managed to escape, and, after enduring many hardships, made their way to Erie. The officer commanding the military forces of the district was so impressed with the graphic account of their experiences, and believing that it would be of value to the government, that he sent one of the men, Daniel Dobbins by name, to Washington with dispatches. The narrative of this eyewitness to the capture of both the American outposts so affected President Madison and the secretary of the navy, Paul Hamilton, that they determined on vigorous action which resolved itself into a plan, strongly urged by Dobbins, that a powerful fleet be built on Lake Erie to sweep the enemy from the lakes.

Soon after, Dobbins returned to Erie bearing a commission of sailing-master in the navy, and with instructions to build two gunboats under orders of Commodore Chauncey at Sackett's Harbor. No shipwrights were then to be had along the frontier, so he gathered a few house carpenters and began the work of cutting out the timbers and sheathing for his little gunboats. It was a slow and laborious task with the rude appliances at hand, yet he had made such headway by January, when the commodore came to Erie, that he was ordered to build a third gunboat and to cut the material for two gun brigs from plans furnished by Master-builder Eck-

ford. The winter was unusually severe, yet in March, when a company of twenty-five shipwrights, in charge of Noah Brown, arrived on the scene from New York, the keels and much of the timber for the ribs were ready on the ground. Gathering up this green and roughly hewed material they bent to their tasks with a vim, and had the keels of the brigs nearly laid by the end of the month.

Commander Perry arrived at Erie early in the evening of the twenty-seventh of March. This place was an insignificant hamlet of a few log huts and a tavern of the same rough material, called Duncan's Erie Hotel. It had once been a trading post, having been established by the French in 1749, as one of a chain of forts, which they had hoped would unite the dreary expanse of Canada with the vast region of Louisiana. Here he beheld a fine illustration of the utter incapacity of the government for war. The little band of shipbuilders had done their part faithfully and well, and on the ways, at the mouth of Cascade Creek, were two gunboats nearly planked and a third ready for planking, besides the work on the brigs. But he was amazed to find that not a gun had been provided for their armament, not a step had been taken for their protection on the stocks; nor had rope or canvas been sent for the sails and rigging. The supervising power of the young commander was at once exerted, and with characteristic energy he took up these matters one by one. That very night he organized a guard out of the villagers of Erie to watch the vessels, so as to prevent their being fired by a British spy; and, before going to rest, he wrote the navy agent at Pittsburg to hurry on the company of fifty ship carpenters, which for a month had been on the way from Philadelphia. The next morning he dispatched Sailing-master Dobbins to Buffalo, to bring on forty seamen from the dock yard; also some muskets and two twelve-pounders.

The want of these necessaries and the distance from which they had to be supplied, convey but a faint idea of the arduous nature of Perry's undertaking — the creating of a squadron of fighting ships in this remote and thinly-populated region. Never were ships of war built under such disadvantages. The white oak, chestnut, and pine were cut on the spot, and many a piece of timber which was put into the frame of the gun brigs late in the day, had been part of a standing tree that morning. Nothing in the way of iron, guns, sailcloth, or cordage necessary to the equipment of ships could be procured within a distance of five hundred miles, and had to be transported through a half-settled country, destitute of good roads, and affording difficult water communication. The iron needed for braces, gun mounts and pivots, chains and other uses in ship construction had to be gathered in scraps from shops, warehouses and stores, and was in every conceivable shape from the tires of an old wagon to the rusty and worn out hinge of a barn door. A thousand pounds of such scraps were finally secured at Buffalo and welded together for the heavy work. The extra labor involved in these operations, which the deficiency of large rods and bars occasioned, was attended with great difficulty. Instead of five blacksmiths, as had been ordered from Philadelphia, only two came, and one was only a striker to the other. Afterward some men were found among the militia capable of doing such work.

On the thirtieth of March Sailing-master Taylor arrived at the little shipyard from Sackett's Harbor, with a small company of twenty officers and men. Thus slightly reinforced, Commander Perry determined to leave this trusty officer in charge of the shipbuilding operations at Erie, and to proceed at once to Pittsburg. His object in making the journey was to hasten on the carpenters, and procure the necessary stores to be had there, or in Philadelphia. He therefore set out the



following day, and arrived at Pittsburg on the fourth of April. There he arranged for the forwarding of ropes, cables, sails, anchors, and guns and muskets, and many articles needed for the equipment of the ships. He passed two days in the workshops of the mechanics who were making these things, and gave them minute details of preparing the articles for his use, the needs of which they were wholly unacquainted. He procured from the commissary of ordnance of the army the loan of four small guns and some muskets for the defense of Erie. This officer also volunteered to look after the casting of the shot which would be required for the squadron; and he rendered valuable service in supplying military stores for the fleet, for which he received the warmest thanks of the generous Perry.

But the ship carpenters, upon whom he depended to rush the construction of the brigs, he found, to his great annoyance, had been separated from their tools. They had been sent on to Erie, over the rough post road, while the all important implements of their trade had been forwarded by a water route in a round-about way, and could not reach Erie as soon as they. To add to his vexation, the block-makers from Philadelphia had gone astray on the road, and had not yet arrived at Pittsburg. There was nothing else he could do but urgently impress all the persons engaged in making the articles of equipment, of the necessity of having them finished and on the way to Erie by the first of May. Commander Perry then left Pittsburg and, after a tedious journey through the wilderness, arrived at Erie on the tenth of April. He was pleased to note that construction of the vessels had been much advanced during his absence; but the muskets and powder and balls, which he had ordered from Buffalo, for their protection, he learned, could not be procured there. It was fortunate that by forethought he had secured the necessary arms at Pittsburg, and, ere long, he was able to equip

a company which could offer a resistance of considerable strength to an armed force of the enemy, bent on destroying his ships. To further strengthen his defensive force, General Meade, who commanded the militia of that district, sent five hundred men fully armed to the little garrison at Erie.

Under the cheering influence of Perry, the work proceeded with harmonious diligence. From the fact that he was the well-spring of confidence, he turned everything to good account. His ability to plan, to supervise the work, to inspire his men with patriotic enthusiasm, and to carry his operations to a successful issue, was as remarkable, as the result was of value to his country. Early in May the work on the three gun-boats of schooner rig was so far advanced that they were launched into the waters of the creek, and fully equipped for service. At this time the two gun brigs were being rapidly planked up with oak, while the decks were being laid with pine. They were stoutly built from the same plans and specifications, and were one hundred and forty-one feet in greatest length, thirty feet beam, and of four hundred and eighty tons measurement. They were designed to carry an armament of twenty guns each, ten arranged on a broadside; and were identical in equipment and sailing power. At sunset of the twenty-third, they were ready for launching, and the next morning were allowed to slip into their natural element. The event was not lacking the manifestations of joy which the stirring scene invited, and the loud shouts of the militiamen, the workmen, and the assembled villagers "made the welkin ring." At this happy moment Commander Perry received a message from Commodore Chauncey that Fort George, the British outpost at the outlet of the Niagara, was to be attacked in the course of a few days by the American army, with the aid of the fleet under his command on Lake Ontario.

## CHAPTER V

### ARMING AND MANNING THE LAKE ERIE FLEET

HAVING been promised by Commodore Chauncey the command of the seamen and marines that might be landed from the fleet, in the attack on Fort George, Commander Perry, without hesitation, determined to join him. His own arduous duties in equipping the fleet were not enough, it would seem, to satisfy his craving for conquest, but he must travel nearly one hundred and fifty miles by tempestuous lake and deep forest to another station, "to meet the enemies of his country." Seldom has history recorded similar instances of devotion to a well-fixed purpose of meeting the enemy whenever and wherever they may be found. As soon as night closed in, he accordingly left Erie in a four-oared open boat, and, encountering head winds and squalls throughout the long dark night and wearying day, he arrived at length at Buffalo late on the following night. The next morning, being much refreshed, he proceeded down the Niagara in his open boat, for a considerable distance within musket shot of the British lines, and landed safely above the rapids in a violent rain storm. No horse being found at this place, Perry set out at once on foot, but was overtaken about three miles down the rough trail by one of his sailors who had caught an old pacer, which could not run away, and brought it to him. Without a saddle and only a rope for a bridle, he continued on and rode unceremoniously and thoroughly wet into the camp of the army, off which the *Madison* lay.

After innumerable difficulties he reached the ship on the evening of the twenty-sixth, and surprised the commodore and all the officers of the squadron, who were assembled to receive orders for the attack. The commodore greeted him joyously with the observation that "no person on earth at this particular time could be more welcome." This remark he more than once repeated. As soon as they were alone the commodore informed the young commander of his plans in detail, and they were most judicious. The storming of Fort George is briefly described in one of Perry's letters sent home, and found among his papers. It is by far the most illuminating story of this important engagement that ever was written. As he had an aversion to the use of his pen, and, as the document is so characteristic of the man, a portion of the letter is transcribed. It sheds no little lustre on the fame of Perry, and exhibits his conduct and character in a new and admirable light:

"It was eventually arranged that five hundred seamen and marines should be landed from the vessels, to be under my command, to act with Colonel M'Comb's regiment. The seamen were only to use the boarding-pike. Thus we had everything arranged on our part. At three in the morning we were called. It was calm with a thick mist. At daylight the commodore directed the schooners to take the stations which had been previously assigned them as soon as possible, and commence a fire upon the enemy's batteries. At the same time he asked me if I would go on shore, see General Lewis, hurry the embarkation, and bring the general off with me. This I did. I found that many of the troops had not yet got into their boats. General Lewis accompanied me on board the *Madison*. General Dearborn had gone on board previously. The ship was under way, with a light breeze from the eastward, quite fair for us; a thick mist hanging over Newark and Fort George, the sun breaking through in the east, the vessels

all under way, the lake covered with several hundred small boats, filled with soldiers, horses, and artillery, advancing toward the enemy, altogether formed one of the grandest spectacles I ever beheld. The breeze now freshened a little, which soon brought us opposite the town of Newark. The landing place fixed upon was about two miles from the town, up the Niagara. The commodore, observing some of the schooners taking a wrong position, requested me to go in shore and direct them where to anchor. I immediately jumped into a small boat, and, in passing through the flat boats, I saw Colonel Scott and told him I would be off to join him and accompany him on shore. When I got on board the *Ontario* I found her situation and the *Asps'*, and directed them to get under way and anchor at a place I pointed out to the commanding officers, where they could enfilade the forts.

“The enemy had no idea our vessels could come so near the shore as they did, many of them anchoring within half-musket shot. I pulled along the shore within musket shot, and observed a position where one of the schooners could act with great effect. I directed her commander to take it. This was so that he could play directly in the rear of the fort. On opening this fire, the consequence was such as I had imagined. The enemy could not stand to load their guns, and were obliged to leave the fort precipitately. I then pulled off to the ship, and, after conversing with the commodore and General Dearborn, and observing to the latter that the boats of the advanced guard were drifting to leeward very fast; they would if not ordered immediately to pull to windward, fall too far to leeward to be under the cover of the schooners, and would take those in the rear still further to leeward, he begged me to go and get them to windward. I jumped into my boat and pulled for the advanced guard, took Colonel Scott (Winfield Scott) into my boat, and, with much difficulty we

convinced the officers and soldiers of the necessity of keeping more to windward.

“As soon as we got them into a proper position, I pulled ahead for the schooner nearest in shore, and the advanced guard pushed for the shore. On getting alongside the schooner, the man at the masthead told me the whole British army was rapidly advancing for the point of landing. Knowing many of the officers had believed the British would not make a stand, and, as they could not be seen by the boats, being behind a bank, I pulled as quickly as possible to give Scott notice, that his men might not be surprised by the opening of the enemy’s fire. He was on the right and the schooner on the left. This obliged me to pull the whole length of the line, and, as the boats were in no regular order, I had to pull ahead of one and astern of another. Before I got up to Scott, although within a boat or two, the enemy appeared on the bank and gave us a volley. Nearly the whole of their shot went over our heads. Our troops appeared to be somewhat confused, firing without order and without aim. I was apprehensive they would kill each other, and hailed them to pull away for the shore, many of the boats having stopped rowing. They soon recovered, and pulled for the shore with great spirit. General Boyd led his brigade on in a most gallant manner, under a very heavy fire, it having suffered more severely than any other. Fortunately, the enemy, from apprehension of the fire from the schooners, kept back until our troops were within fifty yards of the schooners; this deceived them, and their fire was thrown over our heads.

“I remained encouraging the troops to advance until the first brigade landed, when, observing the schooners did not fire briskly, from the apprehension of injuring our own troops, I went on board the *Hamilton*, of nine guns, commanded by Lieutenant Macpherson, and opened a tremendous fire of grape and canister. About

the time I got on board the schooner, our troops had attempted to form on the bank; probably a hundred got up. They were obliged to retreat under the bank, where they were completely sheltered from the effect of the enemy's fire. The enemy could not stand the united effect of the grape and canister from the schooner, and of the well-directed fire from the troops, but broke and fled in great confusion, we plying them with round shot. Our troops then formed on the bank. General Lewis came on board the schooner from the ship at this time. After waiting a few moments, and observing the disposition of things on shore, he landed. I landed at the same time."

The British, meanwhile, retreated to Fort George, where they fired the magazines and hurried precipitately toward Queenstown. They were pursued for some distance by the light cavalry; but the main troops were too much fatigued, after nearly twelve hours of continuous exertion, to join in the pursuit. The total loss to the American forces was thirty-nine killed, and one hundred and eleven wounded; while that of the British was one hundred and eight killed, one hundred and sixty-three wounded, and two hundred and seventy-eight prisoners, exclusive of about five hundred militia paroled by General Dearborn.

The next day, being the twenty-eighth of May, General Lewis, with a large part of the troops, followed up the pursuit of the enemy beyond Queenstown. At Beaver Dam the British made a stand, to protect their depot of supplies and military stores situated there, and were reinforced by three hundred regulars from Kingston and the remaining force of militia. It was supposed that they would resolve to await the arrival of the American forces, and risk an action, but they determined otherwise. Packing up their supplies and stores they sent them ahead, and, breaking up their camp, they retreated along the ridge towards the head

of Lake Ontario. General Lewis, having ascertained beyond doubt that the British had fled, and that Fort Erie had been evacuated, returned with his troops to Fort George. Fort Erie was taken possession of at the same time by a party of Americans from Black Rock.

Of the services of Commander Perry on this occasion Commodore Chauncey spoke in the highest terms of appreciation. In his official report of the naval operations, he commended the young commander for joining him from Erie and volunteering his services, and acknowledged the valuable aid he rendered in directing the debarcation of the troops. In conclusion he wrote of him, that "he was present at every point where he could be useful, under showers of musketry, but fortunately escaped unhurt."

The capture of Fort George and the evacuation of Fort Erie were attended by important consequences. The whole frontier on the Niagara was now in the possession of the Americans, who were left in complete control of the navigation of the river. From this fact Perry was able to turn his valuable services before Fort George to good account for his duty on Lake Erie. The first fruits of his enterprise was that he could now remove from Black Rock into Lake Erie the four small vessels fitted out by Lieutenant Elliott, and the *Caledonia* which had been captured by this officer the year before. These vessels had hitherto been blockaded by the enemy's guns at Fort Erie, and could become of use only in the event of the enemy being driven from the opposite shore. This event having actually occurred, Commander Perry was dispatched on this service by Commodore Chauncey, on the twenty-eighth of May, with a company of officers and fifty men.

The task, however, was one of no little difficulty. The current of the Niagara at this place varied from five to seven knots an hour, and to drag the vessels laboriously against it required the united exertions of



the seamen and a party of two hundred soldiers, under the command of Captains Brevoort and Young, which had been assigned by General Dearborn for the defense of the vessels while on the way to Erie. This was the means employed by La Salle, in 1679, to bring the *Griffin*, the first vessel ever to unfurl sails to the winds of the inland seas, from the mouth of Chippewa River, through these same rapids into Lake Erie. With all the stores in the navy yard at Black Rock on board, the vessels were deep in the water, but they were finally tracked up the current with the aid of oxen, although the toilsome task required nearly two weeks. In writing to the commodore about the difficulties, Perry pronounced the fatigue "almost incredible."

On the night of the fourteenth of June, all having been made ready, he set sail from Buffalo Creek and put forth boldly into the lake destined for the Bay of Presq'ile. His little squadron had altogether but eight guns, and consisted of the brig *Caledonia*, of three long 24-pounders, the schooners *Somers*, of two long 32-pounders, *Tigress* and *Ohio*, of one 24-pounder each, and the sloop *Trippe*, of one long thirty-two. New perils and anxieties rolled in upon them with every wave. Head winds and heavy seas baffled them for days, during one of which they made but twenty-five miles. To add to their dangers and perplexities, the British fleet, under Captain Finnis, a skilful and experienced officer, was scouring the lake to intercept them. This naval force was six times stronger than Perry's and consisted of the ship *Queen Charlotte*, of four hundred tons measurement and seventeen guns, the schooner *Lady Prevost*, of two hundred and thirty tons and thirteen guns, the brig *Hunter*, of ten guns, and the schooners *Little Belt* of three guns, and the *Chippeway*, of one gun. But Perry, by a skilful display of vigilance, eluded the enemy in the night, due in a measure to the insignificant character of his vessels, and finally gained

the harbor of Erie in the evening of the eighteenth, just as the British squadron hove in sight. During this tempestuous voyage, in which the little vessels were buffeted about by boisterous winds, their commander was seized with "lake fever"; but by an indomitable will, although laboring under greatly increased exertions, he kept command of his squadron until it was safely anchored in the quiet waters of the bay.

On his arrival at Erie Commander Perry found a letter from the secretary of the navy, in which he was highly commended for his conduct in the operations before Fort George, and also for his enterprise in creating an effective naval force on Lake Erie. How gratifying this must have been to our young commander, worn by incessant exertion of all his faculties, night watching, and unending care, and suffering from fever and physical exhaustion. In his reply he expressed a becoming sense of the responsibility of his position, and assured the secretary that no diligence or exertion of which he was capable should be wanting to promote the honor of the service. He imparted the information that one of the brigs was completely rigged and had her guns mounted, while the other would be in like condition within a week. Such progress had been made on the sails that it was confidently believed that they would be completed by the time the anchors and the shot arrived from Pittsburg. All the vessels, he concluded, would be ready for service in one day after the reception of the crews.

Although the ten vessels of his little fleet were now safely assembled in the land-locked harbor, and the work of equipping them was going on rapidly, there could be no pause in his efforts, for there was no end to his difficulties. As yet only one hundred and ten officers and men had been sent to man the vessels, and these included the fifty seamen brought by the squadron from Black Rock. To add to this deficiency nearly

one-half of the men were sick with fever, and about thirty were considered as not only entirely useless at the time, but likely to continue so. But the splendid example of their youthful commander sustained the spirit of the workmen, who toiled on far into the night without a murmur, and not one deserted. Writing to the commodore of the situation, on the twenty-seventh of June, he told him, "from sickness and other causes, we cannot muster more than fifty or sixty men who are of any service to us; and these work almost day and night."

By the tenth of July all the vessels were fully equipped and armed, and, had crews been provided for them, could have gone out to battle with the enemy. But there were barely enough men altogether for one of the brigs. This was the situation when the two hundred soldiers under the command of Captain Brevoort, who had been acting as marines, were ordered back to Fort George. This gallant officer, however, was permitted to remain attached to the fleet, because of his familiarity with the navigation of Lake Erie, having for more than a year been commander of the brig *Adams*, in the transportation of military supplies. The boats which took the party to Buffalo were left to bring up the officers and men, to the number of three hundred and fifty, which were so anxiously expected from Lake Ontario. They did not come, however, and, to supply in some measure the lack of marines, Lieutenant Brooks was directed to enlist as many men as he could in Erie. He eventually recruited about forty men, at ten dollars a month, for four months' service, or until after a naval engagement; and supplemented a small detachment which he had brought from Pittsburg.

A letter from Commodore Chauncey to the secretary of the navy, under date of July eighth, throws some light on the question of men for Perry's fleet. "I am at a loss," he wrote, "to account for the change in Captain

Perry's sentiments with respect to the number of men required for the little fleet at Presq'ile; for when I parted with him on the last of May, we coincided in opinion perfectly as to the number required for each vessel, which was one hundred and eighty for each of the brigs, sixty for the *Caledonia*, and forty of each of the other vessels, in all seven hundred and forty men and officers. But if Captain Perry can beat the enemy with half that number, no one will feel more happy than myself."

From the most reliable information of the time, derived from letters and public records, and by retrospection after a lapse of a hundred years, it seems probable that Commander Perry, despairing of obtaining from the commodore a full complement of men for his ships, had resolved to set out and meet the enemy in battle with the least number of men which could manœuvre the vessels in action and fire the guns. He was brought to this decision, undoubtedly, by the repeated directions from the secretary of the navy, urgently expressed, to get his fleet equipped and in battle trim at the earliest possible moment, in order that he might cooperate with the army at the head of the lake, commanded by General Harrison.

These orders of the secretary evidently presupposed that the fleet on Lake Erie was ready for active service, with full crews. "These had actually been sent to Commodore Chauncey," says Mackenzie, "who commanded on Lake Erie as well as Lake Ontario, and the necessary officers and men placed at his disposal; but so absorbed was he in the interest of his immediate command (on the lower lake), that officers and men sent to him for distribution throughout the naval force subject to his orders, were detained almost exclusively where he was himself present. It seems to have been his intention to detain the crews until the vessels on Lake Erie were ready to sail, in the hope of being able

in the meantime with the full force, to overpower the enemy on Lake Ontario, and then repeat the same process in person on Lake Erie. But, independently of the disadvantage of keeping officers and men strangers to each other and to the vessels in which they were to sail, until the moment they were to be engaged, it was expecting almost a miracle that the vessels should be equipped in so short a time by such a small number of men."

But it was by the unremitting zeal and exertions of the youthful Perry, although almost destitute of subordinate officers, such as boatswains and gunners, and by the unceasing efforts of a handful of faithful followers, that the vessels were now rigged, armed, and ready for service. It was by attending personally to the minutest details, correcting some minor mistake here and there, pointing out a better way of doing something else, and encouraging his sadly overworked men, who were strangers to murmuring, that the fleet was so soon prepared to meet the enemy. From every point of view, considering the many difficulties under which he labored, the creation of the fleet on Lake Erie must be regarded as one of the greatest achievements of Perry's career, and second only to his glorious and overwhelming victory on the lake.

On the twelfth of July the news was received at Erie of the capture of the *Chesapeake*, and of the death of her gallant commander whose quenchless heroism mitigated in a measure the sting of defeat. In his dying moments he bequeathed a watchword to his countrymen, "Don't give up the ship," which was yet to herald the little fleet on the lake to victory. The brig over which Perry was to raise his flag was, by order of the secretary of the navy, named the *Lawrence*, "in honor of him who could die in the service of his country, but who could not brook defeat." The other brig, equal to it in size and strength, was named the *Niagara*. They

carried two masts with square sails on both, and their armaments were alike, namely, eighteen 32-pounder carronades, and two long 12-pounder guns. "They were about equal in fighting force," observes Mahan, "to the ocean sloops-of-war *Wasp* and *Hornet*, which, however, were three-masted." The gunboats first built at Erie were named the *Ariel*, armed with four short twelves, and the *Porcupine*, with one long thirty-two; while the third schooner was named the *Scorpion*, and armed with one long twenty-four and one short thirty-two.

Believing that the men he so sorely needed would soon be on the way, Perry dispatched a sailing-master to Buffalo on the eighteenth of July with two boats. These, with the two which had been sent down with the soldiers, it was thought, would be sufficient to bring up the seamen from Lake Ontario. Great vigilance would have to be exercised in returning with the men, on account of the enemy's squadron which was cruising at that end of the lake. On the twentieth the British force appeared off the harbor, and, with battle flags flying, challenged the half-manned fleet to conflict. At this juncture, Commander Perry addressed a letter of entreaty to Commodore Chauncey, in these glowing words:

"Erie, 20th July, 1813.

Sir:

The enemy's fleet of six sail are now off the bar of this harbor. What a golden opportunity if we had men. Their object is, no doubt, either to blockade or attack us, or to carry provisions and reinforcements to Malden. Should it be to attack us, we are ready for them. I am constantly looking to the eastward; every mail and every traveler from that quarter is looked to as the harbinger of the glad tidings of our men being on the way. I am fully aware how much your time must be occupied with the important concerns of the other lake. Give me men, sir, and I will acquire both for you and

myself honor and glory on this lake, or perish in the attempt. Conceive my feelings; an enemy within striking distance, my vessels ready, and not men enough to man them. Going out with those I have is out of the question. You would not suffer it were you here. I again ask you to think of my situation; the enemy in sight, the vessels under my command more than sufficient, and ready to make sail, and yet obliged to bite my fingers with vexation for want of men. I know, my dear sir, full well, you will send me the crews for the vessels as soon as possible, yet a day appears an age. I hope that the wind, or some other cause, will delay the enemy's return to Malden until my crews arrive, *and I will have them.*"

The situation of Commander Perry at this time must have been desperate indeed. To realize, after months of constant and wearying exertion, in which he had overcome all difficulties, that he was held back from meeting the enemy by the lack of men, must have been discouraging enough. But to think of the injustice of his superior officer, in retaining in his immediate command fully one hundred of the Rhode Island men, whom he had himself trained the winter before, and who had volunteered their services for his command, must have filled him with righteous indignation. Yet not a word of complaint of this action did he utter. His whole correspondence shows a remarkable equanimity, in which he subjugated himself and his ambition to the good of the service. The difficulty of lack of men was due primarily to the inefficiency of the navy department at Washington. A thoughtful secretary would have sent the men needed for the fleet on Lake Erie, direct to that station from Philadelphia, instead of trusting the commodore to furnish the crews from his command. By this procedure the detachments would have reached Perry as quickly as they in fact reached Sackett's Harbor, and he would have had the

seasoned men intended for his command, instead of the motley company with which he went into battle.

At about this time he received repeated communications from General Harrison, relative to the critical situation of his army at the head of the lake. He set forth the important relief that the co-operation of the fleet would afford him, and urged the striking of a blow at the enemy's squadron before they could get their new ship, then building at Malden, armed and ready for service. The addition of this ship to their naval force would turn the balance, and give the British a considerable superiority. They had recently been strengthened by the arrival of Captain Barclay, a distinguished officer, who had served with Nelson at Trafalgar, to assume the chief command. He had brought with him a number of experienced officers and a party of prime seamen. Still, the fleet of Perry's was for the moment superior in number of guns, and, had the crews been provided, might have met the enemy with a reasonable chance of capturing them. But the golden opportunity, of which the enthusiastic Perry had mentioned, was allowed to pass because, as Perry wrote to the secretary of the navy and General Harrison, he had but one hundred and twenty men fit for duty in his entire command, but in addition there were about fifty who were incapacitated for any service.

The British squadron, which still hovered about the lake off the mouth of the harbor of Erie, became becalmed on the twenty-second, and, in order to test his men and guns, Commander Perry boldly pulled out over the bar with his small schooners and hotly engaged the enemy with his long guns. But a breeze soon sprang up and Barclay stood off into the lake, before either side had suffered from the exchange of shots. The following day Perry received a reinforcement of seventy officers and men sent by the commodore, to whom he wrote this characteristic letter :



“Erie, July 23rd, 1813.

Sir :

I have this moment had the great pleasure of receiving yours by Mr. Champlin, with the seventy men. The enemy are now off this harbor, with the *Queen Charlotte*, *Lady Prevost*, *Chippewa*, *Erie*, and *Friend's Good Will*. My vessels are all ready. For God's sake, and yours, and mine, send me men and officers, and I will have them all in a day or two. Commodore Barclay keeps just out of the reach of our gunboats. I am not able to ship a single man at this place. I shall try for volunteers for our cruise. Send on the commander, my dear sir, for the *Niagara*. She is a noble vessel. Woolsey, Brown, or Elliott, I would like to see amazingly. I am very deficient in officers of every kind. Send me officers and men, and honor is within our grasp. The vessels are all ready to meet the enemy the moment they are officered and manned. Our sails are bent, provisions on board, and, in fact, everything is ready. Barclay has been bearding me for several days; and I long to have at him. However anxious I am to reap the reward of labor and anxiety I have had on this station, I shall rejoice, whoever commands, to see this force on the lake, and surely I had rather be commanded by my friend than by any other. Barclay shows no disposition to avoid the contest.”

How expressive is this dispassionate letter of appeal. How confident is the commander in the effective strength of his fleet; and how eager is he to meet the enemy the moment the vessels are officered and manned. Note what he says: “Send me officers and men and honor is within our grasp. \* \* \* Barclay has been bearding me for days, and I long to have at him.” Then he proposes to Commodore Chauncey to come himself and take command, hoping thereby to get his fleet properly manned. For the general good and the honor of the service, he offers to sink himself into

a subordinate, and forego the present hope of glory and renown, if only their force may meet the enemy and sweep them from the lake. This letter reveals most vividly the true character and high impulse of the officer and the man.

A day or two after this was written he was goaded again by an appeal from Assistant Adjutant-general Holmes, by order of General Harrison, informing him that if the fleet would sail up the lake, the enemy would be compelled either to retreat precipitately, or suffer the ultimate necessity of surrendering. He concluded his letter with this expression of confidence: "I feel great pleasure in conveying to you an assurance of the general's perfect conviction that no exertion will be omitted on your part to give the crisis an issue of profit and glory to our country." Realizing that the situation of the army at the head of the lake was growing more critical as the weeks of waiting passed, Perry again wrote Commodore Chauncey:

"Erie, 26th July, 1813.

Sir:

I have this moment received, by express, the enclosed letter from General Harrison. If I had officers and men, and I have no doubt you will send them, I could fight the enemy and proceed up the lake. But, having no one to command the *Niagara*, and only one commissioned lieutenant, and two acting lieutenants, whatever my wishes may be, going out is out of the question. The men that came by Mr. Champlin are a motley set — blacks, soldiers, and boys. I cannot think you saw them after they were selected. I am, however, pleased to see anything in the shape of a man."

The British fleet, meanwhile, under the command of Captain Barclay, continued in the offing with colors displayed in defiance, in the evident hope that the Americans would be drawn out to a decisive conflict. But

Perry, stimulated by impatience to get at them, and beginning, perhaps, to have more doubt than he had expressed that Commodore Chauncey would send the officers and men so sorely needed, continued the recruiting of landsmen at Erie. On the thirtieth he received from the naval forces on Lake Ontario, a reinforcement of sixty men in charge of Lieutenant Forrest. This brought the total of his force, after landing the confirmed invalids, to about three hundred which, though hardly sufficient to properly man the two brigs, were expected to provide also for the *Caledonia* and seven gunboats, with a total armament of fifty-five guns. Many of these men were, however, of a most inferior class, and the least desirable of all that had arrived on Lake Ontario; and more than one-fifth of them were debilitated and unfit for duty.

The deficiency of officers to command his vessels was even more marked, and is clearly shown in the last letter to the commodore. In a letter of the thirtieth of July to the secretary of the navy, Perry stated that he had not enough officers of experience even to navigate the ships, and none to train and drill the men in the manual of arms. Yet, under these trying circumstances, due to the neglect or avarice of a superior officer, and the incompetence of the secretary, these officials took exceptions to his earnest but respectful letters of appeal for men. It is the more surprising that such feelings should have been aroused, since neither was on the actual scene of operations, or near enough to know the needs or requirements of the fleet. The correspondence, however, which follows, shows the even temper and control of the young commander at a most trying time in his career.

## CHAPTER VI

### CRUISING UP THE LAKE

THE government and the people expected Perry to change the whole course of the war in the West. By obtaining the command of the upper lakes, which the British as yet possessed without dispute, he would open the way for the army of General Harrison to recover the vast territory of Michigan, which comprised several of the present states along the lakes. It was the want of such supremacy on the water that had lost Hull and Winchester, and their forces, at Detroit and Michilimackinac, and still impeded the purposes of Harrison. Without free and uninterrupted navigation of the lake for the transportation of military stores and supplies, the maintenance of the army, which was nearly always operating on the defensive and often under siege, was attended with great difficulty. The route along the lake shore was almost impassable, and the line of road through the forest and prairie could be traced by the wrecks of wagons, clinging tenaciously to the rich, miry soil. Under such conditions it was natural that General Harrison should have looked upon the naval force on the lake as the savior of the critical situation.

Yet, knowing the desperate condition of warfare and the urgent need of co-operation with Harrison's forces, Commodore Chauncey hesitated in his duty. To send the seasoned tars and experienced gunners, which were so much needed to make the fleet a powerful and effective force on Lake Erie, would reduce his own command proportionately. For months he had expected an

engagement with the British fleet on Lake Ontario, under the command of Sir James Yeo, but by strange procrastination he had put off meeting the enemy for a decisive conflict. His own situation undoubtedly was fraught with difficulties and perplexities, and to him seemed of more consequence than the affairs on the upper lake. Being a much older and more experienced officer than Perry, and having the effective strength of his command ever in mind, he must have read the messages of the confident and resourceful commander with mingled feelings of respect, admiration, and doubt, with a trace of annoyance.

“Commodore Chauncey would have been justified,” says Mackenzie, “in taking advantage of Perry’s generous offer, conceived in the true spirit of patriotism and devotion to the welfare of the country, and repaired to Lake Erie with a sufficient force of officers and men to decide the contest for the superiority immediately in our favor.” That the fate of the army under General Harrison was entirely dependent upon that of the fleet on Lake Erie, he was well aware, still he hesitated to take action which gave promise of affording relief to the disheartened land forces, and which would turn defensive tactics into strong offensive movements. He must have realized, furthermore, that if the British, having the supremacy of the lake, could invest and capture Fort Meigs on the Maumee, they would find themselves at once at the head of our great navigable rivers, and able to descend into the heart of our country. This catastrophe would give it over to devastation and all the horrors of savage warfare, from which the territory of Michigan was then suffering.

With a high patriotic impulse and earnest desire to gain the supremacy of the lake, Commander Perry resolved to set sail with the small crews that he had, and such volunteers as he could procure from the army, and put all to the issue of a battle. He hoped this event

might come about before the enemy could get their new and heavily armed ship, which had been launched on the seventeenth of July, equipped and ready for service. With this ship, which it was supposed would mount about twenty guns, the enemy would have great superiority in tonnage as well in the effective force of their broadsides; and it was believed that they were powerfully manned with seasoned and experienced seamen and gunners. They had cruised about the lakes, were familiar with the coasts, and practiced in seamanship and gunnery. In several trifling encounters in annoying the army under General Hull, while in Canada, the British naval force had exhibited great skill and enterprise.

“In estimating the hardihood,” continues Mackenzie, “of Perry’s determination to fight at once with a squadron but half manned with the worst materials, and these half crews further reduced by sickness, we must also take into consideration that there could have been but little leisure for exercising the guns or training the boarders, pikemen, sailtrimmers, and firemen to the various duties essential to the offensive and defensive operations of a naval engagement. When the able-bodied men of the squadron were kept working incessantly almost by day and night, humanity, as well as the duty of preserving them from utter exhaustion, forbade any exertion, however essential, not connected with the urgent occupations of the moment. Still opportunity had been found, during the last few days that the squadron remained in the harbor of Erie, to station the crews carefully at quarters, and to give them a general idea of all their duties. During several hours of each of these days the men were exercised thoroughly at the guns, and Perry went around in person to see that each man understood his peculiar duty; that the evolutions of loading and firing were properly performed; the arrangements perfected for passing powder without risk

or confusion; and the tubes, matches, and powder-horns were in readiness for service. The commander who delegates these duties to others, who fails to attend in person to whatever concerns the fighting department of his vessel, may fatally regret his misplaced confidence in the hour of battle."

The natural harbor of Erie, within which lay the little half-manned fleet, afforded a safe and convenient anchorage, and, although quite narrow at the entrance, it expanded into a broad and beautiful bay. This secluded haven of refuge was formed by a long peninsula extending in a northeasterly direction along the shore of the lake, and received its original name, Presq'ile, from the French. Being situated about one-third the way up the lake, which is two hundred and sixty miles in length, and not very far from the manufacturing town of Pittsburg, the place had great advantages for the equipment of a naval force; and its narrow entrance rendered the squadron less exposed to a surprise and destruction by the enemy, than at any other inlet on the southern shore. Across the outlet of the bay there was a bar, extending towards the lake for nearly a mile, over which the water in the channel varied in depth from six to ten feet. The shoal was formed of light shifting sand, and was affected by gales which sometimes caused it to reduce the depth to five and even four feet. It was this shoal which prevented the enemy from entering the bay with their vessels equipped and armed, and thus increased the protection to Perry's vessels during construction and equipment.

But now that the time had come to get the fleet into the lake for active service, the sand bar became a serious impediment to its operations. The brigs *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, when fully armed and provisioned, had a draft of nine feet, which was three or four feet more than the natural channel afforded. To get them

over the bar in the face of a hostile fleet, which only awaited the opportunity to make a spirited attack, was a difficult task, and taxed the ingenuity of their resourceful commander. But difficulties and dangers are no obstacle to the brave and resolute, who never want expedients or ways and means when occasion requires them. It was necessary, first of all, to lighten the vessels by removing their armament and provisions and supplies, and then, to await a favorable time when the lake and bay should be smooth. Thus divested of their means of defense and embarrassed by laborious efforts while engaged in crossing the bar, they were open to attack by the enemy's fleet then blockading the port. That Perry expected to be engaged by them at this time is evident from the conclusion of a letter to the secretary of the navy, dated the twenty-seventh of July, in which he says: "We are ready to sail the instant officers and men arrive; and, as the enemy appear determined to dispute the passage of the bar with us, the question as to the command of the lake will soon be decided."

The disposition of his vessels in this crisis was indeed masterly. Five of the smaller gunboats, which could pass the bar without lightering, were sent out early in the morning of Monday, the second of August, and anchored in a favorable position with decks cleared for action. These vessels, it was expected, would bear the brunt of an attack and hold off the enemy until the passage of the ships could be effected. A sixth and larger gunboat was stationed near the *Lawrence*, to offer what protection was possible to an unarmed craft. Two other schooners were kept inside the bar to aid the *Niagara*. The guns which had been removed from the brigs were cleverly masked in a battery on shore to cover the channel, which was about five hundred yards distant at the point where it issued on the lake. From point to point, the mouth of the harbor, where the shifting bar lay, was three-quarters of a mile wide, and



the distance to be traversed in crossing the bar was a little less than a mile.

The means employed by Perry to lift the heavy ships about three feet above their normal water line, were of the most judicious and practical nature, and in ingeniousness were equally creditable to his skill as a seaman, and to his military instinct and hardihood. Two large scows, or pontoons, called "camels", of sufficient capacity to displace several hundred tons of water, had previously been built by Noah Brown, the master shipbuilder. These "camels" were of simple construction, and were long, deep boxes, made of planks and perfectly watertight. They had holes in the bottom to admit water therein, and pumps to discharge it to raise them so as to float with their top high above the surface of the water.

As the sun rose on the morning of the second and dispelled the thin mist overhanging the lake, the smooth waters were clear of a sail in all directions. The relief that the intrepid commander experienced as he scanned the horizon in vain for a sign or indication that the British squadron was near, can easily be imagined. For the enemy had withdrawn in the night, little suspecting that Perry was about to get his fleet into the lake. It was afterward learned that Captain Barclay had given up the plan of attacking him in the harbor, and had accepted an invitation to dinner given in his honor by the villagers of Port Dover, on the Canadian shore. While thus pleasantly occupied by entertainments, which kept him away from the vicinity of Erie for three days, the resourceful Perry and his faithful men succeeded in getting the *Lawrence* over the bar into deep water.

These operations were long and exceedingly arduous. As soon as it was day the camels were run alongside the brig, which had been towed to the entrance of the channel, and the plugs withdrawn from their

bottom. Water was allowed to run into them until their tops were nearly submerged. Meanwhile stout spars were run through the ports of the brig and securely lashed down to the frame, in such a way as to project over the camels in a horizontal position. When the camels were in place, solid blocks were arranged on top of them so as to reach the ends of the spars. Everything having been secured, the pumps were set to work in the scows, which raised slowly, lifting the brig with them as they became more buoyant. In this way the *Lawrence* was raised about three feet and her draft reduced to six feet, when she was towed lakeward in the narrow channel.

Upon reaching the shoalest part of the bar, however, it was found that the water had lowered perceptibly during the calm, and that it was impossible to force her over. Heaving on the cables and anchors which had been carried out, was then resorted to, but, notwithstanding every exertion, the expedient failed to move her. The brig had settled a little by the slacking of the lashings and by the breaking of one of the spars which passed over the camels; and it was necessary to again sink them, get more blocks and a new spar to replace the broken one, adjust the cross-pieces and blocks and pump out as before. A few more inches of the *Lawrence's* draft was thus gained, and she was slowly and by main strength forced over the clinging sands during the night and following day. The militia stationed in the neighborhood, under the orders of General Meade, rendered efficient aid in these operations.

By daylight of the fourth of August, the crew of the *Lawrence*, with most of those of the other vessels, had worked the brig so far over the bar that at eight o'clock she was fairly afloat. To tow her into deep water, refill and sink the camels to lower her to her natural level, and remount the guns, took the better part of the day. The work went on unceasingly, and at night-

fall the supplies were all on board and everything prepared for action. The work of making ready the *Niagara* was meanwhile prosecuted with vigor, and early the following morning she was lifted over the bar in the same way; but she was raised high enough at the start to be moved over without grounding. She was still supported by the camels when the British fleet appeared on the horizon, standing in with a leading breeze. Here was an added peril for the defenders of the little fleet, and a new anxiety for their youthful commander. The prospect of a sharp conflict at this time with the enemy, which was fresh and confident, while his disorganized force was worn out with fatigue, was anything but reassuring.

But Perry, whose health had already suffered from fever and overwork, without sleep or rest for two nights and days, was constantly on the alert, and his example heartened his men. For who of the faithful patriots could complain when their beloved commander bore so much? Incited by his appeals to their pride and loyalty, the exhausted seamen and militiamen rallied to his call, and, by unparalleled exertions, they had the *Niagara* afloat and in deep water by noon. While her battery was being remounted, the supplies put aboard and everything made ready for action, the fast-sailing schooners *Ariel*, under the command of Lieutenant Packett, and the *Scorpion*, under command of Sailing-master Champlin, weighed anchor and stood out towards the enemy in the most gallant manner. With their heavy guns they were able to open a galling fire at long range, and, although the cannonading did little if any damage to the enemy's ships, the action showed the spirit and mettle of the gunners. Had Barclay intended to bring on a general engagement, the little gunboats would have been driven to cover in a few moments; but it seems to have been his well determined plan not to fight until his new and heavy ship, fully armed and

manned would give him, in every respect, a decided superiority. The *Lawrence*, meanwhile, remained at anchor with the crew at quarters working the guns, when it became apparent that they need not yet use them in deadly earnest. Off on the lake the British squadron, after a short but spirited cannonade with the schooners, bore up and stood across the lake.

While engaged in these difficult and trying operations, Commander Perry received another urgent appeal from General Harrison, asking his early co-operation. He replied at once in these memorable words:

“I have had the honor to receive your letter of the twenty-eighth of July this morning, and hasten, in reply, to inform you that I have succeeded in getting one of the sloops-of-war over the bar. The other will probably be over today or tomorrow. The enemy is now standing for us with five sail. We have seven over the bar; all small, however, except the *Lawrence*. I am of the opinion that in two days the naval superiority will be decided on this lake. Should we be successful, I shall sail for the head of the lake immediately to co-operate with you, and hope that our joint efforts will be productive of honor and advantage to our country. The squadron is not much more than half manned; but, as *I see no prospect of receiving reinforcements, I have determined to commence my operations.* I have requested Captain Richardson to dispatch an express to you the moment the issue of our contest with the enemy is known. My anxiety to join you is very great, and, had seamen been sent me in time, I should now, in all probability, have been at the head of the lake, acting in conjunction with you.” “Thank God,” he added in a postscript, “the other sloop-of-war is over. I shall be after the enemy, who are making off, in a few hours. I shall be with you shortly.”

At three o'clock on the morning of the sixth of August, the signal was made from the *Lawrence* for the fleet to weigh anchor; and an hour later all the vessels were under easy sail, standing off in double column in the direction of Long Point on the Canadian shore, where it was supposed the enemy had gone. Although there had been little opportunity for repose during the night, after their unceasing efforts of the preceding days, the ardour and enthusiasm of their young commander was warmly shared by his officers and men. During the search for the British fleet the vessels were cleared for action, and everything made ready for the expected conflict. But the enemy had proceeded up the lake to Malden, their naval base at the mouth of the Detroit River. After an ineffectual pursuit of twenty-four hours, Perry returned with his fleet to its anchorage off Erie.

The next two days were employed in taking on large quantities of provisions and military stores for the army of General Harrison, with the intention of putting off to sea on the evening of the eighth, for the first cruise up the lake. In the course of the day, however, Commander Perry received a message from Lieutenant Elliott from Cattaraugus, sixty miles down the lake, to the effect that he had reached that place on his way to join the fleet and take command of the *Niagara*. He had with him two acting lieutenants, eight midshipmen, a master-mate, a clerk, and eighty-nine men, making a reinforcement of one hundred and two men in all. The position and feelings of Perry at the time of this pleasing announcement are graphically told by Hambleton, the purser of the *Lawrence*, in his journal:

"We went on shore and transacted a variety of business; paid off the volunteers, so that we had none but the four month's men who had signed articles. Captain Perry had just received a letter from General Harrison, informing him of the raising of the siege of

Camp Meigs, and of the unsuccessful attack on the fort at Sandusky, commanded by Lieutenant Croghan. The prisoners taken there state that the new ship, *Detroit*, was launched at Malden on the seventeenth of last month. Captain Perry and I dined on shore. After dinner, being alone, we had a long conversation on the state of our affairs. He confessed that he was now much at a loss what to do. While he feels the danger of delay, he is not insensible to the hazard of encountering the enemy without due preparation. His officers are few and inexperienced, and we are short of seamen. His repeated and urgent requests for men, having been treated with the most mortifying neglect, he declines making another. While thus engaged, a midshipman, J. B. Montgomery, entered and handed him a letter. It was from Lieutenant Elliott, on his way to join him with several officers and eighty-nine men. He was electrified by this news, and, as soon as we were alone, declared he had not been so happy since his arrival."

The delighted commander at once went off to the *Lawrence*, and directed that the *Ariel*, commanded by Lieutenant Packett, should run down the coast towards Cattaraugus, and bring up Elliott and his party. They quickly made sail and soon were hull down in the north-east, beating up along the coast. On the tenth of August they returned with the company of "prime men," who, indeed, proved of superior character to any that had as yet been received on Lake Erie. The sending of these trained and experienced seamen was no doubt due in no small degree to the more urgent request of Commander Perry, and his complaints as to the kind of men that had been sent him. Although his letters, written in a temperate and respectful tone, produced irritation in the mind of Commodore Chauncey, they had fulfilled their purpose and brought about the desired result.

The task of distributing the seamen and trained gunners throughout the fleet was entrusted to Lieutenant Elliott, who, it is recorded, derived the chief benefit from the valuable accession of seamen. For Perry, with a generosity that was natural to him, allowed his junior officer to select for the *Niagara*, of which he had assumed the command, the best of the men who had come with him. It was true that the crew of the *Lawrence* was more nearly complete than that of the *Niagara*, but Sailing-master Taylor, of the former vessel, who happened to be on board of the *Niagara* at the time, observed that Elliott assumed the right of selection among the men, whose relative merits were well known to him; and the residue, after being gleaned by him, was distributed among the other vessels. This fact he reported to his commander, who, with a magnanimity most unusual in the service, took no notice of this unauthorized selection of men, even though it resulted to his disadvantage. Although he intended that the vessel under his command should bear the brunt and burden of the day in the forthcoming battle, he confidently expected that Elliott, his junior officer and next in line of command of the fleet, would support him to the full extent of his power, and do his share of the fighting. Hence, he took no steps to equalize the effective force of the vessel under his immediate command.

On the same day, the tenth of August, a letter was received from Commodore Chauncey, which betrayed great irritation on his part, and was well suited to wound the feelings of Commander Perry. It ran as follows:

“On board the *Pike*, off Burlington Bay,  
Thirtieth of July, 1813.

Sir:

I have been duly honored with your letters of the twenty-third and twenty-sixth ultimo, and notice your anxiety for men and officers. I am equally anxious to furnish you, and no time shall be lost in sending officers and men to you, as soon as the public service will allow me to send them from this lake. I regret that you are not pleased with the men sent you by Messrs. Champlin and Forrest; for to my knowledge, a part of them are not surpassed by any seamen we have in the fleet; and I have yet to learn that the color of the skin, or the cut and trimmings of the coat, can affect a man's qualifications or usefulness. I have nearly fifty blacks on board of this ship, and many of them are among my best men; and those people you call soldiers have been to sea from two to seventeen years, and I assume that you will find them as good and useful as any men on board your vessel, at least if I can judge by comparison, for those which we have on board of this ship are attentive and obedient, and, as far as I can judge, many of them are excellent seamen; at any rate the men sent to Lake Erie have been selected with a view of sending a fair proportion of petty officers and seamen, and I presume, upon examination, it will be found that they are equal to those upon this lake.

“I have received several letters from the secretary of the navy, urging the necessity of the naval force upon Lake Erie acting immediately. You will, therefore, as soon as you receive a sufficient number of men, commence your operations against the enemy, and, as soon as possible, co-operate with the army under General Harrison. As you have assured the secretary that you should conceive yourself equal or superior to the enemy with a force of men much less than I had deemed



necessary, there will be a great deal expected from you by your country, and I trust that they will not be disappointed in the high expectations formed of your gallantry and judgment. I will barely make an observation, which was impressed upon my mind by an old soldier, that is, 'Never despise your enemy.' I was mortified to see, by your letters to the secretary, extracts and copies of which have been furnished to me, that you complain that the distance was so great between Sackett's Harbor and Erie, that you could not get instructions from me in time to execute them with any advantage to the service, thereby intimating the necessity of a separate command. Would it not have been well to have made the complaint to me instead of the secretary?

"My confidence in your zeal and abilities is undiminished, and I sincerely hope that your success may equal your utmost wishes. I shall dispatch to you some officers and seamen and further instructions on my return to Niagara, where I hope to be the day after tomorrow.

Yours with esteem,

ISAAC CHAUNCEY.

To O. H. PERRY,

Commanding the U. S. brig *Lawrence*."

However creditable the assertions made in this letter may have been, it is true that all the officers on Lake Erie united in pronouncing the men sent by the commodore, with the single exception of the party under the command of Elliott, as the most wretched selection that could have been made. In the face of this fact it was well known in the service that there were on Lake Ontario a large proportion of as good seamen as ever trod a ship's deck; and the old-time tars with the genuine queues abounded there. Commodore Chauncey, being a thorough seaman himself, had col-

lected about him all the most finished specimens of the true man-of-war's men that could be found. Unfortunately, the gratification of this passion conflicted seriously with his obligations of duty which made it incumbent upon him, to send in due season to his junior officer, for the execution of an important trust, a full and fair share of his best seamen and gunners. That he actually had an extraordinary number of men, about double what was necessary, crowded on board the *Pike*, is confirmed by the following extract from Hambleton's journal:

“ Several weeks ago, the secretary of the navy informed Captain Perry that a sufficient number for both lakes had been forwarded. This is true; but, unfortunately, they were all sent to Lake Ontario, where our portion was detained without necessity. For instance, the *Pike*, with a single deck and twenty-six guns, had four hundred prime seamen, mustering in all four hundred and seventy; and even now he has not sent a single officer of rank or experience except Captain Elliott.”

The patience and amiability of Commander Perry was coupled with extreme sensitiveness to whatever affected his honor, and the commendatory phrase which closed the commodore's letter failed utterly to qualify the bitterness which his rebuke aroused. But it was not due, as some historians have thought, to the neglect of the commodore in respect to officers and men, but rather to his insinuation that Perry had sought a separate command, which was obviously false. On the very day that he received the commodore's letter, Commander Perry enclosed a copy of it to the secretary of the navy, and wrote earnestly requesting that he might be removed from his present station. The letter shows the real grounds for taking this action, and is as follows:

“On board the *Lawrence*, off Erie.  
Tenth of August, 1813.

Sir :

I am under the disagreeable necessity of requesting a removal from this station. The enclosed copy of a letter from Commodore Chauncey will, I am satisfied, convince you that I cannot serve longer under an officer who has been so totally regardless of my feelings. The men spoken of by Commodore Chauncey are those mentioned in the roll I did myself the honor to send you. They may, sir be as good as are on the other lake; but, if so, that squadron must be poorly manned indeed. In the requisition for men sent by your order, I made a note, saying I should consider myself equal or superior to the enemy with a smaller number of men. What then might have been considered certain, may, from lapse of time, be deemed problematical.

“The commodore insinuates that I have taken measures to obtain a separate command. I beg leave to ask you, sir, if anything in any of my letters to you could be construed into such a meaning. On my return to this place in June last, I wrote you that the *Queen Charlotte* and *Lady Prevost* were off this harbor, and if they remained a few days, I might possibly be able to intercept their return to Malden. I had no orders to act; and the only way of obtaining them in time was to write to you, sir, as the communication between Commodore Chauncey and myself occupied considerably upward of a month. In my request, I meant this as a reason for applying to you on the emergency instead of to the commodore.

“I have been on this station upward of five months, and during that time have submitted cheerfully and with pleasure to fatigue and anxiety hitherto unknown to me in the service. I have had a very responsible situation, without an officer, except one sailing-master, of

the least experience. However seriously I have felt my situation, not a murmur has escaped me. The critical state of General Harrison was such that I took upon myself the very great responsibility of going out with the few young officers you have been pleased to send me, with the few seamen I had, and as many volunteers as I could muster from the militia. I did not shrink from this responsibility; but, sir, at that very moment I surely did not anticipate the receipt of a letter in every line of which is insult. Under all these circumstances, I beg most respectfully and most earnestly that I may be immediately removed from this station. I am willing to forego that reward which I have considered for two months past almost within my grasp. If, sir, I have rendered my country any service in the equipment of this squadron, I beg it may be considered an inducement to grant my request. I shall proceed with the squadron and whatever is in my power shall be done to promote the interest and honor of the service.

O. H. PERRY.

To WILLIAM JONES,

Secretary of the Navy."

Reading these letters after an interval of a hundred years, and in an age so widely different in every respect from the other, arouses some reflections of a somewhat conflicting nature. The whole correspondence of Perry's to Commodore Chauncey, although prompted by a feeling of necessity of the situation, due to neglect of his superior officer, is thoroughly temperate in tone and respectful to a degree highly creditable to him. It would be difficult, in fact, to find in a single line or word, the least provocation for the irritation which is so clearly evident in the Commodore's reply. Although a rebuke pertinently and mildly administered undoubtedly was intended by the commodore, it was presented in such language that one wonders how even

the impetuous Perry could have taken it in such a way as to feel justified in resigning his command. His provocation over the uncomfortable situation no doubt was great, and the neglect and disregard of the commodore was a grievous injustice to him; still, had he followed his usual calm inclination he would have given the matter more consideration than he did, before taking such drastic action. His letter to the secretary of the navy was written within a few hours after the receipt of the one from the commodore, and the only excuse that can be found, if one is sought, for his sudden resolution to relinquish his command, is that the thing happened when, worn out and feverish as the result of his unceasing exertions, he was in no fit frame of mind to think calmly and act wisely. He gave way to a just anger unreasonably aroused; and it is more of wonderment that his letter did not convey invective and rancor, which must have been present in his mind. Its composition, moreover, reflects an admirable spirit, and shows that the valiant Perry was possessed of no mean literary attainments. What letters of his that remain, having survived the ravages of time, reveal most clearly the possession by their author of a fine and calculating mind, always well balanced, and temper in perfect control.

In another letter from Commodore Chauncey, dated off Niagara on the third of August, among other matters, he expressed his disappointment at not being able to send Commander Perry fifty marines, as he had expected to have done; but he promised, as soon as he should return to Sackett's Harbor, to forward them post haste. Ten days after, however, while on his way eastward, he fell in with the schooner *Lady of the Lake*, which, by his order, was transporting the promised marines; but, instead of allowing them to proceed, he appropriated the detachment and took the men on board his own vessel. The reason why Chauncey with difficulty

parted with men is ascribed by Mahan to be the loss of two schooners of his fleet, the *Hamilton* and *Scourge*, on the eighth of August, with nearly all on board, and the capture by the enemy two days later of the *Julia* and the *Growler*, which reduced his force by about one hundred and fifty men. He had had his first encounter with the British fleet, under command of Sir James Yeo, on the seventh, and expected a second and more decisive collision in a short time.

“As for the substitution of either militiamen or newly-levied troops for marines,” observes Mackenzie, in the matter of leaving Commander Perry to shift for himself, “it is needless to say how ill the former could supply the place of the latter. Marines, from the long-continued habit of serving on ship board, are as much at home there as seamen, and are of essential use in the discharge of every ordinary duty. In battle, whether stationed at the great guns, to the exercise of which they are trained in all well-disciplined ships, as, indeed, they should be in barracks, or using their own appropriate arms, they have ever shown the most devoted courage.

“It would be unfair to Commodore Chauncey not to state that the injustice done by him to Captain Perry, in withholding a sufficient number of good men, has been practiced not unfrequently by our old commanders, though, perhaps, in less critical circumstances. Deprived of the distinction of higher grades as a just reward of faithful services, and accustomed yearly to see their juniors take rank beside them, they cling with pertinacity to every admitted attribute of their superior station, and use their authority in a narrow spirit, and with reference chiefly to themselves. The subjects of injustice themselves, they are not a little prone to exercise injustice to others.”

The reply of the secretary of the navy to Perry's letter, dated the eighteenth of August, was exceedingly temperate, so as to convey soothing and complimentary effects: "A change of commander," he wrote, "under existing circumstances is equally inadmissible as it respects the interest of the service and your own reputation. It is right that you should reap the harvest which you have sown. It is the duty of an officer, and in none does his character shine more conspicuous, to sacrifice all personal motives and feelings when in collision with the public good. This sacrifice you are called upon to make; and I calculate with confidence upon your efforts to restore and preserve harmony, and to concentrate the vigorous exertions of all in carrying into effect the great objects of your enterprise."

The difficulty growing out of Commodore Chauncey's letter of the thirtieth of July, was closed and harmony restored by the conciliatory reply of the Commodore to Perry's letter announcing his having requested to be withdrawn from Lake Erie. In justice to Commodore Chauncey, as showing his good sense and good feeling, it is transcribed as follows:

"Sackett's Harbor, Lake Ontario.  
Twenty-seventh of August, 1813.

Sir:

I have received your letter of the eleventh instant, wherein you inform me that you have enclosed a copy of my letter of the thirtieth of July to the honorable, the secretary of the navy, with a request that you might be immediately removed from Lake Erie. I regret your determination for various reasons; the first and most important is, that the public service would suffer from a change, and your removal might in some degree defeat the objects of the campaign. Although I conceive that you have treated me with less candor than I was

entitled to, considering the warm interest that I have always taken in your behalf, yet my confidence in your zeal and ability has been undiminished, and I should really regret that any circumstances should remove you from your present command, before you have accomplished the objects for which you were sent to Erie; and I trust that you will give the subject all the consideration that its importance requires before you make up your mind definitely. You ought also to consider that the first duty of an officer is to sacrifice all personal feelings to his public duties.

ISAAC CHAUNCEY."

It is alike creditable to these officers that the controversy over the assignment of seamen and marines did not prevent their resuming their warm friendship.



## CHAPTER VII

### PREPARING FOR BATTLE WITH THE BRITISH FLEET

**A**LTHOUGH Commander Perry made every effort to enlist men from the militia, to perform the duties of marines during the cruise up the lake, he was unable to procure any permanent volunteers; and his entire force still numbered a few short of four hundred officers and men. With this small force, which was barely sufficient to properly man the three brigs, but had been distributed to ten vessels large and small, he was expected and was ordered by his superior officer to search out and meet the enemy for a decisive conflict. And yet, Commodore Chauncey regarded even a greater number of seamen and marines as necessary for the proper handling of his own flagship, the *Pike*, in his engagements with the enemy on Lake Ontario. He certainly expected and demanded much of his junior officer on the upper lake. How thoroughly well the heroic Perry met the situation, how he took the raw recruits sent him and trained them into efficient seamen and gunners, and how he inspired his few officers and experienced man-of-war's men with zeal and devotion to the object of the expedition, are among the brilliant achievements of his career.

Having completed a tentative plan of campaign against the British fleet, he sailed from Erie on the twelfth of August, and proceeded cautiously up the lake to place himself in co-operation with the army under General Harrison. The headquarters of the army were then at Seneca, on the banks of the Sandusky River, and about thirty miles from where the bay issues into the

lake. The order of sailing established for the fleet was in double formation, the columns being composed of these vessels in the following order:

*Niagara* . . . . . brig . . . . . Commander Elliott.  
*Trippe* . . . . . sloop . . . . . Lieutenant Holdup.  
*Tigress* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Lieutenant Conklin.  
*Somers* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Sailing-master Almy.  
*Scorpion* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Sailing-master Champlin.

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*Lawrence* . . . . . brig . . . . . Cominander Perry.  
*Porcupine* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Midshipman Smith.  
*Caledonia* . . . . . brig . . . . . Lieutenant Turner.  
*Ohio* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Sailing-master Dobbins.  
*Ariel* . . . . . schooner . . . . . Lieutenant Packett.

He also established at this time an order of battle in one line. The *Ariel* and *Scorpion*, which were the fastest sailers of his schooners, he placed on the outside of the line from the enemy, and near his flagship, so as to be in position to quickly support any part of the line that might need it. Afterward he brought the *Scorpion* into the line, and fixed the distance that should be maintained between the vessels at half a cable's length. Then he drew up an order of attack, in which a particular vessel in the British squadron was designated as an antagonist for a certain vessel of his own. This was intended to facilitate the remodeling of the line of battle to conform to the arrangement of the enemy's vessels in line, and also to fix in the mind of each commander his special adversary.

In this well formulated plan Perry reserved to himself the privilege, or duty as he probably regarded it, of fighting the largest and most powerful ship of the enemy's fleet. He accordingly placed the *Lawrence* opposite their new and heavy ship, which it was reported was stoutly built with thick bulwarks, and which

carried a battery of nineteen long guns. The *Niagara*, he placed, in like manner, opposite the second British ship, the *Queen Charlotte*, in which disposition the relative strength of the batteries was as three to two. The *Caledonia* was to engage the brig *Hunter*, of ten guns, and the schooners the smaller vessels of the enemy. In the event of separation of his vessels and an accidental meeting in the night, in which there might be a collision under the impression that they were enemies, he made ample provision. Each of his vessels was to hoist one light and hail, the one to windward first answering "Jones," to which the one farthest to leeward should reply "Madison." In a subsequent order, should the enemy approach his fleet to attack it while at anchor, the signal of two quick musket shots from the *Lawrence* would be an order for the vessels to cut their cables and make sail. They would form astern of the *Lawrence*, which would show a light, beginning with the vessel farthest to leeward; while three successive shots would be the signal to weigh anchor in the same succession. These general orders, which were well conceived to promote concerted action and prevent surprise, indicated good judgment and clear forethought.

On the sixteenth of August the fleet approached Cunningham's Island, which was well toward the head of the lake, without once having sight of the enemy, or noticing any indication that they were near. The wind was fresh at the time, which prevented the vessels from taking berths close in with Sandusky bar, which would have enabled them to disembark the military supplies for the army, and communicate with General Harrison. Late the following afternoon one of the enemy's small vessels was discovered in the northwest, evidently acting as a spy boat, and the *Scorpion* was sent in chase. After a spirited pursuit of several hours, in which the schooner nearly bore up with the enemy, night came on

and she disappeared in the darkness among a group of islands, which Nature has most lavishly distributed in the western part of the lake.

Meanwhile the fleet, which had followed leisurely, came to anchor off the southern shore; and the next day they began the removal of the military stores safely to land. On the evening of the nineteenth, during a heavy rain storm, General William Henry Harrison, his staff, and a number of Indian chiefs, came on board the *Lawrence*. In the party, which must have presented a strikingly martial appearance as it came over the gangway, were General Lewis Cass and General M'Arthur, Colonel Gaines, Major Croghan, and twenty-six chiefs of the Shawnee, Wyandot, and Delaware Indians. Among these were three highly influential chiefs named Crane, Black Hoof, and Captain Tommy. The meeting was held for the purpose of arranging some concerted action between the land and naval forces; and the object in bringing the Indians was to impress them with the strength of these forces, in the hope that by their influence the Indians of the Northwest, who were then allies of the British, might be detached from them. The chiefs were, of course, filled with wonder at the spectacle of the "big canoes," as they called the ships, with their lofty masts and white sails, and looked with amazement at the big guns belching fire and smoke, when, in the morning, a salute was fired in honor of the general. At this meeting it was determined in consequence of the lateness of the season, if the British fleet did not make its appearance soon, that the army should be put in motion and cross the upper part of the lake in open boats, without awaiting the result of a naval conflict.

Between General Harrison and Commander Perry the happiest spirit of concert and good will prevailed. The former had explored some of the islands in search

of a safe rendezvous for the army in the event of its being transported across the lake by the fleet, and had found in one of them a splendid harbor of refuge with its opening toward the north. In this sheltered bay, which is situated in the southermost of the Bass Islands, and about eight miles from the main land, there was ample room for manoeuvring the entire navy of the United States, could it have been assembled there. On three sides it is landlocked by the crescent-shaped shore of rock and shifting sand, while on the north it is protected by a huge rock, called Gibraltar. This natural fortress rises from sixty to seventy feet above the surface of the water, and on the sides toward the lake it is an impregnable cliff. The general pointed out to Perry the excellence of this harbor as an anchorage for his fleet, and it was henceforth called Put-in Bay. They spent a day in reconnoitering the island, making soundings in the bay and across its rocky opening into the lake; and concerted their plans for the removal of the army to this place, when the time should arrive for the invasion of Canada. On the twenty-first the general returned with his staff to his camp at Seneca; and two days after the commander sailed into Put-in Bay, and declared it his headquarters on the lake.

While preparations were being made for the advance of the army to the lake shore, Commander Perry set sail from the bay and stood boldly into the lake in the direction of Malden. This stronghold of the British was situated in a little cove on the east shore of the Detroit River, near its mouth, and about forty miles distant from Put-in Bay. It was fortified by blockhouses and breastworks on a hill that rose from the water's edge, and was strengthened by a battery at the head of an island which lay close in shore. On the twenty-fifth of August the fleet entered the river and soon discovered the enemy's squadron at anchor within their stronghold. The appearance of the American

ships-of-war within cannonade range of the little settlement, spread consternation and alarm on shore, and women and children ran shrieking about the place, momentarily expecting a bombardment to begin. The Indians in the outer camp, however, looked with amazement upon the hostile demonstration; the ten sail with battle flags flying and bristling guns frowning from open ports, and with decks cleared for action, presenting a very warlike aspect. The scene aroused their fighting spirit, and they urged the British commander, Captain Barclay, to go out and meet them.

But the enemy were still waiting for the completion of their new ship, which had been hurriedly built, like the American brigs, of green timber, roughly hewed and unfinished, but unlike these, with heavy bulwarks of oak which it was expected would withstand round shot fired at cannonade distance. So they declined to come out into the open and engage the fleet of the intrepid Perry, who thus had the opportunity of flaunting his colors before the veteran Barclay, a pupil of Nelson, much as this officer had displayed his in battle array off the harbor of Erie. The wind was blowing fresh at the time and unfavorable to run in close to shore, and Commander Perry deemed it unsafe to run the risk of getting embayed and expose his dullest sailers to capture. He therefore made about and headed for the open lake, an action which resulted in much relief to the settlers on land, but which caused disgust and chagrin to the hostile Indians.

On the way down the lake the commander was attacked with bilious remittent fever, an ailment to which few of the valiant seamen were immune, and which was attended with prostration of strength. In this case it soon developed a very malignant character, and the assistant surgeon, Doctor Usher Parsons, himself out of health, was the only medical officer who was able

to attend him. The surgeon of the *Lawrence* was seriously ill, as was also the chaplain, Thomas Breese, and the commander's young brother, James Alexander, who, through all the months of anxiety, had remained with him to share his hardships and dangers, to meet defeat and death, or victory and fame, as Fate should decree. Perry accordingly directed that the fleet should return to Put-in Bay, the snug harbor which overlooked the passage into the lower part of the lake, and which was a vantage point for rendezvous in protecting the southern shore, and the outlets of the numerous streams which issue into it. A few days after Dr. Parsons himself was affected with the prevailing ailment, but he continued to attend to the needs of the sick to whom he was carried, with a human self-devotion most creditable and honorable. Not only did he minister to the sick on board the *Lawrence*, but, it is said, he insisted on going to the other vessels in his mission of mercy. Being so sick as to be incapable of walking, he was lifted on board in his cot, and the sick were brought to him on deck for his examination and prescription. Of such material are patriots and heroes made.

The generous and noble impulses of General Harrison were proverbial, and, in looking through the little fleet, as it lay at anchor off shore, he noted with disquietude the want of marines, and observed how much it had been weakened by sickness and disease. On returning to his camp at Seneca, he therefore asked for volunteers from his army to join the fleet and act as marines. A large number of Kentuckians, led by a spirit of adventure to embark in an enterprise so different from their previous habits of life, responded to the call. From these were selected a few lake and river boatmen to act as seamen, while nearly a hundred others were detailed from the militia for this service. They were at once sent off to the fleet and arrived on the thirty-first of August. Few of them had ever seen

a full-rigged ship, and their astonishment and curiosity were irrepressible. They wore their favorite fringed linsey-woolsey shirts and leggings, and were themselves objects of curiosity and amusement to the officers and seamen, who never before had seen any of these hardy borderers. The officers of the fleet, by Perry's direction, at once set about teaching these recruits their duty, and trained them in the various evolutions preparatory to battle. To their credit, be it said, the sturdy Kentuckians carefully conformed to all that was required of them, were of essential use in manning the fleet; "and replaced," as noted by Mackenzie, "the marines and seamen which Commodore Chauncey had withheld; and their association with Perry was, to such of them as survived to tell the tale of their adventures, a special and enduring source of gratification."

On the first of September, after a week's confinement to his berth, Commander Perry found himself sufficiently well to again take the deck; and he lost no time in getting his fleet once more in motion. He stood off toward Malden, and, as the weather was settled and the wind from the northeast, which was favorable for standing in and out of the Detroit River, he ran very close in. With his colors set and decks cleared for action he continued off the harbor the rest of the day, defiantly bearding the British to come out and engage him in an open and nearly equal contest. They had, he found, equipped their new ship, which they proudly named *Detroit*, as a memorial of their conquest; and had armed her with guns of every calibre taken from the ramparts of Malden. "A more curiously composite battery probably never was mounted," says Mahan, "but of a total of nineteen guns, seventeen were long guns of great range; and all her pieces together fired two hundred and thirty pounds of metal." Although they had the superiority in the number of guns, and especially in



guns of long range, and the fleet in cruising down the lake had been a training school for about five hundred Canadian seamen, Barclay showed no disposition to meet the Americans, who, at nightfall sailed out into the lake.

From the most reliable evidence it appears that Perry, should he be unsuccessful in drawing the enemy out from the harbor of Malden, meditated an attack on them under the guns of the batteries, in concert with an attack from General Harrison by land. This was a bold plan involving great risks, inasmuch as it exposed one or the other of the forces, necessarily separated as they would be, to extreme danger and possible capture. For instance, if the fleet through any cause or accident, met defeat in the river at the hands of the British, the American army in attacking Malden from the land side, would not only have to combat the military forces and Indians, but would also have to contend against the guns of the British fleet at anchor in the bay. Cut off from their base of supplies, and having no transports to carry them across the lake, their situation would be desperate indeed; and, unless they obtained a decisive victory in their siege of Malden, they, too, would ultimately be forced to surrender. On the other hand, should the army be repulsed in its attack on the fortress, the fleet lying in the river at close range under the batteries of the fort, and flanked by those on the island close by, would be compelled to divide its attention and fire between these and the guns of the fleet, at the same time drawing the concerted fire of all. It was a desperate alternative, to be considered only in the event of the British fleet remaining for an indefinite time under the protection of the guns at Malden.

After carefully reconnoitering the position of the allied forces, he therefore bore up and stood down the lake for Sandusky Bay. Upon arriving there, on the

second of September, he at once communicated with General Harrison with regard to embarking the army for their campaign across the lake. He believed that he could transport from twenty-five hundred to three thousand of the troops in the fleet, but hesitated to adopt this means, because so great a number in addition to the crews would so encumber the decks as to render the guns almost useless. In coming down the lake he had noticed a small island, known as the Middle Sister, situated about half way between Malden and Put-in Bay, which he thought would offer an excellent rendezvous for the army the day before the contemplated attack. He therefore mentioned to the general the advantages the situation of this island afforded for their purpose; and, upon due consideration, the plan was regarded as feasible and subsequently adopted.

How long the British fleet might have kept their shelter under the guns of Malden, had not pressing necessity called them out, can only be conjectured. The army, which had been accustomed to the abundance and security which the domination of the lake had afforded, now began to suffer from the want of supplies and provisions, there being at Malden and immediate vicinity, dependent on the commissary, about fourteen thousand persons, including the Indian tribes and followers. The country of Upper Canada was then but sparsely settled, and produced but little more provender than was necessary for the subsistence of the settlers and their stock. For this reason the army was almost entirely dependent upon their base of supplies at Long Point. For more than a month their fleet had been practically blockaded at the upper end of the lake, and, to restore uninterrupted communication with Long Point, General Procter insisted on the necessity of risking a naval engagement, of which the issue was not thought uncertain. Of these circumstances Commander Perry was creditably informed.

On the fifth of September, while anchored in Sandusky Bay, three refugees arrived from Malden who told him that the British had determined that their squadron should put forth into the lake in the course of a few days to engage him. He also received more accurate information than he had yet obtained as to the strength of the enemy's fleet. Besides having minor details of the equipment of their new ship, the *Detroit*, he learned that this vessel and the *Queen Charlotte* each had one of their long guns mounted on a pivot, so that it could be trained in a wide arc of a circle. The latter vessel carried two other long guns and fourteen short 24-pounder carronades, in all seventeen guns. The entire fleet mounted sixty-three guns, of which thirty-five were long guns of various sizes having a long range, which gave them a decided superiority over the Americans.

The commander of this small but well armed squadron was Robert Heriot Barclay, a veteran officer with the rank of captain, who had served with distinction in many of those naval engagements which had rendered the name and flag of England so feared on the ocean. He had been with Nelson, as before stated, and been desperately wounded in the ever memorable sea fight at Trafalgar. More recently, in an action with the French, as first lieutenant of a frigate, he had lost an arm. His first officer next in rank was Captain Finnis, in command of the *Queen Charlotte*, who was a brave and skilful seaman. Others of his officers were of experience and honorable standing in their profession. In the point of men there is a diversity of opinion expressed by the English historians. According to James, very few British seamen ever reached Lake Erie, probably not more than fifty; while Admiral Codrington states there was no want of seamen on the lakes, as their seaships at Quebec had men drafted from them for that service till their crews were utterly depleted. However

this may have been, it is certain that (as afterward admitted in the finding of the court-martial on Captain Barclay) his crews consisted, when he sailed from Malden, of one hundred and fifty men from the royal navy; and, according to James statement, eighty Canadian sailors, and two hundred and forty soldiers from the regular army, making in all an aggregate of four hundred and seventy seamen and marines. Including the thirty-two officers known to have been in the squadron, the total force under Captain Barclay was five hundred and two.

Of the American fleet no vessels were better provided with masts, spars, rigging and sails than brigs might carry; and only the *Lawrence* and *Niagara* could be considered man-of-war. Even they were built with thin sides and bulwarks, affording but slight protection to heavy fire at close range. The two full-rigged ships of the British fleet were supposed to be impervious to the shot of carronades, of which the American fleet was mostly armed; while their long guns, though of smaller size, were well calculated to hull the thin sides of their adversary's vessels through and through. The other vessels of Perry's fleet were exceedingly frail, all, with the exception of the *Caledonia*, having no quarters, or bulwarks, to protect their guns and crews from the enemy's fire. Four of them, moreover, were small merchant schooners which had formerly been engaged in the fur trade, and suffered all the disadvantages which made a lightly constructed vessel of their class inferior to a regular sloop of war. In a strong sea they had a marked tendency, with the heavy guns mounted on deck, to capsize, and were so unsteady that the guns could not be aimed with any degree of accuracy. They were armed with long guns of large size, it is true, mostly 24 and 32-pounders. While they had an advantage in smooth water with light wind, over the larger vessels armed with carronades, because they could stand off

and do effective work with their long range guns before coming into range of the enemy's short carronades, in rough weather they were almost completely at the mercy of the larger and stable ships, for the reasons just stated; and in a calm they could be counted out of the conflict.

The total armament of the American fleet was fifty-four guns, or nine less than the British fleet, and a large proportion were short carronades which, though of larger bore, were effective only at comparatively short range. There were no less than thirty-nine 32-pounder carronades, and only fifteen long guns, of which three were 32's, four were 24's, and eight were 12's. This was an armament which made it incumbent on the commander to "close in" with the enemy, and fight them at close range, although his schooners could stand off at some distance and pound away more or less effectively, without suffering very much themselves from the enemy's fire. In the disposition of this armament, the *Lawrence* and the *Niagara* each had eighteen 32-pounder carronades, and two long twelves. The brunt of the fight thus necessarily fell on the *Lawrence* and *Niagara* just as, the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte* were their principal antagonists.

The total weight of metal thrown in a broadside by Perry's fleet and that thrown by Barclay's show a wide difference. In the former fleet, owing to the larger number of heavy guns, the total broadside was nine hundred and thirty-six pounds, while in the latter fleet, due to many 12, 9 and 6 pounders, the total broadside was only four hundred and fifty-nine pounds. The *Lawrence* and *Niagara* alone could throw six hundred pounds in a broadside, which was thirty-three per cent. more than could be thrown by a broadside of the entire British fleet. In broadside by long guns, however, the British, as might be expected, were decidedly superior, throwing one hundred and ninety-five pounds, while the

most weight that could be thrown by the Americans by long guns was one hundred and fifty pounds.

In number of men, the fleet under Commander Perry, comprising three more vessels than the British, although mounting fewer guns, was at a considerable disadvantage with the enemy. The entire force, including the sturdy Kentuckians, numbered five hundred and thirty-two officers and men, but was quite unevenly distributed among the various vessels. Although the *Lawrence* and *Niagara* were of the same size and armament, the former had a crew of one hundred and thirty-six, as against a crew of one hundred and fifty-five on board the latter. The commander himself expected to bear the brunt of the battle with the *Lawrence*, yet he was willing, by reason of a magnanimous nature, to let the trained seamen in larger numbers go to his junior officer in command of the *Niagara*. That he confidently expected valiant support from Commander Elliott, in the looked-for engagement with the enemy, cannot be doubted. The disparagement of these forces in comparison with the two leading British ships, is even more marked. The ship *Detroit*, which was of about the same tonnage as the *Lawrence* and *Niagara*, and had about the same number of guns, carried a crew of one hundred and sixty officers and men, or twenty-four more than the commander's flagship. Comparing the *Niagara* with the *Queen Charlotte*, however, the disparity was the other way, since the former had a crew of one hundred and fifty-five, and the latter one hundred and thirty-five.

The effective strength of the American fleet was greatly reduced at this time by sickness and general debility; and there were no less than one hundred and sixteen cases on board the different vessels, seventy-eight of which were bilious fever. From this cause the actual number of men able to be on deck and fit for duty was only four hundred and sixteen, which rendered the

physical force greatly in favor of the British. The knowledge of this fact, however, did not check Commander Perry's repeatedly expressed desire to meet them, as he had a just sense of his own resources, and a proper confidence in himself. The following table will be found helpful in finding a just estimate of the relative strength of the two fleets:

## PERRY'S FLEET

<i>Lawrence</i> —	TONS	CREW	BROADS'E	ARMAMENT
Brig	480	136	300	2 long 12's, 18 short 32's
<i>Niagara</i> —				
Brig	480	155	300	2 long 12's, 18 short 32's
<i>Caledonia</i> —				
Brig	180	53	80	2 long 24's, 1 short 32
<i>Ariel</i> —				
Schooner	112	36	48	4 long 12's
<i>Scorpion</i> —				
Schooner	86	35	64	1 long 32, 1 short 32
<i>Somers</i> —				
Schooner	94	30	56	1 long 24, 1 short 32
<i>Porcupine</i> —				
Schooner	83	25	32	1 long 32
<i>Tigress</i> —				
Schooner	96	27	32	1 long 32
<i>Trippe</i> —				
Sloop	60	35	24	1 long 24
<hr/>				
9 vessels	1,671	532	936	

## BARCLAY'S FLEET

<i>Detroit</i> —	TONS	CREW	BROADS'E	ARMAMENT	
Ship	490	160	138	1 long 18, 6 long 12's, 1 short 24,	2 long 24's 8 long 9's 1 short 18
<i>Queen Charlotte</i> —					
Ship	400	135	189	1 long 12, 14 short 24's	2 long 9's
<i>Lady Prevost</i> —					
Schooner	230	91	75	1 long 9, 10 short 12's	2 long 6's
<i>Hunter</i> —					
Brig	180	49	30	4 long 6's, 2 long 2's, 2 short 12's	2 long 4's
<i>Chippeway</i> —					
Schooner	70	27	9	1 long 9	
<i>Little Belt</i> —					
Sloop	90	40	18	1 long 12, 2 long 6's	
6 vessels	1,460	502	459		

Having received this important information concerning Barclay's fleet, and of his plans to sweep the lake of his new foes, Commander Perry at once dispatched the schooner *Ohio*, under the command of Sailing-master Daniel Dobbins, to Erie to bring up additional supplies. In the hope that the British might even then be on the laké and that he might be able to bring on the engagement, which had been so long delayed, he set sail with his fleet on the sixth of September, and again put forth in the direction of Malden. After cruising about the upper end of the lake, and exercising the seamen in the evolutions of fleet formations



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"PERRY'S LOOKOUT" ON GIBRALTER ROCK



PERRY'S FAMOUS BATTLE FLAG  
Preserved in the Naval Academy, Annapolis

and in the handling of the guns, he sailed into the Detroit River and reconnoitered the stronghold of the enemy. Finding the British fleet still lying at its moorings with no signs of activity aboard, he set about and returned once more to his safe anchorage at Put-in Bay. In this beautiful harbor, upon which Nature had bestowed her richest charms, and which offered so many facilities for watching the movements of the enemy when on lake, he made his final arrangements for the conflict which was inevitably near at hand.

On the evening of the ninth, he set a signal on the *Lawrence* summoning the commanders of the several vessels for the last conference. To each officer he handed the final instructions in writing governing his movements, and further explained to them verbally his views with regard to whatever contingency might arise. It was his plan, he said, to fight the enemy at close range, to bring them from the first to close quarters, in order not to lose effectiveness by the short range of his carronades. To each vessel its antagonist on the British side, was clearly marked out, to the *Lawrence* the *Detroit*, to the *Niagara* the *Queen Charlotte*, and so on down the list. And above all, the written order said: "Engage each your designated adversary in close action, at half cable's length."

Before dismissing his officers he produced a battle-flag, which had been made under his direction by Samuel Hambleton, the purser, upon which was emblazoned the watchword which was to lead them on to victory — the dying words of the lamented Lawrence. The hoisting of this flag, inspiring as it was, to the main-royal masthead of the ship which bore his name, was to be the signal to close up with the enemy. As a last emphatic injunction, he could not, he said, advise them better than in the words of Lord Nelson, "If you lay your enemy alongside, you cannot be out of your place."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE

**A**LMOST at the same hour that the commanding officers were assembled on board the *Lawrence*, and listening to the spirited words of their commander, a very different scene was being enacted in the stronghold of the enemy. Under the frowning guns of the fortress of Malden lay the British fleet, on board the various vessels of which all was bustle and activity. On some, anchors were being laboriously weighed, on others, sails were being bent to the lake winds, while on all, powder horns and balls were being laid out and decks cleared for action, the shrill piping of boatswain's whistles, meanwhile, resounding through the fleet. For the time had now come, by the stress of dire necessity, for decisive action — a momentous move in the war — which should decide the supremacy of the lake.

Thus, on the fateful evening of the ninth of September, as the sun was settling low, Captain Barclay was beating out of the little cove and standing boldly down the river. At Bar Point, at its mouth, he evidently anchored for several hours, thus choosing his time to proceed more than half way towards his enemy, and offer him battle in his own waters with a long day before him. His plan was undoubtedly to attack, as he might have sailed out along the Canada shore to the northward of the islands in the night, and eluded Perry's fleet. But he could not have avoided an ultimate collision with him, either at the lower end of the lake or on his return with supplies to Malden; hence, with his

superior force and well-drilled crews, he decided to at once meet his foe and obtain, as he confidently expected, a decisive and overwhelming victory. He therefore, early in the morning of the tenth, bore gallantly down the lake in the direction of the Bass Islands, where he believed the youthful Perry with his poorly-manned fleet was awaiting him.

At sunrise, which at this season is about five o'clock, the British fleet was off the Middle Sister, bearing down under easy sail toward Put-in Bay. A few moments later the outlook at the masthead of the *Lawrence* descried the six sail on the northwestern board; and the fact was at once reported to Commander Perry by Lieutenant Dulany Forrest, the officer of the deck. To the valiant commander, still languishing from the wasting fever, this news was as welcome as the bidding to the most important duty of his life. His long looked-for opportunity "to meet the enemies of his country" at last had come to him. At seven o'clock all vessels of the enemy's fleet could be plainly seen from the deck; and he ordered the signal made, "under way to get." Soon after the entire fleet was under sail, beating out of the harbor against a light breeze from the southwest. So slow was their progress, however, due to the adverse wind, that the small boats, manned by the husky Rhode Island man-of-war's men, were ordered out ahead to tow the vessels around the lee of Gibraltar rock.

By this means they came at length to the passage between the Bass Islands, when a new difficulty arose to retard their progress. To obtain the windward position of the enemy, or weather-gage as it is commonly called, was the chief aim of both commanders during the early manoeuvres. This position was of great advantage, as it conferred the power of initiative and compelled the fleet to leeward, unless very skilfully handled, to await attack and accept the distance chosen by the opponent. To the westward between the two fleets lay

Green and Snake Islands, but close under Perry's bows. To pass these islands and obtain the desired position, with the wind almost dead ahead, was a perplexing problem. By beating around to windward of them he would have a leading breeze to run down upon the enemy and the weather-gage in the battle, while any other course would bring him to leeward of the enemy. He therefore resolved to effect this manoeuvre if possible.

The failing breeze, however, was so light and unsteady, that almost every time they attempted to cross the channel the vessels were headed off, and they were obliged to tack. Several hours passed in this fruitless effort when, at ten o'clock, Commander Perry, becoming impatient at the delay in getting away, asked Sailing-master Taylor how much time would still be required to weather the islands. Receiving a reply that evidently confirmed the opinion he had himself formed, he directed that the sailing-master should wear ship, and run to leeward. "By doing that," remarked the master, "you will have to engage the enemy from the leeward." "I don't care, to windward or to leeward, they shall fight today!" was Perry's vehement reply. But nature at that moment came to his aid in an alliance with his courage and determination, for the wind suddenly shifted to the southeast. Under the freshening breeze from this favorable quarter, the fleet quickly bore away to the windward of the islands, and with all sails set stood off in the direction of the enemy.

In the prescribed order of battle determined on the night before, and which they now formed, the *Niagara*, under the command of Commander Elliott, led the line. This position was assigned him because it was believed that the *Queen Charlotte*, his designated antagonist, would head the British line. He was supported immediately behind by the *Ariel*, under command of Lieutenant John Packett, and the *Scorpion*, commanded by Sailing-master Stephen Champlin. Next in line came

the flagship *Lawrence*, to meet in deadly conflict the largest and heaviest ship of the enemy, the *Detroit*, which bore the broad pennant of their commander. Following in order was the *Caledonia*, under the command of Lieutenant Daniel Turner, to combat the brig *Hunter*; while the *Somers*, *Porcupine*, *Tigress*, and *Trippe*, were designated to fight the *Lady Prevost*, *Little Belt*, and *Chippeway*.

Now that the fleet was fairly under way with a favorable breeze, which would give them the weather-gage, busy scenes were enacted on board all the vessels. The crews fell to with a vim in casting loose guns, drawing around them supplies of balls, grape and canister, arranging pikes and cutlasses, and in girding on pistols for boarding, hammering flints and lighting matches. These were the preliminary duties incident to a naval engagement, and, in this instance, to the most important battle and far reaching in its results of the whole war. This day was to decide for all time the sovereignty of a vast territory to the West, and the future, either for weal or woe, of thousands of their countrymen. As a happy augury of a hopeful issue of the conflict, it was one of the most delightful days of early autumn. A slight shower had fallen early in the morning, but the sky had now become perfectly clear.

Seldom, if ever, has the scene of a naval engagement been laid amid more beautiful surroundings, or to which the approach was so quiet and peaceful. Scarcely a ripple stirred the surface of the waters. The dark green and densely wooded shores of the islands scattered so lavishly over their surface, were just slightly tinted with the hues of autumn, while their deep shadows were brilliantly reflected in the smooth lake. Myriads of birds sang and twittered in the tree-tops and flew in the air, squirrels chattered in the woods, and a great variety of water-fowl filled the marshy spots along the

water's edge. From the lofty mastheads the islands here and there looked like great bouquets of tinted green placed on an immense mirror.

The breeze which had promised so much gradually died away, or came in fitful puffs, and the vessels of the fleet with their white sails stretched aloft, scarcely moved on the quiet bosom of the lake. In the solemn hour that followed not only each officer of the little fleet, but each man of the crews realized that the honor, the glory, and the destiny of his country depended very largely upon the result of the coming conflict. Mutual requests passed between friends for the survivor to notify the family or relatives of the non-survivor, and to take charge of his effects; and Commander Perry handed to the assistant surgeon, Usher Parsons, a package of his private papers and official letters encased in lead, to be thrown overboard in the event of his falling.

What vivid emotions must have stirred the heart and consciousness of the heroic commander, as he observed his fleet slowly bearing down upon the enemy. This conflict, he well knew, would be the first trial of skill between the two hostile nations, in an engagement between squadrons. Upon the ocean, several actions between single frigate and ships had taken place, in which the skill and bravery of the American seamen had been clearly recognized; and the capture of the *Guerriere*, the *Macedonian*, and the *Frolic*, had in a measure broken the charm of British invincibility on the sea. But it yet remained to be determined whether the relative skill, seamanship, and bravery would be the same in an action between two fleets. As commander he had his own reputation and fame to acquire, and his country's integrity to maintain. The development of the wilderness of the West and of the beautiful lake country, and the honor and progress of the nation was at stake. Yet little did he realize that all this was sus-



pended upon the talents and collected valor of *one man*. How appalling the responsibility! How terrible the probation! How vast the interests involved! *And he was that man*.

At about this time the enemy, having lost all hope of obtaining the weather-gage by manoeuvring, hove to in line of battle on the port tack, heading to the south and west. Their situation then was about nine miles west of Put-in Bay, and about the same distance from the main land. Observing the American fleet standing out to windward five or six miles away, Captain Barclay resolved to avail himself of every advantage which the lee-gage to him afforded. And, as later events showed, this was of considerable consequence. It would enable him, he believed, to rake his enemy's vessels, while they were bearing down, with his whole broadsides, while they would only be able to assail him with their bow-chasers. He could, moreover, form his squadron in a more compact line, which was very essential to such a mixed force, and await the necessarily less ordered attack of his enemy. The leeward position would also afford him every facility for relieving disabled vessels, by simply dropping them under cover of the line; and, if disaster threatened, he could run to leeward, form a fresh line of battle, and await a second attack with nearly equal chances of success.

The vessels of the British fleet, it is said, were newly painted and in perfect condition for the conflict; and, as they hove to in close order, gayly bedecked with flags and their red ensigns gently unfolding to the breeze, with the noon-day sun shining on their broadsides, they presented a very gallant appearance. The ship *Detroit* was particularly noticeable for the dazzling whiteness of her canvas, the tautness of her rigging, and the splendid style in which she was handled. As the American fleet bore down to engage them, with the wind on the port quarter, Commander Perry discovered that they had

formed their line with the *Chippeway*, with one long eighteen-pounder on a pivot, in the lead. The big new ship, *Detroit*, was second in the line, followed in order by the *Hunter*, the *Queen Charlotte*, the *Lady Prevost*, and the *Little Belt*. This well ordered line of battle necessitated a remodeling of his own line to conform to his plan, and he signaled the *Niagara* to drop back and take a position between the *Caledonia* and the schooners, to attack the *Queen Charlotte*, her designated adversary. Commander Elliott had no just cause to be piqued at the change, which was required by the plan that had previously been adopted. The movement itself was most fit, and was made promptly and without confusion.

By this disposition of the *Niagara*, the *Ariel* and the *Scorpion* were now in the lead; and the former Perry placed on his weather bow where, having no bulwarks, she might be partially under cover. The long guns of these schooners and the *Caledonia* supplied in a measure the want of long gun power in the *Lawrence*, which was now between them, while standing down outside of carronade range, but within range of the long guns of the enemy. The *Caledonia*, with the schooners in the rear, gave a like support to the *Niagara*. This was a very important arrangement, since the British fleet, it will be remembered, had a preponderance of long guns. Their thirty-five long guns to only fifteen in the American fleet gave them, in action at a distance, a decided advantage; but in close action the weight of metal fired in a broadside greatly favored the Americans.

While they thus slowly bore up for action, martial music struck up the thrilling signal of "all hands to quarters"; and soon after Perry produced the blue burgee, or fighting flag, bearing in large white letters the immortal words of the dying Lawrence, "Don't give up the ship." In a few words he explained the signi-

fiance of the motto, which appealed so strongly to their patriotism and pride, and imparted a rare spirit and alacrity to the crew. As the bunting was briskly rove to the top of the fore-royal, and fluttered out, hovering over the flagship like the guardian spirit of the departed hero, they responded to the appeal of their beloved commander with hearty and enthusiastic cheers. The crews of the nearest vessels, hearing the demonstration and seeing the battle flag proudly bent to the breeze, caught the patriotic spirit and cheer upon cheer burst from the entire fleet. During this stirring spectacle all the sick that were able to stand and lift an arm came on deck, and offered their feeble services in defense of their country. They were impelled to this action, no doubt, by the example of their youthful commander, who, as they well knew, was reduced like themselves by a wasting fever, and though hardly recovered, was standing bravely at his post. Such life is there in the dying words of a hero.

As it was nearly time for the noonday meal, which was certain to find the crews engaged in battle, grog was now served and the bread bags opened. The decks were then thoroughly sprinkled with water and strewn with sand, to insure a firm foothold when blood should begin to flow. Perry then made a final inspection of his ship, carefully examining the battery gun for gun, to see that everything was in proper order. To all the men he had some expression of encouragement, uttered with a cheerful smile and in a confident manner well calculated to inspire them with zeal and loyalty. Coming to some who had been on the *Constitution*, he said, "Well, boys, are you ready?" "All ready, your honor," was the brief reply, with a touch of the hat, or bandanna which some of the old salts had substituted for their cumbrous trucks. "But I need say nothing to you," he added; "you know how to beat those fellows," pointing to the enemy's fleet. At another gun, recognizing

some of his Rhode Island men, he exclaimed, "Ah! here are the Newport boys! *they* will do their duty, I warrant."

During the last half-hour preceding the conflict, a profound hush settled over the scene. It was, in both fleets, like the stillness of the elements before the roar of the hurricane, everyone waiting the issue with breathless anxiety. It was a time when the stoutest heart beat quickly, but with an aspiration, and a hope of victory. It was a moment of direful looking-out toward destruction and death, when even the glow of pride and ambition was chilled for awhile. There was no bustle or noise to distract the mind, except at intervals the shrill piping of the boatswain's whistle, or the low whispers of the men, who, grouped around the guns, closely regarded the movements of the enemy. In that awful pause, when at times every eye stole wistful glances at the countenance of their commander, many looked for the last time across the water on the green shores and sunny hills of their country. For rashness, without courage, it has been said, may rush thoughtlessly into battle; whereas nothing but valor of soul can stand unmoved, and wait for the coming conflict of life or death, of victory or defeat.

The solemn stillness was at last broken, when, at a quarter to twelve, a bugle sounded on board the *Detroit*, and was answered by loud and concerted cheers throughout the British squadron. This was quickly followed by a shot from the enemy's flagship, aimed at the *Lawrence*, which had approached within a mile and a half of the head of their line. The shot fell short; but it was evident that Barclay intended to conduct the fight, if possible, at a distance, which his superiority in long guns indicated as his wisest plan. The American fleet was bearing down on his line at an angle of about thirty degrees, with its rear stretched away in the dis-

tance. A second shot, five minutes later, reached its mark, Perry's flagship, and passed through both bulwarks.

At that moment the advantage lay altogether with the British. The *Lawrence* as yet reached only to the third vessel, the brig *Hunter*, in their line, and was a mile or more to windward. The *Caledonia* was in its designated position, a half cable's length behind the *Lawrence*, and the *Niagara*, which followed the *Caledonia*, was abaft the beam of the *Queen Charlotte*. Owing to the angle which the line formed with the enemy, they were at a slightly greater distance from them than the flagship was. The gunboats, however, being dull sailers, had been unable to keep their places in the line, and had gradually fallen back until the sternmost was more than a mile behind the *Lawrence*, and nearly twice that distance from the enemy. They were well beyond the range of effective fire with their long guns. It was not uncommon for small vessels with low sails to be thus retarded in a light breeze, while larger ones were urged forward by their lofty light canvas.

Despite the disadvantage of his situation, Perry still bore down in gallant style, receiving the fire from the long guns of the *Detroit*, but retaining his own fire, until the enemy apprehended that he intended to board them. There was a limit, however, to the time which he deemed it prudent to allow his opponent's raking fire to play unaffected in aim by a concerted reply. Without waiting, therefore, for his small gunboats in the rear to regain their position in the line, at five minutes before twelve, he opened his fire by a well-directed shot from a long gun on the *Scorpion*. It was aimed and fired by her commander, Stephen Champlin, and crashed through the rigging of the flagship *Detroit*. At the same moment Perry opened with the first division of his own broadside, and inquired of Lieutenant Yarnall if the shots struck. Being answered in the negative, he

began a fire with his long twelve-pounders, and ordered by trumpet the *Ariel*, the *Caledonia*, and the *Niagara*, to open with their long guns. The other British vessels opened at the same time, and the engagement became general all along the line, but at a distance, as the two fleets were still about a mile apart.

The two gunboats in the lead bravely kept their position, and, although limited in power of attack by their few guns and weight of armament, they poured a steady and galling fire at the head of the British line. The *Caledonia*, with her long twenty-fours, was able to engage at once and did effective work, chiefly against the brig *Hunter*, and in a measure diverted her fire from the *Lawrence*. But the *Niagara*, which was at a still greater distance from the British line, had, like the flagship, only two long twelve-pounders that would reach the enemy. These, however, were fired with such vigor that, in the course of about two hours, nearly all the shot of that calibre was expended. From the beginning of the conflict the fire of the British vessels seemed concentrated on the *Lawrence*, and their heaviest shots blazed incessantly upon her. It was evidently Barclay's plan to destroy Perry's flagship and lay low her commander, early in the engagement, and thus throw the fleet in confusion. For here he believed was the bone and muscle, and here he knew was the soul and spirit of the battle. He would then attack the *Niagara* with his combined forces, and the other vessels in turn, and compel their surrender. But there was one weak point in his admirable plan. He underestimated his foe, little realizing the valor, the courage, the indomitable spirit, and the skill, of the valiant Perry and his brave crews.

In few general actions on the seas has the personality of the commander counted for so much after the battle began. Finding that, from the superiority of

the British in long guns, he was suffering more damage than he could inflict, Perry formed the desperate resolution of taking the utmost advantage of the superior sailing qualities of the *Lawrence*, and, leaving the *Caledonia* and the vessels in her rear, advance upon the enemy. He therefore passed the word by trumpet to the other vessels to close up, and, crowding on all sail on the *Lawrence*, he directed the helm put up, and deliberately ran down and closed in with the enemy. The breeze, however, was light and his motion was slow, and, as he bore down with the flagging wind, the *Detroit* with her long guns hulled his flagship through and through, planted shot in her masts and frame, and riddled her sails. The *Ariel* and *Scorpion*, meanwhile, though greatly exposed for want of bulwarks, followed the flagship, maintaining their steady fire. They suffered but little, however, as they were neglected by the enemy, save for a few scattered shots from the *Chippeway*.

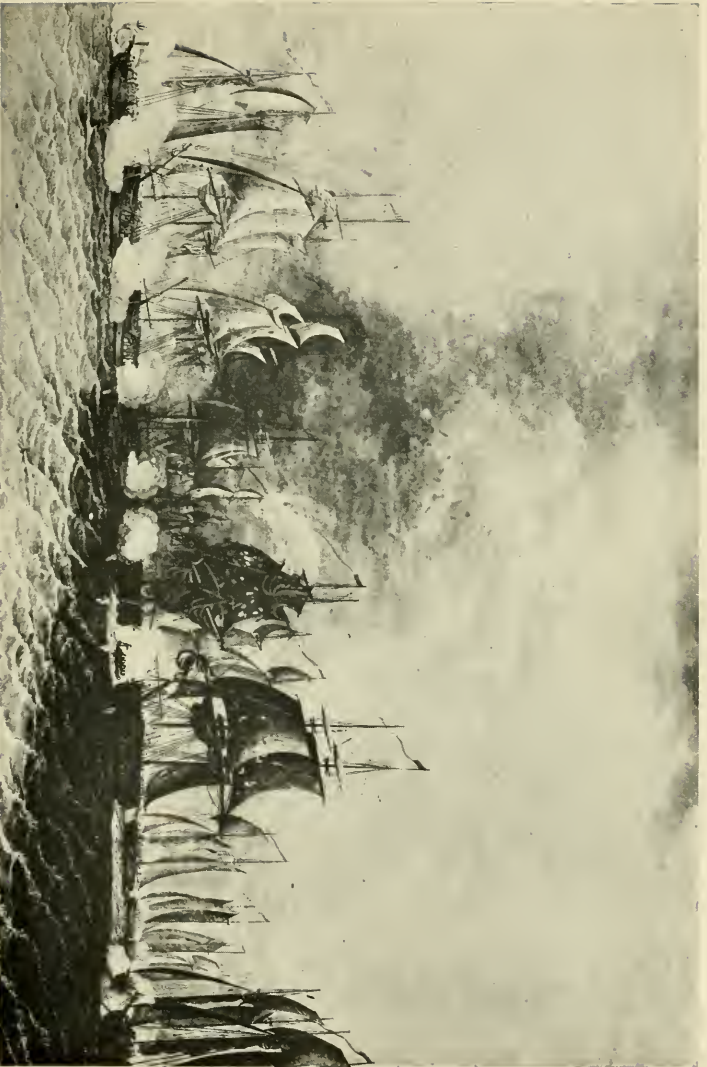
At a quarter past twelve Perry fired a broadside at the *Detroit*, to determine the effect of his heavy guns; but, finding that they did little damage to the thick sides of his opponent, he continued his onward course until he reached a position where every carronade and every musket shot might reach its mark. Sailing-master Taylor says this was within canister shot distance, or within five hundred yards; but Perry says in his official dispatch and account of the battle, at half-canister, or about seven hundred feet. There he luffed up and took a position parallel to the *Detroit*, and poured in upon her a swift, continuous, and effective fire. Although he had suffered from loss of men and injury to his rigging, the good effect of his discipline was apparent, as the guns were rapidly and skilfully served. The flagships, meanwhile, drifted closer and closer together until they were scarcely three hundred feet apart, and musket fire from both became very destructive.

At half-past twelve, Captain Finnis, who commanded the *Queen Charlotte*, perceiving that the *Niagara*, which at the beginning of the conflict was destined as his antagonist, kept so far to windward that he could neither reach her with his carronades, or run up against the wind and lay her alongside, packed on all sail and ran down to the aid of the *Detroit*. He soon bore up with the *Lawrence* and the *Caledonia*, and thus relieved the *Hunter* which made sail and ran to the head of the line to aid the *Chippeway*, against the *Ariel* and the *Scorpion*. By this manoeuvre, Commander Perry, in the *Lawrence*, aided only by the gun-boats on his weather bow, and the distant shots of the *Caledonia*, had to contend in close action with more than twice his force.

For more than two hours did Perry and his flagship bear the brunt of the battle; for, although he was gallantly supported by his small vessels, and as vigorously as could be with their light armaments, the batteries of the *Detroit*, the *Queen Charlotte*, and the *Hunter*, were, during all that time, discharging their broadsides upon him. It was a constant hail of iron and lead from the muzzles of forty-four guns, with all the marines at half-musket shot; while his total armament bearing on the enemy was only nineteen guns. Yet, throughout the unequal contest, the heroic Perry remained unagitated, unshaken and invincible. He had no fear, but for the safety and honor of his country; no ambition but to conquer or die in her defense. Wrought up to the highest state of mental activity, he was superior to every infirmity of mind or body, of passion or will. He was unmoved in the presence of danger, and, midst the scenes of agony and death, he maintained a perfect cheerfulness of manner and serenity of judgment.

The carnage on board the *Lawrence* was terrible; yet, as the assistant surgeon has stated, the most per-





BATTLE OF LAKE ERIE, FROM A RARE ENGRAVING



fect order prevailed during the whole action. There was no bustle or confusion, and as fast as the men were wounded, they were carried below, and others stepped into their places. The dead lay where they fell, until the action was over. The "Commodore," as his men were pleased to call their young commander, nerved by a superior spirit, was untouched, as, covered by a shield, impenetrable, though invisible, he continued to encourage and cheer them to fight on. During the whole time, says this eyewitness, he was the life and soul of the ship, exhibiting a collected and dignified bravery; and his countenance was as composed as if he had been engaged in ordinary duty. Not a murmur, not a complaint, was heard in the ship, while the storm of hail — balls, canister, grape, and bullets — was sweeping over and driving through them, with the slain and wounded falling on every side, and the blood gushing in streams over the decks.

During the thickest of the fight, Yarnall, the first lieutenant, came to his commander with a report that all the officers in his division were cut down; and asked for others. They were assigned him; but so frightful was the slaughter at the guns, as one by one they were dismounted by the fierce fire of the enemy's broadsides, that he soon returned with a like request. "I have no more officers to furnish you," said Perry, "you must endeavor to make out by yourself." And true to this admonition, although thrice wounded, the brave Yarnall kept the deck, and directed his battery in person. Dulany Forrest, his second lieutenant, was struck down at his side by a grape shot. Fortunately the ball had almost spent its force; he was only stunned, and quickly recovered. As he rose from the deck, which was slippery with blood, he pulled out the shot, which had lodged in the lining of his coat, and put it carefully away in his pocket, replying to the anxious in-

quiry of his commander, "No, sir, I am not hurt, but this is my shot."

Several men at the guns were shot down while in the act of speaking to their commander; and one, who had been on the *Constitution*, was about to draw himself up to fire, when a twenty-four pound shot passed through him and he fell without a groan at Perry's feet. Even his young brother, James Alexander Perry, who acted as one of his aides, did not entirely escape. Having two musket balls pass through his cap, and his face blackened by powder and smoke, the little fellow was laid low in front of the commander, by a flying hammock, which had been torn from the nettings by a cannon ball. He was only bruised and slightly wounded by small particles; and soon resumed his duties. John Brooks, the gallant captain of marines, and son of a popular governor of Massachusetts, met a most agonizing death. He was an excellent officer, a man of rare endowments and personality, and a close friend of Perry. Fearfully mangled by a cannon ball in the hip, that swept him across the deck, he was carried below to the surgeon's ward, but asked no aid, for he knew his doom. As he heroically resigned himself to death, he often inquired of the newly wounded as they came from the deck, how the battle was going; and ever repeated his hope for the safety of his commander.

In the midst of this terrible havoc, concentrated in a single brig, there was *one*, and only one sentiment of wonder, of increasing amazement. It was expressed, at first, in guarded words to the commander, by Yarnall, by Taylor, and by Forrest. It was uttered in groans by the wounded when carried below, and breathed by the dying on the deck; and the brave and accomplished Brooks, lifting a last eye aloft, died with this bitter accusing question on his lips: "Where is the *Niagara*? Why does she not come down and help us?"

Why does she still hug the wind and keep at a distance, instead of coming down to take her part in the battle?"

Ah! how truly was this a question which could be answered only in the heart and soul of Elliott, her commander. He knew full well that he was expected to attack the *Queen Charlotte* in close action, and had mentioned it to his crew in words suited to inspire them with confidence. For, from the superiority of his armament, he had boasted that if he could come alongside of her, he could take her in ten minutes. Why, then, in the name of bravery, did he not, with the same wind and with enough sail, and as much speed, beat down and follow her? Why did he, for two hours after the *Queen Charlotte* left him, leave the *Lawrence* exposed to the destructive fire of three of the most powerful ships of the enemy; whilst he with his twenty guns, with the wind whistling into their muzzles, might have been pouring round, grape, and canister out of them at his adversaries, at half-musket shot? There is no evidence that a musket, or more than one division of one broadside of his carronades was fired on the *Niagara*, or that this was more than once discharged during the two hours and a half. And, to restrain her from passing the *Caledonia*, "he was compelled frequently to keep the main yard braced sharp aback."

"How could he suffer the enemy undisturbed," writes Bancroft, "to fall in numbers on one whom he should have loved as a brother, whose danger he should have shared, in the brightness of whose glory he should have found new lustre added to his own name? Some attributed his delay to fear; but, though he had so far one attribute to a timid man, that he was a noisy boaster, his conduct during the day, in the judgment of disinterested observers and critics, acquits him of downright cowardice. Some charged him with disaffection to his country, from sympathy with family connections

in Canada; but this is an imputation justified by no concurrent circumstances, or acts of his earlier or later life. Some thought him blinded by envy, which sews up the eyes with an iron thread, and leaves the mind to hover on an undiscerning wing. He may, perhaps, have been disturbed by that unhappy passion, for a year before he had himself conspicuously won applause near Buffalo, and had then promised himself the command of Lake Erie, to be followed by a victory achieved under his own flag; that very morning, too, his first position had been, as we have seen, in the van; but it had been very properly changed for the purpose of placing him opposite the *Queen Charlotte*.

“Elliott had inherent defects of character. He wanted the generous impulse which delights in the fame of others; the delicacy of sentiment which rejects from afar everything coarse and mean; the alertness of courage which finds in danger and allurements; the quick perception that sees the time to strike; and self-possessed will, which is sure to hit the nail on the head. According to his own account, he at first determined to run through the line in pursuit of the *Queen Charlotte*, and, having a fair and sufficient breeze, he directed the weather braces to be manned for that purpose, when he observed that the *Lawrence* was crippled, and that her fire was slackening; and after consultation with purser Magrath, who was an experienced seaman, he agreed, if the British effect the weather-gage, we are lost. So he kept his place next in line to the *Caledonia*, which lingered behind, because she was a dull sailer, and, in the light wind was moreover retarded in her movements by the zeal of Turner, her commander, to render service by his armament, which enabled him to keep up an effective fire from a distance.”

Under the heavy and destructive fire of twice his force, at a distance of only a hundred yards, or less, the men on deck became fewer, while nearly all the

guns of the starboard battery, next the enemy, were either dismounted or disabled. Yet, the undaunted Perry continued the fight with unabated serenity, making the best use of his small force and the means at hand. Doctor Parsons, the surgeon's mate, and the only medical officer in the fleet who was then able to render surgical aid, heard a call for him at the small skylight in his apartment, and recognized the voice of his commander, who said in a quiet tone, "Doctor, send me one of your men," indicating one of the six men allowed for assistance to the wounded. The call was instantly obeyed; but in the next ten minutes it was successively renewed and obeyed, until at the seventh call the surgeon could only answer that there were no more. "Are there any that can pull a rope?" asked Perry. Whereupon, two or three of the heroic wounded crawled up the ladder to the deck, to lend a feeble hand at pulling at the last guns. One in particular, who was so sick as to be unfit for duty, begged to be of some use. "But what can you do?" he was asked. "I can sound the pump, and let a strong man go to the guns," was his earnest reply. So he sat down by the pump, and at the end of the battle was found at his post, "with a bullet through his heart." He was from Newport; his name was Wilson Mays.

The scenes in the surgeon's apartment, which in the shallow vessel was necessarily on a level with the water, at this time, were most harrowing. The small, low room between decks could offer no security to the wounded, and was repeatedly perforated by cannon balls. The wounded were received on the floor of the wardroom, which was about ten feet square, from the main hatchway forward; and, after treatment, were passed to the berth deck. Once, as the surgeon was bending over the table to dress a wound, a cannon ball came through the side of the vessel and passed directly over him, and would have killed him outright had he

been standing erect. Later, when the battle was raging with the greatest fury, Midshipman Laub came down with his arm badly fractured. The surgeon dressed it and applied a splint, and then told him to go forward and lie down. As he was about to comply, while the surgeon's hand was still on him, a cannon ball struck him in the side and dashed him across the room, instantly terminating his sufferings. Charles Polrig, a Narragansett Indian, who was badly wounded, suffered in the same way.

Never was the advantage of discipline and thorough training at the guns more exemplified than in the desperate and effective fire of the *Lawrence*. During those fateful two and a half hours that she sustained the contest almost alone, so long as her guns remained mounted and in working order, her fire was kept up with uninterrupted spirit and vigor. Doctor Parsons has recorded that he could discover no perceptible difference in the rapidity of the firing of the guns over his head during the action, except toward the end. By that time, however, her rigging was much shot away, and was hanging down on the deck or dragging behind; her spars were badly wounded and falling overboard; her braces and bowlines were cut, so that it was impossible to trim the yards and keep the vessel under control; and her sails were torn to pieces and hanging in ribbons. With this condition aloft, on deck the destruction was even more terrible. The bulwarks were broken in so that the enemy's round shot passed completely through. The shrieks of the wounded and dying, and the crash of timbers shattered by cannon balls, or splintered by grape and canister, were still heard; but her fire grew fainter and fainter, as gun after gun became dismounted, and the men dropped to the deck around them. Death finally had the mastery; *the carnage was unparalleled in naval warfare.*



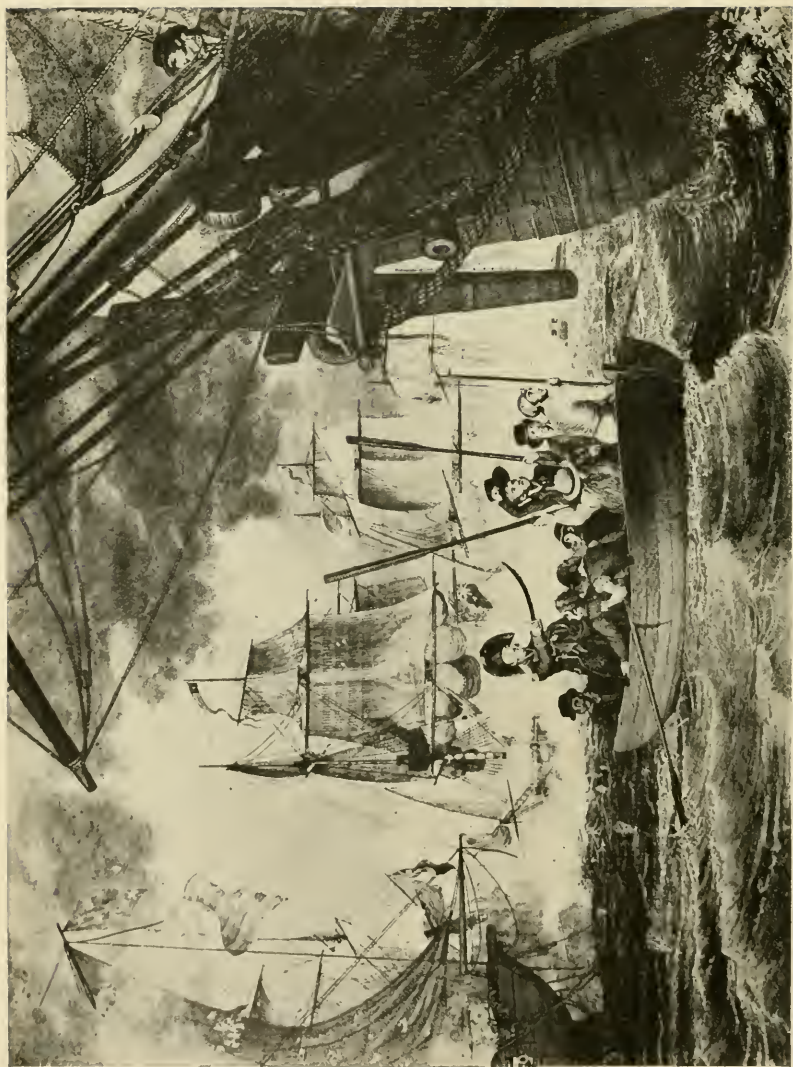
Of the one hundred and one well and able-bodied men who had gone into the action, more than four-fifths were killed or severely wounded. Twenty-two of the gallant seamen and marines lay dead on the deck, while sixty-one suffered from musket and gun shot wounds. Only Perry himself, his little brother, and sixteen of his brave crew remained unharmed. The deck, in spite of the layer of sand, was slippery with blood, which ran down the sides of the ship. Only one gun was left mounted, to fire which Perry himself assisted. At last even this was bowled over and disabled; every brace and bowline was shot away, and, despite the exertions of the sailing-master, the vessel became unmanageable. Yet, through it all, Perry did not despair, for he had an eye which could see through the cloud. He could see that the *Detroit*, upon which he had directed his fiercest fire, and of whose crew many were killed or wounded, was almost disabled. But he did not know that on board the *Queen Charlotte* the loss was most important; for Captain Finnis, her commander, an able and intrepid seaman and officer, had fallen at his post; and that Lieutenant Stokes, the next officer in rank, had been struck senseless by a splinter.

At this stage of the battle, which terminated the first action, Elliott, in the *Niagara*, which lay about half a mile or more to windward, eagerly watched the last spasms of the *Lawrence*, as she gasped in wreck and ruin. Now that her fire was dying away, that there was little movement on her decks, strewn with the dead, and that no fresh signal was hoisted from his superior, he persuaded himself that the indomitable Perry lay among the slain. Believing, therefore, that the chief command of the fleet now devolved on himself, Elliott hailed the *Caledonia* and signalled Lieutenant Turner to bear up and make way for him. But he little reckoned with what stuff the young officer was made; for he at once, without a word, put up his helm in a

most daring manner, and made all sail for the enemy's line, using his small armament all the while to the best advantage. With what satisfaction and pleasure must his commander, from the scene of death and ruin, have witnessed this heroic act of Turner — the utter disregard of Elliott's order, and of his bearing down toward the flagship, to defend her to the last and, if need be, to share her fate.

Meanwhile Elliott, seeing the bold manoeuvre of Turner, which brought him in close action between the flagship and the enemy, under a freshening breeze passed to windward, or to port, of the *Caledonia*, in a line that carried him still further away from the scene of action. Off to his right lay the *Lawrence* disabled and silent; by all the rules of naval warfare and for the sake of suffering humanity, he should have given her protection by sailing his uninjured ship with his fresh crew, between her and the British. But instead of this he kept to the windward, sheltered by the helpless flagship, and, firing at the *Queen Charlotte* at a distance, steered for the head of the British line. Perry, who looked with dismay on this fresh evidence of treachery, now saw with the swiftness of intuition the new plan which promised to bring victory out of defeat. In the crippled condition of the enemy, which had been brought about by his superhuman exertions, if he could get the *Niagara* into close action, "victory must perch on his banner." So he resolved on the moment to transfer his flag from the tattered *Lawrence* to her uninjured consort; and directed that his boat, which hung at the stern and, like himself, had escaped the storm of iron hail, should be lowered and manned for that purpose. The command of the *Lawrence* thereupon devolved upon the wounded Yarnall, to whom and the remnants of his crew he gave the pledge in reassuring tone: "If a victory is to be gained, I'll gain it."





PERRY TRANSFERRING HIS FLAG TO THE NIAGARA

From a rare engraving in the collection of the late Jay Cooke, Gibraltar, Lake Erie

As Perry then went over the port gangway into his boat, with his little brother and seven oarsmen, he pointed to the battle flag still flying at the mast-head, as if seconding the admonition of its trumpet words, "Don't give up the ship." But to Yarnall, he said: "I leave it to your discretion to strike or not as seems best; but the American flag must not be pulled down over my head today." Unconscious or unmindful of danger, Perry continued to stand erect in the boat, with his brave oarsmen imploring him not to expose himself thus needlessly. For, as the smoke of battle had rolled away, the enemy observed the small boat leaving the *Lawrence*, and, quickly penetrating the design, had at once directed a heavy fire of great guns and musketry at it. Directing all their energies to destroy the boat, its sides were filled with bullets, several of the oars were splintered, while the crew was covered with spray from the round shot and grape that churned the water on every side. Yet the unconquerable Perry stood unmoved and defiant. The act was simply the unconscious expression of the invincible spirit of the man; and it moved his men to a drastic measure. Losing for a moment their sense of subordination in realization of his danger, and with anxiety for the periled honor of their country, they threatened to lay on their oars unless he sat down. Thus earnestly entreated and with his young brother clinging to him, he finally yielded to their wishes; whereupon they at once gave way with a hearty good will. With all their exertions, however, more than ten minutes passed in that storm of shot and lead before they reached the *Niagara*. Under a freshening breeze she was then passing the weather or port beam of the *Lawrence*, at a distance of nearly half a mile; but in a direction which would soon have carried her entirely out of the action.

While this heroic scene was being enacted on the water, the little group of survivors on the crippled flag-

ship stood spellbound with anxiety and doubt, watching the progress of their beloved commander. They saw the broadsides aimed at him, and fall harmlessly around him; they saw marines on the decks and sharpshooters in the tops of three vessels of the enemy shower at him musket balls, which only ruffled the water of the lake; they saw the seamen for a brief moment rest on their oars, and their commander sit down; and, at fifteen minutes before three, they saw the oars dipping for the last time, as the boat passed under the port quarter of the *Niagara*. Then, as they saw him step lightly on her deck, apparently unharmed, they gave way to hearty but feeble cheers; and turned to face the desperate situation of the *Lawrence*. The enemy still continued their fire on the helpless vessel; and Lieutenant Yarnall, as commander, consulted with Forrest and Taylor. It seemed to be his duty to spare the lives of the brave fellows entrusted to him, and the frightful slaughter of the wounded below. There were no more guns that could be fired, and had there been, men were wanting to handle them. Of their entire crew only nine remained untouched and unharmed. Further resistance was impossible; to hold out longer would only expose life recklessly. "Yet, they had braved the enemy's fire for three hours," observes Bancroft, "could not they confide in help from their commodore and hold out five minutes more? True, they had no means of offense, but the battle flag with its ringing words floated over their heads; they had a pledge to keep; they had an enemy whose dying courage they should refuse to reanimate; they had their country's flag to preserve unblemished; they had the honor of the day's martyrs to guard; they had a chief to whom they should have spared unspeakable pain; they had the wounded to consider, who with one voice cried out: 'Rather sink the ship than surrender! Let us all sink together!' And yet a shout of triumph from the enemy proclaimed to

both fleets, that the flag of the *Lawrence* had been lowered; nor did they then forbode how soon it was to be raised again."

Upon the quarter deck of the *Niagara*, facing her commander, stood the unconquered Perry, black with the smoke and grime of battle, but unscathed, with not so much as a scratch on his skin, or a hair of his head harmed. The same merciful providence that had watched over him during the desperate battle, had afterward conducted him safely through the storm of leaden hail. With his fortitude unimpaired by the horrors of the last hour, he was radiant with the indomitable purpose of winning the day. As he glanced quickly at the ship's rigging and sails, and at her hale crew that thronged the deck, ready and eager for the conflict, his buoyant nature assured him of a harvest of glory. For he beheld the *Niagara*, "very little injured," even "perfectly fresh," with her crew in the best of spirits, and only three men hurt. The presence of his commander, whom he had thought dead, was a great blow to Elliott; his mind was stunned, and he asked the foolish question, "What is the result on your brig?" as if he had not seen the *Lawrence* a helpless wreck, and believed her commander had fallen. "Cut all to pieces," replied the calm and dispassionate Perry, who even then was formulating his plan for redeeming the day. "I have been sacrificed," he added, but checked himself. The rebuke died on his lips, and he blamed only the wind and the inability of the gunboats in the rear to get into the action. This evidence of the magnanimous nature of his superior smote Elliott with shame; he entirely lost his self-possession, and, catching at the thought which seemed to relieve him from censure, he offered to go and bring up the gunboats. "You may do so," said Perry; for his wish had been anticipated; and was best for both. Thus, the second officer of the fleet, whose right and duty it would be to take the chief command should

Perry be wounded, left his own brig, and went in the same boat that had brought his chief, on a needless errand, to bear a superfluous message which might have been signalled to the gunboats, which, under their faithful officers were already advancing with sweeps and oars, as fast as possible.

As Elliott stepped into the boat, Perry quickly rove his pennant to the masthead of the *Niagara*, and hoisted the signal for close action. This order was seen by the whole fleet, and was instantly answered by loud and prolonged cheers. To know that their commander once more trod the deck of a sound and fully-manned brig, whose crew had scarcely suffered, and whose purpose was to redeem the day, filled the drooping spirits of the faithful with renewed hope and enthusiasm. Their chief, whose judgment had instantly condemned the course in which Elliott had been steering, at forty-eight minutes after two, gave an order to back the main top-sail, in order to keep the brig from running entirely out of the action. He then brailed up the main trysail, put the helm up to run down before the wind, altered her course eight points, or a whole right-angle, and, with squared yards, set foresail, topsail and top-gallants, and bore down to cut the British line, which lay at a distance of half a mile.

Captain Barclay, in the battered *Detroit*, seeing the prospect of another encounter with a second brig, which appeared uninjured, and under the command of one who had fought the *Lawrence* with such skill and obstinacy, was filled with despair. He had other work to do than fight another battle, and in his crippled condition the outlook was anything but promising. Off on his port quarter lay the helpless *Lawrence*, with her flag down, but as yet, in the stress of other duties, not taken possession of. Was he to be deprived of the reward of three hours' hard fighting, after suffering such loss? Was the tide of battle at last to go against him? And in



what an unfortunate predicament he now found himself. In attempting to veer around, or wear ship, in order that he might bring his starboard broadside to bear, several of his port guns being disabled, the *Queen Charlotte*, not having imitated this action with sufficient quickness, ran her bowsprit and head booms into the mizzen rigging of the *Detroit*, and, becoming foul of each other, remained fixed in this precarious position.

Meanwhile, the gunboats in the rear of the line, by the superhuman exertions of their brave crews in the use of sweeps, had arrived within effective range of their guns. In the lead of these was the sloop *Trippe*, with one long thirty-two, under the command of Lieutenant Holdup Stevens, which now took the place, on the weather quarter of the *Detroit*, so long held by the gallant Turner in the *Caledonia*. Inspired by the daring exploits of their intrepid commander, these young officers, without slackening their fire, exchanged signals for boarding the *Detroit*; and were about to carry the design into execution, when they observed with delight their chief bearing down under a full press of canvas, with the evident purpose of cutting the British line.

At this moment the *Niagara*, which, seven or eight minutes in the freshening breeze had brought within canister-shot distance of the enemy, became for the first time a deadly combatant. With guns double-shotted and crew impatient to do their share of the day's fighting, Perry still bore on utterly regardless of the raking fire to which he was fully exposed. Cutting into the enemy's line, he placed the *Chippeway* and the *Lady Prevost* on his left, the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* on his right, and shortened sail to check the velocity so as to make sure of his aim. Passing slowly under the bows of the *Detroit* and across the stern of the *Lady Prevost*, within half-pistol shot, with cool and fatal accuracy, to the right and to the left, he poured into both vessels as they helplessly exposed, his deadly and

destructive broadsides. The loud many-voiced shriek of agony that arose from the *Detroit* told of the terrible slaughter on her decks; while on the *Lady Prevost* the survivors, terrified by the raking fire which they had suffered, fled below the deck. There was no one left but her commander who, with a severe wound in the head, stood gazing about with a vacant stare. Seeing this, Commander Perry, who was merciful even in battle, stopped the guns on that side.

Having cut through their line with such terrible havoc, the tide of battle was now turned. In a moment the invincible Perry, with victory almost within his grasp, luffed up to take a position athwart the two ships, which had now got clear of one another, and continued to pour into them a close and destructive fire. In this close action the gunboats and the brig at the right of the line, and the *Somers*, the *Tigress*, and the *Porcupine*, from the rear, added their fire with deadly results. The *Lawrence*, meanwhile, had drifted to leeward entirely out of the action; but the remnants of her devoted crew watched with keen interest the scene before them. They saw the gunboats in the rear of the line forging ahead with sweeps into the action; they saw the brave young officers, Turner and Stevens, boldly advancing on the *Detroit*, as if to board; they saw their commander bearing down under full press of sail to break the British line; and, with renewed hope and revived spirits, they again raised the flag of liberty above their heads. Later, when they saw the destruction on the enemy's ships, wrought by the fierce broadsides of the *Niagara*, they knew the day was redeemed. They exulted in the prowess of their commander, and the valor of the young officers and men; and felt that they had not fought, nor had their less fortunate shipmates bled and died, in vain.

At a few minutes after three, or in eight minutes after Perry broke through their line, the British fleet



THE NIAGARA BREAKING THROUGH THE BRITISH LINE



was completely at his mercy, in a state of utter ruin. The *Queen Charlotte*, which was in a position to be raked fore and aft, had suffered terribly; her lower sails hung in shreds, while her bulwarks were beaten in and her guns dismounted. She was the first to give up the conflict, one of her officers appearing on the taff-rail and waving a white handkerchief, bent on a boarding pike. On the *Detroit* the wreck and carnage was scarcely less compete and pitiable than on the *Lawrence*. Every brace had been shot away, the mizzen topmast and gaff were down, and the other masts were badly splintered; there was not a stay left forward, the hull was badly shattered, and many guns were dismounted. The ship was completely unmanageable, and Lieutenant Inglis, her second in command, hailed the victors to say he surrendered. The brig *Hunter* and the schooner *Lady Prevost*, which lay to leeward under the guns of the *Niagara*, yielded at the same time. The *Chippeway*, on the right, and the *Little Belt*, at the extreme left, attempted to escape; but were pursued by the *Scorpion* and the *Trippe*, which soon overhauled them and brought them back. The last shot of the battle, like the first, was aimed and fired by Stephen Champlin, the commander of the *Scorpion*.

When the cannonade ceased, its thunders hushed, and the echoes had died away upon the distant shores of the lake, the deep silence of nature, which had been banished for awhile, succeeded, broken only by the feeble groans of the wounded and dying. As the winds of heaven swept away the smoke of battle, uncovering a victory which was to give immortal renown to the victors, it revealed the vessels of both fleets, now acknowledging one master, completely mingled. For a time every voice was silent. "The victors were too proud to exult; the vanquished too brave to complain." All paused; and a feeling of awe crept into the heart of

everyone who had come unhurt from the terrible conflict, fraught with its scenes of agony and death.

Now that the flags of the enemy were down, in evidence of submission, there began the proud though painful duty of taking possession of their vessels. The officer sent from the *Niagara*, on boarding the *Detroit*, found Captain Barclay, who had been twice wounded, prostrated in his berth. Early in the action he had been struck by a grape shot in the thigh, and carried below to the surgeon's ward. In the first moment of returning consciousness, upon learning that Lieutenant Garland, who was next in command, had fallen at his post, he caused himself to be borne upon the deck to again direct the movements of the fleet, in person. During the terrible broadsides of the *Niagara*, he was again struck by grape in the right shoulder, the shot entering below the joint, breaking the blade to pieces, and leaving a most painful wound. But before surrendering, the heroic Barclay was again carried on deck, to convince himself that further resistance would be unavailing. Meanwhile Lieutenant Bignall, commanding the *Hunter*, and Masters-mate Campbell of the *Chippeway*, were severely wounded. On all the vessels of the British fleet the loss of officers was appalling and felt in the action; and at the end, only the commander of the *Little Belt* remained unharmed and fit for duty.

About four o'clock, when the most pressing needs of the moment had been supplied, and the wounded and sick given every attention possible in the narrow confines of the ward room and cabin, Perry turned to announce the victory to his country. Searching in his pockets for paper upon which to write, he found only a letter, on the back of which he wrote the laconic message which has immortalized his name. It was addressed to General Harrison in these ringing words:

“Dear General:

We have met the enemy and they are ours. Two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop.

Yours with great respect and esteem,  
O. H. PERRY.”

As he wrote to the secretary of the navy, without deliberation, in a moment of victory, a solemn awe at his wonderful preservation in the midst of great and long continued danger, prompted him to attribute his signal victory to divine providence:

“U. S. brig, *Niagara*,  
Off the Western Sister, head of Lake Erie.  
September 10, 1813, 4 P. M.

Sir:

It has pleased the Almighty to give to the arms of the United States a signal victory over their enemies on this lake.

The British squadron, consisting of two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop, have this moment surrendered to the forces under my command, after a sharp conflict.

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

O. H. PERRY.

“To HON. WM. JONES, Secretary of the Navy.”

Nothing could be more characteristic of the man and officer than the blended modesty, generosity, and fair-mindedness of this celebrated dispatch, which gave vent to a spontaneous impulse of his heart. He made no allusion to himself, except when he unavoidably referred to the squadron under his command; and the only idea of the desperate struggle in which his own courage and genius was so conspicuous, was conveyed in the simple words, “a sharp conflict.”

Having dispatched these letters by special express to the army headquarters at Seneca, he made signal to anchor, with a view of affording greater facility for securing the prisoners, and for the comfort of the wounded. He then dispatched Sailing-master Brownell to take charge of the *Somers*, to which he soon ordered seventy prisoners to be removed from the larger captives. Forty of the more desperate and seasoned "tars" were ironed and confined below decks, while the remainder were arranged about the long gun in a reclining posture, with the crew forming bulwarks across the deck, and ready to fire at the least indication of the prisoners to rise. Equally careful arrangements were made for the safe-keeping of the prisoners on other vessels of his fleet.

Having performed these imperative duties, Commander Perry returned in his boat to his tattered flagship, to be again among his brave shipmates, and to do what he was able for the wounded. His coming aboard the *Lawrence* has been impressively described by Doctor Parsons, in these words: "It was a time of conflicting emotions when the commodore returned to his ship. The battle was won; he was safe. But the deck was slippery with blood and brains, and strewn with the bodies of twenty-two officers and men, some of whom had sat at table with us at our last meal, and the ship resounded everywhere with the groans of the wounded. Those of us who were spared and able to walk, approached him as he came over the ship's side, but the salutation was a silent one on both sides; not a word could find utterance." Here, amid the carnage of battle, in the presence of the small remnant of his noble crew, Perry received the commanders of the captured vessels, as they came to tender their formal surrender.

Throughout the battle, at the request of his officers, he had worn a uniform round jacket; but for the solemn ceremony of receiving the captives, he resumed his un-



dress uniform, and stood on the quarter deck. As the British officers came over the gangway, silent and harassed by many disturbing emotions, picking their way among the dead and wreckage, they tendered their swords to Perry for his acceptance. With a native dignity befitting the occasion, but without the least betrayal of exultation, in a low tone of voice he requested them to retain their side arms, meanwhile, inquiring with deep concern for Captain Barclay and the wounded officers; and expressed his regret that he had not a spare medical officer to send them.

When twilight fell, the sailors and marines who had fallen in their gallant and desperate defense of the *Lawrence*, and those of the other vessels, were sewed up in their hammocks with a cannon ball at their feet; and, when the ritual of the Anglican Church had been read, they were dropped one by one into the lake. At length, when the day's work was done—the battle fought, the wounded succored, and the dead consigned to the deep—exhausted nature claimed rest, and the victorious Perry turned into his cot, and slept as do the brave, the just, and the pure in heart, as soundly and restfully as a child.

The tribute to the hero by Bancroft is worthy of record:

“The personal conduct of Perry throughout the tenth of September was perfect. His keenly sensitive nature never interfered with his sweetness of manner, his fortitude, the soundness of his judgment, the promptness of his decision. In a state of impassioned activity his plans were wisely drawn, were instantly modified as circumstances changed, and were executed with entire coolness and self-possession. He crowned his victory with his modesty, forbearing to place his own services in their full light, and was more than just to others. When he was rewarded by promotion to the rank of

captain, he, who never murmured at promotion made over his head, hesitated about accepting a preferment which might wound his seniors.

“The mastery of the lakes, the recovery of Detroit and the Far West, the capture of the British army in the peninsula of Upper Canada, were the immediate fruits of his success. The imagination of the American people was taken captive by the singular incidents of a battle in which everything seemed to flow from the personal prowess of one man; and everywhere he came the multitude went out to bid him welcome. Washington Irving, the chosen organ as it were of his country, predicted his ever increasing fame. Rhode Island cherishes his glory as her own; Erie keeps the tradition that its harbor was his shipyard, its forests the warehouses for the frames of his chief vessels, its houses the hospitable shelter of the wounded among the crews; Cleveland graces her public square with a statute of the hero, wrought of purest marble, and looking out upon the scene of his glory; the tale follows the immigrant all the way up the Straits, and to the head of Lake Superior. Perry’s career was short and troubled; he lives in the memory of his countrymen, clothed in perpetual youth, just as he stood when he saw that his efforts were crowned with success, and he could say in his heart, ‘We have met the enemy and they are ours.’”

## CHAPTER IX

### EVENTS AFTER THE BATTLE

THE dawn of morning revealed to the survivors of both fleets the deadly fierceness of the combat; and the victors for the first time took account of their losses. The sides of the *Lawrence* were completely riddled by shot from the long guns of the enemy, and her decks were thickly covered with clots of blood, while fragments of the unfortunates who had been hit by cannon balls were still sticking to the rigging and sides. The vessel was so shattered as to be unfit for sea service; and Captain Perry decided to make her the hospital ship for his fleet. He accordingly transferred his flag to the schooner *Ariel*, from which he directed the subsequent movements of his vessels. The sides of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte* suffered scarcely less. A British officer who saw them in Put-in Bay, a few days after, wrote: "It would be impossible to place a hand upon the broadside, which had been exposed to the enemy's fire, without covering some portion of a wound, either from grape, round, canister, or chain shot." Their masts were so much injured that they rolled out in the first severe gale. The other vessels were not much damaged in hull, rigging or sails, and, after slight repairs, rendered valuable service to the conclusion of the war.

The total losses in the American fleet were twenty-seven killed and ninety-six wounded, of which twenty-two were killed and sixty-one wounded on the *Lawrence*; and two were killed and twenty-five wounded on the *Niagara*, the dead and all but three of the wounded hav-

ing suffered after Perry boarded her. One was killed and three wounded on the *Ariel*; two were killed on the *Scorpion*; while three were wounded on the *Caledonia*, two on the *Somers*, and two on the *Trippe*. While the casualties were not as many as might have been expected, considering the fierceness of the battle, the sufferings of the wounded were terrible. As Doctor Parsons, on the *Lawrence*, was the only surgeon who was able to perform duty, the delay in making amputations and giving proper care to the wounded, added greatly to their distress. During the whole night of the tenth he was occupied in administering opiates, and arresting renewed bleeding among the wounded. But at daylight he had his first patient on the table for amputation, and by eleven o'clock he had completed the operations. He then attended with infinite care to the dressing of minor wounds, and at ten o'clock at night a few of the slightly wounded still remained without attention. Then, after thirty-six hours of constant duty in a stooping position, he was obliged to desist, from mere physical exhaustion. The remaining wounded of the other vessels were only seen for the first time the following day, or forty-four hours after the battle. But by rare skill and humane attentions, only three of the total wounded died, which the surgeon modestly attributed to "their being abundantly supplied with fresh provisions, to a pure atmosphere under an awning upon deck, to the cheerful state of mind occasioned by victory, and to the devoted attention of the commodore to every want." Perry had scarcely removed his flag to the *Ariel*, before his extreme solicitude for his suffering shipmates brought him back to the *Lawrence*, where he spent some time going among the sick and wounded offering cheer and comfort.

In the course of the day he visited Captain Barclay, who lay severely wounded in his cabin on the *Detroit*; and from that hour began a warm and enduring friend-

ship between them. Captain Perry not only procured every comfort for his wounded prisoner, but advanced him and his officers sums of money required for their personal use. Afterward, having the conviction that nothing but a return to his country could restore the British officer, he wrote with such urgency to the secretary of the navy in his behalf, making the request as a personal favor, the only one he had to ask, that a parole for him was eventually obtained. The wounded of the British fleet met with equal assiduous care, and at Erie a few weeks later, Captain Barclay was seen, with tottering steps, supported by General Harrison and Captain Perry, as he walked from the landing place to his quarters. Months after, on his way home, Captain Barclay, at a ball given in his honor by the bravery and beauty of Canada, showed his deep appreciation of the kindness of his victor, by giving a toast, which was received with great applause: "Commodore Perry, the gallant and generous enemy."

The losses of the British fleet, as reported by Captain Barclay, amounted to forty-one killed and ninety-four wounded. Of the dead three were officers; and nine officers were wounded, some very seriously, which loss was sensibly felt during the action. Every officer commanding vessels, and their seconds, were either killed, or wounded as to be unable to keep the deck. Lieutenant Buchan, in the *Lady Prevost*, was wounded in the head, and the purser of the *Detroit*, who nobly volunteered his services on deck, was hurt in the knee. Two days after the battle two Indian chiefs, clad in sailor's clothes, in which they appeared very ill at ease, were discovered in the hold of the *Detroit*. They had been taken aboard to act as sharpshooters in the tops; but when the battle became warm by the crashing of timbers on the deck and destruction around them, they were panic-stricken and, with the exclamation "quoh", fled below. When brought out from their hiding place

they expected nothing less than torture and scalping, but Perry, after a few good-humored words, directed them to be fed and sent ashore.

About nine o'clock on the morning of the eleventh the united fleets weighed anchor and sailed for Put-in Bay, where they arrived at noon. An opening on the margin of the thickly-wooded shore was selected for the burial place of the officers who had fallen; and on the following morning, which was Sunday, their remains were consigned to the earth with an appropriate and affecting ceremonial. The day was serene, every breeze was hushed, and not a wave ruffled the surface of the water. The men of both fleets mourned together. As the boats moved slowly in stately procession from the ships, the slow and regular motion of the oars, keeping time with the notes of the solemn dirge, the mournful waving of the flags, showing the sign of sorrow, the sound of the minute guns on the ships reverberated from shore to shore. The spot where the party landed was a wild solitude, the stillness of nature giving to the scene an air of melancholy grandeur. The procession then formed, according to rank, in reversed order, the youngest of the dead being borne first, the British and American alternately, with the remains of Captain Finnis coming last. The men of both nations walked in alternate couples to the graves, like men who, in the presence of eternity, renewed the relation of brothers and members of one human family. The remains of three Americans, Brooks, Laub, and Clark, were lowered into the earth, side by side with three of the British, Finnis, Stokes, and Garland, volleys of musketry closing the mournful ceremony.

On the thirteenth of September, which was ushered in by a violent gale from the southwest, Captain Perry found leisure to draw up a detailed report of the battle, together with statements of the relative losses. Like



THE BURIAL OF THE AMERICAN AND BRITISH OFFICERS

From a painting by Chevalier, owned by the Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland





his earlier dispatches, this report is admirable for the modesty with which he mentions his own movements, and for his evident desire to make all under his orders appear advantageously. This was particularly true regarding Commander Elliott, and was well suited to prevent any unfavorable impression being formed of his conduct. True to the dictates of his heart he set up no claims to the glory of the victory, but submitted all, with unexampled modesty, to the award of his country. "We are particularly pleased," wrote Irving, "with his letter giving the details of the battle. It is so chaste, so moderate and perspicuous; equally free from vaunting exultation and affected modesty; neither obtruding himself upon notice, nor pretending to keep out of sight. His own individual services may be gathered from the letter, though not *expressly mentioned*, indeed, where the fortune of the day depended so materially upon himself, it was impossible to give a faithful narrative without rendering himself conspicuous." The report follows in detail:

"United States schooner *Ariel*,  
Put-in Bay,  
13' of September, 1813.

Sir:

In my last I informed you that we had captured the enemy's fleet on this lake. I have now the honor to give you the most important particulars of the action. On the morning of the tenth inst., at sunrise, they were discovered from Put-in Bay, where I lay at anchor with the squadron under my command. We got under way, the wind light at S. W., and stood for them. At 10 A. M., the wind hauled to S. E. and brought us to windward; formed the line and brought up. At 15 minutes before 12 the enemy commenced firing; at 5 minutes before 12 the action commenced on our part. Finding their fire very destructive, owing to their long guns, and

its being mostly directed to the *Lawrence*, I made sail, and directed the other vessels to follow, for the purpose of closing with the enemy. Every brace and bow-line being shot away, she became unmanageable, notwithstanding the great exertions of the sailing-master. In this situation she sustained the action for upwards of two hours, within canister shot distance, until every gun was rendered useless, and a greater part of the crew either killed or wounded. Finding she could no longer annoy the enemy, I left her in charge of Lt. Yarnall, who, I was convinced, from the bravery already displayed by him, would do what would comport with the honor of the flag. At half past 2, *the wind springing up, Captain Elliott, was enabled to bring his vessel, the Niagara, gallantly into close action*; I immediately went on board of her, when he anticipated my wish by volunteering to bring up the schooners, which had been kept astern by the lightness of the wind, into close action. It was with unspeakable pain that I saw, soon after I got on board the *Niagara*, the flag of the *Lawrence* come down, although I was perfectly sensible that she had been defended to the last, and that to have continued to make a show of resistance would have been a wanton sacrifice of the remains of her brave crew. But the enemy was not able to take possession of her, and circumstances soon permitted her flag again to be hoisted.

“At 45 minutes past two, the signal was made for ‘close action.’ The *Niagara* being very little injured, I determined to pass through the enemy’s line, bore up and passed ahead of their two ships and a brig, giving a raking fire to them from the starboard guns, and to a large schooner and a sloop, from the larboard side, at half-pistol shot distance. The smaller vessels at this time having got within grape and canister distance, under the direction of Captain Elliott, and keeping up

a well directed fire, the two ships, a brig, and a schooner surrendered, a schooner and a sloop making a vain attempt to escape.

“Those officers and men who were immediately under my observation evinced the greatest gallantry, and I have no doubt that all others conducted themselves as becoming American officers and seamen. Lieutenant Yarnall, first of the *Lawrence*, although several times wounded, refused to quit the deck. Midshipman Forrest (doing duty as Lieutenant), and Sailing-master Taylor, were of great assistance to me. I have great pain in stating to you the death of Lieutenant Brooks, of the marines, and Midshipman Laub, both of the *Lawrence*, and Midshipman Clark, of the *Scorpion*; they were valuable officers. Mr. Hambleton, purser, who volunteered his services on deck, was severely wounded late in the action. Midshipmen Claxton and Swartwout, of the *Lawrence*, were severely wounded. On board the *Niagara*, Lieutenants Smith and Edwards, and Midshipman Webster (doing duty as sailing-master), behaved in a very handsome manner. Captain Brevoort, of the army, who acted as a volunteer in the capacity of a marine officer on board that vessel, is an excellent and brave officer, and with his musketry did great execution. Lieutenant Turner, who commanded the *Caledonia*, brought that vessel into action in the most able manner, and is an officer that in all situations may be relied upon. The *Ariel*, Lieutenant Packett, and the *Scorpion*, Sailing-master Champlin, were enabled to get early into the action, and were of great service. Captain Elliott speaks of the highest terms of Mr. Magrath, purser, who had been dispatched in a boat on service, previous to my getting on board the *Niagara*; and being a seaman, since the action has rendered essential service in taking charge of one of the prizes. Of Captain Elliott, already so well known to the government, it would be almost superfluous to speak.

In this action he evinced his characteristic bravery and judgment, and since the close of the action has given me the most able and essential assistance.

“I have the honor to enclose you a return of the killed and wounded, together with a statement of the relative force of the squadrons. The captain and first lieutenant of the *Queen Charlotte*, the first lieutenant of the *Detroit*, were killed. Captain Barclay, senior officer, and the commander of the *Lady Prevost*, severely wounded. Their loss in killed and wounded I have not yet been able to ascertain; it must, however, have been very great.

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

O. H. PERRY.

To HON. WM. JONES,  
Secretary of the Navy.”

At the close of the battle, every voice, whether of seamen or marines, was loud in praise of the commander of the fleet; every tongue was questioning, or reluctantly restrained from doing so, the conduct of the *second* in command. All who wrote to home or friends were, in their letters, openly expressing their censure on the position and action of the *Niagara*, during the first action. The moment this was known to Captain Perry his magnanimous nature impelled him to send Lieutenant Turner and Mr. Hambleton, his trusted friends, one to every vessel of the fleet, the other to the camp of the army on the main land, entreating them to stop. “Why,” said he, “should a young officer be ruined? Why should the public eye look on any part of the battle with disapprobation? Honor enough for all has been won; and I am desirous that all my companions in arms shall share it with me.” By this concerted effort, every letter not already dispatched, was stopped, and in deference to the wishes of their beloved

commander, all reference to Elliott was left out. This act will ever be held as honorable of Perry's generosity, as the victory was to his courage.

In the official dispatch it will be noted that the commander saves Elliott from disgrace by a benevolent ambiguity. "At half past two," he wrote, "the wind springing up, Captain Elliott was *enabled* to bring his vessel, the *Niagara*, into close action." Although Elliott had requested him to place this "enabled" at an earlier hour, the most that he could say, in all truth, was *enabled*; he could not say he *did* bring the *Niagara* into close action, for every man of the fleet knew that this was done by Perry himself, after Elliott had left his ship. The public might infer that Elliott, since he *was enabled* to bring, *did* in fact, *bring up* the *Niagara* gallantly into close action; and Elliott was quite willing it should be left in this ambiguity, to clear himself from blame. However the public may at first have taken the dispatch, all the efforts of Captain Perry to shield his second officer of the fleet, were unavailing. For, although his officers and the men of the *Lawrence* respected his wishes in this respect, some few disaffected ones and the prisoners quietly spread reports of the exact movements of the *Niagara* before Perry had boarded her, and of the culpability of her commander. Some of the British seamen even went so far as to declare that, had such delinquency occurred in their fleet, the officer would have been hung to the yards of his own ship.

A transcript of the log of the *Lawrence*, made within twenty-four hours after the battle, serves as a searchlight on the position of the *Niagara* during the first action, or until Perry boarded her. It was the duty of Sailing-master Taylor to keep a register of the important events of the day, for preservation, which were admitted facts at the time, and undisputed by anyone. The copy of the register, or log, for the tenth of Sep-

tember, 1813, was made by an officer of the *Lawrence* into his private diary, and is as follows: "Put-in Bay, at 5 A. M., discovered the enemy's squadron bearing N. W., wind S. W.; at seven could see all vessels, two ships, two brigs, one schooner and one sloop. At 10, called all hands to quarters. At a quarter before meridian the enemy commenced the action at one mile distant. In half an hour we came within musket shot of the enemy's new ship, *Detroit*. At this time they opened a most destructive fire on the *Lawrence*, from the whole squadron. At half past one, so entirely disabled we could work the brig no longer. At 2 P. M., most of the guns were dismounted, breechings gone, and carriages knocked to pieces. Captain Perry hauled down his flag and repaired on board the *Niagara*, which hitherto had kept out of the action, and in fifteen minutes passed in among the British squadron, having the *Detroit*, *Queen Charlotte*, and the *Hunter* on the starboard side, and the *Lady Prevost* and *Chippeway* on the larboard side, and silenced them all; and in ten minutes after three, they hauled down their colors. Two small vessels attempted to escape but were overhauled, and struck a few minutes later."

If further evidence was needed to convince the public of the turpitude of Elliott, it was the official report of Captain Barclay to the British Admiralty. Although this document casts no new light on the battle scene, it reveals the position of the *Niagara* in the first encounter:

"His Majesty's ship, *Detroit*, Put-in Bay,  
Lake Erie, September 12, 1813.

Sir:

The last letter I had the honor of writing you, dated the sixth inst., informing you that unless certain intimation was received of more seamen being on the way to Amherstburg, I should be obliged to sail with the squad-

ron, deplorably manned as it was, to fight the enemy (who blockaded the port), to enable us to get supplies of provisions and stores of every description; so perfectly destitute of provisions was the port, that there was not a day's flour in store, and the crews of the squadron under my command were on half allowance of many things, and when that was done, there was no more. Such were the motives which induced me to sail on the ninth instant, fully expecting to meet the enemy next morning, as they had been seen among the islands; nor was I mistaken.

“Soon after daybreak they were seen in motion in Put-in Bay. \* \* \* The line was formed according to a given plan. About ten, the enemy had cleared the islands and immediately bore up, under easy sail, in a line abreast, each brig being also supported by the smaller vessels. At a quarter before twelve, I commenced the action with a few long guns; about a quarter past twelve the American commodore, also supported by two schooners, one carrying four long 12-pounders, the other long 32 and 24-pounders, came close in action with the *Detroit*; the other brig of the enemy, apparently destined to engage the *Queen Charlotte*, supported in like manner by two schooners, kept so far to windward as to render the *Queen Charlotte's* 20-pounder carronades useless, while she was, with the *Lady Prevost*, exposed to the heavy and destructive fire of the *Caledonia*.

“The action continued with great fury until half past two, when I perceived my opponent drop astern, and a boat passing from him to the *Niagara* (*which vessel was at this time perfectly fresh*). \* \* \* As the *Queen Charlotte* was in such a situation that I could receive very little assistance from her, he made a noble, and alas, too successful an effort to regain the day, for he bore up, and supported by his small vessels, passed

within pistol shot, and took a raking position on our bow, nor could I prevent it. My gallant first lieutenant, Garland, was now mortally wounded, and myself so severely that I was obliged to quit the deck. \* \* \* Lieutenant Inglis showed such calm interpidity, that I was fully convinced that, on leaving the deck, I left the ship in excellent hands. \* \* \* Captain Perry has behaved in a most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and officers, but to all the wounded.

I have the honor to be, etc.,

R. H. BARCLAY,

Commander and late Senior Officer."

In the Court martial for the trial of Captain Barclay, which was held months after in England, evidence was introduced showing that the *Niagara* was actually *making away*. The proceedings were reported in a London paper of the time, as follows:

#### "NAVAL COURT MARTIAL.

A court martial was held at Portsmouth, on Friday, on board His Majesty's ship *Gladiator*, for the trial of Captain R. H. Barclay and his remaining officers and men, for the loss of the squadron on Lake Erie, on the tenth of September, 1813, in an action with the American flotilla.

"On the following morning he fell in with the enemy, and having the weather-gage, bore down to commence the action; but, unfortunately, the wind veered directly round, and brought our squadron to leeward. The commencement, however, was propitious; the American commodore was obliged to leave his ship, which soon after surrendered, and hoist his flag on another of the squadron, *which had not been engaged and was making away*, when unfortunately, the *Queen Charlotte* and *Detroit*, our two best ships, having had all their



officers killed or wounded, fell on board of each other, and were unable to clear — at the same time the greater number of their guns were dismounted, and the *Lady Prevost* had fallen to leeward, having lost her rudder. The Americans, seeing the situation of our ships, renewed the action with the assistance of their gunboats, by which the whole of our squadron was obliged to surrender.”

The allegation made in this report that the *Niagara* (with Commander Elliott in command) “was making away”, induced him to call for a court of inquiry. After due deliberation the court decided that “imperious duty compels this court to promulgate testimony that appears materially to vary in some of its important points, — and that the charge made in the proceedings of the British Court Martial, by which Captain Barclay was tried, of Captain Elliott attempting to withdraw from the battle, is malicious and unfounded in fact. On the contrary it has been proved to the satisfaction of this court, that the enemy’s ship the *Queen Charlotte*, bore off from the fire of the *Niagara*, commander by Captain Elliott.” This report merely negated the allegation that Elliott “was making away,” and had nothing whatever to do with his proved delinquency of conduct in standing off and leaving the flagship to bear the concerted fire of the whole British fleet. But the allegation shows conclusively the British view of the movements of the *Niagara* and the conduct of her commander during the first action.

Returning to the chronicle of human events occurring immediately after the battle, we find that Commander Elliott, upon discovering the unfavorable impression made by his conduct during the combat, had taken to his berth, less from sickness than chagrin, as Doctor Parsons afterward stated. While in this state of mind, Captain Perry soon after visited him, when he declared to his superior “that he had lost the fairest

opportunity of distinguishing himself that man ever had." Perry was moved by the abject torture of mental faculties, as exhibited by Elliott, to make every effort to relieve him. Accordingly, when, a few days after, to avail himself of the generosity of his commander, Elliott addressed to him a letter requesting him to state what had been his conduct during the battle, he replied in terms of approbation, which he subsequently had cause to regret. Commander Elliott's letter, copied from the original in the Mackenzie collection, was as follows:

"U. S. ship *Niagara*, September 18, 1813.

Dear Sir:

My brother, who has this evening arrived from the interior of the country, has mentioned to me a report that appeared to be in general circulation, that, in the late action with the British fleet, my vessel betrayed a want of conduct in bringing into action, and that your vessel was sacrificed in consequence of a want of exertion on my part individually. I will thank you if immediately you will, with candour, name to me my exertions, and that of my officers and crew.

Yours respectfully,

JESSE D. ELLIOTT.

An immediate answer is desired.

To CAPTAIN O. H. PERRY, *Ariel*."

Captain Perry's reply was as follows:

"U. S. schooner *Ariel*, Put-in Bay,

September 19. 1813.

Dear Sir:

I received your note last evening after I had turned in, or I should have answered it immediately. I am indignant that any report should be in circulation prejudicial to your character, as respects the action of the

tenth instant. It affords me pleasure that I have it in my power to assure you, that the conduct of yourself, officers, and crew was such as to meet my warmest approbation. And I consider the circumstances of your volunteering and bringing up the smaller vessels to close action as contributing largely to our victory. I shall ever believe it a premeditated plan of the enemy to disable our commanding vessel, by bringing all their force to bear upon her; and I am satisfied, had they not pursued this course the engagement would not have lasted thirty minutes. I have no doubt, if the *Charlotte* had not made sail and engaged the *Lawrence*, the *Niagara* would have taken her in twenty minutes.

Respectfully, etc.,

O. H. PERRY.

TO CAPTAIN JESSE D. ELLIOTT."

That Perry made a great mistake in writing this letter, and even committed a grievous fault, though his motives were generous, cannot be denied. He had gone too far in shielding his subordinate, in framing his official report, and, while it was perfectly natural that he should have continued his efforts to this end, the warmth of his expressions must be condemned. A writer in the *North American Review* of 1841, Vol. 53, had this to say on this point: "Perry in his generous sentiment that 'there is honor enough for us all,' forgot that he had no right to make others share in the dishonor of an individual. His neglect to arrest Captain Elliott on the day of the battle, was the great error of his life, and he had sufficient cause to repent it. No compromise with guilt, whatever the motive that leads to it, can be safe."

In justice to Captain Perry, what he said to his most intimate friend, Mr. Hambleton, in palliation of his mistake, should be included and fully understood: "It was a matter of great doubt, when I began to re-

flect upon Captain Elliott's conduct, to what to attribute his keeping so long out of the action. It was difficult to believe that a man, who as I then thought, had, in a former instance, behaved bravely, could act otherwise in a subsequent action. I did not then know enough of human nature to believe that any one could be so base as to be guilty of the motive which some ascribe to him, namely, a determination to sacrifice me by keeping his vessel out of action.

“On the evening of the action I was elated with success, which had relieved me of a load of responsibility, and from a situation, standing as I did with the government, almost desperate. At such a moment there was not a person in the world whose feelings I would have hurt. On showing Captain Elliott the rough draft of my official report, when I asked him if it was a correct statement, he assented; but, after a while did not like the manner in which I spoke of the *Niagara*, and asked me if I could alter it. I told him I thought not, but would take time to reflect, and, if I could with propriety, would do so. Upon reflection, I was sensible I had already said and done too much. Subsequently I became involved in his snares; and, on his writing me a note, of which *he has published only a part*, I was silly enough to write him in reply the foolish letter of the nineteenth of September, because I thought it necessary to persevere in endeavoring to save him.

“This undoubtedly reflects on my head, but surely, not on my heart. I was willing enough to share with him and others the fame I had acquired. Although, my friend, I never have arrogated to myself superior judgment — on the contrary, am aware of my weakness in being very credulous — yet I was certainly as capable of deciding, after reflection, on events that occurred under my own eyes, as any other in the squadron, and the opinions of others had nothing to do with mine as

respects Captain Elliott. Although my want of judgment may cause regret to my friends, yet no one can reflect on the goodness of my heart and the correctness of my principles."

The efforts of Captain Perry, in behalf of Elliott, not only to exhibit his conduct in a light favorable in the official report, and the letter in the same spirit, but also by repeated requests to his officers to refrain from mentioning the matter in discussing the battle with the public, would doubtless have attained their object, and left Elliott in possession of an enviable reputation, had he been satisfied to leave the whole matter as it then stood. But instead of awakening in Elliott a keen sense of gratitude, these magnanimous efforts of his superior "appear to have planted in his bosom the most implacable hatred." The sequel to this base ingratitude will be shown in its true light in a subsequent chapter.

## CHAPTER X

### FOLLOWING UP THE CAMPAIGN ON LAND

**T**HE military and political consequences of Perry's victory, coming at a most critical time in the war on the western frontier, were of the most momentous character. This splendid achievement gave to the United States the undisputed supremacy of Lake Erie and the Niagara frontier, and made necessary the evacuation of Malden and Detroit. It released the whole northwest territory from dread of the scalping knife; it broke up the confederacy of Indian tribes; it wiped out the stigma of Hull's surrender; it enabled General Harrison immediately to invade, by concerted aid of the victorious fleet, the British territory, with the pursuit and capture of their army under Procter. From the moment of this victory, when the colors of the *Queen Charlotte* and the *Detroit* were lowered, the ambitious schemes of the enemy upon our western borders were forever blasted, and the last vestige of British domination along the southern shores of the inland seas practically expired with the discharge of the last cannon, whose thunders closed the battle of Lake Erie.

From an international standpoint Perry's victory was equally far reaching. It won for the American arms the respect of the whole world; and was an impressive notice to Europe that the nation, which had been baptized in blood at Lexington, was amply able to care for itself on land and sea. The victory had a strong determining effect on terminating the last war our country has had with England, and was the chief

factor in establishing the permanent boundary line between Canada and the United States, which was most favorable to us. The signing of the Treaty of Ghent, in 1814, by those distinguished American statesmen, John Quincy Adams, Henry Clay, and Albert Gallatin, ended the war, and secured to their country the concession by Great Britain of the supremacy of the Great Lakes, a supremacy which Perry had placed beyond question, and which exists today as it was then established. The treaty presaged the retention by the United States of a princely domain bordering on the lakes, which would have been forever lost to them had Fate crowned Captain Barclay instead of Captain Perry, as the hero of Erie.

Perry's victory, moreover, insured the development of the struggling settlements along the lake shores; it promoted the unprecedented growth that followed when they became lake ports, and hurried the time when great cities took their places, and others sprang up in the interior, with their vast commercial and industrial relations. Under the American flag the sisterhood of states reaped plentifully where it had not sown. It profited and became affluent by reaping the timber, mineral, and agricultural riches of a territory second to none, of equal extent, in those natural resources that denote the favored places of the earth. The battle of Lake Erie bound to the destiny of the republic each commonwealth whose waters, however slightly, are laved by the clear blue waters of the lakes. It provided foothold and freedom for the development of American civilization, and welded the strongest links in the chain of our national progress.

The effect of the decisive victory on a despairing people was no less brilliant. Of Perry the government and people had expected much; and, having so signally fulfilled his trust and captured the whole British squadron, the only one that had ever been surrendered, the

people found in him a new sort of hero. They were carried away by his youthful vigor, by the energy and skill with which he built and manned his fleet, by the unwavering serenity with which he bore the brunt of the battle, by the dramatic shift of command in the open boat, and by his indomitable spirit with which, when all seemed lost by the misconduct of Elliott, he brought up the *Niagara* and turned defeat into victory. As the news spread over the country, bells were rung, cannon were fired, and buildings were illuminated at night, in his honor. At Boston the United States frigate *Constitution* honored him with a salute. His name was on all lips; it was repeated with enthusiasm on the streets; it was emblazoned in the journals of the day; it was placed on signs of taverns and given to halls and public buildings; and was the theme of scores of naval songs, odes, verses, and impromptu lines. In their ecstasy of joy the people wore badges bearing the name of Perry; and it was placed on articles of household use. He was everywhere hailed, like the immortal Washington, as the savior of his country. It is said that "the general joy was unequalled since the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown."

The reception of the news of Perry's victory by the army in camp at Seneca, near the present city of Fremont, Sandusky County, was the occasion of great rejoicing. The event was vividly recalled years after, in 1860, by General Lewis Cass, then Secretary of State. During the military operations of the Northwestern army, he had a command under General Harrison, with the rank of Brigadier-General. For some time he had been stationed at Seneca, where the troops destined for the invasion of Canada were assembled, with a view of ulterior operations when the proper moment should arrive. About the tenth of September General Harrison had marched from Seneca with a portion of the army,



for the mouth of Portage River, the point selected for embarkation, leaving General Cass in command of the main body of the army :

“Towards evening of the twelfth of September,” he wrote, “an express reached the camp at Seneca bringing the first news of the brilliant victory in which we felt so deep an interest. He was conducted to my tent, and delivered to me a package of dispatches. Among these was a letter for the secretary of the navy, and another for the commanding general. The latter I opened and read with feelings it were vain to attempt to describe. It contained the memorable annunciation that the battle had been fought and the victory won, in those imperishable words, which I need not repeat, for they are everywhere engraved upon the American heart. The intelligence was immediately communicated to the troops, and those who were present, and are still living, can only appreciate the joyful emotions with which it was received. It was not only gratifying to their national pride, as a great naval victory, but it secured for them a safe passage across the lake, to the enemy’s shore. The manifestations of this feeling, exhibited upon that occasion, are vividly impressed upon the memory.”

The movements of the Northwestern army, shortly after the battle of Lake Erie, are indicated by a dispatch of General Harrison to General Armstrong, then secretary of war, as follows :

“Headquarters, mouth of Portage River,  
Lake Erie, 15th September, 1813.

Sir :

You will have been informed from the letter of Commodore Perry to the secretary of the navy, of the brilliant naval victory obtained by him, and the capture of the whole of the enemy’s flotilla on this lake. I arrived here the day before yesterday with a part of the

troops from Seneca Town, and this morning General Cass has brought on the remainder. Governor Shelby has also arrived with his militia. We are busily engaged in embarking the stores and artillery, and by the day after tomorrow the whole will be afloat. General McArthur will join me the day after, at the Bass Islands, with the troops from Fort Meigs, and on the following night, if the weather permits, we shall sail for the Canadian shore."

The prisoners of the captured fleet, meanwhile, had been landed at Sandusky, whence they were marched to Chillicothe. On the nineteenth of September the *Lawrence*, with hastily made repairs to her spars, rigging, and sails, weighed anchor and stood out of the bay for Erie, with the sick and wounded of the American fleet. As she sailed out of the harbor, Captain Perry went on board to take leave of his brave shipmates, and to make sure that everything had been done for their comfort. He had already procured whatever supplies the sparsely settled country along the shores afforded, for his own and the British wounded, and had opened his own private stores for the use of the surgeon, who drew upon them freely. True to his generous desire to save the reputation of Elliott, he urged the officers and men to avoid any remarks about the conduct of the *Niagara*, and cautioned Lieutenant Forrest, who was to carry the captured colors of the enemy to Washington, to refrain from any discussion of the subject.

During the first few days after the battle, Captain Perry had been busily engaged in making the urgent repairs to the vessels of both fleets still fit for active service, to stage the next drama of the war. About the fifteenth, with his small vessels, he began the removal of the army from the mouth of Portage River to Put-in-Bay. A day or two after he himself sailed in the *Ariel* for the same point, to receive General Harrison and his

staff, and convey them to the rendezvous. Attached to the party in the capacity of guards were about thirty young Virginians, the remnants of a company, called the Petersburg Volunteers, which had suffered much by battle and disease during a year's campaign. While *en route* to Put-in Bay the evening meal was served the officers in the cabin, after which they assembled on deck to enjoy the cool and bracing air of the lake.

"We were engaged in animated conversation," relates Major Chambers, of Kentucky, an aid to General Harrison, "when one of the Virginians, whom a spirit of adventure had led to abandon a life of ease for the hardships of the camp, and who had scarcely recovered from an attack of malarial fever, approached me and asked, in an undertone, if it would be possible for him to obtain a cup of coffee. He was still weak, he said, and the cold and coarse food which the army had been confined to while on the march, he had found almost impossible to partake of. As I was slightly acquainted with the commodore, having met him for the first time only an hour or two before, I hesitated about asking the favor, and, as Mr. Packett, who commanded the vessel, was reluctant to trouble his superior officer, the matter was dropped. Imagine, therefore, my surprise and pleasure when, a half hour later, the entire company of Virginians was invited into the cabin to an excellent supper, and upon whom the warm-hearted Perry attended in person. Afterward I received a firm but kindly worded rebuke from the commodore for having hesitated to explain what accident alone had revealed to him, the longing of those poor fellows for a cup of hot coffee. He happened to overhear the quiet request of the half-sick soldier, and had sent directions to his steward unnoticed by anyone." "This incident," continued the Major, "made a lasting impression on me, and confirmed my earlier opinion of the character of the

gallant commodore, that he was as generous and kind as he was brave and noble."

At length, on the evening of the twenty-second, the army, which mustered four thousand five hundred men, was assembled at the Bay, together with the artillery and military stores. As the vessels of the reorganized fleet, with the *Niagara* in the lead, were insufficient to embark the entire force at one time, it was decided to rendezvous with the troops at Middle Sister, as Perry had suggested to the general some time before the battle. Accordingly, on the twenty-third, they began the operation of transferring the army and, notwithstanding interruptions from bad weather, they were comfortably in camp on the twenty-sixth. Governor Shelby, meanwhile, had arrived with the mass of Kentucky militia; and General McArthur, with the troops from Fort Meigs on the Maumee, was on the way. Everything, therefore, seemed propitious, as soon as favorable weather should favor the enterprise, for the movement of the whole army simultaneously by means of the squadron and small boats, to the Canadian shore.

On the twenty-sixth Captain Perry, and General Harrison who had his headquarters on the *Ariel*, proceeded to the mouth of the Detroit River and reconnoitered the harbor of Malden and intervening shores. At this time the general fixed upon a plan to land the troops at a point about three miles south of the village of Amherstburg, as the British called the settlement close by to Malden. General orders of debarkation, of march, and of battle were immediately drawn up under the direction of the general, on board the *Ariel* while returning to the Middle Sister, and made known to the army at once upon arriving there. The orders concluded with the following words of encouragement and humane caution: "The general entreats his brave troops to remember that they are the sons of sires whose fame is immortal; that they are to fight for the rights

of their insulted country, while their opponents combat for the unjust pretensions of a master. Kentuckians! remember the River Raisin! but remember it only while the victory is suspended. The revenge of a soldier cannot be gratified upon a fallen enemy!"

Long before daybreak of the twenty-seventh, the weather being mild and the lake smooth, the army was taken on board the fleet or embarked into the small boats, for the final movement to the enemy's shore. About nine o'clock, all being afloat, the vessels weighed anchor and stood towards the mouth of the Detroit River; and arrived at the point of debarkation, about a mile and a half east of Bar Point, early in the afternoon. With springs on their cables the war ships anchored in line of battle, close in shore to cover the landing of the troops. In an hour all that could be carried in the boats were landed on the beach, in admirable order, and in readiness for the advance on Malden. But with all their caution to avoid a surprise on landing, there was no enemy to oppose them. The fortress of Malden and adjacent camp had been evacuated by the British, and the fort, barracks, and navy yard destroyed. This information was at once communicated to Captain Perry, who weighed anchor, stood up the river into the cove, and took a position off the town. The remainder of the troops were landed at five o'clock, soon after the main body of the army had marched in and taken possession.

The evacuation and destruction of this stronghold by General Procter was rendered inevitable by the loss of the British fleet, and the want of provisions to stand a long siege. The force under his command consisted of seven hundred regular troops, the militia of the district of Upper Canada, and about three thousand Indians who were exceedingly anxious to fight. Although Procter had the advantage of position, he was far from

his base of supplies and, having no means of reaching his base except by forced marches, with winter closing in upon him, he decided to move eastward while he could do so without interruption. In this decision he was not influenced in the least by the attitude of the Indian chiefs, who strongly opposed retreating, the impolicy and disgrace of which bore upon them heavily. As a result more than two-thirds of the Indians deserted the British when the retreat was begun, only the invincible Tecumseh and his followers remaining steadfast. In the lengthy harangue, which occurred on the eighteenth of September, in which this noted chieftain attempted to dissuade the general from his inglorious design, he said :

“Listen Father, our fleet has gone out, we know they have fought; we have heard the great guns, but know nothing of what has happened to our Father with the one arm. Our fleet has gone one way and we are very much astonished to see our Father tying up everything and preparing to run away the other, without letting his red children know what his intentions are.

“You always told us that you would never draw your foot off British ground; but now we see you drawing back, and we are sorry to see our Father doing so without seeing the enemy. We must compare our Father’s conduct to a fat animal that carries its tail upon its back, but, when affrighted, it drops it between its legs and runs off.

“Listen, Father. The American have not yet defeated us by land, neither are we sure that they have done so by water; we therefore wish to remain here and fight the enemy, should they appear. If they conquer us, we will then retreat with our Father.”

No time was lost in following the retreating enemy, the army marching up the east bank of the river, while the fleet sailed up the Detroit with the heavy baggage

and the military stores. At a small hamlet, called Sandwich, where they arrived on the twenty-ninth, General Harrison learned that the British had made a stand on the right bank of the river Thames, at a point fifty-six miles further on, leaving the Michigan territory to revert to its rightful possessors. General Procter evidently intended to fortify himself in that position, and await attack; and, if defeated, to continue his retreat eastward in the direction of Lake Ontario. The Indians to the number of two thousand, who had abandoned the British on their retreat, comprising the Ottawas, Chipewas, Wyandots, Miamis, and a band of hostile Delawares, were received at Sandwich, and made peace with the Americans by offering to co-operate with them against their former friends. On the same day the Indians lurking in the neighborhood of Detroit, across the river, gave their submission to General McArthur, with seven hundred troops, and agreed to "take hold of the same tomahawk, and strike all who were enemies of the United States, whether British or Indians." General Harrison thereupon issued a proclamation, announcing the expulsion of the enemy from Michigan, and re-establishing the former civil government. He then returned in the *Ariel* to Sandwich, in time to meet the mounted Kentuckians under Colonel Johnson who, with the horses belonging to the staff and field officers, had crossed the river.

The river Thames, along which the scene of war was then laid, is a deep and winding stream flowing in a westerly direction, and discharges its waters into Lake St. Clair about twenty-five miles east of Detroit. It reaches far inland in the general direction of Procter's retreat, and he had used the lake and river to transport in small boats his heavy baggage and supplies. Learning of this, Captain Perry, on the thirtieth of September, sent the *Niagara*, under the command of Commander Elliott, the *Lady Prevost*, then under the com-

mand of Lieutenant Turner, and the *Scorpion* and the *Tigress* into the lake in pursuit of them. He followed soon after with the *Ariel*, and the *Caledonia*, commanded by Holdup Stevens; and on the second of October appeared off the mouth of the Thames, but too late to intercept the escaping boats before they had entered the river. As the *Scorpion*, *Tigress*, and the *Porcupine* were the only vessels which could cross the bar at its mouth, Commander Elliott, with a large number of small boats, was dispatched up the river to convey the baggage of the army, and to protect the passage of the troops over the Thames or its tributaries, should serious opposition be offered by the enemy.

The army, meanwhile, had advanced rapidly, and on the morning of the third of October reached the neighborhood of the Thames. They had met some opposition in crossing the four tributary streams, which were deep and muddy, and at one place the bridge was being destroyed as they approached. They saved it, however, and repaired another further on, and camped four miles below Dalson's, where it was supposed the enemy was entrenched ready to give battle. At this place the Thames becomes narrow with a more rapid current, and the banks are high and steep, and heavily wooded for many miles. As the character of the land would expose the decks of the vessels to the Indian sharpshooters, while their artillery would be of no service, it was agreed that they should be left there, with the small boats and the baggage under a guard of infantry.

At this stage of the campaign Perry became so thoroughly enthused with the spirit of the chase on land, that he was unwilling to remain inactive with the gunboats, and tendered his services to General Harrison as an aid-de-camp. It was not enough that he had won a glorious victory on the water, but with his aggressive nature he must follow it up by daring deeds on



land. He was not content to rest on the fame already won, as most men would, but he must still gratify that old craving, "to meet the enemies of his country," so long as any remained. Of the dangers and perils into which this desire might lead him, he gave no thought. The general received him most cordially on his staff; and, by the kindness of Major Chambers, who dismounted his servant, Captain Perry was provided with a horse. Thus, the sailorman in all his glory became, for the time being, a horseman in the army of his country.

The volunteers from the army who had served in the fleet on the memorable tenth of September, upon returning to the ranks, had spread among their comrades most glowing accounts of Perry's heroism and humanity; and most of the soldiers in the crossing of the lake had seen something of him for themselves. By his exertions and the efforts of the general, the most perfect harmony had existed between the soldiers and the sailors, among whom there usually prevailed a constitutional dislike. On this account, and owing to the enthusiasm aroused by his decisive victory, aided no less by his commanding appearance and the grace and skill of his horsemanship, he was rapturously received in the army, and followed by animating cheers. The exercise of the rapid pursuit of the enemy, after a confinement of some weeks on shipboard, oppressed with cares and anxiety, exhilarated him greatly; and he found much amusement in the odd ways and sayings of the hardy Kentuckians.

But the march of the pursuing army, which then numbered about three thousand five hundred men, soon became the more serious business of war; and hourly there were increasing evidences that it would result in overtaking the enemy, with an inevitable fight or surrender. Some small boats were captured and their

crews made prisoners; and at every favorable point the Indians were encountered in their efforts to check the advance of our troops. Eight miles from the encampment of the previous night was the Village of Chatham, where another tributary of the Thames was to be crossed. The bridge over this stream had been completely destroyed, and on the opposite bank were several hundred Indians drawn up to dispute any attempted passage. Believing the whole British force to be in the immediate vicinity, General Harrison drew up his army in order of battle, and stationed his artillery to cover the party detailed to replace the bridge. But the Indians proved to be only a skirmishing party, for they soon fled, and the army passed over. Beyond the bridge a house, stored with arms, and further up stream a small vessel, laden with guns and ammunition, were discovered in flames, but by heroic efforts they were saved. An advance of four miles revealed two other vessels on fire, and also a large distillery, filled with ordnance and valuable stores, which were burned. Two 24-pounders, with their carriages, and a quantity of shot and powder, were, however, found abandoned by the fleeing enemy.

Thus the army closed up with the British forces, which were still on the right bank of the Thames, and only a few miles ahead. A night came on it was evident that the pursuit would end on the following morning, and a battle waged. They therefore halted, pickets were stationed and both officers and privates bivouacked in the field, the prairie grass for their beds, and the canopy of heaven for their covering.

At an early hour on the morning of the fifth of October, the march was resumed through a fine agricultural country, abounding with well cultivated farms, surrounded by fruitful orchards. The peaceable inhabitants, harassed by the passage of their own army, and terrified by the prospect of pillage and plunder of their

pursuing enemies, had abandoned their possessions and fled. But General Harrison took care that they should not suffer at the hands of his army, as he rigorously forbade the slightest depredations. At one point two gunboats and a number of bateaux, coming up the river with supplies and military stores, were overtaken and captured, thus adding another blow to the already desperate situation of the pursued army.

By nine o'clock the American forces had reached a place called Arnold's Mills, at which was the only ford within several miles that could be used to reach the right bank of the river, up which the enemy was retreating. The water was too deep, however, for the infantry to wade across without becoming thoroughly soaked, and the cavalymen hesitated to take the footmen behind them on their tired horses. Those who were mounted were about to proceed through the ford, leaving the footmen to wade or get across as best they could in the few canoes and bateaux which had been captured near by, when Captain Perry, as related by Major Chambers, rode into the crowd at the ford, pulled a footman up behind him and dashed quickly into the stream, calling meanwhile to the cavalymen to do likewise and follow him. The officers of the staff who were in front at once followed his example, and the others, catching the spirit of the movement, did likewise. In a few moments the whole army was on the opposite bank, in a comfortable condition to pursue the march and engage in battle.

About eight miles above the ford the army passed the place where the British had bivouacked on the previous night, although General Procter and his staff had passed the night at the Moravian Town, an Indian village under the care of the Moravian missionaries, about four miles further up the Thames. Procter then realized that it would be impossible to escape with his army

without engaging in a desperate combat; and had halted his forces a mile and a half in front of the Moravian settlement, and disposed them in order of battle. The position he had taken was a strong one, directly across the line of march; and the mounted Kentuckians, who rode in the van, were soon halted. Colonel R. M. Johnson, their commander, thereupon sent back word to General Harrison that his progress was arrested.

The advantage of Procter's position was chiefly due to the character of the ground. Upon the border of the Thames there was a thick forest of lofty beeches, but with little if any underbrush, which extended back from the river for a space of two hundred and fifty or three hundred yards. Back of this forest was a large and impassable swamp, which ranged for several miles parallel to the river. The road, over which the line of march had been taken, ran through the forest along the bank of the stream. It was across this road and the narrow strip of land that the enemy's line had been formed, with their left resting on the river, supported by the artillery, and their right on the swamp, covered by the Indians under the dauntless Tecumseh. The position was well chosen, inasmuch as the swamp on one flank, and the river on the other, effectually prevented them from being turned; and the American army, though of greater numbers, could only oppose a line of equal extent. Our forces amounted to more than three thousand men, but only one hundred and twenty were regulars; and, owing to the want of space to form them, the number actually engaged scarcely exceeded that of the enemy, or seventeen hundred.

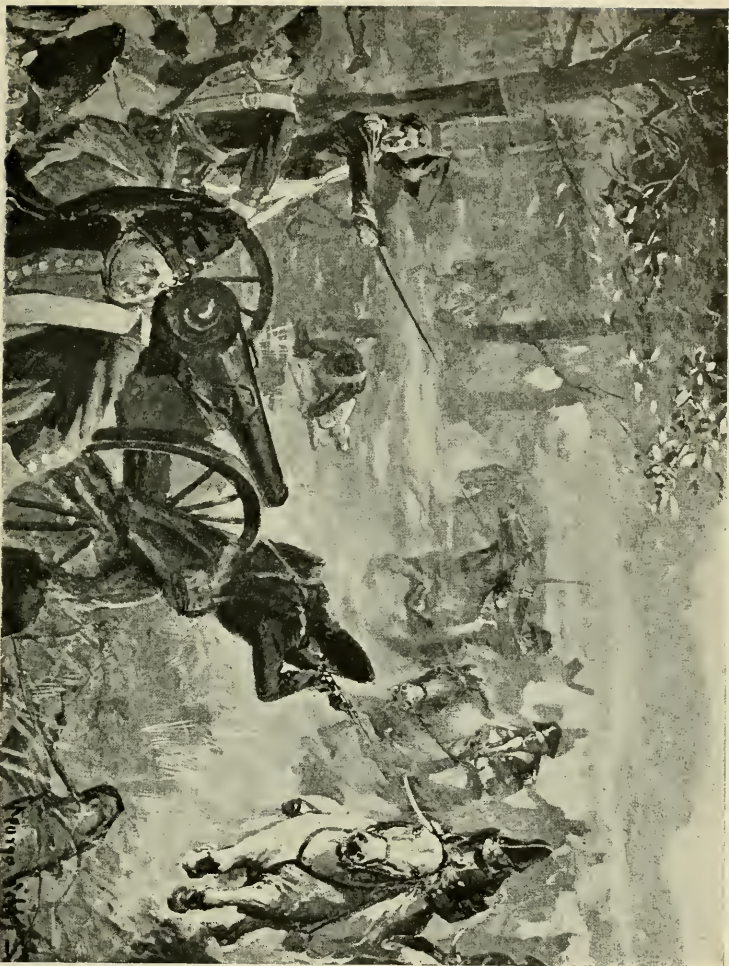
General Harrison then formed his troops in order of battle, assisted by his acting adjutant Captain Butler, General Cass, and by Captain Perry whose services throughout the campaign were active rather than honorary. He placed General Trotter's brigade in the front

line, with his right upon the road, and his left upon the swamp, and General Desha's division, consisting of two brigades, was formed in an irregular, or zig-zag, line backward of him on his left. General King's brigade formed a second line, one hundred and fifty yards back of Trotter's, while Chile's brigade was held as a reserve corps in the rear. These forces numbered about fifteen hundred men. The crotchet formed by Desha's division was filled by the fighting Kentuckians, under the venerable Governor Shelby, while the space between the road and the river was occupied by the regulars, in columns of fours, placed there for the purpose of seizing the enemy's artillery. Under the bank were ten or twelve friendly Indians to pick off the gunners, as chance offered.

It had been the intention to have the mounted riflemen under Colonel Johnson meet the Indians and, when the infantry had advanced to take a position on the left, to endeavor to turn their right. But it was soon perceived that, owing to the thickness of the wood and the swampiness of the ground, it would be impossible for the horsemen to advance in that quarter, as they would be subjected to certain destruction. After the line had been formed there was no time to dismount the horsemen, and a most novel measure was decided upon, which quickly resulted in a signal success. It was known that these hardy backwoodsmen rode better in the woods than other horsemen, and a musket or rifle was no impediment to them, as they were accustomed to carry arms from their early youth. A charge was therefore determined on at the beginning of the battle, when the enemy would most likely be surprised, and the least prepared to meet it. The mounted riflemen were then drawn up in close column, with their right at a distance of fifty yards from the road, that they might, in some measure, be protected by the trees from the artillery fire, and their left upon the swamp.

In this judiciously arranged order the army advanced on the enemy's line. A moment or two sufficed to bring them into view, when firing began on both the left and the right, and, as the head of the column swung into the road, the artillery opened upon them. The mounted riflemen then in front received the full force of the British fire. At first the horses took fright and recoiled, and on the right of the line the horsemen were momentarily thrown into confusion. But just at that instant a strong, clear voice rang out: "Now, men, up and at them before they can get in another broadside!" Ah! there was no mistaking that summons. Well the intrepid horsemen knew the cheering voice of the gallant sailor on horseback, for they had heard its ringing challenge at the ford of the Thames, and willingly responded to its call. Imbued with a fighting spirit, the heroic Perry had for a moment left Harrison's side; his quick eye had taken in the situation on the right, and he had dashed in among the confused horsemen to rally them to the charge. At this supreme test of courage they again responded to his call, for they dashed full speed for the enemy's line.

Across the open the British were shrouded in their own smoke, and, being intent on maintaining a furious fire, they little realized their danger. They did not hear the spirited order to charge, nor did they see the gallant band of horsemen galloping across the field, which a moment after was to burst through them. It was all done so quickly. In less than two minutes the fighting Kentuckians had swept through their line, had turned about and fired volleys from their rear, and decided the contest in front. The British officers seeing little hope of bringing their disordered ranks to a semblance of order, immediately surrendered. Strange as it may seem, not a single American was killed, and only three were wounded. While this was transpiring



From Barnes' "Hero of Erie," D. Appleton & Co.

THE CHARGE OF THE MOUNTED KENTUCKIANS IN  
THE BATTLE OF THE THAMES





the regulars, and few Indians coming up under cover of the bank, captured the enemy's artillery.

Upon the American left the hostile Indians ranged along the swamp and under cover of trees, were keeping up the fight with more obstinacy. Colonel Johnson, who had command in front of them, received a most galling fire, but his mounted riflemen returned it with great effect. Some of the Indians at the extreme left had advanced and fallen in with the front line of American infantry, and for a moment made an impression upon it. But the valiant Shelby, who was stationed near, and who, as General Harrison wrote, "at the age of sixty-six preserved all the vigor of youth, the ardent zeal which distinguished him in the revolutionary war, and the undaunted bravery which he had manifested at King's Mountain," brought up a regiment and checked the onset of the Indians. Colonel Johnson, at this moment, wheeled with a part of his regiment, gained the rear of the Indians, and drove them away with great slaughter. In this last charge he came in personal contact with Tecumseh, and, although wounded five times, he brought the savage chieftain to the ground mortally wounded with a pistol shot, just at the instant that his foe was about to launch his bloody tomahawk with deadly aim at him. Further resistance then being useless was brought to an end, and with it ceased the effusion of blood. The terrible scenes of murder and scalping of the Miami and the River Raisin were not re-enacted by the Americans upon their helpless foes; and the heroic Kentuckians, who had been stigmatized by the British as worse in warfare than savages, remembered the merciful caution of their commander-in-chief, "the revenge of a soldier cannot be gratified on a fallen enemy."

In the rush and confusion of the enemy's retreat, General Procter, with a party of forty dragoons and a few mounted Indians, made off at full speed of their

horses and escaped. As soon as this was discovered, Major Chambers, with a few officers and mounted riflemen, started in pursuit. While they made many prisoners among the straggling remnants of the British army, they were unable to overtake the runaway Procter. The fruits, however, of this decisive victory were complete. The losses to the British in killed and wounded were thirty-four, in addition to thirty-three Indians, including their chief, Tecumseh, found dead on the field; and six hundred and twenty-six regular troops, including officers, were made prisoners. A large quantity of military stores was taken, in which was found a train of brass cannon, three of which had been captured from the British at Yorktown and Saratoga, in the revolutionary war, and surrendered by General Hull at Detroit. The American losses in killed and wounded were only twenty-nine.

Probably the most important result of the victory was the separation of the savage allies of England from her unjust cause, and the immediate relief of our frontier from the horrors by which it had so long been desolated. The death of Tecumseh was an effective check to the fighting spirit of the hostile Indians, who at once made peace with their former foes. There have been few instances recorded where such cool and steady intrepidity of the militia, or other volunteer forces, was displayed as in the battle of the Thames. The whole action, and the movements of the army which preceded it, afford brilliant testimony of the calm judgment of General Harrison; and all the events of the campaign reflect his superior ability and generalship. In his official report he wrote in the highest terms of praise of his officers and troops. He mentioned Colonel Johnson as being engaged where the contest raged with the greatest severity, his valor having been emphasized by numerous wounds. Of the venerable Shelby, he wrote: "I am at a loss how to mention the services of Governor

Shelby, being convinced that no eulogium of mine, can reach his merit. 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 with which he obeyed my orders." Of the hero of Erie, he had this to say: "My gallant friend, Commodore Perry, accompanied me at the head of the army and assisted me in forming the line of battle; and the appearance of the brave commodore cheered and animated every breast."

## CHAPTER XI

### REAPING THE REWARDS OF VICTORY

**H**AVING secured the prisoners and recovered much property abandoned by the enemy, Captain Perry, on the seventh of October, returned with his transports to Detroit. The army, meanwhile, had taken up the return march by easy stages, and arrived a few days after. All armed resistance having ceased, General Harrison and Captain Perry, on the sixteenth, issued a joint proclamation, dated at Sandwich, directed to the people of Upper Canada inhabiting the district between the lower lakes and Lake St. Clair and Georgian Bay. This interesting document stated that the combined land and naval forces under their command, having captured and destroyed those of the British in Upper Canada, and the said district being in quiet possession of the American army, it became necessary to provide for the government thereof, which could only be done under the authority of the United States. The laws of the province, and the rights and privileges of the inhabitants, were recognized; and protection was guaranteed to their persons and property. All magistrates and other civil officers were directed to resume the exercise of their functions, upon taking the oath of allegiance to the United States, so long as this section of the province should remain in their possession. The authority of militia commission was suspended, and all officers were required to give their parole to the officer appointed to administer the government.

The operations of the naval and military campaigns had followed one another in such rapid succession, and

the enemy had been so quickly vanquished, that there was some delay at Detroit in getting instructions from the governmental departments as to the disposition to be made of the fleet and army. During the interval of waiting Captain Perry learned of the glory which his brilliant victory had won for him. The newspapers pouring in from the east and south were full of eulogy and applause of his character; and made him first aware of the vast importance that was attached to his glorious achievement. He was everywhere hailed as the first American victor in a general naval engagement with a powerful foe which, for centuries, had been accustomed to conquer. The peculiar circumstances of the desperate and bloody battle, attended by such daring and skill in retrieving the day, when so nearly lost, rendered the victory eminently his own. They were indelibly impressed upon the popular imagination, and created a fervor of enthusiasm in his behalf, which spread quickly over the whole country, uniting all parties, in one glowing wave of admiration.

The government, too, came under the spell of the overwhelming victory, and the secretary of the navy wrote to Perry acknowledging the brilliancy of the engagement. The letter, found in the collection of the captain's letters from the navy department, is as follows:

“Navy Department, September 21, 1813.

Sir:

Rumor had preceded and prepared the public mind for the enthusiastic reception of the glorious tidings confirmed by your letter of the tenth, received and published in handbills this day.

“Every demonstration of joy and admiration that a victory so transcendantly brilliant, decisive, and important in its consequences could excite, was exhibited as far and as fast as the roar of cannon and the splendor of illumination could travel.

“In the absence of the president, I have no hesitation in anticipating his warmest admiration and thanks, in behalf of our country, for this splendid achievement, which must ever continue among the brightest honors of the nation. You will please accept for yourself an ample share, and communicate to the gallant officers, seamen, and others under your command, the full measure of those sentiments and feelings which it is my duty to express and my delight to cherish.

“Tomorrow, I trust, will bring the interesting details, for which many hearts are palpitating between the laurel and the cypress.

“I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,  
W. JONES.

OLIVER H. PERRY, ESQ.,

Commanding U. S. naval forces of Lake Erie.”

The letters from Perry's own family, containing their earnest congratulations and thankfulness that he had escaped the perils of the battle, were not the least acceptable of the praise and adulation showered upon him. One letter in particular affected him deeply. The news of the victory reached his grandfather, Freeman Perry, at the mature age of eighty-three, on his death bed. As the first brief announcement of the glorious event was read to him, he exulted in the achievement of his descendant; and the reliance that he had placed on a superior power, instead of on his own might, evinced in the words of the memorable dispatch, gratified him even to tears. In his dying moments, he caused it to be read over to him several times; and the words “It has pleased the Almighty” lingered on his lips with his last breath, mingled with blessings on his children.

At this time Captain Perry received two other letters from the secretary of the navy. The first approved of his disposition of the prizes, and granted

through the commissary-general of prisoners the requested authority to parole Captain Barclay, and expressed his desire to extend to the wounded every indulgence consistent with their safe keeping. To this Perry replied in terms which showed how strong an interest he took in befriending the wounded prisoners. The other letter communicated the president's approbation of his conduct in battle, and stated that the president had directed a commission to be made out, promoting him to the rank of post-captain, to be effective from the day of his victory. Although the heroic captain was within one of being at the head of the list of masters-commandant, and had nobly acquiesced in the advancement of Lieutenant Morris over his head, the year before, he now scrupled, in his own case, to receive promotion over a single officer. In his reply, he expressed to the secretary his wish that, if there should be any doubts as to the propriety of his advancement, his commission might be kept back until he should be entitled to it by seniority, without passing over the only officer of his grade above him.

The letter which announced his promotion granted him leave, which he had requested, to return to his home in Newport, and he was directed to leave as soon as affairs on the lake were in such condition that the service would not suffer by his absence. Upon his return he was to resume his command of the Newport station, until a suitable ship should be provided for him. General Harrison had received orders, meanwhile, to repair with a part of his army to Fort George; and, as no service of importance remained for them to perform on the upper lake, two thousand of the troops were therefore embarked on board the fleet. General Harrison, with part of his staff, sailed with Perry in the *Ariel*; and at Put-in Bay, the victorious captain had the pleasure of announcing to the wounded Barclay that he was empowered to parole him. He received him,

therefore, with his surgeon, on board the *Ariel*, to carry him as far as Buffalo on his way homeward. The other British prisoners left the Bay a few days after for Erie, where they were carefully attended until entirely recovered. They were afterward removed to Pittsburg for their greater security.

The *Ariel*, with the party of gallant fighters on board, arrived at Erie about noon of the twenty-second; and the officers immediately landed. Coming into the harbor in his little schooner, unattended by the fleet which arrived later in the day, Captain Perry had hoped to reach his lodgings at the tavern unperceived with his wounded friend. Captain Barclay needed rest and quiet after the passage from Put-in Bay; and the turmoil of an enthusiastic reception of the victor, Perry well knew, would be particularly painful to him, by reminding him of the triumph, which but a short time before he had hoped would be his own. But in this generous hope the victor was disappointed. The villagers of Erie, who for weeks had waited impatiently to do honor to him who had delivered the western frontier from savage warfare, had spied the *Ariel* in the offing, and quickly prepared to receive the heroic captain, with the enthusiasm which his victory had awakened in them.

Months before they had beheld his anxious and apparently hopeless efforts to create an effective fleet; they had witnessed the manifold difficulties which obstructed him; they had noted with alarm the perpetual danger of destruction by the enemy; and above all, they had marvelled at his steady perseverance and mental resources, by which every obstacle was surmounted as it arose. When at length he had launched his vessels in the bay, and by herculean efforts crossed the bar, they had realized the greatness of the man, and presaged his success. And now that he was returning to them, having won a glorious victory over a superior force, and



afterward assisted in the triumph over the British army, they received him with a salute of guns, and met him on the beach with exultant and prolonged acclamations of joy. They formed a triumphant procession to escort him to his lodgings; and all were much affected by the spectacle of the wounded Barclay, with feeble and tottering steps, being supported between Harrison and Perry.

That evening the Village of Erie was all aglow with patriotic celebration. Every house that had a window was brilliantly illuminated by candle dips, and the streets were ablaze with huge bonfires. The people paraded with transparencies descriptive of the battles by sea and land, and the names of Perry and Harrison were everywhere emblazoned with the dates on which they had been fought. The memorable words, "We have met the enemy and they are ours," were most prominently displayed, and shouted by hundreds as the name of Perry was mentioned. He was welcomed personally by many in the little tavern, and called upon to narrate the principal scenes of battle. To all the villagers he was the same courteous, kind-hearted friend they had known in months past, and with all the added honors due to the victor, he manifested the same unruffled composure and quiet dignity of his office.

The *Niagara*, with the other vessels of the fleet, had arrived off the bar late in the afternoon; and Commander Elliott had reported himself to his superior officer by letter, saying that he was much indisposed, and would have to go on shore to sick-quarters. Imagine, therefore, his chagrin and anger when, upon landing, he found the populace showering honors on his seniors, and himself wholly neglected. His name figured on no transparencies, his sayings formed no watchwords, his name called forth no exultant cheers, and he was in no way noticed by the people intent upon

doing honor to the victors. He had noticed in the papers that the credit for the victory, which had excited such joy throughout the country, was ascribed wholly to "the gallant Commodore Perry"; and this outward evidence of popular approval filled him with discontent and rancorous feelings toward his superior, whose brave deeds, to counteract his own treachery, had thrown him into such obscurity.

While in this state of mind he was prey to notions of fancied wrongs from Captain Perry, and his disappointed hopes for fame led him to venomous efforts to disparage the too generous chief who had saved him from reprobation. The month before, during the cruise up the Thames, this feeling had first dominated him, and to Stephen Champlin upon whose vessel, the *Scorpion*, he had his quarters, he commenced his complaints, coupled with abuse of Perry. He even stated "that the officers and men of the *Lawrence*, including the commodore, were by no means entitled to prize-money for her, she being a recaptured vessel." But upon being pressed for a reason for his dereliction of duty in keeping out of the action, he replied that, "he had no signal from the commodore to change his position." He afterward admitted that "in the action he was so far from the enemy that he only fired his twelve-pounders during two hours and a half." The brave Champlin indignantly objected to such complaints from one whose abandonment of the *Lawrence* had temporarily compelled her officers to strike their colors; and replied with some warmth, "I know not who is entitled to prize-money for the victory if the commodore is not." "For myself," he added, "I would scorn to receive a penny if Commodore Perry is not a sharer in the distribution." Irritated by this loyalty to his superior, and opposition to his own course, Commander Elliott unwarily expressed a sentiment which some historians believe might serve as a clew to the mystery of his whole

conduct in battle. For, as a climax to his complaints of the injustice to him in the commander's account of the battle, he said to Mr. Champlin that "*he only regretted that he had not sacrificed the fleet when it was in his power to have done so.*"

So, on this occasion, almost before the plaudits of the people had died away, Elliott addressed to General Harrison the complaints and self eulogy that he had hitherto confined to humbler listeners. He now claimed that he had been in close action during the whole fight, and that his officers would prove it. He objected to the official report which, he claimed misled the public, so that, instead of obtaining credit for one-half of the victory, which he believed was his due, he had been calumniated by false rumors, which, he said, Captain Perry had done nothing to counteract. Because of an old friendship between the father of Elliott and the general, the latter was induced to state to Captain Perry the substance of Elliott's complaint, and arranged for an interview between them on the following morning. While insisting on the absolute verity of his report, Perry generously consented to an arbitration between two officers, one of which was to be selected by Elliott himself. It was agreed that if the arbitrators should decide that the report did injustice to Elliott, Captain Perry should write a letter to the secretary of the navy, correcting whatever they should consider erroneous. This letter, furthermore, was to be published for the benefit of Commander Elliott. The arbitrators chosen were Lieutenant Daniel Turner, who commanded the *Caledonia* in the thickest of the battle, and Lieutenant J. J. Edwards, of the *Niagara*. These competent officers, after considering that part of the official report relating to the time at which the *Niagara* came into close action, namely, at half past two, were both of the opinion, which they freely expressed to General

Harrison, that the report was correct. Captain Perry therefore wrote to Commander Elliott that he would decline making any alteration in his official report.

On the twenty-fourth of October, Captain Perry, accompanied by General Harrison and Captain Barclay, arrived at Buffalo, where he turned over the command of the fleet to Commander Elliott. There he separated from General Harrison, who proceeded with his troops to Fort George; and also from his wounded prisoner, who returned to Canada on the parole which his former adversary in battle had procured for him, and with an ample loan to defray his personal expenses. Before leaving Buffalo, however, the gallant Barclay wrote to his brother in England relative to the state of his health, and expressed the hope of soon reaching home. According to regulations this letter was examined by the United States marshal at Boston, before releasing it to the foreign mail; and afterward a copy of it was sent to Mrs. Perry, in order that she might know the way in which her husband was spoken of by his vanquished foe. The closing paragraph of this letter was as follows: "The treatment I have received from Captain Perry has been noble indeed. It can be equaled only by his bravery and intrepidity in action. Since the battle he has been like a brother to me. He has obtained for me an unconditional parole. I mean to make use of it to go to England as soon as my wound will permit." He showed his appreciation upon taking leave of Perry by presenting him with his sextant, as a memento of his regard; and a few months after Perry sent to Barclay a highly-finished rifle, which he had made expressly for him by a celebrated gunsmith of Albany.

Following the course of Captain Perry on this triumphant journey homeward, we find him everywhere welcomed by the inhabitants and proclaimed as the deliverer of the western frontier. In the villages through

which he passed, all business was suspended, workmen left their tools and pressed forward to receive him; the schools were dismissed, while the master and scholars hurried forth to get a glimpse of the young hero of Erie. Wherever he passed the night, illuminations, parades, and rude but hearty hospitality, scarcely less enthusiastic than the reception at Erie, conveyed to him the gratitude of the people. His party was composed of Sailing-master Taylor, of the *Lawrence*; his young brother, James Alexander; the members of his boat's crew; and a revolutionary war fifer, Cyrus Tiffany by name, who, having ready wit at will, was a source of great amusement to the sailors. These officers and men were later attached to Perry's old command at Newport, whence the whole crew of the *Lawrence* soon after followed.

As Perry and his faithful followers approached the larger towns, his reception became more imposing; and, when they were not too far from each other, deputations escorted him from place to place. At Utica a sumptuous public dinner was given in his honor, and he was presented with a complimentary address by the citizens. From Schenectady a numerous concourse accompanied him along the road to Albany. At Dow's tavern, on the morning of the eighth of November, he was met by a large assemblage of citizens, mounted and in carriages, who, with the mayor, the recorder, and common council, greeted him with hearty and enthusiastic cheers. A procession was then formed and he was escorted to the city by a corps of volunteer cavalry. As he entered the western precincts of Albany a federal salute was fired, and the military companies, which had assembled for the purpose, formed in front, and proceeded with the escort to the capitol, when, the military opening on each side, the procession entered the council-hall. The mayor, in behalf of the council and city then presented him with the freedom of the city in a gold

box, and with a costly sword, which had been properly inscribed for the occasion. To the presentation speech, Captain Perry replied in these becoming words: "The honor done me this day by the common council of the City of Albany will ever be recollected with gratitude and pleasure. To merit the approbation of my country is the dearest wish of my heart. Should I ever be called again to meet the enemy, I shall bear in mind that I am a citizen of Albany, and that I wear a sword, given me under a pledge never to draw it but in defence of our country's rights, honor, and independence."

This impressive ceremony being concluded, the procession accompanied him through the principal streets to his lodging at the Eagle tavern, where he alighted amid the loud and prolonged acclamations of the people. In the evening a grand ball and reception was tendered him, which gave the ladies an opportunity of meeting the youthful hero, and for him to know of the admiration and esteem in which *they* held him. It was a matter of wonderment to all that the individual who had been so terrible to his enemies on the deck of the *Lawrence* and the *Niagara*, should on this occasion be only distinguished by the courteous grace and kindly dignity of his demeanor. The next day the honors were continued, and he was entertained at dinner by the council, the governor, the secretary of war, the principal officers of state, and the citizens. During the festivities Perry gave as a toast the prosperity of the City of Albany. When he had withdrawn, among the complimentary toasts in his honor, was this: "Father Neptune's settlement on his son Perry; Lake Erie in possession, the Ocean in remainder." It was worthy of the hospitality of the people that his brother, James Alexander Perry, though but a mere lad, was not forgotten and, when called upon, responded, like a true young sailor, that "he was thankful for the good cheer which so pleasantly replaced the scant provender of the march."

Thus the hero of Erie, the idol of the people, yielded two days of time — which as he neared his home became more precious to him — to the hospitable attentions of a generous people. But everywhere, as he continued his journey to Newport, he received the same enthusiastic greeting, in manner and extent gauged only by the size of the place and the means of the inhabitants. The universal feeling was a blended one of respect, admiration, and gratified national pride. His reception at Providence, as reported by a local paper, bears witness to the prevailing enthusiasm: “Yesterday morning our fellow-citizen, Oliver H. Perry, arrived in town from the westward. The flag of the Union was displayed, the bells were rung, and a federal salute was fired by the united train of artillery, to welcome the hero’s return to his native state. The extreme modest but affable deportment of this popular young hero wins irresistibly upon the affections, and commands the respect of all who approach him. And, however we may differ with respect to the cause in which his talents are employed, wherever valor and humanity, ability and modesty, are so happily blended as in Commodore Perry, adorning himself and his country, they justly receive the meed of universal praise.”

At length on the afternoon of the eighteenth of November, Captain Perry and his little band of patriots approached their home town. In anticipation of their coming the public buildings and many store houses had been gayly decorated, and the shipping in the harbor had been dressed with national and emblematic flags. All business for the time was forgotten as the townsmen went forth *en masse* to receive their fellow-citizens, who, like the heroes of Rome, in the proudest days of her history, having vanquished their foes, were now returning from the toils of war. In days gone by the people had been well acquainted with Perry, as a *man*, and now, upon his return, they were filled with raptur-

ous joy on beholding the *hero*. As he entered the outskirts of the town, bells were rung, and salutes were fired from Fort Wolcott, the flotilla of gunboats, and a revenue cutter; and, with loud acclamations he was escorted to his own home. For the moment all sense of honors and distinctions conferred upon him were lost in the claims of his family, as he burst in on them, after an absence of nine months of anxiety, peril and toilsome exertions.

The public approbation and attachment, the intoxicating effects of which might have turned many an older head, seem not to have affected his quiet and unassuming manner, nor interfered with his family ties which he considered sacred. He was devoted in his affections, thoroughly domestic in his habits, while the joys and endearments of home, presided over by a beautiful and accomplished wife and mother, formed a bond for which patriotism and duty alone could temporarily disengage. He had, too, become a second time a father, and he noted with pleasure the sturdy appearance of his older boy, then not quite two years old. His happiness at this time is briefly and strongly expressed in a letter to his friend, Samuel Hambleton, whom he had left wounded at Erie.

“I am satisfied you will not require an apology for my not answering your letters sooner, when you recollect that I have had the supreme pleasure of enjoying the society of my beloved family and my excellent friends in Newport. I found, on arrival, another noble boy, and Mrs. Perry in excellent health; my older boy has grown finely, and is, in my opinion, very promising. Many of your friends have made the most particular inquiries after you. They will rejoice if you again come to this place. I need not assure you how much it would add to my pleasure and happiness to have so esteemed a friend with me.”



The command of the naval station at Newport, which Captain Perry had at once assumed, gave him every opportunity for enjoyment of his home and family. His duties were not arduous, the chief employment of the flotilla under his orders consisting of protecting the coast trade and resisting encroachment of the blockading forces of the enemy, the performance of which was faithfully executed. The house in which he lived was a well-built mansion that stood on the south side of Washington Square, a few doors from Thames Street. It was a spacious, square building, of architecture of the revolutionary war period, having been built by Mr. Levi, about 1770. To this house the young and ambitious naval officer had taken his bride, who was a daughter of Doctor Mason, of Newport; and where she lived until her death in February, 1858.

Soon after Captain Perry's arrival at Newport became generally known throughout the East, complimentary acknowledgments, by which a grateful people sought to evince their sense of his notable services, began pouring in upon him from all quarters. All the principal cities, through their common councils, addressed to him their compliments accompanied with invitations to public dinners; and some municipalities tendered the services of volunteer companies of troops to act as his escort. The council of the City of New York expressed by a series of resolutions, its sense of his distinguished services, and of his officers and men, and extended to him the freedom of the city, with the request that he would sit for his portrait, to be placed in their gallery. These resolutions were properly conveyed to Perry in a letter written by Dewitt Clinton, then mayor of New York. Captain Perry willingly consented to comply with the honorable request, with the result that posterity has the masterly portrait, by Jarvis, which depicts him in the act of boarding the *Niagara*.

While thus engrossed with the pleasures of home life and the duties of his station, the Congress of the United States took a more practical recognition of his past services on the lakes, and granted substantial rewards to him and all others who were actively engaged in the battle of Lake Erie. By joint resolution the thanks of Congress were "presented to Captain Oliver H. Perry, and through him to the officers, petty officers, seamen, marines, and infantry, attached to the squadron under his command, for the decisive and glorious victory gained on the tenth of September, 1813, over the British squadron of superior force." The President of the United States was therefore requested to cause gold medals to be struck, emblematical of the action between the two squadrons, and to present them to Captain Perry and Commander Elliott, in such manner as would be most honorable to them. He was also requested to present silver medals, with suitable emblems and devices, to the commissioned officers of the navy and army, serving on board the fleet, and swords to the sailing-masters and midshipmen, who so nobly distinguished themselves on that memorable day. The brave officers who had fallen in battle were not forgotten, as silver medals were presented to the nearest male relatives of Lieutenant John Brooks, captain of marines, of Midshipmen Henry Laub, and John Clark, "with the deep regret which Congress feels for the loss of these gallant men, whose names ought to live in the recollection and affection of a grateful country, and whose conduct ought to be regarded as an example to future generations." As an additional testimonial, three month's pay, exclusively of the common allowance for living, was granted to all the petty officers, seamen, marines, and infantry, serving as such, "who so gloriously supported the honor of the American flag, under the orders of their gallant commander, on that signal occasion."

The vessels of the captured fleet having been officially measured and their value determined, the prize money to which the officers and men of the victorious fleet were entitled, was provided by an act authorizing the president to purchase the vessels captured on Lake Erie, on the tenth of September, for two hundred and fifty-five thousand dollars. This sum, which was paid out of money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, was distributed to the captors, or their heirs, by an equitable division. Commodore Chauncey, as commander-in-chief of the naval forces on the lakes, received twelve thousand seven hundred and fifty dollars; Captain Perry and Commander Elliott, each received seven thousand one hundred and forty dollars; while each commander of gunboats, sailing-masters, and lieutenants of marines, received two thousand two hundred and ninety-five dollars. The midshipmen each received eight hundred and eleven dollars; the petty officers four hundred and forty-seven dollars, and the sailors and marines two hundred and nine dollars each.

There was some discussion as to the propriety of Commodore Chauncey accepting the amount of prize money awarded him, on the ground that he was not present during the naval campaign on Lake Erie, and did not share in the dangers and perils of that trying period. But it must be remembered that the secretary of the navy had made the tactical error of leaving the superior command of the forces on Lake Erie, after the actual command had been assumed by the more capable and resourceful Perry, in his hands. Under the regulations of the service Chauncey was entitled to prize money for the captured vessels, even though he was hundreds of miles distant from the scene of battle on that eventful day, and his dereliction in regard to withholding the best seamen sent him, threw the balance of power in favor of the enemy. Captain Perry, as second in command, thus received a much smaller sum, and to

equalize the amounts thus paid, and to establish justice to the hero of Erie, the Congress appropriated an additional five thousand dollars to be presented to him. There was a peculiar propriety in this special grant, for, even with this liberality of Congress, Perry's compensation fell far below that of other officers similarly situated. Both Commodore Chauncey and Commodore M'Donough had rich emolument through the agencies for the construction and equipment of their squadrons, which it is said produced large fortunes. But Captain Perry, believing it impossible to do full justice to this and the more important duties of his station, voluntarily gave up his agency with the opportunity of gaining a like fortune. To him belongs the merit of having given his whole heart to his country, and his undivided attention and talents to the manifold and arduous duties of his station.

Early in January, 1814, a favorable moment having arrived to get a number of his officers advanced, a desire which he had long entertained, Captain Perry left Newport for the seat of government; and stopped on the way at the intermediate cities which had sent him such earnest invitations to enjoy their hospitality. He arrived in New York on the sixth, and was received that night at a public ball in commemoration of the victories on the western frontier. As he entered the hall, which was thronged with the beauty and grace of the city, the ceremonies of the evening were suspended, nor were they resumed until the hero of those victories had been presented to all the ladies present. On the eleventh he was entertained at dinner at Tammany Hall, and, when called upon gave the toast, "The Union of the States," a union which no other man had recently done so much to strengthen. This was regarded as an honorable evidence of his patriotic principles. He had already been presented with the freedom of the city in a gold box bearing on its top a beautiful picture, in enamel, of the

battle of Lake Erie; and was inducted into the Society of Cincinnati as an honorary member.

Resuming his journey, Captain Perry passed through Trenton, where he received the thanks of the Legislature, which was then in session; and everywhere met demonstrations of enthusiastic regard. Arriving at the Capitol he was received in a most cordial manner by President Madison, and ostensibly by all the members of the government. He was introduced to a seat on the floor of the Senate, an honor never conferred, except by vote, on any but members of Congress, judges of the supreme court, and foreign ministers. On the twenty-fifth he was entertained by the citizens of Washington, on which occasion the cabinet and many members of Congress were present. The secretary of the navy had promised to promote the officers of the fleet, and in particular W. V. Taylor of the *Lawrence*, who had been so useful in equipping his vessels; but he did not fulfill it without some delay. This and the difficulty about giving a purser's commission to Thomas Breese, Perry's faithful secretary, in whom he had a special interest, occasioned him some annoyance; but he exerted his influence with unceasing zeal until he had accomplished his object.

At length, having fulfilled his mission at Washington, Captain Perry, on the last day of January, turned homeward. He arrived at Baltimore before nightfall and was escorted to the Circus, where he found a throng of citizens waiting to do him honor. Without the spacious building and within they received him with "deep, loud, and continued acclamations." The attentions, however, which were bestowed upon him the following day in this patriotic city, were most gratifying. "He was' honored," says Niles' Register, "at a dinner which for bounteous profusion, elegance of style, judicious arrangements, and brilliancy and appropriateness of decorations, surpassed, it is believed, anything

which has occurred in this country." The committee of arrangements comprised "two republicans, two federalists, *four Americans*" and was another evidence that one of the happiest results of Perry's victory was the blending of all Americans in sympathetic pride to promote the "Union of States."

On the night of the succeeding day Perry was tendered a ball given in the name of the ladies of Baltimore. As they were most desirous of showing their respect and admiration of the hero who had done so much for the defense of their country, this entertainment was said to have rivalled in brilliancy that which had preceded it. This brought the festivities of a hospitable city to a close, and Perry proceeded to Philadelphia. Among his papers are two invitations to dine from different committees, bearing dates of his passage through the city in going to and returning from Washington; but the details of both functions are not to be found in the files of the local press of the time. It is known, however, that the city council had previously voted Captain Perry their thanks, and had presented him with an elegant sword, of a style and character most acceptable to him. The State of Pennsylvania, moreover, had accompanied its public thanks with a gold medal bearing appropriate devices.

Thus sensible of his country's approbation of his conduct and services, Captain Perry returned once more to the quiet repose and endearments of his home. But in his retirement, evidences of the universal admiration and esteem in which he was held by his countrymen, continued to pour in upon him. Not content with the tribute of respect already offered through their representatives in Congress, the legislatures of various and widely-remote states passed complimentary resolutions, copies of which were sent to him. Among these was one from the legislature of Massachusetts, a state which, through factional strife, had in a measure cast off the

national spirit of independence, which characterized it during the revolution, and had fostered a spirit of opposition to the war of 1812. But those who regarded the war as unjust as well as inexpedient, could not withhold their admiration of the distinguished bravery and skill displayed in its prosecution on the western frontier. Thus, the full admiration and gratitude of his country, which "are the hero's best reward," were deserved and enjoyed by Oliver Hazard Perry, as by few victors in American history.

## CHAPTER XII

### RESUMING COMMAND ON THE SEA

**E**ARLY in May, 1814, Captain Perry was ordered to Boston to sit on a court of inquiry, a duty which occupied his attention for nearly a month. He was received with military honors by the citizens of the old town, without distinction of parties, and invited to review the uniformed troops assembled in the Common, who honored him with a salute of guns. On the tenth he was publicly entertained at dinner, in testimony of admiration and gratitude for the brilliant victory on Lake Erie; and was escorted to the hall by the Boston light-infantry in full uniform. On this occasion some of the most prominent citizens who had arrayed themselves in opposition to the war, seized the opportunity of evincing their sense of honor which this victory had added to the American arms. In reply to a toast which was highly complimentary, he gave this sentiment: "The town of Boston, the birthplace of American liberty; from whence, should she ever leave the country, she will take her departure." Among other toasts given was one characterized by glowing patriotism: "The American Navy, youngest child of Neptune, but heir-apparent to glory." In the light of subsequent events and glorious achievements, this was singularly prophetic.

As Mrs. Perry had many relatives and friends in Boston, she accompanied her distinguished husband on this errand of duty. During an interval of the court proceedings they visited Cambridge, and found all business of the memorable seat of learning suspended, and



the president and faculty waiting to receive them at the entrance of Harvard Hall, through which they were conducted with due dignity and honor. The captain was then invited to review the Harvard Washington Corps, composed wholly of students whom the president informed him had been "permitted to appear under arms, that they might gratify their desire of expressing the emotions with which they contemplated the character and actions of Commodore Perry." The court of inquiry soon after terminated its sittings, when Captain Perry and his wife proceeded to Portsmouth upon invitation of Commodore and Mrs. Hull to visit them. After spending a few days very agreeably at that place they returned to Newport. There they discovered that the grateful feelings of the citizens of Boston had found further expression in the presentation of a service of plate, consisting of more than fifty pieces of real utility. On each piece was nicely engraved this inscription: "September 10th, 1813, signalized by our first triumph in squadron. A very superior British force on Lake Erie was entirely subdued by Commodore O. H. Perry, whose gallantry in action is equalled only by his humanity in victory. Presented in honor of the victor by the citizens of Boston." Soon after a silver vase of elegant and chaste design was presented to him by his fellow-townsmen; and later the legislature of Rhode Island, through its committee appointed to recollect relics and historical material of the achievements on Lake Erie, invited him to sit for a portrait to be executed by Gilbert Stuart, the famous artist who was also a native of the state.

Captain Perry had scarcely settled himself to the enjoyment of home when, on the thirtieth of May, a Swedish brig, in attempting to enter the harbor by the east passage, was driven ashore by the fire of the British man-of-war *Nimrod*. They had sent off the boats to take possession of the stranded vessel, when Perry

quickly assembled on the beach a small party of seamen, belonging to the flotilla under his command, and a six-pounder gun. So skilfully was the gun served that the enemy was soon compelled to abandon their purpose and return to their ship. The next morning the *Nimrod* ran close in shore and opened such a galling fire on the brig that her crew was obliged to surrender her, whereupon the enemy immediately set her on fire. Meanwhile the militia of the town had collected on the beach with two twelve-pounders; and Perry had dispatched two gunboats around the northeast side of the island, and opened a fire on the man-of-war. Having accomplished their purpose, as they supposed, the enemy at once weighed anchor and stood out to sea. The fire in the brig was soon extinguished, when she was pulled off the bar and taken into the harbor. In these skirmishes one seaman was killed and several others of the gun crews were wounded.

During the summer of 1814 the whole extent of our eastern coast was greatly harassed by the enemy, and many of the smaller unprotected ports suffered much from their predatory incursions, while some of the coasting craft which ventured out to sea were seized and destroyed. The range of coast at this time intrusted to the protection of Perry's flotilla extended from New London, through Buzzard's Bay, to Barnstable and Chatham. In the latter part of June the enemy made an attempt to destroy the town of Wiscasset, but, by the active exertions of Perry and the alacrity with which the inhabitants rallied to the encounter, they were repulsed. The town of Wareham, Massachusetts, was also attacked at about this time, and, having no means of defense, the public buildings were burned, and a vessel on the stocks, five others in the harbor, and a cotton mill, were likewise destroyed. The rights of private property were not respected, and the inhabitants

were threatened with the sword if they offered the slightest resistance, or attempted to stay the flames.

These depredations were increasing in frequency and violence when, in August, Captain Perry was ordered to the command of the frigate *Java*, of the first class, which was building at Baltimore. This man-of-war had recently been launched, and he proceeded at once to that place to supervise and hasten her equipment. While thus diligently occupied, the British made their destructive incursion up the Potomac with a formidable force, and captured Washington. The conflagration of the Capitol, the residence of the president, the public buildings and much of the national archives, followed, as almost the only resistance they met with was from a battery manned by the seamen of the flotilla under the command of Commodore Barney, who stood bravely at their guns, resolutely serving them until surrounded and captured.

This unfortunate event, which occurred on the twenty-fourth of August, was a severe blow to the nation; and led Captain Perry, who always stood ready "to meet the enemies of his country" wherever they might appear, to hasten to Washington with a party of seamen selected from his command. There he joined Commodore Rodgers and Captain Porter, who had proceeded on a like mission to the scene of danger with more troops and marines, in an effort to prevent the enemy from returning unmolested down the Potomac. With a battery, consisting of one eighteen and several six-pounders, brought up by the Georgetown and Washington volunteers, he stationed his united forces at Indian Head, a few miles below Mount Vernon. After destroying the defenses of Alexandria and plundering the town, the enemy had met the forces of Rodgers and Porter in several sharp encounters, but without serious loss. On the sixth of September they began their retreat with quantities of plunder, and in the afternoon

reached Indian Head. There they met with a spirited fire from Perry's battery, which was kept up as long as their meagre supply of ammunition lasted. The cannon, however, with the exception of one eighteen-pounder, were of too small a calibre to make much impression on the enemy's vessels which returned a very heavy fire on them. After sustaining the enemy's fire for more than an hour, when the powder and shot was expended, the force retired a short distance under the protection of the bank, and the enemy soon disappeared down the river. Perry's loss in this encounter was one man wounded.

Fearing that the British, elated with their success on the Potomac, would make a similar attack on Baltimore with the ulterior motive of getting possession of or destroying the *Java*, Captain Perry returned immediately to that place, accompanied by Commodore Rodgers. He devoted himself particularly to the defense of his new command, and enrolled his mechanics in the militia for active service, keeping them almost constantly under arms. This was a wise precaution, for, on the morning of the eleventh, the enemy landed five thousand soldiers and four thousand marines and seamen from the fleet, at the mouth of the Patapsco. Advancing about four miles without meeting any opposition, the enemy came up with a force of three thousand two hundred men, comprising General Strickler's brigade and several companies of volunteers from Pennsylvania. Other troops which had been collected for the defense of the city, were stationed in the rear, and at the various entrenchments hastily thrown up. As the enemy advanced upon them early in the afternoon, the artillery opened a destructive fire which, with that of the infantry, was maintained with remarkable steadiness and effect for about an hour. On the enemy's attempting, however, to turn their flank, they retired in good order within their entrenchments. Measures were

then taken by the intrepid defenders for a concerted assault on the enemy on the following morning, but before the plans could be put in execution, the British decamped and, under cover of darkness, made their way back to their ships. The attack on Fort M'Henry followed on the afternoon and night of the twelfth, but the enemy was repulsed with great loss. The destruction on the enemy's vessels was terrible as, battered and crippled, they retired in precipitation, the darkness of the night and their ceasing to fire, alone preventing their annihilation. Their loss was supposed to have been seven or eight hundred men; while that of the Americans was only twenty killed and one hundred and forty wounded and missing.

The British forces, however, continued a rigid blockade of Chesapeake Bay, and Perry, with the *Java* fully equipped and manned for sea service, saw little probability of being able to get out to carry on the important mission then being planned. Two squadrons of fast sailing vessels were being fitted out to harass the enemy's commerce on their own coasts and in the Mediterranean, to one of which Perry had been assigned. To provide suitable vessels for this service, he was directed to build in Connecticut and Rhode Island three heavy brigs, each to carry an armament of fourteen thirty-two pounder carronades, and two long twelves, the model and whole equipment of which were intrusted to his judgment. Two other brigs of the same force were afterward to have been added to his "flying squadron." Before they could be made ready for sea, however, on their cruise for the destruction of the enemy's commerce, peace was declared; and Perry returned to his command of the *Java*. His family had joined him in Baltimore, where they remained until February, 1815, when they returned to Newport. It was at this time that the Treaty of Ghent, signed on the twenty-fourth

of December, 1814, and which is still in force, was ratified by the senate and the president.

During the Spring and Summer of 1815 Captain Perry continued in command of the Newport station, and supervised the equipment of the three brigs then fitting out at Warren, and at Middletown in Connecticut. At the same time he had a certain control over the *Java*, in which it was intended he should ultimately be sent to sea. Many of her spars and much of the rigging, however, were found to be weak and imperfect, a condition due to the dishonesty or neglect of the contractors. These parts had to be replaced and much other work done to put the frigate in proper trim for sea service. Preparatory to making a cruise to the Mediterranean, the *Java* proceeded to Newport, and remained in the harbor for several months. In the interval the captain gathered around him for his crew the ablest officers and the bravest of his men, who had fought so valiantly in the battle of Lake Erie, among whom was Doctor Parsons, the surgeon of the *Lawrence*.

Upon the restoration of peace the government was free to take up its long-standing difficulties with Algiers, over the violations of the terms of the existing treaty with those piratical people. In order to negotiate a new treaty providing for "the absolute and unqualified relinquishment of any demand of tribute on the part of the Regency, on any pretense whatever," Commodore Decatur with a squadron, presenting a considerable show of force, had been sent in April to the Mediterranean. Having captured several Algerian cruisers and caused great loss to their navy, including the death of Admiral Hammida, who fell in action, Commodore Decatur appeared off Algiers on the twenty-eighth of June. By stern measures and threats of bombardment he finally compelled the dey to conclude a new treaty in which it was humanely stipulated, in addition to other important provisions, that, in the event of future

hostilities, the citizens of the United States captured by Algerian cruisers should not be consigned to slavery, as had formerly been the barbarous practice, but that they should be treated as prisoners of war until exchanged. All differences having been satisfactorily adjusted, Captain Lewis, in the *Epervier*, was dispatched with the treaty to the United States.

This treaty having been duly ratified, the authorized document was sent to Algiers by the frigate *Java*, under the command of her illustrious captain. On the twenty-first of January, 1816, Lieutenant Dulany Forrest, who it will be remembered, was the second officer on the *Lawrence*, arrived from Washington with the official papers, dispatches for our consul at Algiers, and orders for sailing. Everything was in readiness for the cruise, and on the following day, in a gale from the northwest, the *Java* sailed from Newport for a rapid passage across the Atlantic. After an exceedingly rough and boisterous voyage of twenty-one days, during which one seaman was washed overboard and drowned, and five others were killed by the falling of the main-topmast, which carried with it the main-topmast yard and mizzen-topgallant-mast, the *Java* arrived at Gibraltar. Upon communicating with the shore without anchoring, they laid their course for Malaga and thence to Port Mahon, where they arrived on the seventh of March. There they joined the squadron under the command of Commodore Shaw, which in a few weeks sailed for Algiers, off which place it anchored on the eighth of April.

Upon landing and getting an audience with the dey, the commodore found a very different state of affairs than had been expected. Instead of receiving the ratified treaty and accepting it in exchange for the unratified one, which had been left by Decatur, the dey made numerous objections, claiming that several articles had undergone some change. Although the

documents were read and compared word for word and found identical in every respect, he made the preposterous claim that neither he nor his council could understand the provisions of the treaty, and returned it forthwith. His dissatisfaction with the treaty was undoubtedly due to the demands of Great Britain and the consuls of other nations, who, jealous of the advantage gained by the United States, had done everything in their power to secure like concessions for themselves. As all negotiations were at an end, it was decided to make a warlike demonstration by attacking the Algerian navy, which lay moored within the Mole. Thereupon our consul struck his flag and retired on board the frigate *United States*.

While active preparations were being made for the assault, Captain Perry was instructed by the commodore to land under a flag of truce and, if possible, secure a renewal of the negotiations. He therefore went on shore carrying the ratified treaty and, after a few moments' delay, was ushered into the presence of the dey. This official then stated that the United States had violated the treaty by not returning the brig and crew which had been captured by Decatur, but afterward seized by the Spanish authorities, under the contention that she had been captured in waters subject to their authority. To this claim Captain Perry "gave a positive denial," explaining that the stipulation only required his country to relinquish all claim to the vessel, which they had done, and that the question of returning it was very properly left to the Spanish authorities. The negotiations, however, were conducted with such good feeling on both sides that they resulted in our consul returning to the shore, the rehoisting of the American flag over the consulate, and the renewal of former relations, until new instructions should be received from the president of the United States.



From Algiers the squadron was ordered to Tripoli on a peaceful mission, to see if our consul there was being treated with respect due to the American flag. Finding all quiet they proceeded to Syracuse, and thence to Messina and Palermo. At the latter place the commodore learned that Tunis had lately assumed a warlike attitude towards our country, and that American merchants in Sicily felt some alarm for the safety of our commerce. The squadron thereupon made sail and in due course dropped anchor in the Bay of Tunis. This opportune visit, which began on the eighteenth of June, doubtless had much to do with re-establishing friendly relations with those people. From there the ships dispersed in prosecution of separate orders, the *Java* proceeding to Gibraltar for supplies. At this port she fell in with the *Washington*, a full line-of-battle ship, flying the broad pennant of Commodore Chauncey. Ordinary duty brought Captain Perry and the commodore together on board the flagship, a meeting on terms of friendship, in which the late unpleasantness on the lakes was smoothed over and forgotten. Ever after they remained steadfast friends, and were of devoted service to each other.

The *Java*, having completed repairs, was then in a high condition for service, and everywhere attracted attention as a trim and beautifully rigged ship. She accompanied the *Washington* on her mission to Naples, where the whole squadron soon after assembled. There were diplomatic difficulties with the shifting and time-serving government; nevertheless, the new minister, Mr. Pinckney, who, with his family had been brought on the *Washington*, landed under a salute of guns; but he was soon plunged into the intricacies of the delicate situation. To add to the unrest of the moment there were internal troubles in the squadron, and the commanders had great difficulty in maintaining discipline among the younger officers and the unruly spirits

among the crews. There was also at that time a deadly opposition among the different grades of officers; and there was a sad lack of ready and cheerful obedience for inferiors. "Captain Perry," says Mackenzie, who was a midshipman on the *Java*, "was a strict and exact commander, enforcing rigid discipline in his ship; still he was disposed, on all occasions, to exercise equal justice to his inferiors, and repress any approach to an overbearing tone." The first serious offense on the *Java* occurred in entering the Bay of Naples, when, the ship being in perfect order in all other respects, the captain observed that the marine guard did not present a uniformly tidy appearance. He pointed out to John Heath, the captain of marines, one member of his company who was particularly untidy, and demanded to know why he was permitted to appear on deck in such condition. To this rational question the officer replied in, what Captain Perry conceived to be, a disrespectful and contemptuous manner, and prepared the way to the unpleasant scene that followed soon after.

Towards the close of August, no definite adjustment having been reached in settlement of our claim against the Neapolitan government, the squadron set sail and proceeded to Messina. In this port Captain Perry became involved in the unfortunate difficulty with Heath who, though generally inattentive to duty, as official papers have revealed, had on various occasions apologized to the captain for neglect of duty and trifling offenses against the discipline of the ship. From the tone of his letters of apology it is almost certain that he had no settled purpose of infringing the rules of the service, or of wounding or annoying his commander, whose duty it was to sustain them. Mackenzie says that he "can barely recollect him as a good-natured, rather fat, unmilitary-looking, and exceedingly indolent man, who wore his hands in his pockets on the quarter-deck, and his hat on one side, less with a view appar-

ently of annoying the captain, than for the comfort of being at his ease.”

Without entering into very particular detail of the circumstances of his unpleasant dispute, the main facts will be found helpful in forming a just appreciation of the character, and a veneration for the memory of Perry. But it must not be supposed that in the course of his life he never, in a single instance, acted indiscreetly, intemperately, or mistakenly, for to do so would be to place him on a pedestal of perfection — a state of something more than *man*. In no way can these facts be better told than by Perry’s letter to Commodore Chauncey, requesting an inquiry into his conduct towards Heath. It contains a brief history of the quarrel, and Perry’s explanations of his feelings which tended to justify his action:

“U. S. ship *Java*, Tunis Bay, Oct. 8, 1816.

Sir:

I am under the painful necessity of informing you of a circumstance, and of detailing to you the causes which led to an event of a very unpleasant nature.

“The apparent violation of the laws of my country, which may be imputed to me, in my having offered personal violence to a captain of the marine guard of this ship, I trust will be in a great measure extenuated by the consideration that, although I do not absolutely defend this mode of redress, yet I insist the consequences were produced by a sufficient justification.

“The general deportment of Captain Heath towards me, so contrary to the usual address of my officers, and moreover, his marked insolence to me in many instances, induced me to believe, that his conduct proceeded from a premeditated determination to insult me on every occasion.

“His palpable neglect of duty on several important emergencies, together with the usual insolent and inat-

tention to the calls of his office, made it a desirable object for me to solicit his removal the first convenient opportunity, not only to obtain a more active and vigilant officer, but to save him the rigorous severity of a court martial. I now, sir, narrate to you the circumstances which have thus compelled me to address you.

“On the evening of the sixteenth last, while this ship lay at anchor in the harbor of Messina, two of her marines deserted by jumping overboard and swimming ashore. Informed of this fact, Captain Heath, as their commanding officer, was immediately sent for and acquainted therewith, but he refused to go on deck, alleging as a reason therefor the subterfuge of indisposition, I then repeated the order for him to come on deck and muster the marines. This duty he executed in so careless and indifferent a manner, and at the same time neglected to report to me until called by me, and requested to do so, that (conscious that such an occasion ought to animate the most careless and inattentive officer to decision and promptitude), I was induced from such a manifest neglect of duty, to say to him, ‘that he might go below, and should do no more duty on board the *Java*.’

“On the evening of the eighteenth of September, he addressed me a letter, written by himself, which he caused to be laid on the table in the cabin, and which I received at a very late hour. This letter being couched in language which I deemed indecorous and disrespectful, I sent for him and demanded why he thus addressed me, and particularly why he had selected a time so obviously improper. He immediately assumed a manner so highly irritating and contemptuous, that I believed it my duty to arrest him, (after having expressed to him my indignation at such conduct), and for this purpose sent for the second marine officer, at the same time ordering him to be silent. In utter disregard of this order, though repeatedly warned of the conse-

quences of his disobedience, he persevered in the same irritating tone and manner, until at length, after reiterating attempts to effect his silence, I gave him a blow. Frequent outrage added to insult, provoked this disagreeable consequence.

“Mortified, that I should so far *forget myself*, as to raise my arm against any officer holding a commission in the service of the United States, however improper his conduct might have been, and however just the cause, I immediately, in conformity to principle, offered to make such apology as should be proper for both; this proposal was refused which procluded the necessity of any further overtures. The offer was consonant to the views of the most distinguished officers of the squadron, after their being made fully acquainted with every particular.

“From my having been educated in the strictest discipline of the navy, in which, respect and obedience to a superior was instilled into my mind as a fundamental and leading principle, and from natural disposition to chastise insolence and impertinence, immediately when offered me, even in private life, must be inferred the outburst of indignant feeling, which prompted me to inflict personal satisfaction on an officer who thus daringly outraged the vital interests of the service in my own person.

“I have thus gone through this unpleasant recital with as much candor and conciseness as possible. I might indeed detail to you other acts of delinquency in this officer, but I will not further weary you with the circumstances of this unfortunate affair, but confine myself to the request, that you will be pleased to order a court of inquiry or court martial, as you may see fit, to examine into the causes which led to this seeming infraction of the laws of the navy.

“After eighteen years of important and arduous services in the cause of my country, it can hardly be im-

agined that I have any disposition to infringe that discipline, which is the pride and ornament of the navy; and to prevent any intention being falsely ascribed to me, I beg you will give immediate attention to this request, that the navy, as well as my country, shall be satisfied of the integrity of my motives.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

O. H. PERRY.

To ISAAC CHAUNCEY, ESQ., COMMODORE."

Whatever prejudice may have existed in the mind of Captain Perry, and however great the provocation over the infraction of discipline on the part of Heath, it is difficult to find justification for his act of arbitrarily depriving the latter of his command of the marines. Captain Heath had been ordered to the *Java* by the secretary of the navy, and at the time there was a commodore in command of the squadron in port, whose duty it was to adjudicate such matters of dissension. In the heat of passion these circumstances were overlooked or ignored by Perry. Two days after this unfortunate occurrence, hearing nothing further from his commander, Heath very naturally wrote the letter of inquiry, to learn his status on the ship. To show how little in his language could be construed as offensive, the letter is transcribed:

"Sir:

On the evening of the sixteenth instant, I was ordered below by you from the quarter-deck, with these words, or to that effect, 'I have no further use for your services on board this ship.' I have waited till this moment to know why I have been thus treated, and, being ignorant of the cause, request my arrest and charges.

Very respectfully, &c.,

JOHN HEATH."

It is perfectly obvious that it was an act of great indiscretion on the part of Captain Perry in calling Heath before him at an unseemingly hour of the night, when neither was likely to have his feelings and temper under control, to answer for having addressed him in such a way, the plea of which should have been regarded as entirely reasonable. It is also clear that it was an act of intemperateness for Perry to give way to a "burst of indignant feeling;" while the act of offering personal violence to his inferior was utterly unjustifiable. On the other hand, in view of Perry's feelings, his remorse over having violated the rules of the service, and his offer to make a proper apology to Heath in atonement thereof, will ever be held as highly honorable of him. The trials by court martial were called in due course during the month of December, 1816, in which Captain Heath was found guilty of "disrespectful, insolent, and contemptuous conduct towards Captain Perry, his superior officer," and also of disobedience of orders. Captain Perry was found guilty of having used improper language, and of striking Captain Heath. Both were sentenced to be privately reprimanded by the commander-in-chief, a punishment which was scarcely proportioned to the offences. In consequence of the leniency shown by the court, the difficulty between the offenders was not definitely settled until many months after.

"The general character of Perry," wrote Niles in 1820, "was such as to effectually shield it from any imputation of unprovoked violence, tyranny, and arbitrary conduct. He was, during his whole life, remarkable for his modest deportment, for the affability of his manners, and for his mild and unassuming conduct. And, although we would not entirely justify his conduct on this occasion, yet there was something in it not only free from blame, but highly meritorious. The man of real worth and virtue, often appears lovely even in his

faults. These frequently appear like a veil thrown over his virtues, which, although it may obscure their brilliancy, gives them a novel and often a more interesting character, for their being seen through a different medium. When Perry, from the combination of extraordinary circumstances, was betrayed into an intemperate and improper act, he was prompt and ready to offer satisfaction for it. He promptly offered to make an honorable apology to Captain Heath for the aggression on his part, which though repeated and submitted in writing, was peremptorily refused." This ungenerous attitude of Heath complicated the affair, which should have ended there; but, through it all, he was very ill advised by his friends in the marine service. They evidently intended to upset and ruin the reputation of the illustrious hero of Erie, an ignoble purpose which, however, was not successful. To Perry's offer of apology submitted in writing, they caused Heath to reply in these words: "The injuries which have been inflicted upon me by Captain Perry are of such a nature that I cannot receive any apology he can offer as an atonement, but rely upon the laws of my country for justice."

From the Bay of Tunis the squadron proceeded to Algiers, and continued the cruise down the Mediterranean, arriving at Gibraltar early in November. In this passage an incident occurred which gave the officers of the *Java* and of the whole squadron, a good idea of the admirable seamanship of Captain Perry. In standing down before a brisk Levanter, running nine or ten knots, Lieutenant Dulany Forrest, the officer of the deck, fell overboard through an open gangway, calling out to Mr. Fitzgerald, the purser, as he passed rapidly astern, "tell them the officer of the deck is overboard, Fitz!" The dreaded cry of alarm instantly brought the captain on deck, when, raising his clear, sonorous voice, he ordered the ship by the wind, giving the word of command with rare tact and judgment, so that the men,



inspired by the animated presence of their commander, and the desire to save life, gathered in the sails as she came to with the speed of magic. In about three minutes the ship was under snug sail, the boat had been lowered, and the crew was pulling rapidly in the direction designated by the lookout from aloft. In a few minutes the drowning officer was reached and hauled in by the hair of his head; and was soon on board the ship apparently lifeless. By skilful application, however, Doctor Parsons restored him to consciousness.

While at Gibraltar instructions were received from the government appointing a commission to negotiate a new treaty with Algiers. Commodore Chauncey, Mr. Shaler, our consul there, and Mr. Handy, chaplain of the *Java*, were chosen commissioners. The squadron thereupon sailed for Algiers in fulfillment of this duty, and, on arrival, the commissioners were soon able to conclude the negotiations upon the basis of that of Commodore Decatur, and established all the important principles secured to us by that treaty. Information of this event was immediately communicated to the several American consuls in the Mediterranean, expressed with the belief that our commerce had nothing to fear from the cruisers of the Barbary powers.

Soon after this important duty had been concluded, the *Java* was ordered home with the newly-negotiated treaty, leaving the rest of the squadron at Port Mahon. She sailed from that port on the twelfth of January, 1817, and, after encountering head winds nearly all the way, arrived at Gibraltar on the twenty-sixth. After taking on supplies of provisions, they stood out to sea that evening, for several hours running at the rate of twelve knots. In the steady trade winds they had the usual delightful weather, but on approaching our own coast they met with severe gales, in which they fell in with several disabled ships whose crews were exhausted from fatigue and want of food. Captain Perry was

able to relieve many suffering seamen, and never hesitated a moment to run out of his course upon seeing a vessel having the slightest appearance of being in distress, even without the customary signal. To add to the uncomfortable ending of their voyage, the ship was leaking badly keeping the pumps going constantly, and there was much sickness among the crew. "All the sickness," says Mackenzie, "gave scope, as usual, to the exercise of the unwearied benevolence which Perry ever exhibited towards the sick under his command. He daily visited them, and inquired as to their condition and wants, and never failed to send from his own table whatever could be grateful to the convalescent. The captain's steward, an old fashioned Narragansett negro, by the name of Hannibal, with a huge mouth, elephant-like teeth, and a perennial grin, might be seen daily cautiously descending the steerage ladder in search of a sufferer, with some dainty from the cabin table, or some tempting preserve from the family stores, provided for such an emergency by the forethought of woman."

At length, on the third of March, the *Java* arrived at Newport. Captain Perry at once directed Mr. Handy, his secretary, to proceed to Washington, with the new treaty and dispatches from Commodore Chauncey. Soon after, the *Java* was ordered to Boston, where her crew was mustered out, and she was soon dismantled. Her commander thereupon resumed command of the station at Newport, and settled himself once more in the endearments of home, of which no man ever more fully or more thankfully enjoyed. Upon parting with his officers who had served on the *Java*, he was presented by them with an earnest testimonial of their high regard and esteem in the form of an affectionate letter of farewell, which has been found among his papers. As a faithful record has been made of his extreme misconduct to an officer of the marine corps in a fit of uncontrollable rage—the only one which, in a

life of anxious duties, he ever gave way to — it is but fair to include a few passages from this free offering of grateful hearts, of those who knew him best. The letter was signed by Lieutenants Macpherson, M'Call, Turner, Stevens, Forrest, and Taylor, all of whom, except one, had been with him in battle.

“You are about to relinquish the command of the *Java*, and we to separate from you, perhaps for ever. Will you permit us, with the deepest regard for the loss of one with whom we have been so long associated, to lay before you the tribute of our gratitude and esteem? We have seen you in every vicissitude incident to the tumultuous profession of arms, and everything has contributed to augment the esteem which our hearts spontaneously formed. Whether in the hour of perilous achievement, of unequalled triumph and success, or in the quiet circle of domestic life, we have ever beheld the same self-devotedness, the same unshaken fortitude and patience, and the same diffusive kindness. We, sir, owe you no common obligations. In your leaving the *Java* we have not only to lament the loss of a beloved commander, but of a zealous and devoted friend. The favors which you have bestowed upon us have tended to cement our hearts the more closely to virtue. You have been the watchful monitor of our errors, as well as the faithful rewarder of our good conduct. We believe that with you we have acquired a fixed character; and while we have in remembrance the distinguishing traits of yours, every vicious inclination will be suppressed. We cannot but hope that some fortunate concurrence of events will hereafter place us again under your command. To that period we look with impatient expectation, while we earnestly hope that you may reap, in the happiness of domestic life, the richest reward of the virtuous heart; and, when you look back to the busy scenes of other days, we beg we may occupy a place in your recollections.”

At the time this letter was addressed to Captain Perry, Doctor Parsons was absent from Boston, but he separately took a friendly leave of him by letter, from which the following is transcribed:

“Understanding that you have relinquished the command of the *Java*, in which I have had the honor of serving under you for more than two years, permit me, on our separation, to tender to you my grateful acknowledgment for the very friendly and generous solicitude with which you have at all times regarded my best interests and happiness. It is but just to say, that the mere performance of my duty has ever given me a certain passport to your friendship and favor, and I shall ever regard it as the happiest incident of my life, that I was so fortunate in being placed under a commander who has ever been exceedingly active in advancing the improvement and welfare of his officers.

“Permit me also to express the feelings with which I shall ever bear in mind your treatment of the sick and wounded seamen. In you they have ever found a kind, attentive commander and sympathizing friend. Your prompt attention at all times to whatever I could suggest for the preservation of health or the benefit of the sick, your diligent inquiries into all their wants, and frequent appropriations of all your private stores for their comfort, are among the numerous acts of beneficence which can never be forgotten by them or me. In short, to your humane exertions is attributable any extraordinary success that has ever attended my private practice during the four years I have been under your command.”

## CHAPTER XIII

### RENEWED DIFFICULTIES WITH HEATH AND ELLIOTT

**S**OON after resuming command of the Newport station, Captain Perry was employed on a survey of the line-of-battle ship *Independence*, of seventy-four guns, which was built in Boston, in 1814. It had been found that she carried her lower-deck guns too low, and it was necessary to determine whether she should be continued at her original rate, with slight alterations, or be cut down to a frigate. Although Perry recommended that her spars, ballast, and general stores be reduced, to accomplish the desired result, the beautiful ship was eventually converted into a frigate, a process which, it was said, merely substituted new defects for the old. During the summer he was busily engaged, in association with Commodores Bainbridge and Evans, and General Swift of the corps of engineers, in examining the eastern end of Long Island Sound and the harbor of Newport, to determine the practicability of erecting fortifications for the defense of towns and villages situated along that coast. The commission decided adversely on this proposition, but was favorable to the plan of erecting defenses for the protection of Newport. Later they examined the coast north of the Delaware, to select a proper site for a naval depot and dockyard. On this proposition they disagreed, Perry advocating Fall River, in Mount Hope Bay, as combining unequalled advantages for a naval establishment.

In the Fall of 1818 the agitation over the differences with Heath, which had been revived by the public press, caused him great uneasiness and distress of mind. His

enemy had influential friends in Virginia, who brought the matter before the public by means of pamphlets and the use of the press, in the most venomous abuse and vilification. The very frenzy of enthusiasm, which the public and press four years before had manifested in his favor, gave conspicuousness to his offence; and the public prints, conceiving themselves called upon to redress grievances of this nature, meted out to him the residue of justice which they believed the military court had withheld. To the object of these attacks, a man of proud and sensitive nature, retiring in his habits and inclinations, and accustomed to unbounded praise, the experience of being placed on the pillory of censure must have been very bitter indeed. During this ordeal, however, he was not without the support and encouragement of many loyal friends, who did not think it such a terrible offence to chastise one impertinent and insolent fellow. Commodore Decatur, Commodore Porter, and many others of honor in his profession, availed themselves of this appropriate occasion to remind him of their still active esteem and regard, and of their attachment and sympathy. President Monroe, too, took particular pains to mark his high sense of Perry's merits, and his strong personal attachment to him, by appointing him his aid on a trip of inspection of the eastern harbors, on board the brig *Enterprise*, a compliment which was well-timed and gratifying to the wounded feelings of the illustrious Perry.

Toward the close of the year Captain Heath took measures to bring his unfortunate case to the only issue that would satisfy the feelings of the marine corps, or which, indeed, would restore Captain Perry to popular favor with the people. Popular opinion, with all its scruples, was still an abettor of the system of duelling; and, when it was intimated that Heath was about to call upon him for personal satisfaction, Perry determined to grant the demand. He therefore placed his honor

safe with Decatur and Porter to arrange the necessary details of the meeting; and wrote the former under date of January 18th, 1818, as follows:

“My dear Commodore:

You are already acquainted with the unfortunate affair which has taken place between Captain Heath and myself. Although I consider, from the course he has thought proper to pursue, that I am absolved from all accountability to him, yet, as I did, in a moment of irritation, produced by strong provocation, raise my hand against a person honored with a commission, I have determined, upon mature reflection, to give him a meeting, should he call upon me; declaring at the same time, that I cannot consent to return his fire, as a meeting, on my part, will be entirely an atonement for the violated rules of the service. I request, therefore, my dear sir, that you will act as my friend on that occasion.

Very truly your friend,

O. H. PERRY.

COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR.”

This generous and self-sacrificing attitude in the affair shows conclusively, that Perry had not wantonly outraged either the service or one of its officers. He was willing to atone for his offence by exposing his life to a bitter enemy, without raising his hand in self-defense. But Heath and his friends had given so much publicity to the contemplated meeting, that the authorities were everywhere on the alert, and there was great difficulty in bringing it about. Besides, letters poured in from all quarters from Perry's friends counselling him against the meeting, by appeals based either on moral consideration, or on his opponent's having refused to accept from him a proper apology for the injury sustained. On the third of April Perry wrote to an anxious friend: “As regards this meeting with Heath,

it has almost become farcical from the publicity which he and his partisans have given it. This circumstance weighs more with me than any other. I do not wish to render myself ridiculous." To another friend, on the fourteenth of May, he wrote, "The only difficulty now is my adversary has rendered himself so contemptible in this quarter, I am at a loss how to act."

The affair thus dragged until the third of October, when Heath and his second invaded the State of Rhode Island. This caused such commotion among the people that the civil authorities took them both into custody, and detained them until they entered into an agreement to keep the peace and leave the state. But before taking their departure, arrangements were secretly made for the meeting in the vicinity of Washington. The whole unfortunate affair had brought such anxiety to his domestic circle, and such annoyance to his friends, that Perry caused this provision to be endorsed on the back of the agreement for terms, signed by the seconds of both parties: "Captain Perry desires it to be explicitly understood that, in according to Captain Heath the personal satisfaction he has demanded, he is influenced entirely by a sense of what he considers due from him, as an atonement to the violated rules of the service, and not by any consideration of the claims which Captain Heath may have for making such a demand, which he totally denies; as such claims have been forfeited by the measures of a public character which Captain Heath has adopted towards him. If, therefore, the civil authorities shall produce an impossibility of meeting at the time and place designated, which he will take every precaution to prevent, he will consider himself absolutely exonerated from any responsibility to Captain Heath touching their present cause of difference."

The tenth of October was the time originally set for the meeting, but Commodore Decatur had passed Perry



on the road to Washington, and it was necessary for him to turn back to New York. The parties finally met on the nineteenth on the Jersey shore of the Hudson, above Hoboken, at a place condemned by humanity as the scene of many distressing tragedies. Captain Perry was accompanied by Commodore Decatur and Major James Hamilton, a schoolmate and constant friend; while Heath was attended by Lieutenant Desha, of the marine corps. Upon arrival on the scene no time was lost in bringing about the event; the navy pistols were produced; the principals were placed back to back; and the seconds stood aside. Perry's face at this crucial moment, it is said, was calm and unmoved, and free from all traces of rancor, while his bearing was far from betraying his intention of exposing his life without jeopardizing that of his antagonist. The commanding figure of Decatur was drawn up to its fullest stature, and his countenance was calm and thoughtful. At a given word the antagonists advanced five paces with measured step, then wheeled; Heath discharged his pistol towards Perry, but missed him, while Perry abstained from raising his arm. Decatur then stepped forward and read the letter which Perry had addressed to him months before, declaring his intention not to return the fire of Heath; and observed that he presumed the party claiming to be aggrieved was now satisfied. Captain Heath having admitted that his injury was atoned for, the parties returned to New York. Thus the unpleasant affair ended, with more honor to the hero of Erie; and his opponent, the marine corps, the press and the people were satisfied. Perry's failure to raise his hand against his antagonist, while he placed himself in a situation to be wantonly slain, was as magnanimous as it was unusual.

During the Summer, while the agitation over this affair was at its height, Captain Elliott conceived that the time had arrived to vent his malice. Upon learning

that Captain Perry was about to meet his enemy, he accordingly prepared to destroy what might be left of him after Heath had finished. Captain Perry had felt too secure in his own position to expose the treachery of this ungrateful officer; and now that the press were flinging their venomous shafts at the hero with little regard for the truth, Elliott renewed his efforts to injure him by the grossest misrepresentations at Washington. On the fourteenth of May he wrote to Captain Perry from Norfolk, complaining of the many wrongs under which he suffered, and accusing him of "base, false, and malicious reports as contained in the certificates enclosed." The certificates referred to merely asserted that Captain Perry had said, in speaking of Elliott's conduct in the battle of Lake Erie, that, "Captain Elliott had better be quiet on that subject, and that the least he and his friends said about it the better it would be for him." He also brought to mind the contents of Perry's letter of commendation, dated the nineteenth of September, 1813, in which his superior had said that, "the victory was due in a great measure to his (Elliott's) bringing the small vessels into close action," and that, "the *Niagara* would from her superior order have taken the *Queen Charlotte* in twenty minutes, had she not made sail and engaged the *Lawrence*." In conclusion, Elliott wrote, "I would not dwell on the action that you would write a private letter to the secretary of the navy, and express your surprise that the country did not give me half the honors of the victory."

To this letter Captain Perry replied as follows:

"Newport, R. I., June 18, 1818.

Sir:

The letter which I have lately received from you has evidently been written for the purpose of being exhibited to your friends, and in the hope that, passing

without reply, it might gain credit among those whom you have been long in the habit of practicing similar impositions. You had much reason, sir, to indulge in such a hope.

“It is humiliating to be under the necessity of replying to any letters written by a person who so little knows what becomes a gentleman. I must not, however, permit you to derive from my silence any countenance to the gross falsehoods contained in your letter, and which it would be an affectation of decorum to call by any other name; such particularly, is the absurd declaration you impute to me in the close of it, and the perverted account you give of the manner in which I was induced to write a letter in your favor. How imprudent, as well as base, it is of you, by such misrepresentations, to reduce me to the necessity of reminding you of the abject condition in which I had previously found you, and by which I was moved to afford you all the countenance in my power; sick (or pretending to be sick) in bed in consequence of distress of mind, declaring that you had missed the fairest opportunity of distinguishing yourself that man ever had, and lamenting so piteously the loss of your reputation, that I was prompted to make almost any effort to relieve you from the shame which seemed to overwhelm you. This, you very well know, was the origin of the certificate I then granted you; and that your letter to me (of which you once furnished a false copy for publication, and which you now represent as making a demand upon me), was merely an introduction to mine. Another motive I had, which you could not appreciate, but which I urged with success on the other officers; it resulted from a strong, and, I then hoped, pardonable desire, that the public eye might only rest upon the gallant conduct of the fleet, and not be attracted to its blemishes, as I feared it would be by the irritation excited by your conduct among the officers and men, most

of whom, I hoped, had acquired sufficient honor to gratify their ambition, even should that honor be shared by some one who might less deserve it.

“The expressions stated in your two certificates to have been made by me, when speaking of your unmanly conduct, were probably the most lenient I have for a long while employed when called upon to express my opinion of you; and although known, as you must be conscious your character is to me, it was quite needless for you to have procured certificates of the contempt with which I have spoken of you. You might readily, however, have furnished much more ample ones, and of a much earlier date, than those it has suited you to produce; for you allowed but little time to elapse, after receiving the benefits of my letter, before your falsehoods and intrigues against me made me fully sensible of the error I had committed in endeavoring to prop so unprincipled a character.

“If it is really true that you hurried to Washington for the purpose of inviting me to a meeting, it is indeed unfortunate that intentions for which you give yourself so great credit have evaporated in a pitiful letter, which none but a base and vulgar mind could have dictated. The reputation you have lost is not to be recovered by such artifices; it was tarnished by your own behavior on Lake Erie, and has constantly been rendered more desperate by your subsequent folly and habitual falsehoods. You cannot wonder at the loss; that reputation which has neither honor nor truth, nor courage for its basis, must ever be of short duration. Mean and despicable as you have proved yourself to be, I shall never cease to criminate myself for having deviated from the path of strict propriety, for the sake of screening you from public contempt and indignation. For this offence to the community I will atone in due time, by a full disclosure of your disgraceful conduct. But that you, of all men, should exultantly

charge me with an error committed in your favor, and by which you were (as far as a man in your situation could be) saved from disgrace, is a degree of turpitude of which I had before no conception."

O. H. PERRY."

This plain and fearless denunciation of Elliott brought forth from him, under date of July 7th, a demand for personal satisfaction, in which he said, "Your letter of the 18th June is before me, and I have read it, sir, with attention, and will do you the justice in 'saying' it is a masterly production of Epistolary black-guardism; and I am now induced to give you that invitation which I supposed my letter would have drawn from you. I now invite you to the field, appoint your time and place some where equal distant from us both; I feel no disposition to procrastinate this business by useless waste of ink and paper. I must resort to some other weapon more potent than a 'pen', one which will place me at once above your *cunning* and teach you that all your former low and ungentlemanly acts shall not shield you from the chastisement you merit. I would recommend a sentral situation a place in which we might be strangers, by doing so the object of our meeting would excite no suspicions, and throw no new difficulty in the way."

Not long after Captain Perry made this reply to Elliott:

"Newport, August 3, 1818.

Sir:

Your letter of the 7th ult. was delivered to me on my return to this place from New York. It is impossible that you should not have anticipated the reply the invitation it contains would at this time receive, having before you my letter of the eighteenth of June last, in which I implicitly gave you to understand what course I should pursue in regard to you. Most men,

situated as you are, and avowing their innocence, would have considered their honor best defended against the charges contained in that letter, by first demanding the investigation announced to you, and holding me accountable on failure to support them.

"I have prepared the charges I am about to prefer against you, and by mail tomorrow, shall transmit them to the secretary of the navy, with a request that a court martial be instituted for your trial on them.

"Should you be able to exculpate yourself from those charges, you will then have the right to assume the tone of a gentleman; and, whatever my opinion of you may be, I shall not have the least disposition to dispute that right, in respect to any claim you may then think proper to make upon me.

I am, sir, your humble servant,

O. H. PERRY.

CAPTAIN J. D. ELLIOTT, U. S. Navy, Norfolk."

The charges which Captain Perry was preparing against Elliott were completed a few days after, and were transmitted to Washington with the following letter, which reveals the reasons for not bringing the charges sooner to the notice of the government.

"Newport, August 10th, 1818.

THE HON. BENJAMIN W. CROWNINGSHIELD,  
Secretary of the Navy.

Sir:

I have the honor to lay before you copies of a letter lately received by me from Captain Elliott of the navy, and of certain certificates enclosed herein, with copies also of my letter in reply, and of the affidavits of Lieutenants Turner, Stevens, and Champlin, and Dr. Parsons.

"The conduct of Captain Elliott, partially presented to view in these papers, and still more clearly marked by other acts of that officer within my knowl-

edge, and fully susceptible of proof, imposes on me the duty of preferring against him the charges which accompany this letter; and I now accordingly do prefer said charges against Captain Elliott, and request that a court martial may be ordered for his trial thereupon.

“The facts upon which some of these charges are founded (particularly those relating to the behavior of that officer during the engagement on Lake Erie), having been long in my possession, you will expect me to account for my not having sooner made them known to the government, and for having mentioned favorably, in my official report of that action, an officer whose conduct had been so reprehensible.

“At the moment of writing that report, I did, in my own mind, avoid coming to any conclusion to what cause the conduct of Captain Elliott was to be imputed; nor was I then fully acquainted with all the circumstances relating to it. Having, previously to the engagement, given all the orders which I thought necessary to enable every officer to do his duty, and feeling confidence in them all, I was, after it commenced, necessarily too much engaged in the actual scene before me to reflect deliberately upon the cause which could induce Captain Elliott to keep his vessel so distant both from me and the enemy. And, after the battle was won, I felt no disposition to rigidly examine into the conduct of any officers of the fleet; and, strange as the behavior of Captain Elliott had been, yet I would not allow myself to come to a decided opinion, that an officer who had so handsomely conducted himself on a former occasion (as I then in common with the public had been led to suppose Captain Elliott had), could possibly be guilty of cowardice or treachery. The subsequent conduct also of Captain Elliott; the readiness with which he undertook the most minute services; the unfortunate situation in which he now stood, which he lamented to me, and his marked endeavors to conciliate

protection — were all well calculated to have their effect. But still more than all, *I was actuated by a strong desire that in the fleet I then had the honor to command, there should be nothing but harmony after the victory they had gained, and that nothing should transpire which would bring reproach upon any part of it, or convert into crimination the praises to which they were entitled, and which I wished them all to share and enjoy.* The difficulties produced in my mind by these considerations, were, at the time, fully expressed to an officer of the fleet in whom I had great confidence. If I omitted to name Captain Elliott or named him without credit, I might not only ruin that officer, but, at the same time, give occasion to animadversions which, at that period, I thought would be little to the honor or advantage of the service. If my official report of that transaction is reverted to, these embarrassments, with respect to Captain Elliott, under which I labored in drawing it, will, I believe, be apparent. That report was very different from what had been expected by the officers of the fleet; but, having adopted the course which I thought most prudent to pursue with regard to Captain Elliott, I entreated them to acquiesce in it, and made every exertion in my power to prevent any further remarks on his conduct — and even furnished him with a favorable letter or certificate for the same purpose, of which he has since made a very unjustifiable use.

“These, sir, are the reasons which induced me at the time not to bring on an inquiry into his conduct. The cause and propriety of my doing so, will, I trust, require but few explanations. I would willingly, for my own sake as well as his (after the course I had pursued for the purpose of shielding him), have still remained silent; but this, Captain Elliott will not allow me to do. He has acted upon the idea that by assailing my character he shall repair his own.



“After he was left in the command on Lake Erie, I was soon informed of the intrigues he was then practicing, some of which are detailed in these charges. These I should not have regarded as long as they were private; but I then determined and declared to many of my friends in the navy, that should Captain Elliott ever give publicity to his misrepresentations, I would then demand an investigation of the whole of his conduct. This necessity is now forced upon me.

“Believing my hands to be bound, and even braving me with the very certificate afforded him in charity, this officer at last addresses directly to myself, and claims my acquiescence in the grossest misrepresentations — not only of his own conduct on Lake Erie, but of conduct and declarations he imputes to me.

“Thus has Captain Elliott himself brought his own conduct on Lake Erie again into view, and, by involving with it imputations upon mine, has compelled me to call for this inquiry. He can make no complaint, therefore, of delay in bringing forward any of these charges. Those which regard his conduct on Lake Erie, and his justification (if he has any), are besides as perfectly susceptible of proof now as at any earlier period. Whatever the character of that behavior was, it was witnessed by such numbers as to leave nothing in it equivocal or unexplained. Some of the officers who were with him may still be called upon, and although two or three others are deceased, yet so were they when Captain Elliott himself called for a court of inquiry. Certificates also were obtained from these officers by Captain Elliott while living, the originals of which are in the department, and it may be seen by them that those officers, if present, would have no testimony to give which could at all mitigate with these charges. There are as many officers deceased from whose testimony Captain Elliott would have much more to fear, than he would have to hope from that of the officers

above alluded to. A court of inquiry consisting of three officers was once called at the request of Captain Elliott, in consequence (if I recollect rightly) of some allegations to the conduct of the *Niagara*, supposed to be contained in the British Commodore Barclay's report; and though that inquiry (of which no notice to attend as witnesses was given to any of the commanders of vessels on Lake Erie) could only be a very limited one, and could involve no actual trial upon Captain Elliott's conduct, yet he undoubtedly had before that court all such witnesses as could testify in his favor, and the record of that testimony (if any of those witnesses are deceased) will avail him. Captain Elliott, therefore, can suffer nothing from the lapse of time, and it would indeed be a strong pretension in him to claim protection from inquiry into his conduct, at the same time that he is giving notoriety to his own representations of it, and that, too, to the prejudice of others.

"I am, sir, fully sensible how troublesome the frequent examinations into the conduct of officers has been to the government, and how disagreeable they must have become. I am aware, also, that the public are justly dissatisfied with them, and that reproach has been brought upon the service by means of them. I have, therefore, avoided asking for this investigation as long as I could do so with any justice to the service, or to my character.

I have the honor to be, sir,

Your most obedient servant,

O. H. PERRY."

The formal charges against Captain Elliott were never acted upon by the government; and it is presumed that the motives of the president in suspending the whole matter were the same which influenced Captain Perry to withhold them for so long a time. There was most likely the same unwillingness to reveal to the

nation and to the world so disgraceful a passage in our history as the treachery of the second in command in the battle of Lake Erie. The facts were not made public until about 1840, when Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, U. S. N., first presented his full and authentic life of Perry. Whether Captain Elliott and Captain Heath were acting under a concerted plan to ruin the reputation of the heroic Perry, can only be conjectured; but it is certain that they caused the object of their venomous attacks a very unhappy year. That he rose from both unfortunate affairs with honor and with his self-respect unimpaired, added greatly to his prestige as a noble exemplar of his country's principles and honor.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HIS LAST CRUISE

**I**N possession of the restored admiration of his countrymen, and surrounded by intelligent and deeply-devoted friends, Captain Perry had one more Winter of domestic tranquillity, of unalloyed happiness. From the snug little cottage in Narragansett, on the farm which had been settled by Edmund Perry and occupied by five generations of his people, where he had spent a portion of the summer and autumn, he now moved his family to his comfortable house in town. To the quiet enjoyment of this home he now devoted himself, heart and soul; yet held himself in readiness to quickly answer his country's call. "I have no fixed plan as regards public employment," he wrote Hambleton, "but if I am ordered abroad, I will go cheerfully; but I will not solicit anything from the government. They know better, probably, than I to what I am entitled, and they must determine." Most of his little means, which was the reward bestowed upon him by a grateful people for heroic deeds, was carefully invested; and the emoluments of his office were entirely sufficient for his family needs in a community where extravagance and ostentation were almost unknown. Scarcely yet entering in the prime of life, in the enjoyment of excellent health, he might well have said, "thou hast much good laid up for many years; take thine ease."

As the Winter of 1819 came to an end, he received, on the thirty-first of March, a summons from the distinguished secretary of the navy, as follows:

“New York, March 29th, 1819.

Sir :

We have some very important and confidential business which the president wishes to commit to some of our distinguished navy officers, and has mentioned you as one he is desirous of entrusting with it. The business is of such a nature, and the arrangements necessary to be made to carry it into effect require, that I should have a personal interview with you. I wish, therefore, you would repair to this place as soon as you conveniently can. Be pleased to drop me a line immediately on the receipt of this, and let me know when you will be here, that I may make it a point to be at home.

I am, sir, very respectfully,

Your most obedient servant,

SMITH THOMPSON.

COMMODORE PERRY.”

Upon arriving at New York, Captain Perry was confidentially informed of the important service which was to be intrusted to him. It was nothing less than a diplomatic mission of no trifling delicacy, to the Republic of Venezuela. This struggling republic after years of bloody strife had finally, about two years before, effectually thrown off the yoke of Spanish tyranny, and since, in union with New Granada, the province adjoining on the south, had maintained a regular government under the patriotic leader, Simon Bolivar. The seat of this republican government was at Angostura, a town of ten thousand inhabitants, situated on the declivity of a hill about three hundred miles up the Orinoco.

The difficulty with this new republic had arisen over the depredations of privateers commissioned by it, without limit or qualification, on American commerce on the high seas. The predatory expeditions had been fitted out ostensibly to cruise against the ships of Spain,

but in very many cases had passed with great facility to the lawlessness of pirates, and extended their operations to include the ships of other nations. American commerce extended over the civilized world, and in South American waters had suffered severely. The government had determined, therefore, to put an end in a quiet and peaceable way to a system which could no longer be tolerated.

To effect this desirable object without wounding or giving offence to a warm-tempered people, whose friendship they sought to cultivate, required sound judgment, energy, and discretion; and it was a fine tribute to the ability and acumen of Captain Perry that it was intrusted to him. A naval force, such as he might deem necessary, was to be placed at his disposal in order to lend a military character to the diplomatic mission. For these services he was to receive extra compensation from the department of state, under whose orders he was to be placed for that portion of his duties. As an honored servant of the people, he could not decline a task of such importance thus flatteringly tendered him by the president; and he accepted it at once. He then returned to his home to hastily prepare for his departure, and linger to the latest moment within the circle of his family.

The frigate *Constellation*, of thirty-six guns, had been ordered out to bear his flag, but, as some time would be required to prepare her for sea, the sloop *John Adams* was given him temporarily, and the frigate was to follow with the least possible delay. On the tenth of May, the secretary informed him that the ship would be ready to sail as soon as he could proceed to Washington and receive his instructions from the secretary of state. As the *John Adams* would be unable to pass the bar at the mouth of the Orinoco, over which there was only sixteen feet of water, the schooner *Nonsuch*, a vessel of lighter draft, was also placed at his disposal for the

cruise up the river. The state instructions set forth the friendly course which the United States had pursued towards the republics of South America, and our doctrine with regard to blockades and the equipment of privateers. During his stay in Washington, Perry passed many of his leisure hours in the congenial company of his loyal friend, Commodore Decatur, of whom he often mentioned in his notes and papers in terms of the most exalted admiration.

On the fifth of June he proceeded to Annapolis and went on board the *John Adams*, when his broad pennant was hoisted under a salute of thirteen guns. The ship was in good order and ready to sail, but her commander, Captain Alexander S. Wadsworth, left her the following morning to take command of the *Constellation*, which he was to bring out to Perry, and then resume the command of his own ship. His first officer, however, was his staunch and devoted friend, Lieutenant Daniel Turner, and his purser was his former secretary, Mr. C. O. Handy. In his notes he observed that "the officers were gentlemen-like-looking young men, and the crew a tolerably good one." At this time, while waiting for the purser to come from Washington with the necessary funds for the expedition, and for the arrival of the *Nonsuch*, the commodore addressed a letter to a close relative, from which the following paragraph is transcribed:

"I must content myself with giving you a very brief letter, with some account of myself. Without feeling at liberty to mention where I am going, or upon what service, I can assure you that it is perfectly satisfactory to me. The course which has been observed towards me by the different officers of the government, with whom I have had occasion to communicate, has been extremely gratifying. My wishes have been, as far as possible, anticipated; and whatever I have suggested,

immediately assented to. I go out as commodore, and am to have several vessels under my orders."

At Annapolis Commodore Perry was joined by B. Irvine, an accredited confidential agent to Venezuela, who gave him much useful information regarding the political condition of that country, from which he had recently returned. He also made clear the character of the prominent officials of the government with whom the commodore was likely to come in contact. On the evening of the sixth the purser arrived with funds, and on the following morning the *John Adams* weighed anchor and stood down the bay. That night they met the *Nonsuch*, commanded by Lieutenant Alexander Claxton, and both vessels proceeded seaward. But they were detained by head winds and calms, and only got to sea on the eleventh of June, on a course which would take them to the passage between St. Thomas and Porto Rico. This they cleared in due course and arrived off Barbados on the fifth of July. To this island the commodore sent Mr. Handy on board the *Nonsuch*, to get the latest information regarding the political situation of the country to which he was destined, and of other matters pertaining to his movements. The schooner returned on the following day bringing the purser with the desired information, and abundant supplies of fresh provisions.

Lieutenant Claxton, who meanwhile was attending to the military civilities, saluted the British flag and waited upon Admiral Campbell, who commanded the station on the Barbados. The admiral thereupon expressed "his regret that he should have been denied the opportunity of showing the commodore all the civility which he wished, but hoped yet to have the pleasure of meeting him." He also learned from the admiral that the season for the dreaded hurricanes was at hand, and that the first one was expected daily. The wind hauling to the south and west, attended with dark weather, was



certain indication of their approach; and great apprehension was felt that season because of the uncommon absence of thunder and lightning. It was mentioned, however, that they were never known to blow further southward than two degrees beyond Barbados, and navigation of the Gulf of Paria was free from danger. Port of Spain, in the island of Trinidad, moreover, was a safe harbor, where it would be expedient to leave the *John Adams* while cruising up the Orinoco.

Proceeding on their voyage, in defiance of the furies of the elements, the two vessels arrived, on the fifteenth of July, at the delta of the Orinoco. They experienced some difficulty in finding its navigable mouth, which was laid down differently in various charts of the time, and not correctly in any possessed by the United States navy. At length the commodore transferred his flag to the *Nonsuch*, and ordered the *John Adams* to proceed to the Port of Spain, about fifty leagues distant, to await his return. He then took on a pilot off the bar and commenced the tedious ascent of the river, a journey, which for about two hundred miles, was through an uninhabited country. Because of the low, marshy character of the land on both sides of the stream, and the frequent freshets which converted wide stretches of country into a vast inland sea, it was abandoned to the forces of nature. The banks, however, were densely covered with lofty trees, to which, the stream being very deep, the schooner was often tied, while the crew jumped ashore.

Farther up the river they came to native settlements on higher ground, where the vast forests were alternated by plantations which amply repaid the toil of the cultivators. Everywhere the scenery was grand and majestic, and often beautiful; but the swarms of mosquitoes, the excessive heat, and the discomforts of the stuffy cabin in the small vessel, rendered the attractions of little enjoyment to them. When the wind was

light the commodore would sometimes get into his boat, and pull along the bank in advance of the schooner, bringing down with his gun the birds and other game which abounded in the overhanging trees. In his notes of the journey, he graphically described the discomforts of the situation:

“Confined on board a small vessel,” he wrote, “we rise in the morning after being exhausted by the heat. The sun, as soon as it shows itself, striking almost through one; mosquitoes, sandflies, and gnats covering you. As the sun gets up, it becomes entirely calm, and its rays pour down a heat that is insufferable. The fever it creates, together with the irritation caused by the insects, produce a thirst which is insatiable; to quench which we drink water at eighty-two degrees. About four o’clock, a rain squall accompanied by a little wind, generally takes place. It might be supposed that this would cool the air; but not so. The steam that rises as soon as the sun comes out, makes the heat still more intolerable. At length the night approaches; the wind leaves us. We go close in shore and anchor; myriads of mosquitoes and gnats come off to the vessel, and compel us to sit over strong smokes created by burning oakum and tar, rather than endure their terrible stings. Wearied and exhausted, we go to bed to endure new torments. Shut up in the berth of a small cabin, if there is any air stirring, not a breath of it reaches us. The mosquitoes, more persevering follow us and annoy us the whole night with their noise and bites, until, almost mad with the heat and pain, we rise to go through the same troubles the next day.”

At length, on the twenty-sixth of July, the little schooner reached Angostura, which lies near nine degrees north, or about the same latitude as Panama. The commodore immediately announced his arrival by dispatching an officer on shore to wait on the vice-president, Don Antonio Francisco Zea, as Bolivar was then

with the army, and offer the customary salute. This official expressed his pleasure at the arrival of an armed vessel of the United States bearing an officer of rank, and promised that a salute should be returned gun for gun. He also said that "he would be happy to receive the commodore on the following morning at ten o'clock." Before the appointed time the *Nonsuch* saluted the Venezuelan flag, and her salute was properly returned by the battery on shore. At ten Commodore Perry landed, attended by several of his officers, and by Doctor Forsyth, an American resident of the place, who acted as interpreter in all the commodore's intercourse with the vice-president. The party was received in the Hall of Congress with manifestations of respect, and, when the customary compliments had been exchanged, the commodore arranged for an informal meeting, when he would make known the object of his mission. They then retired, and, upon the urgent invitation of Dr. Forsyth, the commodore took up his residence with him.

On the evening of the following day, which was the twenty-eighth of July, the vice-president called on the commodore at his lodgings, when the whole matter was laid before him. He was sensible of the great influence which the United States had exerted with foreign powers to the aid and encouragement of his country, and assured the commodore that everything would be arranged to their entire satisfaction, including indemnity for the losses suffered by American shipping. But the negotiations with the infant republic dragged, and, on the first of August, Perry made the following note: "I received assurance of a prompt and favorable issue to my business. Yet with the indolence of these people, I am not sanguine of an early termination of my visit; a visit which affords me no pleasure farther than a prospect of succeeding to the full extent of my wishes. The climate is bad, the town is extremely sickly. Al-

ready two Englishmen have been buried from the house in which I reside, and others are dying in different parts of the town daily. The officers and crew of the schooner begin to be sickly and anxious. For my own part, I meet this danger, as I do all others, simply because it is my duty; yet I must own there is something more appalling in the shape of death in a fever than in the form of a cannon ball. The creoles are dying daily. I have nothing to do but wait patiently the time of the vice-president, and occasionally urge him to expedite my papers."

A week later, sickness having broken out on the schooner to an alarming extent, and the surgeon also attacked, the commodore wrote a note to the vice-president, saying that he must depart. In his notes, he recorded: "The communications I made to the vice-president appeared in the first instance to produce a favorable impression, but at present he affects, as I am told, to think that the sole object of my visit is to reclaim the property that has been illegally captured. He joins others in the opinion that it will be policy to restore this property, as it will make a favorable impression on the minds of foreign nations. Yet it is a hard matter to make them disgorge their plunder. These people affect to think that it is very unkind in the United States to demand restitution of any property, however piratically obtained, if it has been done in the name of patriotism. Some difficulty may be anticipated in regulating their privateers by suitable restrictions, as people engaged in this business are the only moneyed men, and, of course, possess great influence. They will not readily give up so fruitful a source of revenue as the privilege of plundering at pleasure the peaceful commerce of all nations."

It was not until the eleventh of August that Perry finally received from the secretary of state a definite reply to his note claiming indemnity for the vessels and

property condemned within the territory of the republic. The government admitted, though reluctantly, the principle of restitution, and the secretary promised to make an early settlement of its obligation. He also pledged, on behalf of the republic, that its cruisers and privateers would henceforth be restricted within narrower limits. Thus, by holding themselves responsible for illegal captures, they created a motive to restrict the operations of their vessels to the admitted rights of belligerents.

Having thus brought the communications to a satisfactory issue, the commodore would have left at once, but he was so strongly urged to remain until the following Saturday, the fourteenth, when a dinner was to be given in his honor by the government, that he felt he could not decline doing so consistently with the important object of conciliation. He therefore delayed his departure to comply with the wishes of the officials, though he fully realized the increasing perils of his situation. On board the *Nonsuch*, Lieutenant Claxton and Lieutenant Salter, and twenty of the crew were then ill with the fever. The disease, however, had not assumed a very virulent character, as fifteen of the crew were slowly recovering. He continued daily to go aboard the schooner, to cheer the sick with encouraging words, and to look after their comfort. The three days of keen anxiety finally passed, and, at the appointed time, the commodore and some of his officers dined with the vice-president, the officials of the government, and the leading citizens of the place. Forgetting the vexatious delays and the distrust of the officials by whom he had been annoyed, he prepared to part with his entertainers with more kindly feelings.

On the following day, the fifteenth of August, a new constitution of the republic was solemnly proclaimed with religious ceremonies and the firing of cannon. Upon urgent invitation Commodore Perry assisted in the ceremonies, a duty which was an appropriate ter-

mination of his diplomatic mission. On the conclusion of this affair, he immediately went on board the *Nonsuch* which weighed anchor and dropped rapidly down the river. He was not feeling very well at the time, but rose on the following morning in better health and with cheerful spirits. The rapid motion of the schooner gliding swiftly down with the current, greatly animated him, the shores with their magnificent vegetation and lofty trees seeming to glide swiftly away like magic. On the seventeenth he ordered out his gig and was pulled along the banks to resort to his gun for fresh game. That night the *Nonsuch* reached the mouth of the Orinoco, but, as the wind was unfavorable to cross the bar with safety, she was anchored within it until morning.

While the commodore lay sound asleep in his berth, the wind freshened, and the schooner, with stern to seaward by reason of the swift current, took on much spray which dashed down the companion hatch of the trunk-cabin, thoroughly wetting him. About daybreak he awoke with a severe chill. Doctor Forsyth, who had taken passage on the schooner, which was to proceed to the United States with dispatches, immediately prescribed for him, and in about an hour the chill passed off. This left him, however with great pain in the head and back, a hot skin, and soreness of the muscles, which were the symptoms of a very severe attack of yellow-fever. During the illness of Doctor Morgan, the ship's surgeon, Doctor Forsyth had treated the cases of fever on board the schooner with marked success, and he now took charge of the distinguished patient, and attended him with unremitting care. But the use of cathartics and the lancet, which had been successful in other cases, brought no relief; and the case, proving so different from the others which had occurred on board, was considered a presage of great danger.

The schooner, meanwhile, meeting with light and unfavorable winds, was making but slow progress toward Port of Spain, where she was to meet the *John Adams*. On the third day after leaving the Orinoco, the commodore was in a most unpromising condition. He was restless from extreme pain, and his breathing was deep and tremulous. The use of the usual remedies was continued, and every effort made to maintain his strength with nourishing drinks, and his head was sponged frequently with vinegar and water to allay the distressing heat; but all without avail to effect any permanent change for the better. Occasionally his skin became cool and his breathing more natural, only to be followed by a new paroxysm of fever to destroy the hopes of his faithful attendants.

From the first the commodore was apprehensive of the outcome of the attack; and, indeed, when in Washington, had remarked to his friend, Commodore Decatur, that he felt if he should be stricken with the fever, he could not survive. But through all his suffering he evinced a resolute spirit not to allow this belief to influence unfavorably his chances of recovery. The small and confined cabin of the schooner, in which ventilation was impossible and the heat almost unbearable, added to the discomforts and made him impatient to reach his ship, where he would be so much more at his ease. On the fourth day of his fever the *Nonsuch* was still forty miles from Port of Spain, and the progress was so slow that an officer was dispatched in an open boat to the *John Adams*, to make known his serious condition. At this time the efforts of the physicians were directed to sustain the powers of life and allay his intense pain, as his strength was almost gone. He had, however, entire possession of all the faculties of mind; and as Doctor Morgan has said: "His patience and fortitude never forsook him; his mind seemed entirely superior to the greatest agony of suffering he felt. His

sufferings were severe, but during the whole of his illness, he showed every characteristic that could be exhibited by a great man and a christian." On one occasion, when dwelling, no doubt, on the rare felicity of his home life, the commodore remarked, "few persons have greater inducements to make them wish to live than I; but I am perfectly ready to go if it pleases the Almighty to take me; 'the debt of nature must be paid.'"

Towards noon of Monday, the twenty-third of August, the gallant defender of our country's rights, though in good spirits, was in extremity and rapidly approaching his end. It was his birthday, the thirty-fourth of his earthly career. The schooner was then within six miles of port, and from the *John Adams* came Lieutenant Turner, Doctor Osborne, the surgeon, and Mr. Handy, to offer their sympathy and aid. The temperature was raging above ninety, and his bad symptoms had returned, but as he saw by his bedside the devoted Turner, his trusty companion in former perils, and sharer of his brilliant victory, he was sensibly touched, and inquired about the ship, the officers and the crew. To Mr. Handy, whom he then summoned, he extended his hand and succeeded by an effort in looking him in the face, asking how he had been, and expressing a strong desire to reach his ship, and escape from the discomforts of his present situation. After this his strength failed rapidly, his skin became tinged with yellow, the pain which he had suffered passed away, and at half past three o'clock, he expired. Thus, the illustrious Perry, still in youthful manhood, died, of a painful ailment, surrounded by every discomfort, yet with a calmness and resignation befitting his character and worthy of his renown.

As the spirit of the hero passed beyond, the *Non-such* was within a mile of the *John Adams*, to the officers and crew of which the fact was made known by



the lowering of his pennant. Among the officers and crews of both vessels the deepest gloom prevailed in mourning for him, who had strongly endeared himself to them by his justice, his uniform kindness, and his solicitude for their comfort and welfare. The greatest anxiety existed among the senior officers, lest the body of their beloved commander might not be transported to his home for burial; but the surgeons agreed that it was advisable to make the interment at Port of Spain. They at length became reconciled to leaving the mortal remains in a foreign country, a colony of Great Britain, knowing full well that the United States would not fail in due time to reclaim them with all honors.

To carry out the decision of the surgeons, Lieutenant Turner at once applied to Sir Ralph Woodford, the governor of Trinidad, for permission to land the body for burial, a request which was courteously granted with expressions of deep concern. At four o'clock on the twenty-fourth of August, the funeral party left the side of the *John Adams* in small boats, forming a mournful procession as they pulled slowly away, with measured strokes in concert with minute guns from the ships, which were continued until they reached the wharf. The regular and even firing of guns was then resumed by the battery at Fort St. Andrew. The body was received at the landing by the Third West India Regiment, with arms reversed, the officers wearing white scarfs and hat bands. Following in the procession was the regimental band playing the dead march in *Saul*, and then the commandant of the garrison and his staff. Officers of rank, on horseback, attended the hearse as bearers, while the chief mourners — the officers of the two ships — a large number of prominent residents, and one hundred and twenty sailors came after, the procession being closed by Sir Ralph Woodford.

The presence of the governor was a very unusual token of respect; and, as the procession moved slowly through the streets, the balconies and roofs were crowded with people, who showed deep feeling. At the entrance to the burying ground, the troops filed off and formed a double line for the solemn pageant to pass through. The funeral service was impressively performed and three volleys of musketry fired over the grave. The minute guns from the fort then ceased; and, as stated in a local paper, "the whole body of attendants on the funeral retired from the burying ground with every mark of sympathetic grief for the premature death of a gallant man, and a good parent and citizen."

The officers were unable to account for the great respect and sympathy evinced by all classes of inhabitants, until informed that some of the officers and men then stationed on the island of Trinidad, had been prisoners taken by the Americans in the battle of the Thames, and were enthusiastic in their grateful expressions of the kindness and humanity of Commodore Perry, and their admiration of him as a commander and as a man. As soon as it had become known that he was to call at Port of Spain, from the Orinoco, the greatest desire was created by all classes of the people to see him; so that when he arrived in the harbor only to die, the most that they could do was, by respect to his remains, to express their deep sympathy. The story of his youth, his manly bearing, his skill and bravery in the battle on the lake, and withal, his humanity to his suffering captives — a story soon told when death had claimed him — affected all people, even in the far distant land.

So grateful, indeed, were the American officers for these marked evidences of sympathy on the part of strangers, that they expressed their thanks in a public manner. In further evidence of appreciation and in

conformity with naval etiquette, Lieutenants Turner and Claxton, in behalf of the officers, returned thanks by letter to the governor, and the commandant of the garrison and his officers. Both officials returned complimentary replies; Sir Ralph Woodford taking occasion to express his "lively regret that the hopes which he had entertained of receiving Commodore Perry within that government, with the consideration due to his rank and merits, had been so fatally disappointed."

With the death of the commodore, the further objects of the cruise, which included a call to the port of Buenos Ayres, could not be fulfilled; and the *John Adams*, under the command of Lieutenant Claxton, returned to the United States. When the announcement of Perry's death was received by his countrymen, the voice of sorrow spread over the whole republic; and, forgetting the one fault of his life, in the lustre which he had shed upon the American arms, they only remembered his splendid services. In this last cruise he had gone forth on a delicate mission to a far distant land; he had won the respect and admiration of the foreign government; he had succeeded in his mission to an eminent degree; and he had fallen in youthful manhood, in the height of his glory, by the ravages of an insidious ailment. The circumstances attending his difficulties and anxieties, his brave fight for life, his resignation at the last, amidst the most uncomfortable and disheartening surroundings, filled the nation with sorrow and anguish. The fall of a man so pre-eminently distinguished and useful, who promised a long career of active service to his country, of new acts of bravery and patriotism, and of fresh honors and new laurels of a more brilliant and unfading lustre, was everywhere regarded as a national calamity. This was emphasized by President Monroe, representing the sovereignty of the nation, in the most emphatic terms, in making mention of the event in his annual message to Congress.

It was universally believed that, in the records of mortality, no other event since the death of General Washington, in 1799, occasioned such general sensations of sorrow or regret, and such genuine sympathy for the bereaved family.

Legislative enactments in various states proclaimed the estimate of the national loss; and the president sent messages of condolence to the sorrowing family of the commodore. As a more substantial evidence of sincerity, he directed the secretary of the navy to bear all the expenses of the funeral, as a charge upon the treasury department. In due time, a ship of war was dispatched to the Island of Trinidad, for the express purpose of bringing the remains of the illustrious hero to Newport for final interment. Congress, in recognition of the extraordinary services rendered by Commodore Perry to his country, solemnly granted an annuity to his widow and children. Considering the times and the condition of the national finances, the grant was a most liberal one; and the motive of Congress in taking such unusual action, was no less honorable to that body than to the fame of the nation's immortal son.

As expressed by his fellow officer and biographer, Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, "envy, hatred, malice, and uncharitableness found no resting place in the heart of Perry. There was no room there for any but the noblest feelings and affections. He was not disturbed by petty irritability on trifling occasions, though his temper was violent, and easily aroused by injustice towards others or himself. He was discriminating in the choice of his friends, and possessed eminently the faculty of creating strong affection for his person in those who were intimate with him. With regard to those who were accidentally associated with him, and for whom he had no previous or particular regard, he was rather disposed to discover their good qualities than to be censorious of their faults. He was unsuspecting in his

temper, and gives himself the character of being credulous; the fault of a noble mind, conscious of no evil itself, and suspecting none in others. His magnanimity was conspicuous, and betrayed him into some indiscretions. He had a chivalrous sense of the courtesy that is due to woman, and the most enthusiastic admiration of the female character.

“As a naval commander, he was sensitively alive to the appearance, order, and efficiency of his vessel; everything connected with the management of the sails, and the skilful performance of every duty connected with the fighting department, received his zealous and unwearied attention. As an officer and a seaman he was equally eminent. He was a strict disciplinarian; but always punished with reluctance, and only when unavoidable. With the officers, his extraordinary faculty of creating a lively attachment for his person spared him the necessity of frequent censure; a disapproving glance of the eye had often more effect than the stern rebuke of others. Every germ of merit was sure to be discovered and encouraged by him; and his attention to the moral and intellectual training of his midshipmen was unceasing.

“The person of Perry was one of the loftiest stature and the most graceful mould. He was easy and measured in his movements, and calm in his air. His brow was full, massive, and lofty, his features regular and elegant, and his eye full, dark, and lustrous. His mouth was uncommonly handsome, and his teeth large, regular, and very white. The prevailing expression of his countenance was mild, benignant, and cheerful, and a smile of amiability, irresistibly pleasing, played in conversation about his lips. His whole air was expressive of health, freshness, comfort, and contentment, bearing testimony to a life of temperance and moderation. In his private character he was a model of every domestic virtue and grace; an affectionate husband, a fond

father, and a faithful and generous friend. Thoroughly domestic in his tastes, yet social in his feelings, he was hospitable without ostentation, and was not averse to a measured and regulated conviviality in the midst of his family and friends. The amiability of Perry was one of his most distinguishing traits, and the susceptibility of his feelings was excessive. He so impressed his friend, Commodore Decatur, that, when informed of the particulars of his death, he exclaimed with great solemnity, 'Sir, the American Navy has lost its brightest ornament.' "

## CHAPTER XV

### MEMORIALS TO HIS HONOR

**N**O nobler tribute to the memory of any man can be realized than that raised by the hands of his former enemies in bloody warfare. What motive would prompt them, after suffering all the perils of his fiercest attacks, to raise an enduring monument over his mortal remains? Ah! it is nothing less than a deep sense of the nobility of human sympathy for suffering and distressed fellow beings, as manifest by an adversary on the field of battle, that can implant such feelings in the hearts of man. With such a noble and humanizing motive the people of the Port of Spain honored themselves by commemorating the character and bravery of the American hero. For scarcely had his sorrowing friends and shipmates departed from their shores, following the solemn obsequies, before the British authorities — the governor, officers and soldiers of the garrison — and prominent citizens, planned for the erection of an appropriate and substantial memorial over the grave of Commodore Perry, in the island of Trinidad. This was the first monument erected to his honor, and was completed early in the following year.

Six years after, in the autumn of 1826, the government of the United States dispatched the sloop-of-war *Lexington* to Trinidad, on the express mission of bringing the remains of the lamented Perry to his native land. On the twenty-seventh of November the ship arrived at Newport, and on Monday, the fourth of December, the final rites due to a departed hero were solemnized with all funeral honors. With regard to

his rank the coffin was borne on a bier, the lower part of which was the form of a boat, while the canopy was decorated with stars and trimmed with dark curtains, with black plumes at each corner. In a grassy mound on the west side of the island cemetery, the remains were reinterred with appropriate military ceremonies. On this spot, overlooking the waters of the bay which he had loved so well, the state of Rhode Island later erected an enduring shaft of granite, as a fitting testimonial of the public regard for his memory. On the east side of the shaft is engraved the inscription: "Oliver Hazard Perry. At the age of twenty-eight he achieved the victory of Lake Erie, September 10, 1813." On the north side is the inscription: "Born in South Kingston, Rhode Island, August 23, 1785. Died in Port of Spain, August 23, 1819. Aged 34 years." On the west side there appears: "His remains were conveyed to his native land in a sloop-of-war and here interred, December 4, 1826." On the south side are the simple words: "Erected by the State of Rhode Island."

During the subsequent period of twenty-five years, little was done of which any record remains, aside from the biographical works of eminent historians, to commemorate the heroic deeds of Commodore Perry or the victory on Lake Erie. The pioneer settlements along the lake shore and in favored places inland, were still struggling with the difficulties and hardships of frontier life; and, although these events were fresh in the memory of the older inhabitants, there was little inclination or opportunity of meeting to celebrate the recurring anniversaries. But in 1852 five companies of the Volunteer Militia of Ohio held a three days' encampment, from July 3 to 6, in Put-in Bay on South Bass Island. This was the first military display or celebration held on the island since General Harrison's army encamped there in 1813. On Monday, the fifth of July, a company of leading citizens of Sandusky



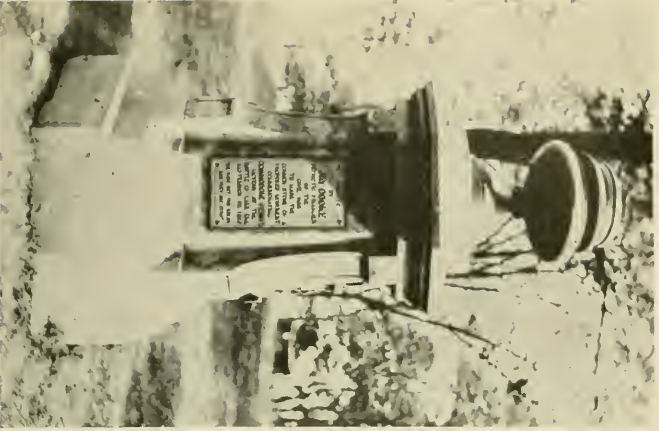
joined the militia in the celebration at the island, and in a duly organized meeting adopted resolutions "in reference to the erection of a monument on Gibraltar Rock, Put-in Bay, commemorative of Perry's brilliant victory on Lake Erie, and in honor of the dead who fell in that memorable engagement. It is now both the duty and the pleasure of their countrymen, to erect to their memory a monument, which shall exhibit to future generations the appreciation the present entertains of the value of their service and sacrifice. Therefore, trusting in the cordial and efficient co-operation of their countrymen throughout this broad land, they form themselves into an association, styled 'the Battle of Lake Erie Monument Association.' "

Nothing further was done in the matter, however, due to an outbreak of cholera which swept over Northern Ohio, and other causes immediately following, until 1858, when an enthusiastic celebration was held at Put-in Bay on the tenth of September. The occasion was the forty-fifth anniversary of the glorious victory on the lake, and about eight thousand people came to the island in ten steamboats from Buffalo, Cleveland, Sandusky, Toledo, and Detroit, and in numerous small craft from the smaller places. After the proper salutes had been given from two government vessels lying in the harbor, the meeting of the Association was called to order and presided over by Governor Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio. Addresses appropriate to the event were then delivered by Hon. Eleutheros Cooke, Captain Stephen Champlin (of the *Scorpion*), Doctor Usher Parsons, the only known survivor of the *Lawrence*, who related thrilling incidents of the battle, and Hon. Ross Wilkins, of Detroit. After a number of patriotic songs had been sung by Ossian E. Dodge, and further salutes fired, the meeting was duly adjourned and the celebration concluded. During the celebration of the following year the corner stone of the monument was formally laid on the high-

est point of Gibraltar Rock, and within the stone are preserved the records of the association, and papers and coins of the period. The commencement of the civil war, however, took many of these sturdy patriots to the "front", and the association, which had done so much to keep alive the spirit of patriotism in the hearts of the people, was permitted to languish and die.

In 1863 the title and ownership of the beautiful island of Gibraltar passed from Rivera St. Jago, who then owned the whole group of islands, to the late Jay Cooke, patriotic financier of the civil war, who established thereon his summer home. After completing his residence in June, 1865, despairing of reviving the monument association, many members of which had given their lives to the cause of the Union, Mr. Cooke, erected in the following year upon the corner stone already laid, at his own outlay, the simple and chaste monument, which is crowned with a bronze urn. Within thirty yards of this interesting monument, on the edge of the cliff to the north, is Perry's Lookout, from which point, it is said, he often trained his glasses in eagerly sweeping the western horizon for a sign of the enemy's approach. This historic spot for several generations has been appropriately marked by a parapet of stone with comfortable rustic seats, from which the tourist scans the shimmering surface of the lake, seeking in imagination the white sails and glistening sides of the British armada. Surmounting the low breastwork, to further commemorate the brilliant victory which took place within the range of the naked eye, is a lofty flagstaff, from which is regularly unfurled the Stars and Stripes.

Across the harbor from Gibraltar on Put-in Bay, in a grove of forest trees and near the shore of the crescent-shaped bay, lie the remains of the American and British officers who fell in the battle of Lake Erie. For many years the exact spot was marked by a willow tree, said to have been planted by Commodore Perry himself.



MEMORIAL ERRECTED ON GIBRALTER



THE FAMOUS STATUE IN WADE PARK  
CLEVELAND



However this may have been, as generations passed, this monument of nature became gaunt and broken, and finally died. Years after the settlers on the island cut down the decaying trunk and planted at its base a sapling, which it was hoped would grow into a forest giant defying the fiercest lake storms and the ravages of time. But in this hope they were disappointed for the promising tree after a time withered and rotted away. The succeeding generation of patriotic islanders, in transforming the natural grove into an attractive park, erected a humble tribute to the heroic dead. From the proceeds of an amateur theatrical entertainment on the island, they set up a low pyramid of cannon balls embedded in stone and concrete, which remains today the only recognition which a grateful people have bestowed upon the sacrifices of these heroes.

The fire of patriotism, meanwhile, burned no less brilliantly in the hearts of the people of Cleveland. In June, 1857, resolutions were introduced in the city council by the Hon. Harvey Rice, for the erection of an appropriate and enduring monument to Commodore Perry, in commemoration of his glorious victory on the lake. A select committee of five citizens was duly appointed and empowered to solicit subscriptions from the people of Cleveland and vicinity; and to contract for the erection of the memorial. In October of that year the preliminary work had so far proceeded that the committee contracted with T. Jones and Sons, of Cleveland, who agreed to furnish all the materials and to erect the monument in time for dedication on the tenth of September, 1860. The contractors were imbued with the true spirit of patriotism, as they relied entirely upon the voluntary subscriptions of the people thereafter to be obtained, for their payments, and the work was done at a price which left them nothing above their actual outlay. They were well honored, however, for

having produced a work of art, the first of really notable character ever executed in the Middle West.

After lengthy correspondence with eminent sculptors, the contractors had the good fortune to secure the services of William Walcutt, to design and model the statue. As a sculptor of busts Mr. Walcutt had already acquired a wide reputation, and, in undertaking the creation of a noble statue of Perry, he was influenced more by the love of art and the character of his subject than by the remuneration in dollars and cents. Upon submitting his design of the statue to surmount the monument itself, the original plan of the monument was discarded, and the one drawn by the sculptor was approved in its stead. The change of plan required the pedestal to be constructed of Rhode Island granite, twelve feet in height, and the statue to be cut in Carrara marble, eight feet two inches in height, of heroic proportions so as to appear life-size to the eye when erected. The total height of the monument, including the base, was to be twenty-five feet. The marble was shipped in the rough to Cleveland; and in the studio of the Messrs. Jones, the entire work of cutting the statue was done. When completed the monument was erected in the center of the public square, where it stood for forty years an object of pride and inspiration of the populace. It was afterward removed to a commanding situation in Wade Park, where it is no less the center of attraction.

The Perry celebration of 1860 in Cleveland surpassed any similar event in the history of the West. To the inauguration of the stately and life-like statue of the commodore, on the tenth of September, came the governor of Rhode Island and his staff, members of the state legislature, the famous Light Artillery Corps of Providence and the American Brass Band. Many prominent men, relatives and descendants of the naval hero, a few survivors of the battle on the lake and

soldiers of the war of 1812, travelled many miles to join in the celebration, which was also attended by Governor Dennison, of Ohio, and his staff. The people of every town and hamlet on the lake shore, and from the interior of the state, thronged to the gayly decorated city, which, with its population of only forty-three thousand, entertained almost one hundred thousand visitors for two days. For such was the spell of a great naval victory thrown over a patriotic people more than fifty years ago, and after an interval of nearly the same length since the event itself.

The memorable festivities opened on the morning of the tenth with a mammoth procession. In the stately pageant were the governors and their staffs, numerous military companies, distinguished guests and relatives of the commodore. Fifteen brass bands enlivened the march with patriotic strains; while the procession was about forty minutes in passing a given point. Upon arriving at the public square early in the afternoon, the distinguished visitors and orators of the day took their allotted places on the speaker's stand, and the more impressive ceremonies proceeded. Before them was the statue of heroic size, veiled with an American flag, which a moment later, by a deft movement of the sculptor, was revealed to them in all its beauty. For a moment a sudden hush passed through the crowd, then an exclamation of delight, followed by a tremendous burst of applause from the assembled multitude. The triumph of the sculptor was complete, and must have been the proudest moment of his life.

Loud calls were quickly heard for Walcutt, who as soon as he could reach the stand, made a brief but fitting response. In part, he said: "The design of this monument, as you all know, is to perpetuate the fame of the immortal Perry. \* \* \* Obviously, it is the Commander, brave and confident, giving directions to

his men, while watching through the smoke of battle the effect of his broadsides upon the enemy. Figuratively, it is the impersonation of the triumphant hero, gazing with pride and enthusiasm over the beautiful land he saved with his valor, and pointing to the lake as if reminding us of the scene of his victory. No sculptor ever had a nobler subject, and, if in raising him, as it were, from his ashes, the few survivors of that glorious day may be able to recognize their gallant leader, then I am content."

When hearty cheers had been given to Walcutt, the State of Ohio, and for Rhode Island, the imposing statue was formally presented to the City of Cleveland. Mayor Senter thereupon, in an eloquent speech, accepted the work in the name of the city, after which the orator of the day, Hon. George Bancroft, delivered an oration abounding with beauty of thought, heart-throbs of loyalty to the cause of the Union, and animated expressions of right and justice, which thrilled his auditors with patriotic fervor. With fiery eloquence before the myriads there assembled the noble statue was then dedicated to the Union in the name of the people of Ohio. Upon concluding his address the Wayne Guards of Erie presented Mr. Bancroft with a beautiful cane made of wood taken from Perry's flagship *Lawrence*, with the sentiment that "they were proud to honor the hero and the historian whose graceful pen preserved untarnished the lustre of the heroic deeds of 1813." In a few words the orator thanked them and said he was happy to receive the memento from the Guards, and particularly as they bore the name of one ever to be revered — brave in battle, correct and kind in private life." The cane was mounted with gold and bore the inscription: "American patriotism embalms the memories of its heroes."

Doctor Usher Parsons, the surgeon of the flagship *Lawrence*, then gave his reminiscences of the battle of



Lake Erie, during which he exhibited with deep feeling the identical round jacket of blue cloth worn by the commodore during the engagement, and which, he said, "surrounded as brave a heart as ever beat in human frame." Captain Thomas Brownell, pilot of the *Ariel*, was then called upon, followed by Oliver Hazard Perry, the only surviving son of the commodore, who favored the assemblage with appropriate remarks. Upon the conclusion of the masonic ceremonies, Ossian E. Dodge, assisted by the masonic choir, sang an ode written expressly for the occasion, and the inaugural ceremonies were brought to a close.

The immense assemblage then hastened to the shore of the lake to witness the mock battle, which had been staged to give the people some idea of the terrible conflict forty-seven years before. The vessels taking part in the battle were towed out from shore by tugs, they took their proper position, and the firing commenced. Although difficult of satisfactory execution, under the direction of Doctor Parsons and Captain Champlin, the real battle was faithfully represented in the mimic fray. The opposing fleets were soon enveloped in smoke which cleared away to reveal the *Lawrence* disabled and drifting helplessly behind, and a little boat passing from her to the *Niagara*, representing the perilous shift of the heroic commodore. As the boat disappeared under the port quarter of the *Niagara*, the smoke of many guns again shrouded the vessels from view, only to lift at the critical moment for the thrilled spectators to see the uninjured *Niagara* haul up, and pass through the British fleet, delivering, as she did so, the most terrifying broadsides to right and to left. The surrender of the enemy's vessels followed, as indicated by the lowering of their flags; and the chase and capture of the two small gunboats of the enemy, which had attempted to escape, ended a most interesting and impressive scene. Banquets in the evening, a military review on the following

day, and a farewell dinner to the Rhode Island delegation and distinguished guests of the city that night, concluded the grandest celebration ever held in the Middle West.

With such glowing precedents to guide and inspire them, the people of the present generations now celebrate and live over the memorable scenes of other days. To the honor of the national government and the states bordering on the Great Lakes, including Rhode Island and Kentucky, an imposing memorial is being erected at Put-in Bay, to commemorate for all time the glory and renown of the victors, the greatness of the Republic, and the century of peace which has since blest humanity as the result of the statesmanship and patriotism which inspired the signing and ratification of the Treaty of Ghent. It was this treaty that preserved the neutrality of the Great Lakes for one hundred years, and gave the civilized world its first object lesson in the efficacy of international peace. Within the area drained by the inland seas are concentrated all the interests of the United States and Great Britain, material and sentimental, and here are symbolized the bonds that unite the two nations. The peace of one hundred years has consecrated the sacrifices of our sailors and soldiers in the war of 1812, and shown that any adequate conception of an American memorial to their heroism must emphasize the equal valor of our opponents in that conflict.

The first authoritative action to bring about the celebration of the one hundredth anniversary of Perry's famous victory, of General Harrison's triumphant campaign in Upper Canada, as well as the erection of the great memorial, was very appropriately taken by the State of Ohio, within whose borders the battle of Lake Erie was fought and its dead buried, either in the lake or by the picturesque shores of Put-in Bay. On the twenty-second of June, 1908, Governor Harris, by

authority of the Ohio General Assembly, appointed five commissioners "to prepare and carry out plans" for a centennial celebration, and authorized them to invite the co-operation therein of the lake states and of Rhode Island and Kentucky. Within two years eight states accepted the invitation by appointing commissioners, each in the order named, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois, Wisconsin, New York, Rhode Island, and Minnesota. Later, the legislature of Louisiana authorized the governor to appoint three commissioners, to express in a formal manner the interest of the commonwealth in the proposed memorial, and in the objects which it commemorates.

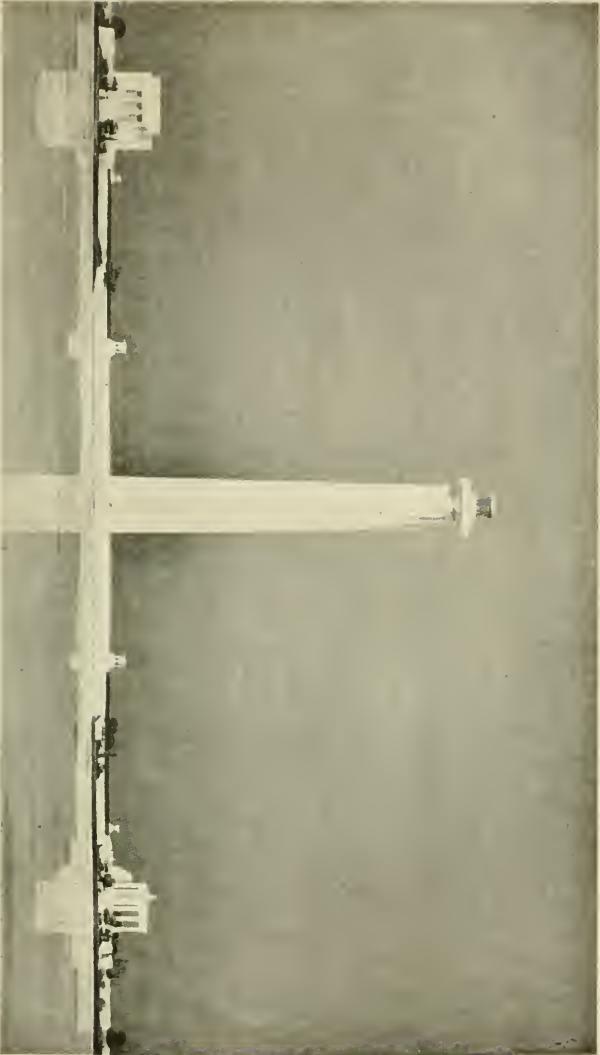
On the tenth of September, 1910, at Put-in Bay, the organization of the "Inter-State Board of Perry's Victory Centennial Commissioners," was effected, which has since continued as the governing body of the enterprise. Besides the commissioners appointed by the several states, which comprise the Inter-State Board, there are three commissioners for the United States government, appointed by President Taft in accordance with the act of Congress. These commissioners are Lieutenant-General Nelson A. Miles, U. S. A. (Ret.) Washington, D. C.; Rear Admiral Charles E. Clark, U. S. N. (Ret.) Washington, D. C.; and General J. Warren Keifer, Springfield, Ohio. The Building Committee of the Perry memorial consists of President George H. Worthington, United States Commissioner Nelson A. Miles, and First Vice-President Henry Waterson, with Secretary Huntington of the Inter-State Board, as secretary.

Every suggestion of history and sentiment pointed to Put-in Bay, on South Bass Island, as the logical site for the memorial which should be truly national in character, and taking rank among the worthiest of such structures in the world. The site acquired by the Board consists of a reservation of about fourteen acres in ex-

tent, situated in the narrow neck of land forming the eastern end of the island and extending northward toward Middle Bass. It has about fourteen hundred feet of water front on both sides, and overlooks the historic bay which afforded shelter for Perry's fleet. Opposite lies Gibraltar Rock from which the intrepid commander made his observations; and a little way to the north is Ballast Island where the fleet paused, it is said, to obtain ballast from the rocky shores. Not far from the memorial site, on the shore of the picturesque bay, are the graves of the American and British officers who fell in the memorable engagement on the lake. It is fortunate indeed that Nature, in her most generous mood, has bestowed upon this spot attractions as beautiful as its historic suggestions are significant.

The competition in submitting designs for the Perry memorial was said by competent authority to have been the most remarkable in the history of the country. This was true both in point of number and merit of the designs presented to the National Commission of Fine Arts. In the architectural competition eighty-seven architects and firms qualified under the terms of the program proposed by the building committee, and fifty-four actually presented designs. These designs were exhibited in the National Museum at Washington, and as a whole were the subject of the highest expert approval and admiration. The accepted design, by Mr. J. H. Freelander and Mr. A. D. Seymour, Jr., of New York, was adopted as the winner of the first prize in the architectural competition which was concluded in January, 1912.

The Perry memorial, when completed according to the accepted design, will cover, with its plaza, almost all of the reservation dedicated as a park to it. The plaza, rising in a gradual ascent from the surface of the lake to the height of twelve feet, is seven hundred



Copyright, 1912, by Perry's Victory Centennial Commission  
THE PERRY MEMORIAL



and fifty-eight feet long and four hundred and sixty-one feet wide. From its center rises the beautiful Doric column, three hundred and thirty-five feet in height from the base to the light on the tripod surmounting the cap. The column is forty-five feet in diameter at the base and thirty-five feet at the top; and is the highest monument in the world, with the exception of the Washington monument at the National Capital. Surrounding the cap, which is elevated three hundred feet above the plaza, is a spectator's gallery reached by electric elevators from the crypt at the base. The material used in the column is granite, and the whole rests on bed rock, which at this point is encountered from ten to twelve feet below the surface of the lake.

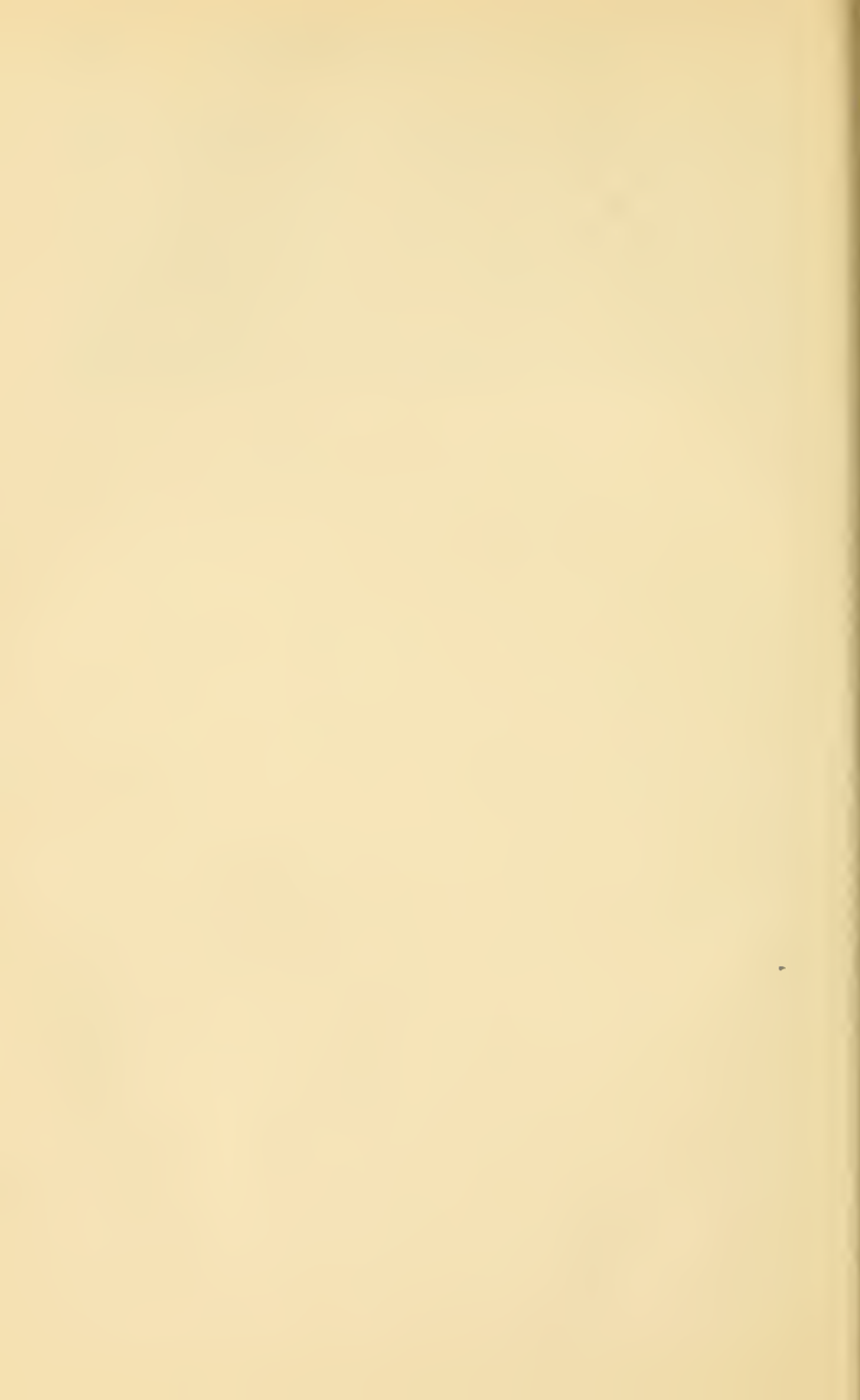
Flanking the monument on the left is an historical museum, with a floor space of three thousand square feet; and the structure to the right is emblematic of the century of peace between the United States and Great Britain. With due regard for the beauty and dignity of this architectural conception, the parking of the grounds is in perfect harmony, every detail of which appears with equal charm to the eye from both sides, or from the waters of the bay and those of Lake Erie. Some practical adjuncts to the memorial suggest themselves as combining the highest artistic ideals and historical significance with lasting benefits to humanity. The site is an admirable one for the location of a wireless telegraph station capable of receiving and discharging messages over the whole chain of lakes, and also for a life-saving station and a meteorological bureau. Its location among the group of islands, the most treacherous to navigation in Lake Erie, and the fact that Put-in-Bay is the only island connected with the main land by both telegraph and telephone, render these considerations of great practical value to the lake shipping.

By the indefatigable efforts of the commissioners of the state of Pennsylvania, the hulk of the old *Niagara*,

which for nearly a century lay embedded in the shifting sands of Misery Bay, in the harbor of Erie, was raised and restored as nearly as possible to its original lines. Fully rigged and armed as of old, the historic ship sailed forth, the central point of interest in the naval pageants of the Summer of 1913. To hundreds of thousands of people were thus extended the essential educational and patriotic aspects of the centennial celebration, who would otherwise have been deprived of its moral lessons.







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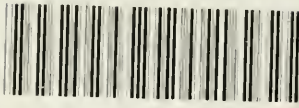








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