The Battle of Plattsburgh

What Historians Say About It

The centennial of this great naval contest, the last fought between English-speaking nations and which effectually checked the British advance into New York and hastened the consummation of peace, is to be celebrated at Plattsburgh, on Lake Champlain, New York, on September 6 to 11, 1914

To the Honorable

Eby. Miville Dechene

Deputy Minister

With the Compliments of

Henry Harmon Noble

Commissioner

Commodore Thomas Macdonough, U. S. Navy

U. S. Ship Saratoga
off Plattsburgh, September 11, 1814

Sir:

The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain in the capture of one Frigate, one Brig and two sloops of war of the enemy.

I have the honor to be

Very respectfully,

Sir, your ob't. Serv't.

T. Macdonough, Com.

Hon. W. Jones,
Secretary of the Navy.

THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH

WHAT HISTORIANS SAY ABOUT IT

Obverse of Gold Medal presented to Commodore Macdonough by Congress

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CHAPTER I

THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH

The centennial of the decisive naval victory on Lake Champlain in which Commodore Thomas Macdonough and his American squadron, on September 11, 1814, defeated a superior British foe after one of the most hotly contested battles in history, is to be celebrated at Plattsburgh, on Lake Champlain, on September 6 to 11, 1914. The Plattsburgh Centenary Commission is now arranging the details of this celebration and the plans for a permanent memorial.

For the purpose of placing in convenient form the historical data relating to this battle and to aid those who may wish to speak or write upon this subject, this pamphlet has been issued.

We have quoted freely from Admiral Mahan's great work "Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812," and we have included liberal excerpts from the writings of Maclay, Lossing, Cooper, Palmer and McMaster.

The description of the battle given by Theodore Roosevelt in his book, "The Naval War of 1812," finds a leading place here.

These authorities are supplemented and confirmed by excerpts from the letters of Commodore Thomas Macdonough, the American commander and hero of Lake Champlain, and Captain Robert Henley, one of his chief officers, commander of the brig Eagle, both of which were written to Secretary of the Navy William Jones; and also from the letter of Captain Daniel Pring, of the British brig Linnet (who became, on the death of Captain Downie, commander of the squadron) to Sir James Lucas Yeo, commander-in-chief of His Majesty's ships and vessels on the lakes of Canada. There are quotations, too, from letters of General Mooers, who commanded the militia and of General Macomb, who was in command of all the land forces in the Battle of Plattsburgh. These letters give a clear, "close-range" pen picture of the great contest.

ROOSEVELT'S DESCRIPTION

Colonel Roosevelt says of the battle: "*This lake, which had hitherto played but an inconspicuous part, was now to become the scene of the greatest naval battle of the war.* A British army of 14,000 men, under Sir George Prevost, undertook the invasion of New York by advanc-

ing up the western bank of Lake Champlain. This advance was impracticable unless there was a sufficiently strong British naval force to drive back the American squadron at the same time. Accordingly, the British began to construct a frigate, the Confiance, to be added to their already existing force, which consisted of a brig, two sloops and 12 or 14 gunboats. The Americans already possessed a heavy corvette, a schooner, a small sloop, and 10 gunboats, or row-galleys; they now began to build a large brig, the Eagle, which was launched about the 16th of August. Nine days later, on the 25th, the Confiance was launched. The two squadrons were equally deficient in stores, etc.; the Confiance having locks to her guns, some of which could not be used, while the American schooner, Ticonderoga, had to fire her guns by means of pistols flashed at the touchholes (like Barclay on Lake Erie). Macdonough and Downie were hurried into action before they had time to prepare themselves thoroughly; but it was a disadvantage common to both, and arose from the nature of the case, which called for immediate action. The British army advanced slowly toward Plattsburgh, which was held by General Macomb, with less than 2,000 effective American troops. Captain Thomas Macdonough, the American commodore, took the lake a day or two before his antagonist, and came to anchor in Plattsburgh harbor. The British fleet under Captain George Downie moved from Isle-aux-Noix on September 8th, and on the morning of the 11th sailed into Plattsburgh harbor."

Colonel Roosevelt enters into a long and exhaustive discussion to show that the British squadron was larger and, from the standpoint of armament, much more effective than the American squadron. He quotes freely from British and American authorities.

Summing up his deductions he gives this table as the probable strength of

MACDONOUGH'S FORCE

Name	Tons	Crew	Broadside	Metal, from long or short guns
Saratoga	734	240	414 lbs.	long 96 short 318
Eagle	500	150	264 lbs.	long 72 short 192
Ticonderoga	350	112	180 lbs.	long 84 short 96
Preble	80	30	36 lbs.	long 36
Six gunboats	420	246	252 lbs.	long 144 short 108
Four gunboats	160	104	48 lbs.	long 48

In all, 14 vessels of 2,244 tons and 882 men, with 86 guns throwing at a broadside, 1,194 lbs. of shot, 480 from long, and 714 from short guns.

He quotes Cooper as saying that the Confiance had "nearly double the tonnage of the Saratoga" and then makes this significant statement: "*She (the Confiance) had aboard a furnace for heating shot; eight or ten of which heated shot were found with the furnace.*" This statement taken in connection with the statement of Commodore Macdonough, quoted elsewhere, that "*The Saratoga was twice set on fire by hot shot from the enemy's ships*" adds weight to the conclusion that the purpose was to burn the wooden vessels of the Americans. After discussing the probable strength of the British, ship by ship, he says:

The following, then, is the force of

DOWNIE'S SQUADRON

Name	Tonnage	Crew	Broadside	From what guns, long or short
Confiance	1,200	325	480 lbs.	long 384 short 96
Linnet	350	125	96 lbs.	long 96
Chub	112	50	96 lbs.	long 6 short 90
Finch	110	50	84 lbs.	long 12 short 72
Five gunboats	350	205	254 lbs.	long 12 short 72
Seven gunboats	280	182	182 lbs.	long 54 short 128

In all, 16 vessels of about 2,402 tons with 937 men, and a total of 92 guns.

Colonel Roosevelt then again takes up the relative strength of the British and American squadrons taking issue with James, the British historian, who has tried to show that the Americans were much the superior. Colonel Roosevelt concludes that all authorities show that the Confiance made Downie's fleet much superior to Macdonough's.

MACDONOUGH READY

Getting down to the actual battle Colonel Roosevelt says:

Macdonough saw that the British would be forced to make the attack in order to get control of the waters. On this long, narrow lake the winds usually blow pretty nearly north or south, and the set of the current is of course northward; all the vessels being flat and shallow could not beat to windward well, so there was little chance of the British making the attack when there was a southerly wind blowing. So late in the season there was danger of southern and furious gales, which would make it risky for Downie to wait outside the bay till the wind suited him; and inside the bay the wind was pretty sure to be light and baffling. Young Macdonough (then

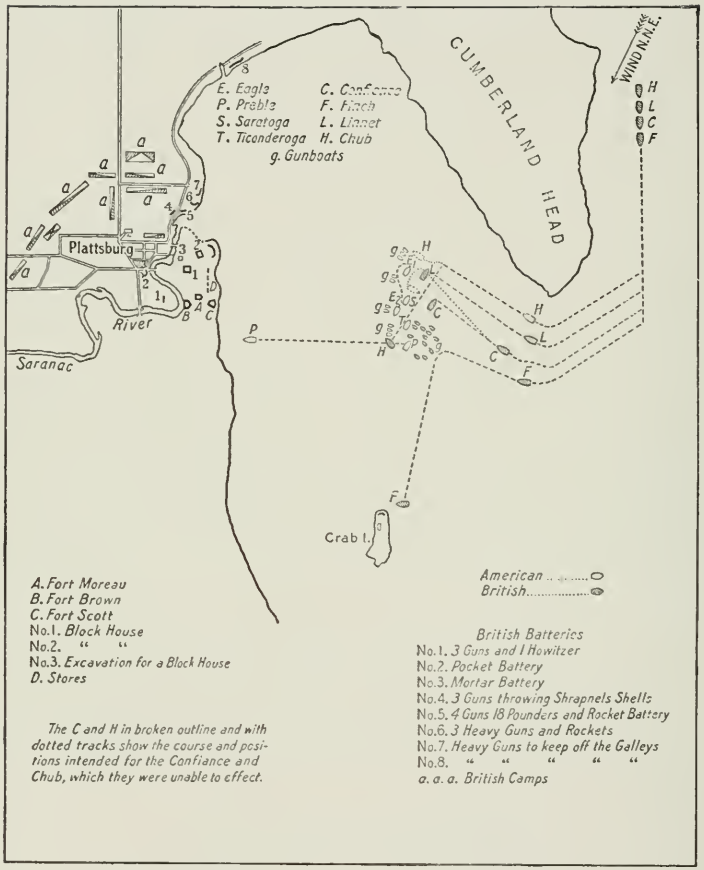


Diagram showing the British and American batteries at Plattsburgh and the positions assumed by the vessels of the two squadrons during the engagement of September 11, 1814.

(By permission of Captain A. T. Mahan, U. S. N.)

but 28 years of age) calculated all these chances very coolly and decided to wait the attack at anchor in Plattsburgh Bay, with the head of his line so far to the north that it could hardly be turned; and then proceeded to make all the other preparations with the same foresight. Not only were his vessels provided with springs, but also with anchors to be used astern in any emergency. The Saratoga was further prepared for a change of wind, or for the necessity of winding ship, by having a kedge planted broad off on each of her bows, with a hawser and preventer hawser (hanging in bights under water) leading from each quarter to the kedge on that side. There had not been time to train the men thoroughly at the guns; and to make these produce their full effect the constant supervision of the officers had to be exerted. The British were laboring under this same disadvantage, but neither side felt the want very much, as the smooth water, stationary position of the ships, and fair range, made the fire of both sides very destructive.

PLATTSBURGH BAY

Plattsburgh Bay is deep and opens to the southward; so that a wind which would enable the British to sail up the lake would force them to beat when entering the bay. The east side of the mouth of the bay is formed by Cumberland Head; the entrance is about a mile and a half across, and the other boundary, southwest from the Head, is an extensive shoal, and a small, low island. This is called Crab Island, and on it was a hospital and one six-pounder gun, which was to be manned in case of necessity by the strongest patients. Macdonough had anchored in a north and south line a little to the south of the outlet of the Saranac, and out of range of the shore batteries, being two miles from the western shore. The head of this line was so near Cumberland Head that an attempt to turn it would place the opponent under a very heavy fire, while to the south the shoal prevented a flank attack. The Eagle lay to the north, flanked on each side by a couple of gunboats; then came the Saratoga with three gunboats between her and the Ticonderoga, the next in line; then came three gunboats and the Preble. The four large vessels were at anchor; the galleys being under their sweeps and forming a second line about 40 yards back, some of them keeping their places and some not doing so. By this arrangement his line could not be doubled upon, there was not room to anchor on his broadside out of reach of his carronades, and the enemy was forced to attack him by standing in bows on.

MORNING OF SEPTEMBER 11

The morning of September 11th opened with a light breeze from the northwest. Downie's fleet weighed anchor at daylight, and came up the lake with the wind nearly aft, the booms of the two sloops, swinging out to starboard. At half past seven, the people in the ships could see their adversaries' upper sails across the narrow strip of land ending in Cumberland Head, before the British doubled

the latter. Captain Downie hove to with his four large vessels, when he had fairly opened the bay, and waited for his galleys to overtake him. Then his four vessels filled on the starboard tack and headed for the American line, going abreast, the Chub to the north, heading well to windward of the Eagle, for whose bows the Linnet was headed, while the Confiance was to be laid athwart the hawser of the Saratoga; the Finch was to leeward with the twelve gunboats, and was to engage the rear of the American line.

As the English squadron stood bravely in, young Macdonough, who feared his foes not at all, but his God a great deal, knelt for a moment, with his officers on the quarter-deck; and then ensued a few minutes of perfect quiet, the men waiting with grim expectancy for the opening of the fight. The Eagle spoke first with her long 18's, but to no effect, for the shot fell short. Then, as the Linnet passed the Saratoga, she fired her broadside of long 12's, but her shot also fell short, except one that struck a hencoop that happened to be aboard the Saratoga. *There was a game cock inside, and, instead of being frightened at his sudden release, he jumped up on a gun-slide, clapped his wings, and crowed lustily.* The men laughed and cheered; and immediately afterward Macdonough himself fired the first shot from one of the long guns. The 24-pound ball struck the Confiance near the hawse-hole and ranged the length of her deck, killing and wounding several men. All the American long guns now opened and were replied to by the British galleys.

CONFIANCE SILENT

The Confiance stood steadily on without replying. But she was baffled by shifting winds, and was soon so cut up, having both her port bow-anchors shot away, and suffering much loss, that she was obliged to port her helm and come to while still nearly a quarter of a mile distant from the Saratoga. Captain Downie came to anchor in grand style, securing everything carefully before he fired a gun, and then opening with a terribly destructive broadside. The Chub and Linnet stood farther in, and anchored forward the Eagle's beam. Meanwhile the Finch got abreast of the Ticonderoga, under her sweeps, supported by the gun boats. The main fighting was thus to take place between the vans, where the Eagle, Saratoga, and six, or seven gunboats were engaged with the Chub, Linnet, Confiance, and two or three gunboats; while in the rear, the Ticonderoga, the Preble, and the other American galleys engaged the Finch and the remaining nine or ten English galleys. The battle at the foot of the line was fought on the part of the Americans to prevent their flank being turned, and on the part of the British to effect that object. At first the fighting was at longe range, but gradually the British galleys closed up, firing very well. The American galleys at this end of the line were chiefly the small ones, armed with one 12-pounder apiece, and they by degrees drew back, before the heavy fire of their opponents. About an hour after the discharge of the first gun had been fired the Finch closed up toward the Ticonderoga, and was completely crippled by a couple of broadsides from the latter.

She drifted helplessly down the line and grounded near Crab Island; some of the convalescent patients manned the six-pounder and fired a shot or two at her, when she struck, nearly half of her crew being killed or wounded. About the same time the British gunboats forced the Preble out of line, whereupon she cut her cable and drifted inshore out of the fight. Two or three of the British gunboats, had already been sufficiently damaged by some of the shot from the Ticonderoga's long guns to make them wary; and the contest at this part of the line narrowed down to one between the American schooner and the remaining British gunboats who combined to make a most determined attack upon her. *So hastily had the squadron been fitted out that many of the matches for her guns were at the last moment found to be defective. The Captain of one of the divisions was a midshipman, but 16 years old, Hiram Paulding. When he found the matches to be bad he fired the guns of his section by having pistols flashed at them, and continued this through the whole fight.* The Ticonderoga's commander, Lieutenant Cassin, fought his schooner most nobly. He kept walking the taffrail amidst showers of musketry and grape, coolly watching the movements of the galleys and directing the guns to be loaded with canister and bags of bullets when the enemy tried to board. The British galleys were handled with determined gallantry, under the command of Lieutenant Bell. Had they driven off the Ticonderoga they would have won the day for their side, and they pushed up till they were not a boathook's length distant, to try to carry her by boarding; but every attempt was repulsed and they were forced to draw off, some of them so crippled by the slaughter they had suffered that they could hardly man the oars.

FIRST BROADSIDE

Meanwhile the fighting at the head of the line had been even fiercer. The first broadside of the Confiance, fired from 16 long 24's, double shotted, coolly sighted in smooth water, at point blank range, *produced the most terrible effect on the Saratoga.* Her hull shivered all over with the shock, and *when the crash subsided nearly half of her people were seen stretched on deck*, for many had been knocked down, who were not seriously hurt. Among the slain was her first lieutenant, Peter Gamble; he was kneeling down to sight the bow-gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, and drove a portion of it against his side, killing him without breaking the skin. The survivors carried on the fight with undiminished energy. **Macdonough himself worked like a common sailor, in pointing and handling a favorite gun. While bending over to sight it, a round shot cut in two the spanker boom, which fell on his head and struck him senseless for two or three minutes; he then leaped to his feet and continued as before, when a shot took off the head of the captain of the gun crew and drove it in his face with such a force as to knock him to the other side of the deck,** but after the first broadside not so much injury was done; the guns of the Con-

The Battle of Plattsburgh.

(From Painting by Dwidson, owned by Hon. Smith M. Weed, Plattsburgh.)

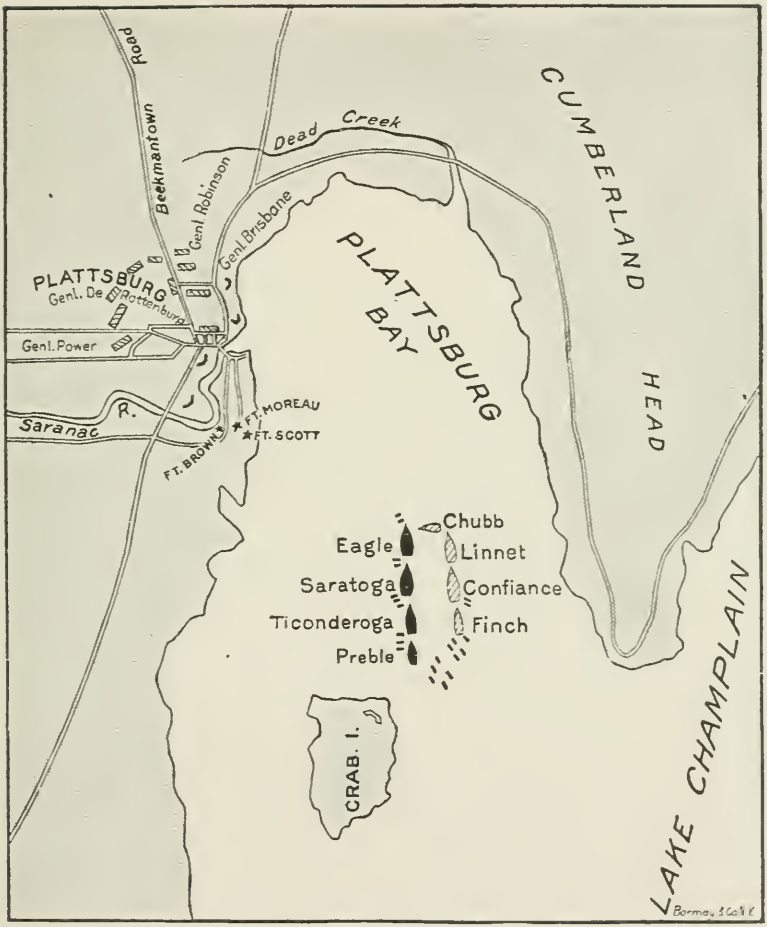
fiance had been leveled to point blank range, and as the quoins were loosened by the success of discharges they were not properly replaced, so that her broadside kept going higher and higher, and doing less and less damage. Very shortly after the beginning of the action her gallant captain was slain. He was standing behind one of the long guns, when a shot from the Saratoga struck it, and threw it completely off the carriage against his right groin killing him almost instantly. His skin was not broken, a black mark about the size of a small plate was the only visible injury. His watch was found flattened, with its hands pointing to the very second at which he received the fatal blow. As the contest went on the fire gradually decreased in weight, the guns being disabled. The inexperience of both crews partly caused this. The American sailors overloaded their carronades so as to very much destroy the effect of the fire; when the officers became disabled, the men would cram the guns with shot till the last projected from the muzzle; of course, this lessened the execution, and also gradually crippled the guns. On board the Confiance the confusion was even worse; after the battle the charges of the guns were drawn, and on the side she had fought one was found with a canvas bag containing two round of shot rammed home and wadded without any powder; another with two cartridges and no shot; and a third with a wad below the cartridge.

A BRISK ENGAGEMENT

At the extreme head of the line the advantage had been with the British. The Chub and Linnet had begun a brisk engagement with the Eagle and American gunboats. In a short time the Chub had her cable, bow-sprit and main-boom shot away, drifted within the American lines, and was taken possession of by one of the Saratoga's midshipman. The Linnet paid no attention to the American gunboats, directing her whole fire against the Eagle, and the latter was, in addition, exposed to part of the fire of the Confiance. After keeping up a heavy fire for a long time her springs were shot away, and she came up into the wind, hanging so that she could not return a shot to the well directed broadsides of the Linnet. Henley accordingly cut his cable, started home his top-sails, ran down, and anchored by the stern between and inshore of the Confiance and Ticonderoga, from which position he opened on the Confiance. The Linnet now directed her attention to the American gunboats, which at this end of the line were very well fought, but she soon drove them off, and then sprung her broadside so as to rake the Saratoga on her bows.

Macdonough by this time had his hands full, and his fire was slackening; he was bearing the whole brunt of the action, with the frigate on his beam and the brig raking him. *Twice his ship had been set on fire by the hot shot of the Confiance;* one by one his long guns were disabled by shot, and his carronades were either treated the same way or else rendered useless by excessive overcharging. Finally but a single carronade was left in the starboard batteries and on manning it the naval-bolt broke, the gun flew off the carriage and fell down

the main hatch, leaving the Commodore without a single gun to oppose to the few the Confiance still presented. The battle would have been lost had not Macdonough's foresight provided the means of retrieving it. The anchor suspended astern of the Saratoga was let go, and the men hauled in on the hawser that led to the starboard quarter, bringing the ship's stern up over the kedge. The ship now rode by the kedge and by a line that had been bent to a bight in the stern cable, and she was raked badly by the accurate fire of the Linnet. By rousing on the line the ship was at length got so far round that the aftermost gun of the port broadside bore on the Confiance. The men had been sent forward to keep as much out of harm's way as possible, and now some were at once called back to man the piece, which then opened with effect. The next gun was treated in the same manner; but the ship now hung and would go no farther round. The hawser leading from the port quarter was then got forward under the bows and passed aft to the starboard quarter, and a minute afterward the ship's whole port battery opened with fatal effect. The Confiance meanwhile had also attempted to round. Her springs, like those of the Linnet, were on the starboard side, and so of course could not be shot away as the Eagle's were; but, as she had nothing but springs to rely on, her efforts did little beyond forcing her forward and she hung with her head to the wind. *She had lost over half of her crew, most of her guns on the engaged side were dismounted, and her stout masts had been splintered till they looked like bundles of matches, her sails had been torn to rags*, and she was forced to strike about two hours after she had fired the first broadside. Without pausing a minute the Saratoga again hauled on her starboard hawser till her broadside was sprung to bear on the Linnet, and the ship and brig began a brisk fight, which the Eagle from her position could take no part in, while the Ticonderoga was just finishing up the British galleys. The shattered and disabled state of the Linnet's masts, sails, and yards precluded the most distant hope of Captain Pring's effecting his escape by cutting his cable, but he kept up a most gallant fight with his greatly superior foe, in hopes that some of the gunboats would come and tow him off, and dispatched a lieutenant to the Confiance to ascertain her state. The Lieutenant returned with news of Captain Downie's death while the British gunboats had been driven half a mile off; and, after having maintained the fight single-handed for fifteen minutes, until from the number of shots between wind and water, the water had risen a foot above her lower deck, the plucky little brig hauled down her colors, and the fight ended. A little over two hours and a half after the first gun had been fired not one of the larger vessels had a mast that would bear canvas, and the prizes were in a sinking condition. The British galleys drifted to leeward, none with their colors up, but as the Saratoga's boarding-official passed along the deck of the Confiance he accidently ran against a lock spring of one of her starboard guns, and it went off. This was apparently understood as a signal by the galleys, and they moved slowly off, pulling but a very few sweeps, and not one of them hoisting an ensign.



BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

SHIPS MUCH CUT UP

On both sides the ships had been cut up in a most extraordinary manner; the Saratoga had 55 shot holes in her hull, and the Confiance 105 in hers, and the Eagle and Linnet had suffered in proportion. The number killed and wounded cannot be exactly stated; it was probably about 200 on the American side, and over 300 on the British.*

EFFECT OF VICTORY

The effects of the victory were immediate and of the highest importance. Sir George Prevost and his army at once fled in great haste and confusion back to Canada, leaving our northern frontier clear for the remainder of the war, *for the victory had a very great effect on the negotiations for peace.*

In the battle the crews on both sides behaved with equal bravery and left nothing to be desired in this respect; but from their rawness of course they showed far less skill than the crews of most of the American and some of the British ocean cruisers, such as the "Constitution" or "United States," a Shannon, the Hornet, the Wasp, or a Reindeer. Lieutenant Cassin handled the Ticonderoga, and Captain Pring the Linnet, with the utmost gallantry and skill; after Macdonough they divided the honors of the day. *But Macdonough in this battle won a higher fame than any other commander of the war, British or American.* He had a decidedly superior force to contend against, the officers and men of the two sides being about on a par in every respect; *and it was solely OWING TO HIS FORESIGHT AND RESOURCE*

* Macdonough returned his loss as follows:

	Killed	Wounded
Saratoga	23	29
Eagle	13	20
Ticonderoga	6	6
Preble	2	.....
Boxer	3	1
Centipede	.....	1
Wilmer	.....	1

A total of 52 killed and 58 wounded; but the latter had apparently only included those who had to go to the hospital. Probably about 90 additional were more or less slightly wounded. Captain Pring, in his letter of September 12th, says the Confiance had 41 killed and 40 wounded; the Linnet, 10 killed and 14 wounded, the Chub, 6 killed and 16 wounded; the Finch, 2 wounded; in all, 57 killed and 72 wounded. But he adds "that no opportunity has offered to muster * * * this is the whole as yet ascertained to be killed or wounded." The Americans took out 180 dead and wounded from the Confiance, 50 from the Linnet, and 40 from the Chub and Finch; in all 270. James ("Naval Occurrences," p. 412) says the Confiance had 83 wounded. As Captain Pring wrote his letter in Plattsburgh Bay, the day after the action, he of course could not give the loss aboard the British gunboats; so James at once assumed that they suffered none. As well as could be found out he had between 50 and 100 killed and wounded. The total British loss was between 300 and 400, as nearly as can be ascertained. For this action, as already shown, James is of no use whatever. Compare his statements, for example, with those of Midshipman Lee, in the "Naval Chronicle." The comparative loss, as a means of testing the competitive prowess of the combatants, is not of much consequence in this case, as the weaker party, in point of force, conquered.

that we won the victory. He forced the British to engage at a disadvantage by his excellent choice of position; and he prepared beforehand for every possible contingency. His personal prowess had already been shown at the cost of the rovers of Tripoli, and in this action he helped to fight the guns as ably as the best sailor. His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck, are beyond all praise. *Down to the time of the Civil War, he is the greatest figure in our naval history.* A thoroughly religious man, he was generous and human, and he was skillful and brave. One of the greatest of our sea captains, he has left a stainless name behind him." This is high praise, indeed, by Roosevelt, but it is supported by all the other authorities, as will be seen.

WHAT PALMER SAYS OF THE BATTLE

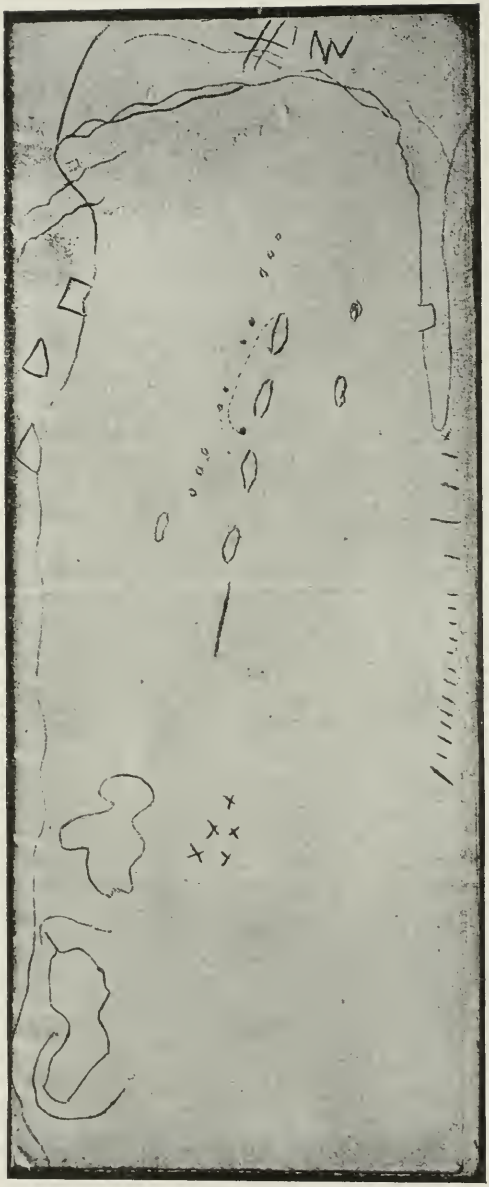
Peter S. Palmer in his description of the battle concludes with an interesting account of the action of the land forces under General Prevost, and as this army was supposed to have planned to aid Downie but was turned back by Macdonough's unexpected victory, the description is interesting and instructive.

Mr. Palmer says:

When the British army reached Plattsburgh, their gunboats had advanced as far as the Isle La Motte, where they remained, under command of Captain Pring. On the 8th Captain Downie reached that place with the rest of the fleet, and on the morning of the 11th, the whole weighed anchor and stood south to attack the Americans, who lay in the bay, off Plattsburgh.

As the British vessels rounded Cumberland Head, about eight o'clock in the morning, they found Macdonough at anchor a little south of the mouth of the Saranac river, and abreast, but out of gun shot, of the forts. His vessels lay in a line running north from Crab Island, and nearly parallel with the west shore.

The brig Eagle, Captain Henley, lay at the head of the line, inside of the point of the head. This vessel mounted twenty guns and had on board one hundred and fifty men. Next to her and on the south lay Macdonough's flag-ship, the Saratoga, mounting twenty-six guns, with two hundred and twelve men. Next south was the schooner Ticonderoga, of seventeen guns, Lieutenant Cassin, with one hundred and ten men, and next to her, and at the southern extremity of the line, lay the sloop Preble, Lieut. Charles Budd. This vessel carried seven guns and was manned by thirty men. She lay so near the shoal extending northeast from Crab Island, as to prevent the enemy from turning that end of the line. To the rear of the line were ten gunboats, six of which mounted one long twenty-four pounder and one eighteen-pound columbiad each; the other four carried one twelve-pounder. The gunboats had, on an average, thirty-five men each. Two of the gunboats lay a little north and in the rear of the Eagle, to sustain the head of the line; the others were placed opposite the intervals between the different vessels, and about forty rods to their rear. The larger vessels were at anchor, while the gunboats were kept in position by their sweeps.



The Commodore's pencil sketch (slightly reduced) of the positions of the British and American squadrons before and during the action of September 11, 1814.

The British fleet was composed of the frigate Confiance, carrying thirty-seven guns,* with over three hundred men, commanded by Captain Downie; the brig Linnet, Captain Pring, of sixteen guns and one hundred and twenty men; the sloop Chub, Lieutenant McGhee and the sloop Finch, Lieutenant Hicks, carrying eleven guns and about forty-five men each. To these vessels were added twelve gunboats of about forty-five men each. Eight of them carried two guns, and four, one gun each. Thus the force of the Americans consisted of one ship, one brig, one schooner, one sloop, and ten gunboats, manned by eight hundred and eighty-two men, and carrying in all eighty-six guns. The metal of the vessels on both sides was unusually heavy.

The Saratoga mounted eight long twenty-fours, six forty-twos, and twelve thirty-twos, while the Confiance had the gun-deck of a heavy frigate, with thirty long twenty-fours upon it. She also had a spacious top gallant forecastle, and a poop that came no further forward than the mizzen-mast. On the first were a long twenty-four on a circle, and four heavy carronades were mounted on the poop.†

THE FINCH LED

When the British fleet appeared in sight the Finch led and kept in a course toward Crab Island, while the other vessels hove to opposite the point of Cumberland Head, to allow the gunboats to come up, and to receive final instructions as to the plan of attack. The vessels then filled and headed in towards the American fleet, passing inside of the point of Cumberland Head; the Chub laying her course a little to windward of the Eagle in order to support the Linnet, which stood directly towards that vessel. Captain Downie, had determined to lay the Confiance athwart the Saratoga, but the wind baffling he was obliged to anchor at about two cables' length from that ship. The Finch, which had run about halfway to Crab Island, tacked and took her station with the gunboats, opposite the Ticonderoga and Preble.

As the British vessels approached they received the fire of the American fleet; the brig Eagle firing first, and being soon followed by the Saratoga and the sloop and schooner.‡ The Linnet poured

* There were thirty-nine guns on board the Confiance, but two of them were not mounted.—*Cooper.*

† Cooper's Naval History. Mr. Alison (in his History of England, Vol. 4) says: "The relative strength of the squadron on this, as in every other naval action during the war where the British were defeated, was decidedly in favor of the Americans"—a statement unwarranted by the facts and unnecessary to sustain the high reputation of the British Navy. The Americans had 86 guns; the British, 95.

‡The first gun fired on board the Saratoga was a long twenty-four, which Macdonough himself sighted. The shot is said to have struck the Confiance near the outer hawse-hole, and to have passed the length of her deck, killing and wounding several men and carrying away the wheel. In clearing the decks of the Saratoga, some hencoops were thrown overboard and the poultry permitted to run at large. Startled by the report of the opening gun of the Eagle a young cock flew upon a gun slide, clapped his wings and crowed. The men gave three cheers and considered the little incident as a happy omen. (Cooper's Naval History and Niles' Register.)

her broadside into the Saratoga as she passed that ship to take her position opposite the Eagle. Captain Downie brought his vessel into action in the most gallant manner, and did not fire a gun until he was perfectly secured, although his vessel suffered severely from the fire of the Americans. As soon, however, as the Confiance had been brought into position she discharged all her larboard guns at nearly the same instant. The effect of this broadside, thrown from long twenty-four pounders, double shotted in smooth water, was terrible. The Saratoga trembled to her very keel; about forty of her crew were disabled, including her first lieutenant, Mr. Gamble, who was killed while sighting the bow gun.

FIRST TO SURRENDER

Soon after the commencement of the engagement the Chub, while maneuvering near the head of the American line, received a broadside from the Eagle which so crippled her that she drifted down between the opposing vessels and struck. She was taken possession of by Mr. Charles Platt, one of the Saratoga's midshipmen, and was towed in shore and anchored.

The Chub had suffered severely, nearly half of her men having been killed or wounded. About an hour later the Finch was driven from her position by the Ticonderoga, and, being badly injured, drifted upon the shoal near Crab Island, where she grounded. After being fired into from the small battery on the island, she struck and was taken possession of by the invalids who manned the battery.

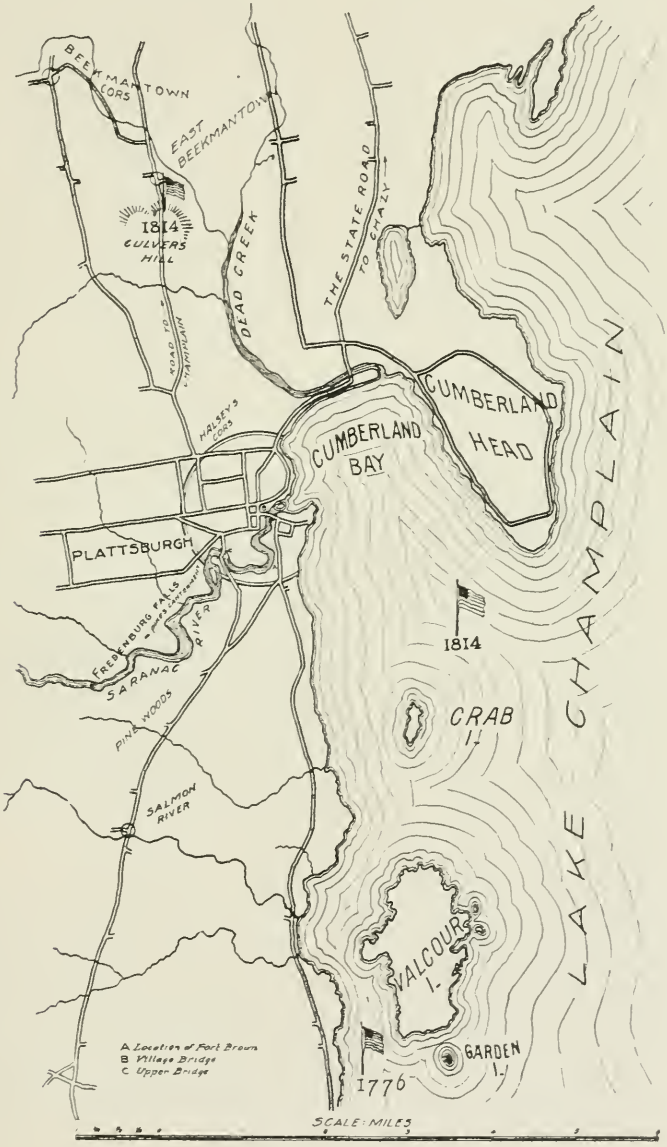
After the loss of the Finch, the British gunboats made several efforts to close and succeeded in compelling the sloop Preble to cut her cables and to anchor inshore of the line where she was of no more service during the engagement. The gun-boats, emboldened by this success, now directed their efforts towards the Ticonderoga, against which they made several very gallant assaults, bringing the boats, upon two or three occasions, within a few feet of the schooner's side. They were, however, as often beaten back, and the schooner during the remainder of the day completely covered that extremity of the line.

EAGLE LOST SPRINGS

While these changes were taking place at the lower end of the line, a change was also made at the other extremity. The Eagle, having lost her springs and finding herself exposed to the fire of both the Linnet and Confiance, dropped down and anchored between the Saratoga and Ticonderoga and a little inshore of both. From this position she opened afresh on the Confiance and the British gunboats with her larboard guns. This change relieved the brig, but left the Saratoga exposed to the whole fire of the Linnet, which sprung her broadsides in such a manner as to rake the ship on her bows.

The fire from the Saratoga and Confiance now began materially to lessen as gun after gun on both vessels became disabled, until

MAP SHOWING PLATTSBURGH AND VICINITY. THE LOWER FLAG MARKS THE SPOT WHERE IN 1776 WAS FOUGHT THE FIRST BATTLE BETWEEN FLEETS OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIONS. THE UPPER FLAG MARKS THE SPOT WHERE IN 1814 MACDONOUGH WON THE LAST BATTLE FOUGHT BETWEEN FLEETS OF ENGLISH-SPEAKING NATIONS.



at last the Saratoga had not a single available gun, and the Confiance was but little better off. It therefore became necessary that both vessels should wind, to continue the action with any success. This the Saratoga did after considerable delay, but the Confiance was less fortunate as the only effect of her effort was to force the vessel ahead. As soon as the Saratoga came around she poured a fresh broadside from her larboard guns into the Confiance, which stood the fire for a few minutes and then struck. The ship then brought her guns to bear on the Linnet, which surrendered about fifteen minutes afterwards. At this time the British gunboats lay half a mile in the rear, where they had been driven by the sharp fire of the Ticonderoga and Eagle. These boats lowered their colors as soon as they found the larger vessels had submitted, but not being pursued, for the American gunboats were sent to aid the Confiance and the Linnet which were reported to be in a sinking condition, they escaped, together with the store sloop which lay near the point of Cumberland Head during the battle.

The engagement continued for two hours and a half and was the most severely fought naval battle of the war. The Saratoga had twenty-eight men killed and twenty-nine wounded; the Eagle, thirteen killed and twenty wounded; the Ticonderoga six killed and six wounded, and the Preble, two killed. The loss on the gunboats was three killed and three wounded. Total killed and wounded, one hundred and ten, being equal to one in every eight men in the fleet. Besides, the Saratoga had been hulled fifty-five times and was twice on fire; the Eagle was hulled thirty-nine times. The carnage and destruction had been as great on the other side. The Confiance had forty-one men killed and eighty-three wounded; the Linnet reported her casualties at ten killed. Fourteen were wounded, but the killed and wounded probably exceeded fifty; the Chub was reported as having six killed and ten wounded, and the Finch had two wounded. No account is given of the loss on the gunboats, but, from their close and severe contests with the Ticonderoga, it must have been large. The total of killed and wounded on the British side was equal to at least one-fifth of the whole number of men in their fleet. The Confiance had been hulled one hundred and five times. So severe had been the contest that at the close of the action there was not a mast in either fleet fit for use.

CAPTAIN DOWNIE KILLED

Among those killed on the side of the British were Captain Downie who fell soon after the action commenced, Captain Alexander Anderson, one of the marines, Midshipman William Gunn of the Confiance, and Lieutenant William Paul and Boatswain Charles Jackson of the Linnet. Among the wounded were Midshipman Lee of the Confiance, Midshipman John Sinclair of the Linnet, and Lieutenant James McGhee of the Chub. The American officers killed were Peter Gamble, first lieutenant of the Saratoga, John Stansbury, first lieutenant of the Ticonderoga, Midshipman James M. Baldwin, and Sailing Master Rogers Carter. Referring to the death of three of these officers, Mr. Cooper, in his History of the Navy, says:

View in Riverside Cemetery, Plattsburgh New York,—showing graves of British and American officers killed in Battle of Plattsburgh and buried side by side. Grave of Commodore George Downie, commander British fleet, enclosed by iron railing. Plattsburgh people have honored and kept green their graves annually including them within the tributes of Decoration Day

MAP SHOWING THE SECTION OF COUNTRY THROUGH WHICH THE BRITISH ARMY PLANNED TO MARCH FROM MONTREAL TO NEW YORK IN THEIR INVASION OF THIS COUNTRY SEPTEMBER 1814.

" Lieutenant Gamble was on his knees, sighting the bow-gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, drove a portion of it against his breast and laid him dead on the quarter-deck without breaking his skin. Fifteen minutes later one of the American shots struck the muzzle of a twenty-four on the Confiance, dismounted it, sending it bodily inboard against the groin of Captain Downie, killing him also without breaking the skin; Lieutenant Stansbury suddenly disappeared from the bulwarks forward while superintending some duty with the springs of the Ticonderoga. Two days after the action his body rose to the surface of the water, and it was found that it had been cut in two by a round shot."

NONE ESCAPED INJURY

It is said that scarcely an individual escaped, on board of either the Confiance or Saratoga, without some injury. Macdonough was twice knocked down; once by the spanker-boom, which was cut in two by a shot and fell upon his back as he was bending his body to sight a gun; and again by the head of a gunner, which was driven against him and knocked him into the scuppers. Mr. Brum, the sailing master of the Saratoga, had his clothes torn off by a splinter, while winding the ship. Mr. Vallette, acting lieutenant, had a shot-box, on which he was standing, knocked from under his feet, and he, too, was once knocked down by the head of a seaman. Very few escaped without some accident, and it appears to have been agreed on both sides *to call no man wounded who could keep out of the hospital.* Midshipman Lee of the Confiance, who was wounded in the action, thus described the condition of that vessel: "The havoc on both sides is dreadful. I don't think there are more than five of our men out of three hundred but what are killed or wounded. Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears. Were you to see my jacket, waist-coat and trousers, you would be astonished how I escaped as I did, for they are literally torn all to rags with shot and splinters; the upper part of my hat was also shot away. *There is one of our marines who was in the Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson who says it was a mere flea-bite in comparison with this.*"

THE LAND FORCES

As soon as the British fleet were observed approaching Cumberland Head, on the morning of the 11th, Sir George Prevost ordered General Power's brigade, and a part of General Robinson's brigade, consisting of four companies of light infantry, and the 3d battalions of the 27th and 76th, to force the fords of the Saranac, and to assault the American works. The advance was made and the batteries were opened the moment the action on the lake commenced.

The British attempted to cross the river at three points; one at the village bridge, where they were repulsed by the artillery and guards under Captains Brooks, Richards and Smith; one at the upper bridge, where they were foiled by the pickets and riflemen under

Captain Grosvenor and Lieutenants Hamilton and Smith, supported by a detachment of militia; and the third at the ford near "Pike's cantonment," where they were resisted by the New York Militia under Major-General Mooers and Brigadier-General Wright. At this latter point, several companies succeeded in crossing, driving the militia before them towards Salmon river. The British advanced, firing by platoons, but with such carelessness of aim as to do but little injury. At Salmon river, the militia were joined by a large detachment of the Vermont Volunteers, and were soon afterwards reinforced by Lieutenant Sumpter with a party of artillery and a field-piece. Here they rallied and were drawn up to meet the attack o the British troops, who were rapidly approaching. Just at this moment an officer rode up to the ranks, proclaiming the welcome intelligence that the British fleet had surrendered. With three hearty cheers the militia immediately pressed forward against the enemy, who, having been at the same moment recalled, were now rapidly retiring toward the ford. In their retreat, a company of the 76th lost their way among the thick pines, where they were surrounded and attacked by several companies of militia and Vermont Volunteers. Three lieutenants and twenty-seven men were made prisoners and Captain Purchase and the rest of the company killed. The rest of the British detachment regained the North bank of the Saranac without much loss.

Although no further attempt was made to cross the river, the British batteries continued their fire upon the Americans works until sundown. This fire was returned by the guns of Fort Brown, which were managed during the day with great skill by Captain Alexander Brooks and the corps of veteran artillery under his command.

Sir George Prevost had now under his command over thirteen thousand troops, more than half of whom had served with distinction under Wellington, while the American force did not exceed over fifteen hundred regulars fit for duty, two thousand five hundred Vermont Volunteers under Major General Strong, six hundred of whom had just arrived, and General Wright's brigade of Clinton and Essex militia, seven hundred strong, under command of Major-General Mooers. With his superior force, Prevost could have forced the passage of the Saranac and have crushed Macomb by the mere weight of numbers. But the victory would have been attended with a great sacrifice of life, and would have led to no permanent advantage to the British. Macdonough was in command of the lake; reinforcements of regulars were hastening to the support of Macomb; the militia were rising *en masse* in every quarter and within two weeks Prevost would have been surrounded, his supplies from Canada cut off, and an only alternative left to force his way back with the loss of half his army or to have surrendered. In a dispatch to Earl Bathurst, after referring to the loss of the fleet, he says: "This unlooked for event depriving me of the co-operation of the fleet, without which the further prosecution of the service was become impracticable, I did not hesitate to arrest the course of the troops advancing to the attack, because the most complete success would have been unavailing; and the possession of the enemy's

works offered no advantage to compensate for the loss we must have sustained in acquiring possession of them."

COMPLIMENT TO BRAVERY

This was a just and merited compliment to the skill and bravery of the American regulars and militia. The former were few in number, but resolute and unflinching. Among the latter the greatest enthusiam now prevailed. They had been accustomed to the " smell of powder," and, animated by the recollection of Macdonough's victory, were ready to oppose any force that might attempt the passage of the Saranac. It is due to the patriotism of the citizens of Vermont to mention the fact that as soon as Governor Chittenden received information from General Macomb of the invasion by the enemy, he issued a spirited address calling on the Vermont militia to rally to the aid of their countrymen on the opposite side of the lake. This address was most nobly responded to, for when the requisition of the President for a reinforcement of two thousand militia to aid General Macomb reached the Governor, he replied that the order had not only been anticipated but far exceeded by the voluntary enrollment of his fellow citizens. The same enthusiam pervaded the militia on the New York side. When Major-General Mooers' orders were received for the militia of Warren and Washington counties to assemble, *en masse* and march to the frontier, *there appeared, under arms, two hundred and fifty men more than had ever mustered at an inspection or review.*

PREVOST'S RETREAT

Acting upon the considerations stated in his dispatch to Earl Bathurst, Sir George Prevost prepared for an instant and hasty retreat. As soon as the sun went down he dismantled his batteries, and at 9 o'clock at night sent off his heavy baggage and artillery, which were quickly followed by the main army; the rear guard consisting of a light brigade, started a little before daybreak, leaving behind them vast quantities of provisions, tents, camp equipage, ammunition, etc. The sick and wounded were also left behind, consigned to the generosity and humane care of General Macomb. So silent and rapid was the retreat that the main army had passed through Beekmantown before its absence was known in the American camp. The light troops, volunteers, and militia were immediately sent in pursuit. They followed the retiring column as far as Chazy, and took a few prisoners. The roads were muddy and very heavy at the time, which not only prevented further pursuit, but delayed Prevost's retreat. The last of the British army did not leave Champlain until the 24th.

General Macomb, in his returns, states the number of killed, wounded, and missing of the regular force under his command, during the skirmishes and bombardment, at one hundred and twenty-three. The only commissioned officer killed was Lieutenant George W. Runk of the 6th Regiment, who was severely wounded on the

seventh and died the next day. The loss among the volunteers and militia was small. The loss of the British has never been correctly ascertained. Their accounts fix the casualties of the expedition at under two hundred killed and wounded and four hundred lost by desertion. Seventy-five British soldiers were captured.

VOLUNTEERS RETURN HOME

On the 12th the Vermont Volunteers returned home, and on the 13th the New York Militia were disbanded by General Macomb, and orders issued countermanding the march of thousands who were flocking the frontier.

On the morning of the 14th of September, the remains of the lamented Gamble, Stansbury, Baldwin, Carter, and Barron, were placed in separate boats, which, manned by crews from their respective vessels, proceeded to the Confiance, where they were joined by the British officers with the bodies of Downie, Anderson, Paul, Gunn, and Jackson. At the shore of the lake the procession was joined by a large concourse of the military and citizens of Plattsburgh, who accompanied the bodies to the village burial-ground. Near the center of the graveyard, beneath the shade of two pines, now rest the ashes of those gallant officers. The sailors and marines who fell in the engagement were buried on Crab Island, side by side, in one common grave.

With the battle of Plattsburgh closed all active operations upon the Champlain frontier.

McMASTER'S ACCOUNT

In volume IV, pages 66 to 68, of "A History of the People of the United States from the Revolution to the Civil War," John Bach McMaster of the University of Pennsylvania, writes of the Battle of Plattsburgh as "the greatest naval battle of the war," and stamps Macdonough as "the ablest sea-captain our country has produced." McMaster says:

"Downie's fleet numbered twelve gun-boats and four large ships — the Chubb, the Linnet, the Confiance, and Finch — one of which, the Confiance, he considered a match for the entire American flotilla. She was indeed a splendid vessel, for she was one hundred and forty-six feet long, was armed with thrity-seven guns, and carried a crew of three hundred officers and men. After pausing for a time at the entrance to the bay in order that his gun-boats might come up with him, Downie, with his four ships abreast and the twelve galleys to leeward, bore down on the American line. The Chubb and the Linnet singled out the Eagle. The Confiance dropped anchor before the Saratoga; the Finch with the galleys engaged the Ticonderoga and the Preble, and sought to turn the end of the American line. The battle which followed was fought long and well. At the head of the line the Chubb was quickly disabled by the Eagle, and, drifting past the Saratoga, received a shot that forced her to strike.

She was then boarded by a prize crew and towed inshore and anchored off the mouth of the Saranac river. But the Eagle was soon forced from her position, and, running down the line, she anchored between the Saratoga and Ticonderoga. The Ticonderoga meanwhile had been hotly engaged with the Finch, which, shattered and helpless, was, in her turn, driven from her anchorage, and, floating off toward Crab Island, grounded and was taken by the invalids from the hospital. The galleys now redoubled the fury of their attack on the Preble, and soon compelled her to cut her cables and take refuge inshore near the captured Chubb. On the Saratoga the day was going badly for Macdonough. The first broadside from the double-shotted guns of the Confiance, delivered at short range, almost blew the Saratoga out of the water. Such was the force of the shot that more than half the crew were thrown upon the deck and forty of them killed outright or wounded. Deprived of so many men, Macdonough began to fight like a sailor, and was busy sighting a gun when a round shot cut the spanker boom in two and threw a piece of it on his head, striking him senseless to the deck. Springing up, he went back to the gun, but a second shot, tearing off the head of the captain of the gun, flung it in his face with such force that he was hurled to the other side of the vessel. The Linnet, having driven off the Eagle, began to rake the bow of the Saratoga. But though his men fell thick around him, though his guns were one by one disabled, Macdonough fought manfully on till the navel-bolt of his last gun giving way, the piece leaped from its carriage and, plunging down the main hatch, left him without one carronade on his engaged side.

Many a captain would have thought the time had now come to strike, but the emergency was one Macdonough had foreseen and had provided for, and, turning his vessel slowly round, while the Linnet raked her, he brought his usused port battery to bear on the Confiance and forced her to surrender. Then, turning still farther round, Macdonough opened on the Linnet, and in fifteen minutes her commander hauled down her colors. A boarding officer was now sent to take possession of the Confiance, which, with every mast in splinters, with Downie and half the crew dead and wounded, and with one hundred and five shot-holes in her hull, lay a wreck on the water. As the lieutenant passed along her deck he ran foul of the lock-string of a gun, which immediately went off. It is believed that the report was understood by the British galleys to be a signal, for they at once began to move away slowly by the aid of the few sweeps left them. To follow was not possible, and they escaped with every ensign down.

The fight in Plattsburgh Bay was undoubtedly the greatest naval battle of the war, and the victory stamped Macdonough as the ablest sea-captain our country produced down to the Rebellion."

CHAPTER II

LOSSING'S COMMENTS

Benson J. Lossing's "Pictorial Field Book of the War of 1812," contains a wealth of interesting "illustrations by pen and pencil, of the history, biography, scenery, relics and traditions of the last war for American independence." There are several hundred engravings on wood, by Lossing and Barritt, chiefly from original sketches by Lossing.

Lossing says:

"The retirement of Napoleon to Elba did release from Continental service a large body of English troops, and several thousands of them were immediately dispatched to Canada to re-enforce the little army there. They were sent from the Garonne, in Spain, and many of them were Wellington's veterans, hardy and skillful. They arrived at Quebec late in July and in August, and were rapidly pushed up to Montreal. In the meantime, the forces under Prevost, the Governor of Canada and general-in-chief, had been very busy in preparations for an invasion of New York, and the little flotilla in the Richelieu, or Sorel river, had been greatly augmented in numbers and strength during the winter and spring."

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BURGOYNE'S PLAN FOLLOWED

"Both parties now prepared for a struggle for supremacy on Lake Champlain. The British, as we have observed, had adopted in a degree the plan of Burgoyne for separating New England from the rest of the Union, while the Americans were as determined to resist the meditated invasion at the very threshold, and defend the lake region and the valley of the upper Hudson at the gates of Canada."

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"During the months of July and August not less than fifteen thousand troops, chiefly veterans from Wellington's armies, as we have observed, arrived at Montreal. Only one brigade was sent westward, and the remainder were kept in reserve for the contemplated invasion of New York, in such overwhelming force as to overbear all opposition. These newly-arrived troops were encamped in the level country between Laprairie on the St. Lawrence, and the Chambly on the Sorel.

"Very soon after the advance of the Americans to Chazy and Champlain, Sir George Prevost arrived at the Isle aux Noix, where he had concentrated a considerable body of veterans, and took chief command in person; and strong detachments of seamen were sent from Quebec, by order of Sir James L. Yeo, to strengthen the naval power at the same place.

A SERIOUS BLUNDER

"It was evident that a speedy invasion of Northern New York was in contemplation; and yet, with full information on the subject, the American government, as if fearful of a conquest of Canada whenever a spirited general was in command near assailable points, ordered Izard at that critical moment, when danger was never more apparent, to march a larger portion of his force westward to co-operate with the army of Niagara. It was an open invitation to invasion; and the army and people, expecting a great battle soon at the foot of Lake Champlain, and hoping for a decisive victory, were astonished by the order. The disappointed Izard could scarcely restrain his indignation. On the 11th of August he wrote: "I will make the movement you direct, if possible; but I shall do it with the apprehension of risking the force under my command, and with the certainty that everything in this vicinity but the lately erected works at Plattsburgh and Cumberland Head will, in less than three days after my departure, be in the possession of the enemy. He is in force superior to mine in my front; he daily threatens an attack on my position at Champlain; we are all in hourly expectation of a serious conflict. * * * Let me not be supposed to hesitate about executing any project which the government I have the honor to serve think proper to direct. My little army will do its duty."

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THE BRITISH ADVANCE

"When the British advanced to Chazy, Macomb ordered Captain Sproull to take a position near Dead Creek Bridge, on the Lake road, with two hundred of the Thirteenth regiment and two field pieces, while Lieutenant-Colonel Appling, the hero of Sandy Creek, was sent farther in advance, with a little more than a hundred riflemen, and a troop of New York cavalry under Captain Gilead Sperry, Lieutenant Hiram Safford and Cornet Matthew M. Standish. Their business was to watch and annoy the enemy, and obstruct his march by felling trees in the road. It was their appearance that caused his halt at Sampson's. General Mooers had called for the entire militia force of his district to repel the invasion, and Macomb made an earnest appeal for troops to Governor Chittenden, of Vermont.

"On the evening of the 4th, Mooers had seven hundred men under his command, and with them, by order of Macomb, he advanced a few miles northward on the Beekmantown road, on an errand

similar to that of Sproull and Appling. He was instructed to watch the enemy, skirmish with his vanguard, break up the bridges, obstruct the roads with felled trees. He went forward on the morning of the 5th, and bivouacked that night near the stone church in Beekmantown.

"On the morning of the 6th the British army, full fourteen thousand strong, mostly veteran troops, marched upon Plattsburgh in two columns from their encampment near Sampson's, the right crossing over to the Beekmantown road, and the left following the lake shore that led to Dead Creek Bridge. General Edward Baynes was the adjutant-general, and Sir Sidney Beckwith, who was conspicuous at Hampton and in Hampton Roads the previous year, was quartermaster-general. The right column was composed of General Powers's brigade, supported by four companies of light infantry and a half brigade under Major General Robinson. The left was composed of General Brisbane's brigade, and was led by him in person. The whole were under the immediate command of Major-General DeRottenburg.

"Macomb was informed of this movement being in contemplation on the evening of the 5th, and prepared to meet it. The gallant Major John E. Wool, ever ready for a daring enterprise, volunteered to lead some regulars to support the militia and oppose the advance of the foe. At about the time in the early morning of the 6th when the British broke camp at Sampson's, Wool moved from Plattsburgh with two hundred and fifty regular infantry and thirty volunteers, with orders to set the militia an example of firmness. This was done. He reached Beekmantown before the enemy appeared, and took possession near the residence of Ira Howe. There the first collision occurred. The enemy came marching on rapidly, anticipating no resistance, when they were suddenly checked by a heavy volley of musketry from Wool's little corps. The militia broke and fled toward Plattsburgh, but the regulars stood firm. The enemy was in overwhelming numbers, but Wool moved slowly back toward Culver's Hill, disputing the way inch by inch in desperate skirmishing. On that hill, a short distance below Beekmantown, he made a stand, and as the British advance ascended the slope, filling the entire road, he made another gallant attack upon them. Some of the militia had been rallied, and were in position behind the stone wall that bounded the road. The enemy's advance was driven back upon the main body, and their leader, Lieutenant-Colonel Willington of the Third Regiment of Royal Buffs, and Ensign Chapman of the same regiment were killed. Captain Westropp, of the Fifty-eighth, was severely wounded. Corporal Patridge, of Essex militia, and several other Americans, were killed. The fight was severe, but very short. The heavy column of the enemy came pressing steadily onward with irresistible force, filling the entire roadway. At the same time Wool discovered a formidable movement to turn his flank and gain his rear, when he again fell back in order to Halsey's Corners, within a mile and a half of Plattsburgh bridge. There he was joined at about eight o'clock in the morning by Captain Leonard with two pieces of artillery. These were immediately placed in battery at

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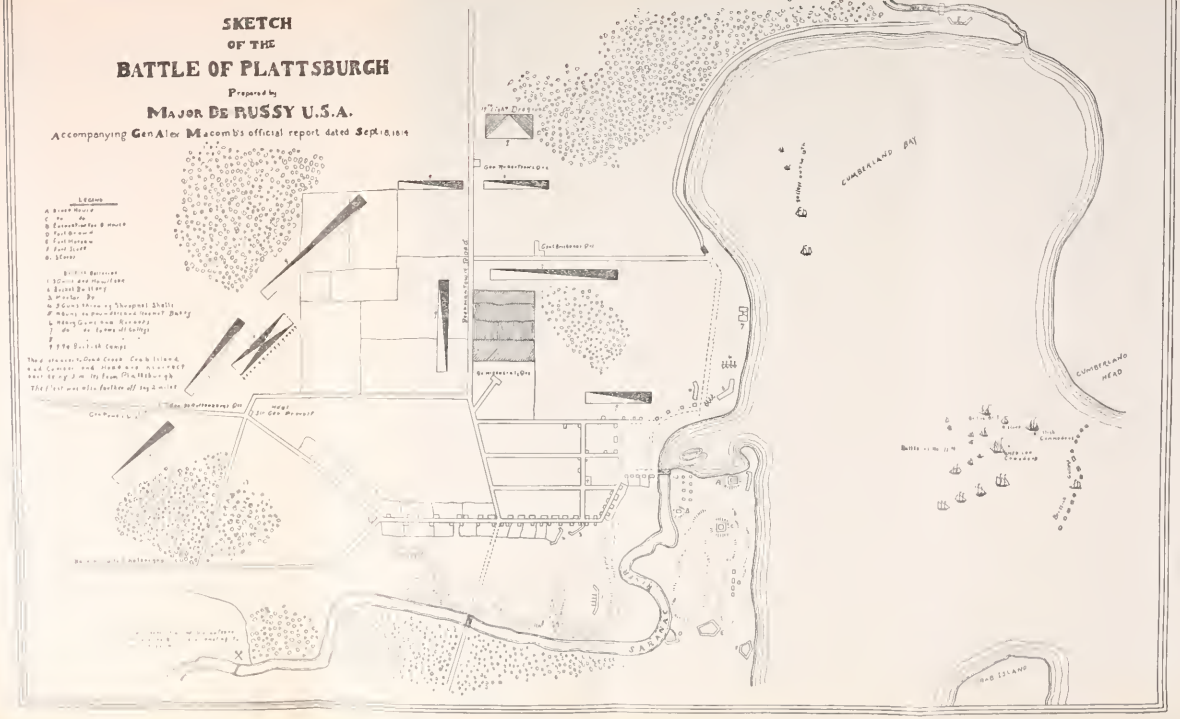
SKETCH
OF THE
BATTLE OF PLATTSBURGH

Prepared by

MAJOR DE RUSSY U.S.A.

Accompanying Gen Alex Macomb's official report dated Sept 8, 1814



an angle in the road. They were masked by Wool's infantry and a small body of militia, and as the enemy came steadily on in heavy mass, Leonard opened upon them, and his balls cut fearful lanes through their ranks.

"Three times that battery hurled its deadly missiles through the lines of the foe, yet it did not check them. The British bugles sounded and the men, throwing away their knapsacks, rushed forward at double quick to charge with the bayonet. Leonard was compelled to fly toward the village. He carried his guns with him, turning them occasionally upon the pursuing foe, and, crossing the Saranac at the lower bridge, he planted them in battery on a gentle eminence in the road, near the stone mill, to cover the crossing of the rest of the Americans if they should find it necessary to retreat. In the affair at Halsey's Corners several of the British were killed. Among them was Lieutenant Kingsbury, of the Third Royal Buffs, who was mortally wounded, and taken into the farm house of the now (1867) venerable Isaac C. Platt, Esq., near by, where he soon afterward died.

"The more rapid march of the British right column imperiled the detachments of Appling and Sproul, who were awaiting the approach of the left. Macomb perceived this, and ordered them to fall back toward Plattsburgh, and attack the enemy's flank. They did so, and their riflemen galled the foe severely. They reached the lower bridge just in time to avoid being cut off by the British right, and to cross it with Wool's retiring troops. When all were safely over, the bridge was torn up in the face of a heavy fire from the head of the enemy's right, which had reached the little village. The militia in the meantime had fled across the upper bridge, and destroyed that in the same way. The British left column soon afterward appeared. It crossed the Dead Creek bridge, and, while making its way along the beach of Plattsburgh Bay to unite with the right, it was severely harassed by an enfilading fire from some of Macdonough's galleys which had been sent to the head of the bay for the purpose. A heavy blow came on, and Macdonough sent Midshipman Silas Duncan in a gig to order the galleys to return to the fleet. His boat was fired upon by the enemy, and he was severely wounded, but he delivered the order and escaped with his life.

"The British were checked at the village by the destruction of the lower bridge whose timbers were used in the construction of a breastwork for the infantry. They took position in some store houses near the Saranac. Upon these Captain Brooks hurled some hot shot, and burned out the enemy. Their light troops endeavored during the day to force a passage of the Saranac, but were each time repulsed by the guards at the bridge and a small company known as Aiken's volunteers, of Plattsburgh, who were stationed in the stone mill (see engraving next page) already mentioned. These young men had been out on the Beekmantown road in the morning and behaved gallantly, and they garrisoned that mill-citadel most admirably. The following are the names of these young men, or rather lads, for none of them were old enough to be legally called into the military service: Martin J. Aiken, Azariah C. Flagg, Ira

Wood, Gustavus A. Bird, James Trowbridge, Hazen Mooers, Henry K. Averill, St. John B. L. Skinner, Frederick P. Allen, Hiram Walworth, Ethan Everset, Amos Soper, James Patten, Bartimeus Brooks, Smith Bateman, Melancthon W. Travis and Flavius Williams. They were highly praised by Macomb for their gallantry, and he promised that each of them should receive a rifle. This promise Congress redeemed in 1826 by ordering a rifle to be presented to each member of that little volunteer company. Several of these lads afterwards became distinguished men. In the meantime a division of the British had pressed toward the upper bridge, where General Mooers and his militia, as we have observed, crossed the bridge, tore it up, and used its timbers for a breastwork. The enemy made extraordinary efforts to force a passage there, but Mooers and his men stood firm, and kept them at bay. Finding the passage of the stream impossible under the circumstances, Prevost ordered his troops to encamp upon an elevated ridge about a mile back from the river, and upon the high ground north of the village. He made his headquarters at Allen's farmhouse on the ridge, and gave orders for vigorous preparations for attack. Notwithstanding he was at the head of overwhelming numbers, the events of that day convinced him that the task before him was not a light one. He had lost, in killed and wounded, since the dawn, over two hundred men, while the loss of the Americans did not exceed forty-five."

* * * * * * * * * * * * * *

THE BATTLE ON THE LAKE

"The Linnett, as she was passing to attack the Eagle, gave the Saratoga a broadside, but without serious effect. One of her shots demolished a hen-coop on the Saratoga, in which was a young game-cock which some of the seamen had lately brought on board. The released fowl, startled by the noise of cannon, flew upon a gun-slide, and, clapping his wings, crowed lustily and defiantly. The sailors cheered, and the incident appearing to them as ominous of victory for the Americans, strengthened the courage of all. Statement to the author by Commodore Samuel L. Breese, who was commander of the gunboat Netley in the action, and James Sloan, of Oswego, who, as we have observed (page 797), was Macdonough's clerk, and was a witness to the affair. He says that some of the sailors were fond of cock-fighting. This particular bird, owned on shore, had been a formidable antagonist, and by 'hook or crook,' they had obtained possession of him."

The following allusion to this event is contained in a rhyming "Epistle of Brother Jonathan to Johnny Bull," said to have been written at near the close of 1814:

"O, Johnny Bull, my Joe, John,
Behold on Lake Champlain,
With more than equal force, John,
You tried your fist again;
But the cock saw how 'twas going,
And cried 'Cock-a-doodle-doo,'
And Macdonough was victorious,
O, Johnny Bull, my Joe!"

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"Among the brave spirits on board the Ticonderoga was Midshipman Hiram Paulding, now (1867) a rear-admiral. He was then a lad not seventeen years of age, but for want of officers, he was placed in command of a division of eight guns. When the British galleys approached, it was discovered that the matches for firing the cannon were useless. Young Paulding saw no recourse but the flash of a pistol, and with his own hand he thus fired the guns of his section during a combat of more than two hours; and in the interval of the cannon-firing, when the enemy were within pistol shot, he discharged his weapon against them. These facts I had from the lips of the late Commodore Tatnall.

"Hiram Paulding, a son of one of the captors of Andre, was born in Westchester county, New York, on the 11th of December, 1797. His first service in the navy was as a midshipman, at thirteen years of age, on Lake Ontario, in 1812. During the remainder of the war he was confined to Lake Champlain. In 1815 he accompanied Decatur in the Constellation frigate to the Mediterranean. He was promoted to lieutenant, and served under Bainbridge and Downes. He was on shore for some time in 1821 engaged in study preparatory to a more useful career in the navy. He accompanied Porter in his expedition against the West India pirates, and from that time until 1865, he was in active, arduous and most useful service, afloat and ashore, as subordinate and commander, having been promoted to captain in 1843. He took an active interest in the suppression of the rebellion that broke out in the slave labor states in 1861, and in 1862 (when the annexed portrait was drawn) was promoted to rear admiral. He was the first American commander who received a full admiral's salute. It was given by a French frigate lying in New York harbor, August 1, 1862, on the occasion of the admiral's visit to that vessel."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"For two hours and twenty minutes this severe naval battle raged, while the thunder of cannon, the hiss of rockets, the scream of bombs, and the rattle of musketry were heard on the shore. It was a sublime sight, and was beheld by hundreds of spectators on the headlands of the Vermont shore, who greeted the victory with shouts. It was a battle characterized by a vigor and destructiveness not excelled by any during the war, indeed seldom equalled anywhere or at any time. The havoc on both sides was dreadful, Midshipman William Lee wrote: - 'I don't think there are more than five of our men, out of three hundred, but what are killed or wounded. Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears. Were you to see my jacket, waistcoat and trousers, you would be astonished to know how I escaped as I did, for they are literally torn all to rags with shot and splinters; the upper part of my hat was also shot away. There is one of the marines who was in Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson, who says it was a mere flea-

bite in comparison with this'—Letter to his brother December 14, 1814. Midshipman Lee rose to the rank of Lieutenant and died on the 24th of February, 1817, at the Telegraph West Square."

"Mr. James Sloane of Oswego informed me that a few days before the battle, he gave one of the seamen a very nice glazed hat. After the battle was over the sailor came to him with the hat in his hand, having a semicircular cut in the side and crown made by a cannon shot while it was on his head. 'Look here, Mr. Sloane,' said the sailor, 'how the damned John Bulls have spoiled my hat.' He did not seem to reflect for a moment how nearly the cannon ball came to spoiling his head."

"Macdonough received the officers of the captured vessels with great courtesy of manner and speech. When they offered him their swords, he instantly replied, 'Gentlemen, your gallant conduct makes you worthy to wear your weapons; return them to their scabbards.'

"During the hostilities at Plattsburgh, from the 6th until the evening of the 11th, scarcely a building in the village escaped injury of some sort. Many houses were completely riddled. Nine dwellings, thirteen stores and shops, and the court house and jail were burned. Some of these were destroyed when the enemy were burned out by the Brook's hot shot, as mentioned on page 863."

DINNER TO MACDONOUGH

"A few days after the battle the citizens of Plattsburgh, who had returned to their homes, resolved in public meeting, to give a public dinner to Commodore Macdonough. A committee, of which Henry De Lord was chairman, waited upon the hero on board his ship with an invitation. It was accepted and on Tuesday, the 23rd instant, at three o'clock P. M., the commodore, with Generals Macomb and Mooers, and other officers of the army and navy, who were invited guests, and a number of citizens, sat down to a bountiful dinner at the United States Hotel, kept by Thomas Green, and yet standing in 1860, between the stone mill and the bridge over the Saranac, in Plattsburgh. General Macomb's band furnished the music on the occasion. Peter Sailly, Esq., presided. Seventeen regular toasts were drunk. The distinguished guests, as they retired, were toasted, and one was given in respectful silence to "The memory of Commodore Downie, our brave enemy." The fallen brave of Macdonough's fleet were also remembered in the regular toasts. 'Much credit,' says a writer who was present, 'is due to Mr. Green for the excellent dinner which he provided for the occasion, it being generally conceded to be the best that was ever given in Plattsburgh.'

"The following toast was offered after Macdonough had left the table: 'The pious and brave Macdonough — the professor of the religion of the Redeemer — preparing for action, he called on God, who forsook him not in the hour of danger; may he not be forgotten by his country.'"

View of scene of Macdonough's decisive victory, looking northeasterly from Bluff Point, Crab Island in center, Cumberland Head at left and Grand Isle at right in distance

LIFE OF GENERAL MACOMB

"Alexander Macomb was the son of a fur merchant of Detroit, who married one of the highly respectable family of Navarre. Their son was born in Detroit on the 3d of April, 1782. He became a resident of New York in infancy, and was educated in New Jersey. He was a member of the 'New York Rangers,' a volunteer corps raised in 1779, when war with France was expected. General North, of the Revolution, placed him on his staff. He became permanently attached to the army as a dragoon, and was very useful. He was with Wilkinson in the southwest and being afterward attached to a corps of engineers as first lieutenant, he was sent to West Point, where he compiled a treatise on martial law. He became captain in 1805, and was ordered to superintend the erection of fortifications on the frontiers. He was promoted to major in 1808, and when the war commenced in 1812 he was placed in command of an artillery corps. We have already met him several times in the course of this narrative of the war. His crowning achievement was at Plattsburgh. After the war he was stationed at Detroit. He was made chief engineer in 1821, and removed to Washington. He remained in that bureau until 1835, when on the death of General Jacob Brown, he was promoted to general-in-chief of the army of the United States. He died at Washington City on the 25th of June, 1841, aged fifty-nine years. He was buried with military honors in the Congressional Burying Ground at Washington, and over his grave now stands a beautiful white marble monument bearing the following inscriptions:

"*West side.*—'ALEXANDER MACOMB, MAJOR-GENERAL, Commander-in-chief United States Army. Died at Washington, the seat of government, 25th June, 1841.'

"*East side.*—'It were but small tribute to his memory to say that in youth and manhood, he served his country in the profession in which he died, during a period of more than forty years, without stain or blemish upon his escutcheon.'

"*South side.*—'The honors conferred on him by President Madison, received on the field of victory for distinguished and gallant conduct in defeating the enemy at Plattsburgh, and the thanks of Congress, bestowed with a medal commemorative of this triumph of the arms of the Republic, attest the high estimate of his gallantry and meritorious services.'

"On the west side, over his name, is an olive wreath; on the south side an hour glass, with wings, and a scythe; on the east side a simple cross, and on the north side a serpent and butterfly.

"In the above sketch the little monument to Commodore Patterson is seen in an iron railing. Over one corner of it, in the distance, is seen William Wirt's monument, and between it and Macomb's is seen that of Commodore Chauncey."

"The events on land and water at Plattsburgh on the 11th of September, 1814, produced a thrill of intense joy throughout the country, and with delight the people read the stirring General

General Alexander Macomb

Orders in which, on the 14th of September, Macomb announced the result to his little army. Spontaneous honors and praises were given by the people to him and Macdonough conjointly. Bonfires and illuminations blazed in almost every city and village in the land, and the recent disaster at the national capitol was almost unthought of for a moment. Legislative resolves, artillery, oratory, and song were pressed into the service of rendering homage to the two heroes and their men. The newspapers teemed with eulogies, and at all public gatherings and entertainments their names and deeds were mentioned with applause. Governor Tompkins in the name of the State of New York, presented Macomb with a superb sword. De Witt Clinton, Mayor of New York, presented him, in the name of the Corporation, the 'freedom of the city' in a gold box similar in character to the one given to General Brown; and he was requested by the same body to sit for his portrait, to be placed in the gallery of distinguished men. Congress gave him the thanks of the nation, and voted him a gold medal. He was commissioned by the President, major-general by brevet. When he returned to his family at Belleville, New Jersey, the village was illuminated, and he was received with the most gratifying tokens of respect. 'Never on the return of any hero to the peaceful bosom of his family,' said the New York *Evening Post*, an opposition paper, 'was evinced so universal a sense of sincere joy and heartfelt satisfaction.'"

HONORS FOR MACDONOUGH

"Macdonough, too, was nobly honored. The State of New York gave him two thousand acres of land. The State of Vermont purchased two hundred acres on Cumberland Head and presented it to him. It was on the borders of Cumberland, or Plattsburgh Bay, and the farmhouse upon it overlooked the scene of his gallant exploits. The cities of New York and Albany each gave the hero a valuable lot of land. 'Thus,' said Macdonough to a friend, while tears stood in his eyes, 'in one month, from a poor lieutenant I became a rich man.' Congress gave him the thanks of the nation, and with his brave commanders, Henley and Cassin, voted him a gold medal, with suitable devices and inscriptions.

"Three days after the battle, when it was ascertained that the British were making their way toward the St. Lawrence, General Macomb discharged the New York and Vermont militia, and the solemn rites of burial were accorded to the dead of both nations. Fifteen officers, including Commodore Downie, were laid in the Plattsburgh Burying Ground, and a neat marble slab, with the name of the commemorated cut upon it, was placed at the head of each grave. On each side of Downie's grave a pine tree was planted. These were noble in stature when I made the annexed sketch, but one has since disappeared. A few years ago a near relative of the British commander laid a recumbent marble slab, suitably inscribed upon brick walls, over his remains. Around it are the graves of the other officers."

"The following is a copy of the inscription:

"Sacred to the memory of George Downie, Esq., a post captain in the Royal British Navy, who gloriously fell on board his B.M.S. the Confiance while leading the vessels under his command to the attack of the American flotilla at anchor in Cumberland Bay, off Plattsburgh, on the 11th of September, 1814."

"To mark the spot where the remains of a gallant officer and sincere friend were honorably interred, this stone has been erected by his affectionate sister-in-law, Mary Downie, 1851."

LIFE OF COMMODORE MACDONOUGH

"Thomas Macdonough was born in the county of New Castle, Delaware, on the 23d of December, 1783. His father was a physician and a major in the Continental army. Thomas entered the navy as midshipman in 1798. He was with Decatur in the Mediterranean, where he behaved with great gallantry, especially in the affair of the Philadelphia. His spirit was shown in the harbor of Gibraltar on one occasion. He was then first lieutenant of the Siren. Near her lay an American merchant brig. A boat from a British man-of-war went alongside of her, and its crew seized a seaman who was claimed as a British subject. Macdonough saw it. His commander was absent. He instantly armed and manned his gig and gave chase. He overhauled the boat under the guns of the British frigate, released him, and took him back to the merchant vessel. The British captain, in great rage, appeared on the Siren, and inquired of Macdonough how he dared to take a man from his boat. 'He was under the protection of my country's flag, and it was my duty,' was the reply. With warm oaths the captain swore he would lay his frigate alongside and sink the Siren. 'While she swims you shall not have the man!' said Macdonough. 'You'll repent of your rashness young man,' rejoined the Englishman. 'Suppose I had been in that boat, would you have dared to commit such an act!' 'I should have made the attempt sir!' 'What! would you interfere if I were to impress men fron that brig?' 'You have only to try it, sir,' was Macdonough's cool reply. He did not try it.

"Macdonough was sent to Lake Champlain when the war of 1812 broke out. There he won unfading laurels, as we find recorded in the text. From the close of the war his health gave way, yet he lived for more than ten years with the tooth of consumption undermining the citadel of his life.

In personal appearance Commodore Macdonough was tall, dignified and commanding. His features were regular and pleasing. His hair and complexion were light and his eyes were blue, but he had a firm and steady look. His early country training gave him an active, vigorous frame.

Macdonough as a commanding officer always had the respect and love of the officers and men under him. In 1809 when he was ordered from command of the U. S. frigate "Essex" to take charge of the gun-boats in Connecticut and Long Island, the crew of the "Essex" signed and presented him with a letter expressing their

"heartfelt sorrow". In 1820, after he became famous as the hero of Lake Champlain, the crew of the "Guerriere" presented him with a handsome sword as a token of their appreciation of his efforts to promote the "comfort and happiness of his men." These incidents are interesting as showing some of his distinguishing traits. They also tend to show that fame did not change his nature in the slightest.

Macdonough was married December 12, 1812, in Middletown, Connecticut, to Lucy Ann Shaler, daughter of Nathaniel and Lucretia Ann (Denning) Shaler of Middletown.

Ten children were born to Commodore and Mrs. Macdonough, five of whom died young.

Commodore Macdonough died of pulmonary consumption on the 10th of November, 1825, on board the merchant brig "Edwin," when about six hundred miles east of New York while he was on his way home from Gibraltar, where he had been bravely battling against the disease he had contracted during his years of toil, trouble and worry on Lake Champlain. He was only 41 years of age.

Thomas Macdonough gave his life for his country.

He was buried at Middletown, Connecticut, beside his devoted wife, in the soil he loved, fought and died for. A single monument marks the two graves and bears these inscriptions:—

SACRED

TO THE MEMORY OF

COM. THOMAS MACDONOUGH

OF THE U. S. NAVY

He was born in the state of Delaware Dec. 1783, & died at sea of pulmonary consumption while on his return from the command of the American Squadron in the Mediterranean on the 10 Nov. 1825. He was distinguished in the world as the Hero of Lake Champlain; in the Church of Christ as a faithful, zealous and consistent Christian; in the community where he resided when absent from professional duties, as an amiable, upright and valuable citizen.

SACRED

TO THE MEMORY OF

MRS. LUCY ANN

WIFE OF

COM. THOMAS MACDONOUGH

AND DAUGHTER OF

NATHANIEL & LUCY ANN SHALER.

The richest gifts of Nature and of Grace adorned her mind & heart, & at her death Genius, Friendship & Piety mourned their common loss.
She preceded her husband to the realms of Glory only a few short months, having departed this life Aug. 9, 1825, Ae. 35.

They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death they were undivided.

Monument erected by his family in memory of Commodore Thomas Macdonough, in the cemetery at Middletown, Conn.

CHAPTER III

ADMIRAL MAHAN'S VIEWS

Speaking of the progress of the war during the season of 1814, Admiral Mahan in his work "Sea Power in its Relations to the War of 1812," says:

"Except at Baltimore and New Orleans — mere defensive successes — nothing but calamity befell the American arms. To the battle of Lake Champlain it was owing that the British occupancy of United States soil at the end of the year was such that the Duke of Wellington advised that no claim for territorial cession could be considered to exist, and that the basis of *uti possidetis*, upon which it was proposed to treat, was untenable. The earnestness of the government, however, in seeking the changes specified, is indicated by the proposition seriously made to the Duke to take the command in America."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"By Macdonough's report, the action had lasted two hours and twenty minutes, without intermission. Few combats have been more resolutely contested. * * * There was reason for obstinacy, additional to the natural resolution of the parties engaged. The Battle of Lake Champlain, more nearly than any other incident of the War of 1812, merits the epithet 'decisive.' The moment the issue was known, Prevost retreated into Canada; entirely properly as indicated by the Duke of Wellington's words before and after.

"The war was practically ended by Prevost's retreat. What remained was purely episodical in character, and should be so regarded."

* * * * * * * * * * * * *

"The Commissioners who represented Great Britain in the negotiations looking toward the Treaty of Peace, stated the demands of their Government in a note dated August 19, 1814. They were framed on lines which showed consciousness of mastery.

"1. The question of abandoning the practice of impressment would not be so much as entertained. They would not even discuss it.

"2. Their position with regard to irregular blockades was equally decisive.

"3. As to compensation for seizures under the Orders in Council, the instructions of the British Government read:

"'You cannot be too peremptory in discouraging, at the outset the smallest expectation of any restitution of captures made under the Orders in Council.'"

And Admiral Mahan says on page 416 of Vol. 2 of his history:

"Military and naval weakness combined with the changed con-

ditions (Napoleon's defeat) in Europe, made the United States powerless when thus confronted with refusal."

The British commissioners, moreover, demanded suitable arrangements for the establishment of the communities of Indians as a sovereign state and a rectification of the Canadian frontier by such a cession of the northern part of Maine as would establish a direct communication between Quebec and Halifax.

"If," the Earl of Liverpool, Prime Minister of England wrote on September 2, 1814, to Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary, "our campaign in Canada should be as successful as our military preparations would lead us to expect; if our commander does his duty, I am persuaded we shall have acquired by our arms every point on the Canadian frontier, which we ought to insist upon keeping."

There were frequent interchanges between the representatives of the two nations during September, 1814.

On September 27, 1814, the accounts of the capture of Washington and the burning of the capitol were published in London. This gave encouragement to the already confident Britishers. They were very sanguine about future operations. First, they were to occupy Rhode Island. Then they were to proceed southward, destroy Baltimore, occupy several important points on the cost of Georgia and the Carolinas, take Mobile and wind up by capturing New Orleans.

There was a plan to send very large re-enforcements to America; so numerous, in fact that Lord Hill, Wellington's second in the Peninsula, had been designated for the command.

Meanwhile on October 21st, just forty days after it occurred, the news of Macdonough's smashing victory at Plattsburgh reached London. That changed the situation completely. "Had it not been for this unfortunate adventure on Lake Champlain," wrote Lord Bathurst who was acting foreign secretary in the absence of Castlereagh, "I really believe we should have signed a peace by the end of this month. This will put the enemy in spirits. The campaign will end by our doing much where we thought we should have done little, and doing nothing where we expected everything."

The command of the British army in America was offered to the Duke of Wellington.

Admiral Mahan says further:

"The offer, which was really a request, brought Wellington by a side wind into the American negotiations, and enabled him to give the government the weight of his name and authority in concluding a peace otherwise than on their 'just pretensions.' The war, he said, has been honorable to Great Britain; meaning doubtless that, considering the huge physical mass and the proximity of the United States, it was well done to have escaped injury, as it was militarily disgraceful to the American government, with such superiority, to have been so impotent. But, he continued, neither I nor any one else can achieve success, in the way of conquests, unless you have naval superiority on the lakes. That was what was needed; 'not a general, nor general officers and troops. Till that supe-

riority is acquired, it is impossible, according to my notion, to maintain an army in such a situation as to keep the enemy out of the whole frontier, much less to make any conquest from the enemy, which, with those superior means, might, with reasonable hopes of success, be undertaken. * * * The question is, whether we can obtain this naval superiority on the lakes. If we cannot, I shall do you but little good in America; and I shall go there only to prove the truth of Prevost's defence, and to sign a peace which might as well be signed now.' This endorsed not only Prevost's retreat, but also the importance of Macdonough's victory. The Duke then added frankly that, in the state of the war, they had no right to demand any concession of territory."

Wellington's letter was dated November 18, 1814. Thus one of the greatest generals in the history of the world bore testimony to the decisive character of Macdonough's victory.

The Treaty of Ghent was signed about a month later, on Christmas eve, 1814. The war had renewed and reinstated the national feelings and character which the revolution had given.

"The people now have more general objects of attachment with which their pride and political opinions are connected," wrote Albert Gallatin in May, 1816, volume 1, page 700, "Writings of Gallatin." "They are more Americans; they feel and act as a nation; and I hope that the permanency of the Union is thereby better secured."

"Such, even at so early a date, could be seen to be the meaning of the War of 1812 in the progress of the national history. The people, born by war to independence, had by war again been transformed from childhood, absorbed in the visible objects immediately surrounding it, to youth with its dawning vision and opening enthusiasms. * * * They issued from the contest, battered by adversity, but through it at last fairly possessed by the conception of a national unity, which during days of material prosperity had struggled in vain against the predominance of immediate interests and local prepossessions."

Photo by Miss Sarah Weaver, Plattsburgh, N. Y.

Scene of Macdonough's victory on Lake Champlain-- Green Mountains of Vermont in distance

CHAPTER IV

STORY OF BATTLE BY PARTICIPANTS

In the course of his letter to Secretary of the Navy Jones, Commodore Macdonough says:

"For several days the enemy were on their way to Plattsburgh by land and water, and it being well understood that an attack would be made at the same time by their land and naval forces, I determined to await at anchor the approach of the latter.

"At eight A. M. the lookout boat announced the approach of the enemy. At nine he anchored in a line ahead at about 300 yards distance from my line, his ship opposed to the Saratoga, his brig to the Eagle (Robert Henley) his galleys, 13 in number to the schooner, sloop and the division of our galleys, one of the sloops assisting their ship and brig, the other assisting their galleys. Our remaining galleys with the Saratoga and Eagle, in this situation the whole force on both sides became engaged, the Saratoga suffering much from the heavy fire of the Confiance. I could perceive at the same time, however, that our fire was very destructive to her. The Ticonderoga, Lt. Commt. Cassin, gallantly sustained her full share of the action. At ½ 10 the Eagle, not being able to bring her guns to bear, cut her cable and anchored in a more eligible position between my ship and the Ticonderoga, which she very much annoyed the enemy but unfortunately leaving me exposed to a galling fire from the enemy's brig. Our guns on the starboard side being nearly all dismounted are not manageable, a stern anchor was let go, the bower cable cut and the ship winded with a fresh broadside on the enemy's ship, which soon after surrendered. Our broadside was then sprung to bear on the brig, which surrendered in about 15 minutes after.

"The sloop that was opposed to the Eagle had struck some time before and drifted down the line, the sloop which was with their galleys having struck also. Three of their galleys are said to be sunk; the others pulled off. Our galleys were about obeying with alacrity the signal to follow them when all the vessels were reported to me to be in a sinking state. It then became necessary to annul the signal to the galleys and order their men to the pumps. I could only look at the enemy's galleys going off in a shattered condition, for there was not a mast in either squadron that could stand to make sail on; the lower rigging, being nearly all shot away, hung down as though it had been just placed over the mast heads.

"The Saratoga had 55 round shot in her hull; the Confiance 105. The enemy's shot passed principally just over our heads, as there

were not 20 whole hammocks in the nettings at the close of the action which lasted, without intermission, two hours and twenty minutes. * * * **The Saratoga was twice set on fire by hot shot from the enemy's ships."**

CAPTAIN HENLEY'S LETTER

Captain Henley in his letter to Secretary Jones says:

"We were anchored in the harbor of Plattsburgh in a line north and south, at about the distance of 100 yards, the Eagle north, the Saratoga in the center, and the Ticonderoga south. The enemy approached in a line abreast, having a favorable wind that enabled them to choose their position. The enemy's brig took a station off the starboard bow of the Eagle at about 1 mile distance, the ship about one point abaft our beam, and the sloop Linnet, of 11 guns, made an effort to obtain a raking position under our stern. Perceiving her intentions, however, I ordered a broadside to be fired into her, which caused her to strike her colors. As soon as the enemy approached within point blank distance, this brig commenced a most destructive fire upon their ship and continued to direct her whole broadside, excluding the 18 pounders forward, which were occasionally fired at the brig, who relieved her position as occasion required, and kept up a raking and most destructive fire upon this vessel.

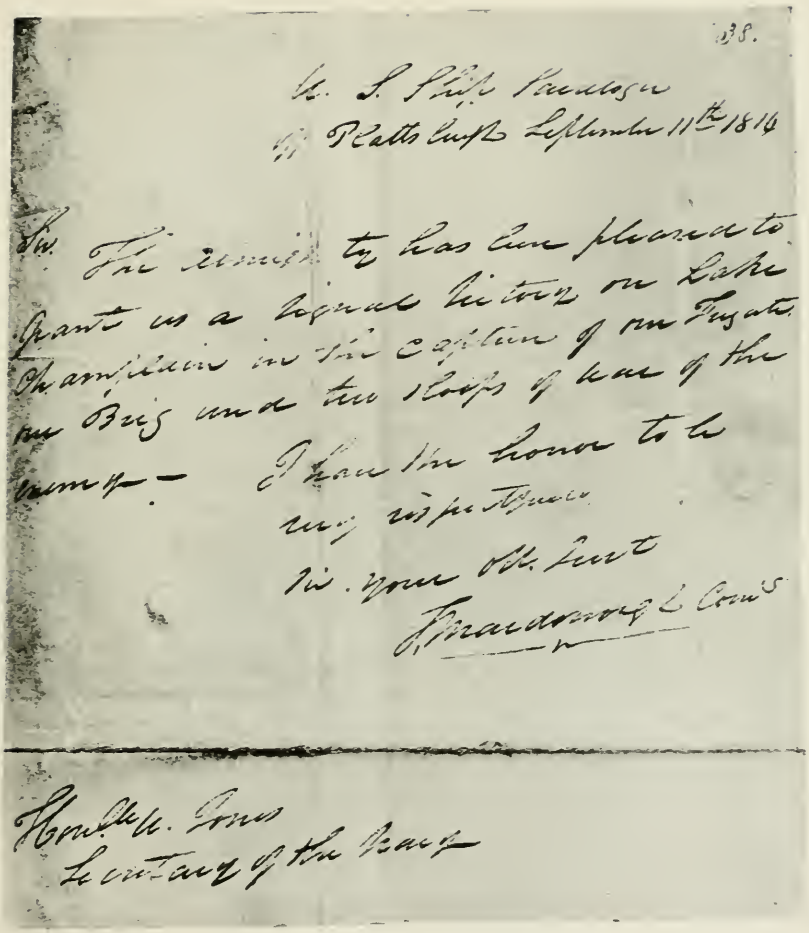
"I was confident that it was of the greatest importance to endeavor first to carry the enemy's ship to insure us of success. For a great length of time after the action commenced the enemy's ship leveled her whole force upon the Eagle, dealing out destruction.

"After having sustained the severest of the action for the space of one hour, having my springs shot away and many of the starboard guns disabled, it was out of my power to bring a gun to bear upon the ship or brig. Consequently I ordered the cable cut and cast the brig, taking an advantageous position a little south of the Saratoga, bringing my larboard broadside to bear upon the ship which was very shortly obligated to haul down her colors. Our fire was then directed to the brig; under the space of eight minutes she struck and the victory terminated in our favor. We then turned our attention to the galleys, some of which, it is believed, sunk, and the remainder made their escape. The Eagle was in too shattered a condition to pursue them."

CAPTAIN PRING'S REPORT

Captain Pring's letter to Commander-in-Chief Yeo contains the following:

"The fleet came up on the 3d inst., but for want of stores for the equipment of the guns, could not move forward until the 11th. At daybreak we weighed, and at 7 were in full view of the enemy's fleet, consisting of a ship, brig, schooner, and one sloop, moored in line abreast of their encampment, with a division of five gunboats on each flank. At forty minutes past seven, after the officers commanding vessels and the flotilla had received their final instruc-



Facsimile of Macdonough's' dispatch to the Secretary of the Navy announcing the victory over the British Squadron on Lake Champlain, September 11, 1814.

tions as to the plan of attack, we made sail in order of battle. Captain Downie had determined on laying his ship athwart-hawse of the enemy's, directing Lieutenant McGhee of the Chub to support me in the Linnet in engaging the brig to the right, and Lieutenant Hicks of the Finch, with the flotilla of gunboats, to attack the schooner and sloop on the left of the enemy's line.

"At 8 o'clock the enemy's gunboats and smaller vessels commenced a heavy and galling fire on our line. At 10 minutes after 8 the Confiance, having two anchors shot away from her larboard bow, and the wind baffling, was obliged to anchor (though not in the situation proposed) within two cables length of her adversary. The Linnet and Chub soon afterwards took their allotted stations, something short of that distance, when the crews on both sides cheered and commenced a spirited and close action. A short time, however, deprived me of the valuable services of Lieutenant McGhee, who, from having his cables, bowsprit and mainboom shot away, drifted within the enemy's line and was obliged to surrender.

"From the light airs and smoothness of the water, the fire on each side proved very destructive from the commencement of the engagement, and, with the exception of the brig, that of the enemy appeared united against the Confiance. After two hours' severe conflict with our opponent she cut her cable, run down and took shelter between the ship and the schooner, which enabled us to direct our fire against the division of the enemy's gunboats and ship, which had so long annoyed us during our close engagement with the brig without any return on our part. At this time the fire of the enemy's ship slackened considerably, having several of her guns dismounted, when she cut her cable and winded her larboard broadside to bear on the Confiance, who in vain endeavored to effect the same operation. At 33 minutes past 10, I was much distressed to observe that the Confiance struck her colors. The whole attention of the enemy's force then became directed towards the Linnet. The shattered and disabled state of the masts, sails, riggings, and yards precluded the most distant hope of being able to effect an escape by cutting the cable. The result of doing so must in a few minutes have been her drifting alongside the enemy's vessels, close under her lee; but in the hope the flotilla of gunboats, who had abandoned the object assigned them, would perceive our wants and come to our assistance, which would afford a reasonable prospect of being towed clear, I determined to resist the then destructive cannonading of the whole of the enemy's fleet, and at the same time dispatched Lieut. H. Drew, to ascertain the state of the Confiance. At 45 minutes after 10, I was apprised of the irreparable loss she had sustained by the death of her brave commander (whose merits it would be presumptuous in me to extol), as well as the great slaughter which had taken place on board, *and observing the maneuvers of the flotilla that I could enjoy no further expectations of relief*, the situation of my gallant comrades, who had so nobly fought and even now fast falling by my side, demanded the surrender of his Majesty's brig entrusted to my command, to prevent a useless waste of valuable lives, and, at the request of the surviving officers and men, I gave the painful orders for the colors to be struck.

"Lieutenant Hicks of the Finch had the mortification to strike on a reef of rocks to the eastward of Crab Island about *the middle of the engagement*, which prevented his rendering that assistance to the squadron that might, from an officer of such ability, have been expected.

* * * "It now becomes the most pleasing part of my duty to notice to you the determined skill and bravery of the officers and men in this unequal contest; but it grieves me to state that the loss sustained in maintaining it has been so great; that of the enemy I understand, amounts to something more than the same number.

"I have much satisfaction in making you acquainted with the humane treatment the wounded have received from Commodore Macdonough. They were immediately removed to his own hospital on Crab Island, and were furnished with every requisite. His generous and polite attention, also, to myself, officers and men, will ever hereafter be gratefully remembered."

The reverse of the gold medal presented by Congress to Commodore Macdonough.

CHAPTER V

THE GOOD WORK OF THE MILITIA AND VOLUNTEERS

No account of the battle of Plattsburgh would be complete, without the description of the gallant services of the militia and volunteers, as narrated by their immediate commanding officer, General Mooers, and splendidly confirmed by General Macomb of the regular troops. It is calculated to cause the bosom to swell with pride in American citizenship to read these candid and authentic accounts of eye witnesses, of the patriotism and gallantry of the citizen soldiers of those days.

When General Mooers issued his call for the militia to turn out, the whole country-side rose *en masse*, and hastened to the scene of their country's peril.

These untrained yeomen, according to the evidence of eye witnesses, rose to feats of gallantry and daring which have never been excelled in the history of this or any other country.

Boys of under eighteen formed companies, and the exploits of "Aiken's volunteers" form a most heroic chapter in the history of the War of 1812.

The captain of one company of "exempts" from Essex county, Jonathan Lynde, was a revolutionary veteran. The congressman from this district, Hon. Benjamin Pond, marched as a private in the ranks of the militia company from the town of Schroon, Essex county.

Major-General Benjamin Mooers who was in command of the militia during the battle, was a veteran officer of the revolution, and was well qualified to write of the conduct of his own men in battle.

In his report to Governor Tompkins, dated September 16, 1814, regarding the part taken by the men in the battle, he states:

"On the first appearance of the enemy I issued an order to call out the militia of Clinton and Essex, and soon after of my whole division.

Their promptness in turning out both in Clinton and Essex entitled both officers and privates with few exceptions to the thanks and gratitude of their country, as was likewise the case in every other county and district which has been called upon. A general spirit of active patriotism seems to have prevailed throughout."

"From old man to youth scarcely able to bear arms they came pouring to our assistance by thousands."

Regarding the conduct of his men in the action on September 6, he writes:

"The most of my troops were but little in his (Major Wool's) rear. They soon formed a continued and smart fire upon the enemy as he advanced. Knowing the enemy to be in great force and as he advanced upon two roads we could have no prospect of stopping his career, but we continued to check and thwart his movements with considerable loss to the enemy and inconsiderable one to us. The militia retreated over the river Saranac and lined the south bank and disputed the passage of the river with spirit and success."

Again, regarding the conduct of his men in the action on the Salmon river road on the 11th, he writes:

"In disputing the passage of the river a sharp contest ensued. The militia under the command of Majors Sanford and Wadhams, two excellent officers, stood their ground during a number of well directed fires and until the enemy had effected the passage of the river and ascended the bank; when a retreat was ordered and affected in good order before a force evidently far superior, carefully improving every good position to continue our fire upon them until we approached the opening toward the village of Salmon river a distance of about two miles, where we had two field pieces planted under the direction of Lieutenant Sumpter of the U. S. Light Artillery, with that of the militia stopped the progress of the enemy and he soon began his retreat. We pursued in our turn."

Regarding the conduct of Major Wool, General Mooers writes Governor Tompkins:

"Too much praise cannot be given Maj'r Wool for his cool and intrepid conduct and to the officers and men under him." (in the action on September 6th)

And again: "The mead of praise is due to Maj'r Wool in preference to any officer of the regular officers in the affair of the 6th. Col. Apling was about three quarters of a mile in advance of the village as was also Capt. Sproul. I have no doubt they did their duty. They were at a considerable distance on our right principally on another road nor did I consider them under my command."

From Plattsburgh under date of November 8, 1814, General Mooers writes further to Governor Tompkins regarding Major Wool as follows:

"In General Macomb's official report to the Secretary of War relative to the attack on this place September last, Major Wool has not had that mention of his brave and gallant conduct that he is justly entitled to.

Maj'r Wool joined me about 6 o'clock in the morning of the 6th of Septem'r about 7 miles in advance of the forts on the Beekmantown road. Soon after the action commenced in which Major Wool took a very active and decisive part and kept his command in good order under a constant and continual fighting, until we retreated into the village and by his exertions and those under his command and the militia, that day there was more of the enemy killed and wounded than at any other time, which severe check upon the enemy upon his first advance was perhaps the means of saving this place. The conduct of Major Wool was under my observation, and from his meritorious conduct it would be pleasant to me that your

Excellency should report the same to the Secretary of War in hopes that he may be noticed by the President."

Governor Tompkins appears to have felt keenly the failure of the president to mention in his message to Congress the services of the New York militia at Plattsburgh, and on the Niagara frontier, as under date of October 3, 1814, in a personal letter to the Hon. Jonathan Fisk, member of Congress from New York, he writes:

"I have noticed with considerable regret the pointed neglect of Gen'l Peter B. Porter & his gallant volunteers in the President's message to Congress." * * *

"In noticing the affair at Plattsburgh too, the President seems carefully to have avoided the mention of New York or Vermont Militia. At Baltimore where all would have distinguished themselves had not the enemy retired unmolested and safely on board without even being observed, the praises of the militia are trumpetted forth. But it is said that at Plattsburgh the enemy was gallantly repulsed by a force, a part only of which was regulars. Now it is well known that one column of the British army took the Beekmantown road & that this column was opposed both in its advance & in its retreat by Militia alone, not a regular being opposed to that column. The regulars had their strong works to retire to, & did retire to them upon the advance of the other column of the Army; whilst the militia both in retreat & pursuit were exposed in the open field & suffered most, as will be seen by the ultimate return of killed & wounded of the New York & Vermont Militia & Volunteers. It may be said that Macdonough's victory caused the retreat of the British land force. Still that detracts from the praise due the regulars who were in the works, more than it does from that due the Militia; for the one was exposed to field attack, & pursued the enemy in his retreat, & the other was in strong works & did not pursue.

Now with the exception of Gen'l Brown, the mention of whom could not be avoided because he commanded the army not a New Yorker is praised or even mentioned, & with respect to Brown, even, the honor of the mention is greatly impaired by coupling subordinate officers with him. Nor is the patriotism, volunteers nor militia of the State mentioned, altho, at the time the President penned his message nearly thirty thousand of the yeomanry of this State were in the service of the United States, & without whom two of their armies would probably have been lost, & the metropolis of the State before this time have been in the possession of the enemy.

I am far from detracting from the services of the gallant Generals noticed by the President. It is of the injustice done to others by the omission of their names & services that I complain."

The late Dr. Austin W. Holden of Glens Falls, N. Y., author of the "History of the town of Queensbury," in his Centennial address said:

"The success of the American troops was due, in a great degree, to the boldness, daring and bravery of the militia, who, in the language of their opponents 'did not know enough to run,' and who, from

'the rent and bloody fragments of a signal defeat,' gathered the laurels of a signal victory."

In General Macomb's General Orders, dated Head-quarters, Plattsburgh, Sept. 14, 1814, he says: "At the same hour the fleets engaged, the enemy opened his batteries on our forts, throwing hundreds of shells, balls and rockets, and attempted at the same time to cross the Saranac at three different points to assault the works. At the upper ford he was met by the militia and volunteers, and after repeated attempts was driven back with considerable loss in killed, wounded and prisoners" * * * as soon as his retreat was discovered, the light troops, volunteers and militia, were in pursuit, and followed as far as Chazy, capturing several dragoons and soldiers, besides covering the escape of several hundreds of deserters who continue still to be coming in. A violent storm and continual fall of rain prevented the brave volunteers and militia from further pursuit.

Thus have the attempts of the invaders been frustrated by a regular force of only fifteen hundred men, a brave and active body of the militia of the State of New York under General Mooers, and volunteers of the respectable and patriotic citizens of Vermont, led by General Strong and other gentlemen of distinction. The whole not exceeding two thousand five hundred men.

The British forces being now either expelled or captured, the services of the volunteers and militia may be dispensed with.

General Macomb cannot however permit the militia of New York and volunteers of Vermont, to depart without carrying with them the high sense he entertains of their merits. The zeal with which they came forward in defence of their country, when the signal of danger was given by the general, reflects the highest lustre on their patriotism and spirits. Their conduct in the field has corresponded with the laudable motives which led them into it. They have deserved the esteem of their fellow citizens, and the warm approbation of their commanders. They have now exemplified how speedily American citizens can be prepared to meet the enemies of their country. In testifying his sense of the merits of the troops, the general cannot but express his sorrow and regrets, for the loss of some brave and virtuous citizens, and for those who have been wounded. The loss no doubt will be keenly felt by their friends and countrymen, but at the time will be borne with that fortitude and resignation which become good citizens and good Christians.

The affection of the general will accompany his brave associates in arms, wheresoever they may go, nor will anything give him more pleasure than opportunities of testifying to them individually, by actions as well as by words, the high regard he cherishes for them.

The general, in the name of the United States, thanks the volunteers and the militia for their distinguished services, and wishes them a happy return to their families and homes."

ALEX. MACOMB

CHAPTER VI

BUILDING MACDONOUGH'S FLEET AT VERGENNES

It was clear from the outbreak of the War of 1812 that the control of Lakes Erie, Ontario and Champlain was of prime importance.

Commodore Macdonough (at that time a Lieutenant) was, on September 28th, 1812, ordered to take "immediate command of the naval forces on Lake Champlain." Macdonough was in Portland, Maine, in command of a division of gun boats.

He left Portland October 5th. Among his papers is a bill for $75.00 for the use of a "horse and chaise from Portland to Burlington, Vt." He rode on horse back during part of the journey — a method of travel not relished by sailors. Macdonough arrived at Burlington on or about October 8th, 1812, and from there he crossed to Plattsburgh to confer with General Dearborn who was objecting very strongly to the appointment of an independent naval commander.

Macdonough went to Whitehall from Plattsburgh on October 13th and began at once with great vigor to fit out the two gunboats and the sloops "Hunter" and "Bull Dog" for service. The other three sloops were found to be too old to carry guns and they were retained by the War Department as transports.

Macdonough went into winter quarters at Shelburne early in December.

On December 12, 1812, he was married in Middletown, Connecticut, to Lucy Ann Shaler and took her back with him to spend the winter at Burlington, where he busied himself in putting his ships in a more efficient condition, training his men, etc.

Early in the summer of 1813, the sloops, "Growler" and "Eagle," formerly the "Hunter" and "Bull Dog," were captured near Isle Aux Noix by the British forces — Lieutenant Smith, in disobedience to Commodore Macdonough's explicit orders, having ventured too far across the Canadian boundary line.

This disaster sadly crippled Macdonough's little fleet and gave the British the immediate control of the Lake.

Toward the end of June, 1813, Macdonough received the following order:

SECRETARY OF THE NAVY TO MACDONOUGH

"Navy Department, June 17, 1813.

Sir: I have received your letter of the 4th instant announcing the unfortunate disaster and loss of the two sloops under the command of Lieutenant Smith as it would appear by the imprudence of that officer, of which, however, you will inquire into and report to me the result.

It now only remains to regain by every possible exertion the ascendency which we have lost, for which purpose you are authorized to purchase, arm and equip in

an effective manner two of the best sloops or other vessels to be procured on the lake. I have written to Commodore Bainbridge, commandant of the navy yard at Charlestown, Mass., to send on to you 20 18-pounder carronades, if to be procured, and you are authorized to make such requisitions as the service may require either on John Bullus Esq., Navy Agent, New York, and if not to be had there, upon Mr. Binney, the N. Agent at Boston, to whom, when you write, you will quote this authority.

You are to understand that upon no account are you to suffer the enemy to gain the ascendency on Lake Champlain, and as you have now unlimited authority to procure the necessary resources of men, materials and munitions for that purpose, I rely upon your efficient and prudent use of the authority vested in you.

General Hampton, an officer of talent and energy, is appointed to the military command on Lake Champlain, with whom you will heartily co-operate in every measure calculated to promote the objects of the war. But you are to observe that the naval command is exclusively vested in you and for which you are held responsible. General Hampton will afford you every assistance in the quartermaster's department with mechanics, laborers, etc., and if you deem it necessary to construct 4 or 5 barges of 50 or 60 feet long to carry a 12 or 18-pounder carronade, you are at liberty to do so.

I shall order a purser to your station immediately.

I am very respectfully yours, etc.,
W. Jones."

On July 24, 1813, Lieutenant Macdonough was promoted to the rank of Master Commandant, and was now very generally given the title of Commodore, an unusual honor for a man of 29.

On the 31st of July, 1813, British troops to the number of 1,000 under command of Lieutenant Murray emboldened by their success in capturing two of our vessels proceeded to Plattsburgh in 3 gunboats and about 40 batteaux, where they burned a large amount of property. They also visited Burlington and other points on the lake destroying property, capturing merchant vessels and harassing the people in every possible way.

Perry won his fight at Put-in-Bay, Lake Erie on September 10, 1813.

Naval and military activity in the lake region had so far been confined principally to the great lakes.

Lake Champlain was now to become the scene of important developments, the theatre of the greatest event of the War — the Battle of Plattsburgh,— one of the turning points in the history of our country.

Macdonough had gone into winter quarters at Vergennes, Vt., having chosen that place after careful consideration. Vergennes was situated at the head of navigation on Otter Creek, seven miles from its mouth, with a road leading directly to Burlington 22 miles north,— another leading to Boston about 225 miles to the southeast,— and one to the south leading to Troy and New York.

Among the industries of Vergennes were a blast furnace, an air furnace, eight forges, a rolling mill and a wire factory, besides grist, saw and fulling mills.

Vergennes was protected by the troops at Burlington on the north; Dead Creek and its contiguous marshes opposed an effectual barrier on the west should the enemy attempt to land a force south of the mouth of Otter Creek; and the narrowness and crookedness of the latter stream precluded the possibility of an attack by water. Thus protected, Macdonough could build and fit out his vessels with reasonable certainty of not being molested.

Under date of January 28th, 1814, he was authorized and directed to build about fifteen gunboats, or a ship, or a ship and three or four gunboats, as he thought best. In those days before the advent of the railroad, the telegraph, the telephone or the cable and when the steamboat was generally looked upon as an expensive and useless plaything, it was necessary to allow commanders of naval or military forces the widest discretion.

"The object," wrote the Secretary of the Navy to Macdonough, "is to leave no doubt of your commanding the lake and the waters connected, and that in due time. You are therefore authorized to employ such means and workmen as shall render its accomplishment certain."

As early as February 8th intelligence reached Vergennes that the British were building at Isle aux Noix a vessel to carry about twenty guns; also several smaller vessels.

BUILDING THE FLEET

Work at Vergennes went forward therefore with renewed energy. Mr. Browne, the shipbuilder sent up from New York City by the Navy Department, had guaranteed to launch a ship of 24 guns in sixty days. He did even better. On March 2nd the "Saratoga's" timbers were standing in the forest; on the 7th her keel was laid; and on the 11th of April she took the water — FORTY DAYS FROM THE LIVING TREE TO THE MAN OF WAR!

Peter Sailly, Collector of Customs of Plattsburgh, who was keeping track of the movements of the British fleet wrote Commodore Macdonough under date of April 6th, 1814, as follows:

"We are apprehensive that they will pay us a visit in a few days and send us some of their heavy balls unless they go first to the mouth of Otter Creek and block you in. They may take every sloop and other suitable boats on this lake, load them with stones and sink them at the proper place up the river and keep you where you are. Whether the two points of land at or near the mouth of that river can be fortified by strong batteries and keep them off, you best know. I think the whole of the mercantile shipping and transports ought to be kept together at some protected place until you can contest the mastery of this lake. No batteries have been erected nor can now at Rouses Point nor nowhere to impede the sailing of our enemy's floating force."

Governor Chittenden of Vermont was of great assistance to Macdonough, and the militia and yeomanry of Vermont responded nobly to the Governor's call for volunteers in the way Vermonters always have responded whenever their country was in peril.

Macdonough erected batteries at the mouth of Otter Creek and fortified the place (afterwards called Fort Cassin). On May 14th the British fleet made an attack on Fort Cassin, hoping to capture it, blockade the creek and thus prevent Macdonough's fleet from getting out to the lake. The British were driven off.

The work of completing the vessels was rushed with all possible speed but there were aggravating delays in the arrival of articles

The city of Vergennes, Vt., as it looks today. Head of Navigation on Otter creek, seven miles above its mouth

Scene on Otter creek about half way from Vergennes to mouth

Mouth of Otter creek, near Fort Cassin, where British attempted a blockade

necessary to fit the vessels out. When the Saratoga, Macdonough's flagship, was launched neither her guns, anchors, cables nor rigging had been received. The roads were so bad that the heavy loading of transport wagons was impossible. It took eighty teams to carry one consignment of naval stores from Troy to Vergennes and then three large cables were left behind. A large quantity of shot were brought from Boston and one thousand 32-pound balls were cast at Vergennes.

Difficult as it was to equip the squadron, it was an even greater task to man it. Supplies could be had by waiting long enough, but it seemed almost impossible to secure enough seamen. Although recruiting offices were opened in New York and Boston and every other available source drawn upon, on May 5th, the squadron was still far short of an effective working force.

On May 26th, 1814, the Saratoga, Ticonderoga, Preble and six gunboats sailed out of Otter Creek, followed sometime after by the President, Montgomery and four more gunboats. Three days later the squadron came to anchor off Plattsburgh, from which place Macdonough made the following report:

MACDONOUGH TO SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

"U. S. Ship Saratoga at Anchor off
Plattsburgh, May 29, 1814.

Sir: I have the honor to inform you that I arrived off here to-day, and having been informed that the enemy had retired to the Isle aux Noix, the squadron was brought to an anchor. There is now a free communication between all parts of this lake and at present there are no doubts of this communication being interrupted by the enemy.

I find the Saratoga a fine ship. She sails and works well. She is a ship between the Pike and the Madison on Lake Ontario. The schooner is also a fine vessel and bears her metal full as well as was expected. The galleys are also remarkably fine vessels. I have not yet my complement of men, but as fast as they come on I shall relieve the soldiers whom I have on board by them. I have made it known to Maj. Gen. Izard that the squadron is ready for service.

I have the honor to be very respectfully your ob. servant.

T. Macdonough,

Hon. Willm Jones,
Secretary of the Navy."

The British had heard before this of Macdonough's big 26-gun flagship "Saratoga,"— 734 tons. They at once set to work at Isle aux Noix building a 37-gun vessel named the "Confiance" 1,200 tons, and "the Commissary General and Quartermaster General, in order to expedite the new frigate were directed to suspend every other branch of the public service which interfered with its equipment." The British were building a fleet with which they felt certain they could sweep Macdonough from Lake Champlain.

In this connection it is interesting to note that the "Bon Homme Richard" the worn out French East Indiaman in which John Paul Jones won undying fame off Flamborough Head on the high seas was a ship of only about 950 tons, while the "Serapis" the British vessel which Jones captured in that same desperate encounter in the gathering dusk on September 23rd, 1779, was a vessel of approximately 850 tons. These ocean-going vessels were only slightly larger than Macdonough's flagship the "Saratoga" and not nearly so large as Commodore Downie's flagship the "Confiance." In fact the famous ships "Constitution" and "Guerriere" were only of 1500 and 1300 tons respectively. The "Saratoga" was nearly twice as large and the "Confiance" nearly three times as large as Perry's flagship, "Niagara," which was a vessel of only 480 tons.

Macdonough's fleet on Lake Champlain had a total tonnage of 2,244 tons as compared with the tonnage of 1,671 tons of Perry's Squadron on Lake Erie. Macdonough had 882 men and 86 guns while Perry on Lake Erie had only 512 men and 54 guns.

On the British side the comparison is even more striking. Commodore Downie's British fleet went into the Battle of Plattsburgh with a tonnage of 2402 tons, with 937 men and 92 guns. Barclay's fleet which opposed Perry at Put-in-Bay had 1,460 tons, 440 men and 63 guns. It will be seen, therefore, that the Battle of Plattsburgh, although fought on a comparatively small fresh water lake was a battle of first-rate importance from every view-point.

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE BATTLE

Thus the summer days of 1814 went by.

A most interesting description of the life on board Macdonough's fleet at this time was written by Joseph H. Dulles of Philadelphia who was then a student at Yale College. The Fall vacation of his closing term gave him an opportunity to make a pleasure trip through Lake George and Lake Champlain. Bearing in mind President Timothy Dwight's injunction — "Young gentlemen, in planning your journey, you will remember to make allowance for Sabbaths and rainy days" — he arranged to spend a Sunday at Plattsburgh. A friend in Burlington had given him a letter of introduction to Macdonough.

"My letter being delivered to the commander of the squadron," Mr. Dulles writes, "I received an invitation to dine and spend the day on board the flagship on the following Sunday. That was the 4th of September, the day week before the battle of Lake Champlain. At the appointed hour the Commodore's gig was ready at the landing, and I found a companion for the trip, the chaplain of the army stationed at this military post, but who, for obvious reasons, preferred to exercise his function on board the ship rather than among the soldiers. At noon, divine services were performed, the commander and officers being seated on the quarter-deck, the chaplain at the capstan, and the crew, about 300 men, occupied the room from midships to the bow. All was orderly, and not only the officers, but the crew, showed such marked attention that I expressed my

surprise to the Commodore. He replied, 'The men do behave well, but you must not be deceived by an inference that it is from pious feelings altogether,' adding, with a smile, 'there are other considerations controlling their conduct.'

"I passed some time with the younger officers, nearer my own age, and was struck with the palpable evidence of the one pervading spirit of a master mind that ruled in that mass of volatile young men and the rude, man-of-war sailors. The cock, so celebrated in the history of the battle for flying up to the yard-arm and crowing lustily throughout the engagement, attracted my attention while he paraded the deck. To my simple question addressed to a little group of midshipmen, 'What do you think about the coming battle?' a young fellow replied, very modestly, 'We know the British force to be superior to ours, but we will do our duty.' There was at that fearful moment a calm, resolute composure in every word and on every face that assured me that all would be well."

"Retiring to the cabin, Commodore Macdonough conversed with singular simplicity and with the dignity of a Christian gentleman on whose shoulders rested the weightiest responsibility that bore on any man in that period of our history. The conflict, inevitably to occur within a few days, was to decide the most important issues of the war. With the destruction of the American squadron on Lake Champlain, the British army was sure to make its way unobstructed to Albany, possibly to New York, and probably dictate the terms of an ignominious peace. That army, composed of 14,000 picked soldiers, fresh from victories in Spain and at Waterloo, commanded by a picked officer, the governor-general of Canada, was on its march southward, supporting and being supported by the naval force on the lake. Macdonough was then 31 years of age, but seemingly several years younger, of a light and agile frame, easy and graceful in his manners, with an expressive countenance, remarkably placid. * * * The confidence of his officers and men in him was unbounded, and such as great leaders only can secure. While awaiting the dinner hour he entered freely into conversation on religious services in the navy, and, among other things, remarked that he regarded the Epistle of St. James as peculiarly adapted to the sailors' mind; the illustrations drawn from sea life — such as 'He that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind,' and 'Behold the ships, though so great, are turned about with a very small helm'— are very striking, and then the plain and forcible manner in which the ordinary duties of life are taught, and the sins of men are specified and condemned, are easily comprehended, even by men as little instructed as seamen usually are. My youthful ears were all attention to such language and in such associations."

"At dinner a blessing, being invited, was offered by the chaplain, and it appeared to be no unusual thing. A considerable number of the officers attached to the other vessels were present by invitation, as I was told, given in rotation. In the midst of the meal the Commodore, calling attention, said, 'Gentlemen, I mean the sailor gentlemen, I am just informed by the commander of the army

that the signs of advance by the British forces will be signalled by two guns, and you will act accordingly.' He retired from the table early and the conversation became more unrestrained, and when one of the lieutenants enforced some remark with an oath, an officer sitting near him immediately exclaimed, 'Sir, I am astonished at your using such language. You know you would not do it if the Commodore was present.' There was a dead pause, and a seeming acquiescence in the propriety of the rebuke, severe as it was. At the close of the day the strangers were brought on shore and the men of the squadron left in hourly expectation of a battle."

On the following Sunday the battle was fought and won by the brave Macdonough and his gallant men,— the last battle ever fought between fleets of English-speaking nations.

Photo by Brush, Plattsburgh, N. Y.

Tablet on United States Post Office Building, Plattsburgh, N. Y.

CHAPTER VII

PLANS FOR CELEBRATION AT PLATTSBURGH

The Plattsburgh Centenary Commission have fixed September 6th to 11th, 1914 as the dates for the celebration at Plattsburgh, N. Y., of the one hundredth anniversary of the Battle of Plattsburgh.

On Sunday, September 6th appropriate religious ceremonies will be held in all the churches in Plattsburgh and vicinity and at the Catholic Summer School of America at Cliff Haven, two miles south of Plattsburgh. Prominent dignitaries of different denominations are expected to take part in these services.

Monday, September 7th (Labor Day) will be devoted to ceremonies appropriate to Labor Day.

Tuesday, September 8th, there will be appropriate ceremonies at Vergennes, Vt., commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of the building of Macdonough's fleet at that place.

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, September 9th, 10th and 11th will be devoted to the giving of an historical pageant, and on Friday September 11th, exercises will be held in the afternoon. Many of the most distinguished men of the nation have been invited to speak on this occasion.

There will be parades on land and on the lake by civic and military organizations; band concerts and fire-works. A banquet is planned for one of the evenings of the week.

HOW TO GO TO PLATTSBURGH

The Quebec-Miami International Highway is now completed from Washington, D. C., to Montreal, P. Q., via Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Saratoga Springs, Lake George, Lake Champlain and Plattsburgh. Those who desire to make the trip by auto to Plattsburgh from as far south as Washington may now ride over a magnificent stone road. It is probable that the fine new section of the International Highway now being built between Richmond and Washington will be completed on or before September 1, 1914.

Many will wish to make the trip to Plattsburgh by motor-boat. The trip up the Hudson from New York to Albany (150 miles) and thence via Waterford and the Champlain canal to Whitehall (52 miles) and from Whitehall at the head of Lake Champlain down the lake to Plattsburgh (90 miles) makes a most delightful trip of 292 miles through a region rich in places of historic interest and of marvellous scenic beauty.

Those who would make the trip by motor-boat from the Great Lakes have a choice of three attractive routes: via Buffalo and the

Erie canal to Albany; via Oswego and the Oswego and Erie canals to Albany, or via the St. Lawrence river route to Montreal and Sorel and up the Sorel river and through the Chambly canal into Lake Champlain via the northern entrance.

Plattsburgh is on the Delaware & Hudson railroad about 75 miles south of Montreal and about 150 miles north of Albany. It is expected that special rates will be made for those wishing to attend the celebration at Plattsburgh in September, 1914.

The people of the Champlain valley are going ahead with their plans to aid in a fitting celebration of the centennial of this decisive battle in the same spirit in which their forefathers fought and won the battle—with a determination to merit the hearty approval of the entire nation.

Photo by Miss Sarah Weaver, Plattsburgh, N. Y.

Scene of Macdonough's victory near Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain looking from Cumberland Head southwesterly. Adirondack mountains in distance

CHAPTER VIII

A FITTING PERMANENT MEMORIAL

The crowning achievement of the War of 1812 was Macdonough's victory at Plattsburgh. Thereafter the supremacy of democracy and the progress of its ideals and purposes in our country were never again contested by any foreign power. Their influence, which has spread throughout the world, has become the leaven of progress everywhere in the struggle for human rights, and nations, at that time hostile to their existence, long since have come to recognize them as potent factors in their own national lives.

Thus we find warrant for the honor our nation and the State of New York are about to pay to the memory of this devout Christian gentleman,—this naval hero first distinguished at Tripoli, this zealous young patriot,—who on September 11, 1914, near Valcour, where the British had won the *first* battle between fleets of English-speaking nations, led an American fleet to victory in the *last* naval battle between English-speaking nations.

The State of New York, under Chapter 95, Laws of 1914, enacted April 3, 1914, has appropriated $125,000 towards the celebration and permanent memorial in commemoration of the victory at Plattsburgh, this being substantially the same amount appropriated in 1913 by New York State towards the celebration and permanent memorial in commemoration of the Perry victory on Lake Erie.

The same patriotic feeling that actuated the nation in celebrating and commemorating the victory of Perry at Put-in-Bay impels it in equally impressive manner to celebrate and by a fitting memorial to perpetuate the victory of Macdonough at Plattsburgh.

Due recognition and honor for events and men great in our nation's history attest and measure the greatness of the present. They supply inspiration and incentive for still nobler achievements.

No fitting expenditure can be deemed amiss which tends to stimulate patriotism and deep appreciation of worthy deeds which made possible the nation's existence, and gave nobility to its national life.

Many of the cuts used in this pamphlet were kindly loaned to the commission by Rodney Macdonough, grandson of the Commodore, and author of "Life of Commodore Thomas Macdonough, U. S. N."

Photo by Brush, Plattsburgh, N. Y.

Mouth of Saranac River looking out upon scene of Macdonough's victory, Plattsburgh, N. Y. Site of proposed permanent memorial on island at right of picture. Cumberland Head in distance