

being then off York, left a number of empty transports which he was conveying to Kingston for the conveyance of the siege-train to pursue their voyage alone, crossed the lake and anchored off the mouth of the Four Mile Creek on the evening of the 4th. De Rottenburg had already removed his headquarters to the left in hope of beginning the siege as soon as Yeo returned, but his chief engineer then declared that it would be impossible to drive the American Fleet out of the River and commence operations without martyrs. Two ten inch guns mounted on Brown's Point, he said would be sufficient.

"If the fleet should leave me," De Rottenburg wrote, "I cannot hold my position with so powerful a fleet in the river. If I cannot get heavily artillery, I cannot attempt anything with only six field-pieces and howitzers. I have now at the Twelve Mile Creek and York, over 500 sick."

By this time, nearly the whole of his Indians, except those from the Grand River, had returned to their homes, and desertion had again become alarmingly frequent among the regular troops. Two men of the 8th, four of the Canadian Voltigeurs and three of the 49th had deserted in a single day.

"We have changed our headquarters to the lake side," writes Mr. Ridout. "The encampment here is very beautiful, and is formed of the 8th and 104th and part of the 89th and 100th Regiments, consisting of 2,000 men. They lie upon the edge of the woods, having large clearings in front, and the main road crossing the camp by Mr. Addison's, where the General stays. Very few troops are left in St. Davids.....The Army is getting very sickly. There are more than 400 sick, and a great number of officers. York is considered the healthiest place for the hospitals. We cannot stand this daily diminution of strength ten days longer. Our fleet is just coming over from York - I suppose with De Watteville's Regiment. Four of the Glengarrys deserted yesterday and four American Dragoons deserted to us."

But great as the amount of sickness in the blockading force may appear, the ravages of disease were vastly more serious in the American camp. A large body of men had been practically shut up within it for three months. Their encampment was badly policed with heaps of rubbish and refuse were allowed to accumulate everywhere and a horrible stench rose from the sinks, to the neglect of which the surgeons ascribed much of the ill health of the troops. With the exception of a few hot days in the beginning of June, the whole of that month and the first ten days in July had been unusually wet and cool. Then a "severe and unrelenting drought set in," which lasted for almost two months. The village of Niagara intercepted the breeze from the lake, while the unbroken forest, stretching for many miles southward along the eastern bank, kept the wind away from those quarters. The pitiless midsummer heat beat down upon their camp until it glowed like a furnace.

"Thus having been wet for nearly a month," says Dr. Lovell, "our troops were exposed for six or seven weeks to intense heat during the day and at night, to a cold and chilly atmosphere, in consequence of the fog arising from the lake and river. The enemy's