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Historical Sketches of the Late War between the United States and Great

Britain at Washington and Baltimore---John Lewis Thomson, handwritten, Army Branch, National Archives of the United States. Published in limited edition by J. T. Vance, Baltimore, Md., 1816, from experiences of the author as a Captain in the Alexandria Eagle Artillery, Aug.-Sept. 1814

CHAPTER XXI.

Repeated Engagements, between the Gun-Boat Flotilla and the British Vessels in the Patuxent---Bladensburg---Capture of Washington---Of Alexandria---Death of Sir Peter Parker---Attack upon Baltimore---Death of General Ross, and repulse of his Army

The movements of the British blockading squadrons, on the eastern coast, during the summer of 1814, have already been traced, to the occupation of Eastport and Castine, in the beginning of September. In their operations along the shores of the Chesapeake bay, and the southern coast, they have not been followed beyond their attack upon Hampton and Ocracock, in the month of June. At that period, a flotilla, consisting of a cutter, 2 gun-boats, a galley, and 9 large barges, sailed from Baltimore, under commodore Barney, for the protection of the inlets and harbours in the several parts of the bay. On the 1st June, being at the mouth of the Patuxent, the commodore discovered 2 schooners, one of which carried 18 guns, and immediately gave chase. The schooners were joined, however, by a large ship, which despatched numbers of barges to their assistance, and the commodore, in danger of being cut off from the Potomac, signaled his flotilla to sail up the Patuxent. In that river he engaged the schooners and the barges, and after beating them off with hot shot, he anchored within 3 miles of a 74, stationed at its mouth. In the course of a few days the enemy was reinforced by a raze and a sloop of war, and joining the barges of these vessels, to those with which they had already engaged commodore Barney, they followed his flotilla into St. Leonard's creek, 2 miles above the mouth of which his gun-boats and barges were formed in line of battle, across the channel. From this point the commodore engaged them, and seeing a disposition to fall back, he immediately bore down, put them to flight, and pursued them to within a short distance of their shipping, which consisted of a ship, a brig, and 2 schooners. The commodore immediately moved upon them, and after a smart fire, drove the barges

down to the 18 gun vessel, which, in attempting to beat out, was so severely handled, that her crew ran her aground and abandoned her.

These attempts upon the flotilla were constantly repeated, and its blockade in St. Leonard's continued until the 26th, on the morning of which day, a combined attack of a corps of artillery, which had been despatched from Washington to its assistance, a detachment of the marines corps, and the flotilla itself, was made upon the whole squadron, among which were 2 frigates. The action continued upwards of 2 hours, and terminated in driving the enemy from his anchorage. His ships stood down the river, and commodore Barney finding the blockade raised, sailed out of St. Leonard's, and proceeded up the Patuxent.

The British squadron, at the different stations in the Chesapeake, were now every day augmented, by arrivals of transports and ships of the line from England. The cessation of hostilities which had taken place in Europe, enabled the British government to British government to send out powerful reinforcements to their fleets and armies already on the coast, and admiral sir Alexander Cochrane had been despatched with upwards of 30 sail, having on board an army of several thousand men, under major general Ross. This force entered the Chesapeake in the course of the summer, and between the land and naval commanders, a plan of attack upon Washington, Alexandria, and Baltimore, was soon after adopted. A few weeks before the repulse of sir George Prevost, at Plattsburg, admiral Cochrane notified the secretary of state, of his having been called upon by the governor general, to lay waste, and destroy, all such towns and districts upon the coast as might be found assailable, and that he had in consequence issued his orders to that effect, to all the naval commanders upon the station.

If this despatch was forwarded with the honourable intent of apprizing the American government of the contemplated attack upon the capital, the object was either wilfully, or through negligence,

defeated.---For, previously to the receipt of this notice at the department of state, the enemy was already ascending, in two divisions of his fleet, the Patuxent and the Potowmac. In the first of these rivers, his force amounted to 27 square rigged vessels, all of which proceeded to Benedict, the head of frigate navigation, and landed about 6000 regulars, seamen, and marines. Commodore Barney, in obedience to the orders which he had received to that effect, blew up and abandoned his flotilla upon the approach of so powerful a force, and retreated to Nottingham on the 22d of August, where, with his seamen and marines, he joined the United States' army, under brigadier general Winder. The enemy approached the Wood-Yard, a position 12 miles only from the city, and at which general Winder's forces were drawn up. These consisted of about 5000 men, 2500 of whom were from Baltimore, and offered battle to the British troops. But general Ross, upon reaching the neighbourhood of Nottingham, turned to his right and took the road to Marlborough, upon which general Winder fell back to Battalion Old Fields, about 8 miles from the city. The positions now occupied by the two armies were distant from each other about 7 miles; and general Winder desiring to know in what manner they had encamped, rode with a small escort to Marlborough, and learned, from several prisoners who were taken, that the British general intended to remain there until the following day. About noon of the 23d, general Ross put his troops into motion, having been previously joined by admiral Cockburn, and was met by the American advanced corps, under lieut. colonel Scott and major Peter, who, after exchanging several rounds, fell back upon the main army. Early on the 24th, the enemy's column resumed its march, and reached Bladensburg, about six miles from Washington, without loss. At Bladensburg, general Stansbury had taken an advantageous position, and by the greatest exertion, general Winder was enabled to interpose his whole force before the enemy, including commodore Barney's flotilla men and marines. At 1, P.M. the action commenced: The Baltimore artillery, under captains Myers and Macgruder, supported by major Pinkney's riflemen, were stationed in advance, to command the pass of the bridge, and dealt out a very destructive fire. But

the British column advanced upon them in such superior force, that they were obliged to retire. Upon seeing this, the right and centre of general Stansbury's brigade, immediately gave way, and in a few minutes he was deserted by his whole command, except about 40 men of colonel Ragan's regiment, and captain Shower's company. The 5th Baltimore regiment, under colonel Sterret, stationed on the left of general Stansbury's brigade, maintained its ground, until, lest it should be outflanked, an order was given for its retreat. The reserve, under brigadier general Smith, of the District of Columbia, with commodore Barney and lieutenant colonel Beall on their right, still remained upon the hill, and continued the contest after the flight of the Maryland brigade. As the militia retired, the British regulars advanced upon the main road, and coming immediately in front of commodore Barney's flotilla, he opened an 18 pounder upon them, which cleared the road, and for a time disordered their column, and retarded their approach. Two other attempts made by the enemy to pass the battery, were also repulsed, and general Ross marched a division of his troops into an open field, with a determination to flank the commodore's right. This attempt also was frustrated by captain Miller, of the marines, with three 12 pounders, and the men of the flotilla acting as infantry. After being thus kept in check about half an hour, general Ross began to outflank the right of the battery, in large numbers; and pushed about 300 men upon general Smith's brigade, which, after exchanging a shot or two, fled as precipitately as the brigade of general Stansbury. In the panic produced by this disorderly retreat, the drivers of the ammunition wagons fled also, and commodore Barney's small command was left to contend against the whole force of the enemy, with less than one complete round of cartridge. To add to the general misfortune, and to increase the difficulties even of retiring with credit, he had received a severe wound in his thigh, and his horse had been killed under him---two of his principal officers were killed, and captain Miller, and sailing master Martin, wounded. The places of these, could be promptly supplied, from the men acting as infantry, but the means

of repulsing the enemy were expended, and the British infantry and marines by this time completely in the rear of the battery. Thus situated, the commodore gave orders for a retreat, and after being carried a short distance from the scene of his gallantry, he fell, exhausted by the loss of blood, and was soon after made prisoner by general Ross and admiral Cockburn, who put him on his parole, and having first removed him to their hospital in Bladensburg, ordered the immediate attendance of their surgeons to dress his wound.

Having thus obtained possession of the pass of the bridge, over the eastern branch of the Potomac, the enemy marched directly upon the capital, and immediately proceeded to the destruction of all the spacious and splendid edifices by which it was adorned. The senate house, the representative hall, the supreme court room, the president's house, with all its external and interior decorations, and the buildings containing the public departments, were very soon demolished, and several private houses burned to the ground. The plunder of individual property was prohibited, however, and soldiers, transgressing the order, were severely punished. The principal vengeance of admiral Cockburn, on whom, if the safety of the citizens' dwellings had alone depended, if he is to be judged by his former conduct, they would have rested on a slender guarantee, was directed against the printing office of the editor of a newspaper, from whose press had been issued frequent accounts of the admiral's depredations along the coast.

The navy yard, as well as a new first rate frigate, and a sloop of war, were destroyed by order of government, upon the approach of the enemy, to prevent the immense public stores, munitions and armaments, deposited there, from falling into his hands. The patent office alone, in which were collected the rarest specimens of the arts of the country, escaped the insatiable vengeance of a foe, whose destroying arm was directed against the most superb monuments of architectural skill, and public munificence. The public documents and official records, the flags, and various other

trophies of the repeated triumphs of the American arms, and the specie from all the banks of the District, had previously been placed beyond the reach of the cupidity of the invaders, and they returned from an irruption which excited the indignation of all parties in the union, and drew forth the deprecations of the principal nations in Europe.

The president and the heads of departments, all of whom had visited the rendezvous of the troops at Bladensburg, the day before the battle, finding that the force which had been hastily assembled, did not amount to the number, called for by the requisitions upon the adjacent states, returned to the metropolis to make arrangements for the augmentation of general Winder's army. This duty, which, in times of less danger, required the exercise of great energy, could not be performed, before the enemy had encountered and defeated the corps already collected. The capture of these officers would have caused at least a temporary derangement of the government, and in order that its functions might be resumed immediately after the departure of the enemy, they retired from the metropolis on his approach. General Winder had also withdrawn, with the remnant of his force, to Montgomery Courthouse: the citizens were incapable of opposing the hostile operations of the British commanders; and the capital was therefore entirely at their mercy.

That division of the enemy's fleet, which ascended the Potomac, consisting of 8 sail, upon which were mounted 173 guns, and commanded by captain Gordon, was directed to attack the city of Alexandria. As they approached up the river, the commandant of fort Warburton, captain, Dyson, destroyed that garrison, and retired with his artillerists, and the British squadron passed up to the city, without annoyance or impediment. The people of Alexandria surrendered their town, and obtained (sic) a stipulation on the 29th of August, from the British commander, that their dwellings should not be entered or destroyed. The condition upon which this stipulation was made, required the immediate delivery to the enemy, of all public and private naval and ordnance stores; of all the

shipping, and the furniture necessary to their equipment, then in port; of all the merchandize, of every description, whether in the town, or removed from it since the 19th of the month; that such merchandize should be put on board the shipping, at the expense of the owners; and that all vessels which might have been sunk upon the approach of the enemy, should be raised by the merchants and delivered up, with all their apparatus. These hard and ungenerous conditions were complied with; and on the 6th of September, captain Gordon moved off with a fleet of prize vessels, which, as well as his frigates and other vessels of war, contained cargoes of booty. In descending the river, he was warmly opposed, and received considerable damage, from two batteries, at the White House, and at Indian Head, under the respective commands of captains Porter and Perry, of the navy---the former assisted by gen. Hungerford's brigade of Virginia militia infantry, and a company of riflemen, from Jefferson county, under captain Humphreys, whose brother lost an arm in the engagement; and the latter by the brigade of general Stewart, and the volunteer companies of major Peter and captain Birch. The batteries, however, not being completed, and mounting but a few light pieces, could not prevent the departure of the enemy with his immense booty, though they kept up an incessant fire, from the 3d until the 6th of the month, upon the vessels passing down on each of these days. Commodore Rodgers, too, aided by lieutenant Newcombe and sailing master Ramage, made frequent attempts to destroy the enemy's shipping, by approaching within the range of musket shot, with several small fire vessels. After the communication of the fire, a change of wind prevented these vessels from getting in between the British frigates, though they excited much alarm among the fleet, whose men were actively employed in extinguishing the flames. These respective forces were afterwards concentrated, and commodore Rodgers took possession of Alexandria, with a determination to defend it, notwithstanding its surrender, against another attempt of the enemy, whose fleet was not yet out of sight from the nearest battery.

After the embarkation of the troops under general Ross, whose loss at Bladensburg nearly amounted to 1000 men, in killed, wounded, prisoners, deserters, and those who died of fatigue, admiral Cochrane concentrated the various detachments of his fleet, and made preparations for an attack upon the city of Baltimore.

Despatch vessels were forwarded to all parts of the bay, to call together the frigates stationed near the different shores, and among others the Menelaus, commanded by sir Peter Parker, and then lying in the neighbourhood of Moors-Fields. That officer determined on an expedition against a detachment of Maryland volunteers, encamped, under colonel Read, at those fields, before he obeyed the call of the admiral; and for that purpose landed with 230 men, and made a detour to surprize and cut it off. The detachment consisted of 170 men; and its commander, being apprized of the enemy's motions, was fully prepared to receive him. Sir Peter advanced to a charge, and being repulsed, opened a fire within pistol shot, which continued nearly an hour. At the end of that time his force was driven back, with a loss of 17 carried off, and 13 killed, and 3 wounded, left upon the ground--- Among the wounded was sir Peter, who died immediately after being put on board the Menelaus.---Colonel Read had 3 men slightly wounded. The Menelaus joined the fleet upon the following day, and sailed with it to the mouth of the Petapsco (sic) on the 10th of September.

The fleet consisted of nearly 40 sail, and the heaviest vessels, ships of the line, anchored across the channel, and commenced the debarkation of the troops, intended for the land attack, upon North Point, 12 miles distant from the city. By the morning of the 12th, about 8000 soldiers, sailors, and marines, were in readiness to march upon the town, and 16 bomb vessels and frigates proceeded up the river, and anchored within two miles and an half of fort M'Henry.

This garrison, commanded by lieutenant colonel G. Armistead, of the United States' artillery; a battery at the lazaretto, commanded by lieutenant Rutter, of the flotilla; a small work called fort Covington, by lieutenant Newcombe, of the Guerriere; a six gun battery, erected near it, by lieutenant Webster, of the flotilla; and lines of intrenchments, and breastworks, hastily thrown up by the people of Baltimore, were relied on for the defence and protection of the city.

At the forts and batteries, 1000 men were stationed; along the breastworks, about four times that number---and all under the command of major general Samuel Smith, assisted by brigadier general Winder, of the United States' army, and brigadier general Stricker, of the Baltimore brigade.

In anticipation of the enemy's intention to land at that point, and to meet and repulse his light parties, or to engage his whole force at a distance from the main works, general Stricker was despatched with part of his brigade, and a light corps of riflemen and infantry, from general Stansbury's brigade, under major Randal, and several companies of the Pennsylvania volunteers. On the evening of the 11th, this detachment, amounting to 3185 effective men, reached the meeting house, near the head of Bear creek, when the volunteer cavalry, under colonel Biays, were sent three miles, and captain Dyer's riflemen, two miles, in advance. Early on the following morning, captain Montgomery, with the artillery; lieutenant colonel Sterret, with the 5th; and lieutenant colonel Long, with the 27th regiments, were sent some distance forward. The artillery was planted in the middle of the North Point road, and supported on each flank by the two infantry regiments. The 51st regiment, under lieutenant colonel Amey, was stationed a few hundred yards in the rear of the 5th; the 39th, under lieutenant colonel Fowler, in the rear of the 27th; and the 6th, under lieutenant colonel M'Donald, drawn up as a reserve, half a mile in the rear of the whole.

The riflemen were ordered to skirt a low wood, with a large

sedge field in its front, under cover of which, as the cavalry fell back to apprise general Stricker of the approach of the enemy, they were to annoy the British advance, and retire in good order upon the main body of the troops. Soon after these dispositions had been made, the cavalry came in with the intelligence, that the enemy's light corps were rapidly advancing along the road, and at the moment when it was expected they would be engaged by the riflemen, that body was seen falling back without having opposed them, under a presumption that the enemy had landed at Back river, in order to cut off their retreat. The General immediately pushed forward two companies from the 5th infantry, 150 in number, under captains Levering and Howard, and commanded by major Heath, of that regiment; about 70 riflemen, under captain Aisquith; the cavalry, and 10 artillerists, with a 4-pounder, commanded by lieutenant Stiles. This detachment having proceeded half a mile, was met by, and instantly engaged, the enemy's main body. The situation of the ground would not admit of the co-operation of the artillery and cavalry; and the infantry and riflemen sustained the whole action with great gallantry, pouring in a rapid and effective fire upon the British column, killing major general Ross, and several other officers, and impeding the advance of the British army. Having performed the duty required of them by general Stricker, the whole detachment, with a trifling loss, fell back in excellent order upon the American line. The enemy then moved forward, under colonel Brooke, upon whom the command had devolved, and at half past 2 began to throw his rockets upon the left flank of the militia brigade. Captain Montgomery immediately opened his artillery upon him, and the British played upon the left and centre with their 6-pounders and a howitzer. The cannonade continued with great vivacity, until general Stricker ordered the firing to cease, so as to draw the enemy within the range of grape and canister. Colonel Brooke then covered his whole front with the British light brigade, directed the 4th regiment, by a detour, to gain a lodgment close upon the American left, and formed a line along general Stricker's front, with the 41st regiment, the marines of the fleet, and a detachment of seamen;

and placed the 21st regiment, the 2d battalion of marines, and another detachment of seamen, in columns on the main road, with orders to press on the American right, on the first opportunity. General Stricker, seeing that his left flank would be the main object of attack, ordered up the 39th into line on the 27th, and detached two pieces of artillery to the extreme left of lieutenant colonel Fowler's command. Lieutenant colonel Amey was also directed to form the 51st at right angles, with his right resting near the left of the 39th.

The whole force of the enemy at that moment pressed forward his right column, advancing upon the 27th and 39th, and attacked those regiments with great impetuosity. The 51st, which was ordered to open upon the enemy in his attempt to turn the rest of the line, delivered a loose fire, immediately broke, fled precipitately from its ground, and in such confusion, that every effort to rally it proved ineffectual. The 2d battalion of the 39th, was thrown into disorder, by the flight of the 51st, and some of its companies also gave way. The remainder and the 1st battalion stood firm. Thus abandoned by the retreat of the 51st, general Stricker made new arrangements for the reception of the enemy, and opened a general fire upon him, from the right, left and centre. The artillery sent forth a destructive torrent of canister against the British left column, then attempting to gain the cover of a small log-house, in front of the 5th regiment. Captain Sadtler, with his yagers from that regiment, who were posted in the house when the British 4th regiment was advancing, had, however, taken the precaution to set fire to it, and the intention of the enemy was therefore defeated. The 6th regiment then opened its fire, and the whole line entered into an animated contest, which continued, with a severe loss to the enemy, until 15 minutes before 4 o'clock. At that hour, general Stricker, having inflicted as much injury upon the invaders as could possibly be expected, from a line now but 1400 strong, against a force amounting, notwithstanding its losses, to at least 7000 men, ordered his brigade to retire upon the reserve regiment; an order which was well executed by the whole line, which in a few minutes rallied upon lieutenant colonel M'Donald, (sic) From the point occupied by this regiment, general

Stricker, in order to refresh his troops, and prepare them for a second movement of the enemy, retired to a position half a mile in advance of the left of major general Smith's intrenchments. Here he was joined by general Winder, who, with general Douglass's Virginia brigade, and the United States' dragoons, under captain Bird, took post upon his left.

Whilst all these movements were in operation, general Smith was actively engaged in manning the trenches and batteries with generals Stansbury and Foreman's brigades, a detachment of seamen and marines, under commodore Rodgers, colonels Cobean and Finly's Pennsylvania volunteers, colonel Harris's Baltimore artillery, and the marine artillery under captain Stiles. Colonel Brooke did not advance with his columns further than the ground on which general Stricker had been previously formed, where he remained during the night of the 12th. Early on the following morning, he received a communication from admiral Cochrane, that the frigates, bomb ships, and flotilla of barges, would take their stations, to bombard the town and fort, in the course of the morning. At day-break of the 13th, the land forces, therefore, again moved forward, and occupied a position 2 miles eastward of the intrenchments. The day was chiefly employed in manoeuvring by both parties. Colonel Brooke frequently attempting to make a detour through the country, to the Harford and York roads; and generals Winder and Stricker adapting their movements to those of the enemy, the better to frustrate his designs. At noon the British columns were concentrated directly in front of the American line, and colonel Brooke advanced to within a mile of the works, drove in the outposts, and made arrangements for an attack at night. Generals Winder and Stricker were then ordered to station themselves on the enemy's right, and in the event of an attack upon the breastworks; to fall upon that flank, or on his rear. The assault was not made, however, and the enemy, probably thinking he would be outflanked, and having discovered the strength of the defences, withdrew from his position in the course of the night, and re-embarked his troops in the evening of the 14th. His retreat was not discovered until break of that day, in consequence of the darkness of the night;

and though a heavy fall of rain continued throughout the morning, general Winder, with his dragoons, and the Virginia militia; major Randal, with his light corps, and the whole militia and cavalry were sent in pursuit. The excessive fatigue of the troops, all of whom had been 3 days and nights under arms, in the most inclement weather, prevented their annoying the enemy's rear with much effect, and they made prisoners of none but stragglers from his army. At the moment when colonel Brooke advanced along the Philadelphia road, the frigates and bomb ships of the fleet approached within striking distance of the fort. Colonel Armistead had already disposed his force to maintain the cannonade with vigour; a company of regular artillery, under captain Evans; and another of volunteer artillery, under captain Nicholson, manned the bastions in the Star fort; captains Bunbury and Addison's sea fencibles, and captain Berry's, and lieutenant Pennington's artillery, were stationed at the water batteries; and about 600 infantry, under lieutenant colonel Stewart, and major Lane, were placed in the outer ditch, to repulse an attempt to land. The bombardment commenced. All the batteries were immediately opened upon the enemy, but the shot falling very far short of his vessels, the firing ceased from the fort, or was maintained only at intervals, to show that the garrison had not sunk under the tremendous showers, of rockets and shells, incessantly thrown into the batteries. Thus situated, without the power of retaliating the attack of the enemy, colonel Armistead and his brave men endured their mortification with an unyielding spirit during the whole bombardment, which continued until 7 o'clock on the morning of the 14th. Under cover of the night, the British commanders despatched a fleet of barges to attack and storm fort Covington.--- The attempt was repulsed, however, and the assailants retired, with an immense loss, to their bomb vessels, and on the morning of Wednesday, the whole stood down the river, and rejoined admiral Cochrane's fleet. The loss in the fort amounted to 4 killed, and 24 wounded: among the killed were 2 gallant young volunteer officers, lieutenants Clagget and Clem. The entire loss of the enemy has not

yet been ascertained. That of the Americans on the field of battle did not fall short of 150, which, being added to the killed and wounded in the fort, makes a total of 178. The invaders having thus retired from what they called a demonstration upon Baltimore, the safety of the citizens was secured, and the different corps were relieved from further duty.....

John L. Williams Report
Gladesburg + Washington

HISTORY OF THE INVASION AND CAPTURE OF WASHINGTON

BY

John S. Williams

Beginning at p. 202-238 and the
Appendix

Ross, as we have seen, bivouacked on the night of the 23rd at a place called Melwood, about three miles from the Old Fields, and some ten or twelve miles from Washington. He appears to have been astir very early on the morning of the 24th, for at four o'clock that morning* he passed the Old Fields. An advance of two miles farther brought him to a fork of the road, one branch of which runs northward thence to Bladensburg, distant about ten miles, and the other westward to the Eastern Branch Bridge, distant seven or eight miles. Here he practiced the same ruse as at the fork of the road from Nottingham to Upper Marlborough. He took the road leading to the Eastern Branch Bridge, and continued in it until his last column had got into it,** then suddenly reversed his front and marched rapidly to Bladensburg.

Intelligence of this last movement was not received by General Winder until 10 A.M. or after, and he then ordered General Smith, with the whole of the troops under his command, to proceed to Bladensburg, and Commodore Barney, with the seamen and marines, was soon afterward ordered to proceed to the same place with all dispatch.

Mr. Monroe, who was at General Winder's quarters with the President when the intelligence was received that the enemy was on his way to Bladensburg, offered his services to proceed to that place

* General Wilkinson, vol. i., p. 775.

** See letter of Mr. Rush, close of chap. xiv.

and join General Stansbury, and both the President and General Winder expressing a wish that he would do so, he "lost not a moment in complying with their desire," and between 11 and 12 o'clock joined General Stansbury, who had, in obedience to the reiterated order of General Winder, moved his troops back to the vicinity of Bladensburg. Mr. Monroe was soon followed by General Winder, then by the Secretary of War, and then by the President and Attorney-general. When Mr. Monroe arrived on the field, the enemy was about three miles distant from Bladensburg. Mr. Rush states that, before the President and himself "could reach the town, the forces of the enemy had possession of it."

The object of Mr. Monroe in joining General Stansbury--- that of assisting him to post his troops to the best advantage--- does not seem to have been made known to that officer, who expresses no gratitude for any services rendered to him by Mr. Monroe on the occasion, but, as we shall see, rather intimates that somebody, he does not know who, disarranged his order of battle without consulting him. This, if true, was doing him no trifling wrong; for it is said by a military writer that "orders of battle are the sublime of war, and it is in their application that the talents and genius of the general shine pre-eminent."

CHAPTER XI.

THE ORDER OF BATTLE

The village of Bladensburg is about six miles north-east of Washington, from which city it is approached by a good turnpike-road, formerly the mail-road to Baltimore. North of this road is another old road, which, before the City of Washington was founded, was the route from Georgetown to Bladensburg. These roads meet, at an angle of about forty-five degrees, some sixty or eighty yards from the river at Bladensburg. From the junction the turnpike-road continues on to the river, not abutting, however, immediately at the bridge, but curving for a short distance to the south and east along the margin of the stream, and following a sort of cause-

way, which, at the time we speak of, was bordered on the west side by thickets of small trees and bushes, and which led to the bridge. The bridge is somewhat less than thirty yards in length, and about four in breadth, and the stream, a few rods above or north of the bridge, is every where fordable.

General Stansbury's troops, after his countermarch to Bladensburg, occupied the triangular field formed by the roads which we have mentioned, near their junction. In this field, on the Georgetown road, and about a hundred and fifty yards from the junction of the roads, there stood and still stands a large wooden barn or tobacco-house, and between the barn and the Washington turnpike there was and is an orchard, which commences at the barn and extends more than half way across the field, or about a hundred and twenty or thirty yards toward the turnpike. In front of the barn, looking toward the river, the ground has a gentle descent, and upon the brow of the declivity, near the Georgetown road, and some thirty or forty yards in advance of the barn, had been hastily constructed a barbette battery of earthwork, intended for heavy ordnance. This battery was distant about three hundred and fifty yards from the bridge at Bladensburg, nearly west of it, and commanded by an oblique and not enfilading fire.

In the battery were stationed the two companies of volunteer artillery from the city of Baltimore, commanded by Captains Myer and Magruder, mustering together about one hundred and fifty men, with six six-pounders. The parapet being too high for these guns, and there being no time now to reduce it, the artillerymen were employed, with such tools as they could get, in cutting embrasures and masking them with brushwood. The battalion of riflemen, commanded by Major Pinkney, was placed on the right of the battery, the men being distributed in such positions among the bushes on the low ground, near the junction of the roads, as might best enable them to annoy the enemy on his approach, should he succeed in crossing the bridge or fording the stream. Two companies of Stansbury's militia, commanded by Captains Ducker and Gorsuch, acting as riflemen, but principally armed with muskets, were stationed

in the rear of the left of the battery, near the barn, and protected by it, to assist in defending any approach of the enemy by the Georgetown road.

The 5th regiment of Baltimore volunteers, commanded by Lieutenant-colonel Sterett, had been halted about fifty yards in the rear of the position now occupied by Major Pinkney's riflemen, and General Stansbury says that it was his intention to have formed it with its left resting on the right of Pinkney's battalion and fronting the road, along which ran a fence; while Colonels Ragan and Schutz's regiments were to be drawn up in echelon, their right resting on the left of Ducker and Gorsuch's companies, and commanding any approach by the Georgetown road. By this proposed disposition of Sterett's regiment, the troops from the city of Baltimore would have been stationed so as to support and give confidence to each other; and as they were well disciplined and reliable troops, and some of them were necessarily to encounter the first shock of the contest, Stansbury's intended order was not the worst that could have been adopted, and at least had the merit of placing all parts of his lines within supporting distance of each other.

But he states that, after the enemy came in sight, while he was engaged in giving some directions to the artillery, Schutz and Ragan's regiments were moved from where he had stationed them, marched up the rising ground in the rear of the orchard, and formed in order of battle about 500 yards, or more than a quarter of a mile, in the rear of the artillery and riflemen, their right, Schutz's regiment, resting on the Washington turnpike. On riding up the hill to ascertain who had ordered this movement, he was informed that General Winder was on the ground. He then immediately rode to the spot where General Winder was, found him engaged in reconnoitring the enemy, and while conversing with him he discovered that the 5th regiment was also moved from its position, marched up the hill, and formed on the left of the other two regiments, the whole being so placed that their situation and numbers could be clearly seen by the enemy, within reach of his rockets, without any

cover, and at such a distance from the artillery and riflemen as to be able to give the latter no support, leaving them to contend with the whole British force. "Whose plan this was," he says, "I know not; it was not mine, nor did it meet with my approbation; but, finding a superior officer on the ground, I concluded he had ordered it, consequently did not interfere."

Major Pinkney, in his statement to the committee, also complains of this alteration, or "new order of battle," as he terms it. "The 5th regiment," he says, "had now, to the great disparagement of my companies and of the artillery, been made to retire to a hill several hundred yards in our rear, but visible, nevertheless to the enemy, where it could do little more than display its gallantry."

Mr. Monroe states that the removal of the 5th Baltimore regiments, "at a late period," from the rear of the battery to the left of the line, was "a measure taken with reluctance and in haste;" and after finishing his account of the final disposition of Stansbury's troops in order of battle, he says, "after General Stansbury had made his disposition," General Winder arrived on the ground, and "on taking a view of the order which had been formed, he approved of it. This was the more satisfactory, because it had then become impossible to make any essential change." This leaves it to be inferred that the whole arrangement was made by General Stansbury, or at least had his concurrence.

General Armstrong, in his "Notices," adverts to this unlucky arrangement and its effects on the progress and issue of the combat, and says that it is only in Lieutenant-colonel Sterett's report that "we are made acquainted with this busy and blundering tactician, whom Stansbury does not know and whom Pinkney would not name;" and he then quotes Sterett's statement that "the 5th regiment was formed under the direction of Colonel Monroe on the left and in line with Stansbury's brigade." But he omits any reference to the subsequent part of Lieutenant-colonel Sterett's statement, in which he says, "I ought to notice that the first line formed on the

battle-ground was changed under the direction of Colonel Monroe. On this occasion he observed to me, 'Although you see I am active, you will please bear in mind that this is not my plan,' or words to this effect."

There are discrepancies in these statements which it is impossible now to reconcile, and which are the more singular because the statements were prepared for the information of a committee of Congress but a few weeks after the battle. Lieutenant-colonel Sterett could hardly have dreamed or imagined the emphatic declaration made to him by Mr. Monroe at the time of changing the position of the 5th regiment; Mr. Monroe himself states that the change was made with reluctance, yet he directed it, and does not say that it had been suggested to him by any one else.

We have dwelt particularly upon this matter, not only to illustrate the confusion existing at the time of forming the order of battle, owing to the near vicinity of the enemy and the number of persons exercising independent authority, but in justice to the troops of Stansbury's line, the only troops who can be said to have fled. For although it is true, as General Winder states in his narrative, that "no advantage of position is proof against groundless panic, and a total want of discipline, skill, and experience," still, advantage of position must help in some degree to prevent a panic; and if the troops are wanting in skill, discipline, and experience, it is the more important to profit as much as possible by all advantages of position.

It was hardly reasonable to expect that raw militiamen would remain firm in the position in which Stansbury's troops were placed, considering the force which they believed to be advancing against them, and the alarm created by the rockets, a species of weapon wholly unknown to them, and apparently of the most formidable description. The orchard would have served as a cover to them, and, if permitted to remain in it, they might have been encouraged by the shelter which it afforded, by the steadiness which the troops in their front displayed under the advance of the enemy, and even

by the excitement attending an opportunity of immediate action.

General Winder himself, it appears, had no time to remedy, and hardly to observe, any defects in the arrangement of Stansbury's troops. He says that upon his arrival on the field he rode up to the battery, and continues:

"Upon inquiry, I learned that General Stansbury was on a rising ground upon the left of his line. I rode immediately thither, and found him and Colonel Monroe together. The latter gentleman informed me that he had been aiding General Stansbury to post his command, and wished me to proceed to examine it with them, to see how far I approved of it. We were just proceeding with this view, when some person rode up and stated that news had just been received of a signal victory obtained by General Izard over the enemy, in which one thousand of the enemy were slain and many prisoners taken. I ordered the news to be immediately communicated to the troops, for the purpose of giving additional impulse to their spirits and courage. The column of the enemy at this moment appeared in view, about a mile distant, moving up the Eastern Branch, parallel to our position. From the left, where I was, I perceived that, if the position of the advanced artillery were forced, two or three pieces upon the left of Stansbury would be necessary to scour an orchard which lay between his line and his artillery, and for another rifle company to increase the support of this artillery. These were promptly sent forward by General Smith and posted as hastily as possible, and it was barely accomplished before I was obliged to give orders to the advanced artillery to open upon the enemy, who was descending the street toward the bridge. All further examination or movement was now impossible."

The artillery which General Winder directed to be placed on the left of Stansbury's line was part of Captain Burch's volunteer artillery from the City of Washington, with three six-pounders. The additional rifle company brought up to support the Baltimore artillery was Captain Doughty's company, called riflemen, but armed with muskets. General Winder also directed one of Major Pinkney's rifle companies to be withdrawn from the right of the battery and placed on the left of it.

Two pieces of Burch's artillery, with a part of his company, were placed on the main road, near the right of Stansbury's line. And Major Pinkney states that, at his instance, a militia company, armed with muskets, but acting as riflemen, was placed on his right, near the main road, under cover of some bushes and a fence. By a mistake, which he afterward publicly acknowledged, he represents this company as having been commanded by Captain Doughty.

This completes the arrangement of what has been called the first line, composed principally of the troops from the city of Baltimore and its vicinity.

The cavalry, whose history we may as well dispose of at once, seems to have been considered as a part of the first line. Mr. Monroe states that they "were placed to the left, somewhat in the rear of the line." No use was attempted to be made of them during the action. They were under separate and independent commanders, and amounted altogether to about 380. The regular portion of them, under Lieutenant-colonel Laval, a Frenchman and an officer of some experience, were less disciplined and efficient than the volunteers. They were unable to make a charge, the men, from fatigue and hunger, hardly able to sit their horses, or the horses to move; and they were routed, according to Laval's account, not by the enemy, but by our own troops, "crushed down, horses and all," in the tumult of the flight, one artillery company bursting through a gate and driving right through them.

The second line was composed, with the exception of the body of Maryland militia under the command of Colonel Beall, of the troops which General Winder had with him at the Battalion Old Fields, and which had been hurriedly marched from the Eastern Branch Bridge between 11 and 12 o'clock in the morning of the battle. They had barely time, on arriving on the ground, to make a hasty selection of position.

Commodore Barney's men and the marines were halted on the turnpike about a mile from the stream at Bladensburg. The two

eighteen-pounders were planted in the road, forming the left of his line, and the three twelve-pounders immediately on the right of them, a portion of his seamen acting as artillerists, and the rest, with the marines, supporting them as infantry. In front of his position the road descends to a ravine, crossed by a small bridge about 500 yards distant. North of the bridge the ravine is wide and shallow, the bottom of it producing grass, and terminating in a somewhat abrupt acclivity or bluff about 150 yards from the road. On this acclivity the companies commanded by Captains Stull and Davidson were posted; and on an eminence a short distance west of it Major Peter's battery of six guns was placed, so as to command the main road near the bridge over the ravine, and also a part of the space in the rear of Stansbury's line. Lieutenant-colonel Scott, with the regular troops, Colonel Brent, with the 2d regiment of General Smith's brigade, and Major Waring, with the battalion of Maryland militia, were posted in the rear of Major Peter's battery, the regular troops being on the left. The 1st regiment of General Smith's brigade, commanded by Colonel Magruder, was immediately on the left of Barney's men, its right resting on the road.

The militia under Colonel Beall, who had arrived from Annapolis about half an hour before the battle began, were placed on the right of the seamen and marines, on an eminence about 250 yards from the road; and on the same side of the road, about 150 yards in front of Colonel Beall's position, was Kramer's battalion of Maryland militia.

Nothing is more easy than to criticise the order of battle of a defeated army. In fact, the defeat itself exposes errors which would not otherwise have been observed. And in orders of battle formed with such precipitation as these were, under the direction of a variety of inexperienced heads, it would be strange if errors did not exist which the merest tyro might point out, and which none but a tyro would exult in detecting. Nevertheless, in order to show the defects which have existed, and the little credit due to the enemy for their victory over troops so disadvantageously posted,

we shall first quote General Winder's remarks on the subject, and then those of the veteran General Wilkinson, who appears to have carefully and minutely studied the history of this campaign, and who was well acquainted with all the localities in which the events of it occurred.

General Winder says:

"If I had had longer time, or to repeat the action of Bladensburg, I could correct several errors which might materially have affected the issue of that battle. The advanced force ought to have been nearer to the creek, along the edge of the low ground, where they would have been skirted with bushes, and have avoided the inconvenience of the cover which the orchard afforded to the enemy. The edge of the low grounds on the right of the road ought to have been lined with musketry, and a battery of cannon also planted on the field, on the right of the road, directly fronting the bridge; and if Commodore Barney's heavy artillery, with his more expert artillerists, had occupied the position which the advanced artillerists did, and these posts been obstinately defended, the enemy would not have crossed the river at that point, but would have been obliged to make a circuit round to his right, and have crossed above, and at the upper end of the town; or, if the whole force had been posted at the position of the second line, with all the advantage which it afforded, and had acted with tolerable firmness and courage, the event might have been different."

From these remarks of General Winder, he was evidently of the opinion that "if the whole force had been posted at the position of the second line," or at the position of the first line, the result might have been different; in other words, that the main defect of the arrangement of the troops was their being out of supporting distance of each other.

General Wilkinson says:

"It is in vain that professional men shall search for the

excellences of this disposition of the American army in the parts or in the whole, in the advantages of a single point or in the combination of all, whether viewed in respect to the principles and maxims of war, ancient or modern, or with reference to the incidents of desultory warfare, which are not reducible to fixed rules; it is void of plan or proportion; and the naked truth is the best apology for it, that is, it was formed on the spur of the occasion, by pieces, and under the direction of many different chiefs, without preconcert, principle, or design. Shall I expose the particular faults of this disposition? It would not reward the pains; a few remarks will suffice. If the enemy had been obliged to pass the bridge, and it could not have been removed or obstructed, then the greatest force should have been brought to oppose them in debouching from the defile; but the disposition actually made served only to expose the artillery to capture, or, by its sudden flight, and that of its light covering party, to increase the confidence of the enemy and depress the spirits of the American front. But, as the Eastern Branch was every where fordable, and a considerate, judicious antagonist would have crossed the creek at the forks, and turned the left flank of what was called the first line, the disposition was feeble, injudicious, and ineffectual. It is true, the temerity of the enemy, and his contempt for his antagonist, gave this disposition a different character; but then it was too remote from the defile to command it, too remote from the advanced battery to support it; intrinsically too feeble to resist the shock of the enemy's whole force, and too distant from what was called the second line to be seasonably supported by it."

This criticism of General Wilkinson is too full of generalities and epithets, but in substance it is pretty much the same as General Winder's. The defile or bridge at Bladensburg should have been better defended, if defended at all; and the troops were not within supporting distance of each other.

General Armstrong does not venture to criticise the order of battle except by innuendo, by sneering at "this busy and blundering tactician," Mr. Monroe, and at General Winder for assigning to Mr.

Monroe the duty "of forming his order of battle!" He could not forget that to himself had been assigned the duty of revising and correcting the errors of all, and that therefore to particularize errors which he did not advert to and correct at the time would have been to condemn himself.

The disadvantages of the order of battle, and of the distance of the two lines from each other, were made worse by the fact that the troops of the first line were generally ignorant that there was a second line, or any troops in their rear to support them, or on which they could fall back. They were under the impression that they were to fight the battle unassisted, against a force four or five times as numerous as their own. Lieutenant-colonel Sterett says that he "knew nothing of any second line or reserve being formed to support" them. Major Pinkney states that he "did not know that Brigadier-general Smith's brigade was in or near the field until the action had ceased," nor that Barney's artillery was on the field. General Stansbury states that "before and during the action" he "did not see any of the force" he "was led to expect would support" him. This statement is contradicted by General Smith's; but whatever information General Stansbury may have had on the subject was of no use to him, and was not communicated by him to his officers. Nor does any rallying-point seem to have been determined on. These and other omissions are to be accounted for by the shortness of the time allowed for preparation, the hurry and excitement occasioned by the near approach of the enemy, the number of commanders acting without concert with each other, and the host of volunteer aides-de-camp and amateur advisers.

The British reports of the battle not only exaggerate the strength of our position and the numbers opposed to them, but invent strength for the position which did not exist. Ross, in his official report of the victory, says, "The enemy was discovered strongly posted on very commanding heights, his advance occupying a fortified house, which, with artillery, covered the bridge over

the Eastern Branch, across which the British troops had to pass." There was, it is true, a house partially fortified, which commanded the pass by the bridge, but it was not occupied, and therefore must have been rather a convenience than an obstacle to the advance of the British.

Cockburn says, "The enemy, 8000 strong, on ground he had chosen as best adapted for him to defend, where he had time to erect his batteries and concert all his measures, was dislodged as soon as reached," etc. The advanced troops, under Major Pinkney and others, who encountered the first shock of the British army, did not amount to more than 600 men. The regiments under Sterett, Schutz, and Ragan, too far in the rear to support the advanced troops, mustered about 1800 men. The rest of the army, amounting to about 2700 men, was more than a mile from Bladensburg, and did not change its position until ordered to retreat. The British, therefore, instead of encountering an "enemy 8000 strong," had to deal with an army altogether of little more than half that number, and did not encounter, at any one time, more than a third of the number.

Gleig, a lieutenant of the 85th regiment, who was present in the action, says that our position was "one of great strength and commanding attitude;" and that our "cavalry showed itself in one mass," and our force amounted to 9000 men, a number "exactly doubling" their own, and waiting their approach in "a formidable posture." He describes the passage of the bridge at Bladensburg as if it were another Lodi, and says that our battery opened "with tremendous effect, for at the first discharge almost an entire company was swept down." But the "Subaltern in America," who exaggerates in other matters, states that by the first discharge of our artillery they had one man only killed and two dreadfully wounded, and that by the first fire on the bridge "seven men were swept down," but he does not state how many of the seven men were killed. In point of fact, the bridge was a convenience to the enemy, and if it had not been, there was no necessity for their crossing it, as the stream above was fordable, and was forded

by parties of their men.

The statement of the British historian, Alison,* is more exaggerated than any, and inexcusably so, because it is not justified by the official dispatches to his government, to which he refers. He says that the American general had 6500 bayonets, 300 horse, and 600 seamen to work his guns, of which he had twenty-six to the British two, "and with this force, about double that of the British, he took post at Bladensburg, a small village on the left bank of the Potomac, and commanding the only bridge by which that river could be crossed. The great road ran straight through the centre of his position, and the artillery was placed so as to enfilade all the approaches to the bridge." A column of the British, he says, "advanced in double-quick time, in the finest order, through the fire of the guns, dashed across the bridge, carried a fortified house at the other end, which was occupied and loop-holed, and, being quickly followed by the other division, spread out their sharpshooters on either flank, and moved direct against the American batteries. So vigorous was the attack and so feeble the defence, that they were all carried, and the first line thrown back in confusion on the second by the first division alone, not more than fifteen hundred strong, aided by the fire of a few rockets, before the second could get across the bridge. Ten guns were taken, and the whole army, totally routed, took to flight." According to this modest account, 1500 British soldiers crossed a bridge enfiladed by 26 guns, stormed a fortified house at the other end, and routed an army of more than 7000 Americans.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BATTLE

We shall not invoke either the muse of History or the shade of Cervantes to assist us in describing the battle of Bladensburg, but to restrict ourselves, saving an occasional comment, to the prosaic statements of those who shared in the fatigues and dangers

* History of Europe, chap. lxxvi.

of the day.

As the eminent civilian, orator, senator, and diplomat, the Hon. William Pinkney, was the superior officer of the advanced troops, and as he possessed great intelligence as well as cool bravery, and his station on the field was on an eminence where, he says, there was nothing to interrupt his view of the advancing enemy, we shall adopt his account of the commencement of the action. He says:

"The enemy, having reached Bladensburg, descended the hill, about 12 o'clock, in a very fine style, and soon showed his intention to force his way by the bridge. Assisted by some discharges of rockets (which were afterward industriously continued), he made an effort to throw across the bridge a strong body of infantry, but he was driven back at the very commencement of it, with evident loss, by the artillery in the battery, which principally acted upon the street or road near the bridge, and he literally disappeared behind the houses. The effort was not immediately repeated, but the artillery continued to fire, with a view, as it seemed, to interrupt the discharge of rockets, as in some degree it did, and otherwise to check the enemy's operations.

"After a long pause, during which I conjectured (erroneously, as I have since been told) that the enemy, less confident than before of the passage of the bridge, detached a corps of some strength to make its way by the ford in the old Baltimore road, a second attempt was made to cross the bridge, with increased numbers and greater celerity of movement. This, too, was encountered by the artillery in the battery, but not with its former success, although it was served with great spirit, and commanded by officers of acknowledged skill and courage. In consequence, a large column of the enemy, which was every moment re-enforced, either by the way of the bridge or by the ford immediately above it, was able to form on the Washington side, and to menace the battery and the inadequate force by which it was to be supported. While the enemy was yet at a distance, the company on our right

(commanded by Captain Doughty) discharged their pieces and fled, although he appeared to do all in his power to restrain them, as I myself did."

As Mr. Pinkney here shows a disposition to become personal in his remarks, and to speak ill of his neighbors, we shall take leave of him. The company to which he refers as having been so eminently prompt in its movements was not commanded by Captain Doughty, as Mr. Pinkney afterward acknowledged in a communication to the National Intelligencer, drawn out by a letter from Captain Doughty, backed by one from Walter Jones, Esq., of Washington. Captain Doughty, as we have stated, was in a different part of the field, and did great service. We have been unable, after much inquiry, to ascertain what company it was that was so eager to deliver its volley, fulfill its mission, and depart.

We were at first somewhat at a loss to understand Mr. Pinkney's meaning in saying that the enemy "literally disappeared behind the houses." There can not be much difference in an optical point of view between a literal and an apparent disappearance; and if a thing is not to be seen, it is of little importance which species of invisibility it may lay claim to, literal or figurative. But the author of the "Subaltern in America," who states that he was with the advanced guard of the British on their approach to Bladensburg, thus explains the phenomenon of the "literal" disappearance of their troops:

"The very first shot cost us three men---one killed and the other two dreadfully wounded, and the second would have been, in all probability, not less fatal, had we not very wisely avoided it. We inclined at once to the right and left of the road, and, winding round the houses, made our way without further loss as far as the last range, when we were commanded to lie down and wait for the column.

"In the mean while, the main body, being informed how matters stood (i. e., that Bladensburg was not occupied by the American troops),

resumed its march and approached the town. It was saluted, as we had been saluted, by a heavy and well-directed cannonade; but, being warned by some of our people where the danger lay, it so far avoided it as to close up its ranks, and effect all the arrangements necessary for the assault under cover of the green mound."

The "green mound" referred to is Lowndes' Hill, which is seen on the right of Bladensburg in approaching the village by the turnpike from Washington, and the literal disappearance and "long pause" of which Mr. Pinkney speaks were occasioned by the British troops taking refuge behind Lowndes' Hill and the houses of the village until they had made their final arrangements for the assault and completed their toilet.

General Winder's position also gave him an uninterrupted view of the field of battle; and as he must have been anxiously interested in the result, we naturally look with curiosity to his account of what passed. He says:

"The fire of our advanced artillery occasioned the enemy, who were advancing, and who were light troops, to leave the street, and they crept down under the cover of houses and trees in loose order, so as not to expose them to risk from the shot. It was therefore only occasionally that an object presented at which the artillery could fire.

"In this sort of suspension the enemy began to throw his rockets, and his light troops began to accumulate down in the lower parts of the town and near the bridge, but principally covered from view by the houses. Their light troops, however, soon began to issue out and press across the creek, which was every where fordable, and in most cases lined with bushes or trees, which were sufficient, however, to conceal the movements of light troops who act in the manner of theirs, singly. The advanced riflemen now began to fire, and continued it for half a dozen rounds, when I observed them to run back to the skirts of the orchard on the left, where they became visible, the boughs of the orchard-trees concealing their original position, as also that of the artillery, from

view. A retreat of twenty or thirty yards from their original position toward the left brought them in view on the edge of the orchard. They halted there, and seemed for a moment returning to their position, but in a few minutes entirely broke and retired to the left of Stansbury's line. I immediately ordered the fifth Baltimore regiment, Lieutenant-Colonel Sterett, being the left of Stansbury's line, to advance and sustain the artillery. They promptly commenced this movement; but the rockets, which had, for the first three or four, passed very high above the heads of the line, now received a more horizontal direction, and passed very close above the heads of Shutz's and Ragan's regiments, composing the centre and left (right) of Stansbury's line. A universal flight of these two regiments was the consequence. This leaving the right of the fifth wholly unsupported, I ordered it to halt, rode swiftly across the field toward those who had so shamefully fled, and exerted my voice to the utmost to arrest them. They halted, began to collect, and seemed to be returning to their places. An ill-founded reliance that their officers would succeed in rallying them when I had thus succeeded in stopping the greatest part of them induced me immediately to return to the fifth, the situation of which was likely to become very critical, and that position gave me the best command of view. To my astonishment and mortification, however, when I had regained my position, I found the whole of these regiments (except a few of Ragan's, not more than forty, rallied by himself, and as many, perhaps, of Shutz's, rallied, I learn, by Captain Shower and Captain _____, whose name I do not recollect) were flying in the utmost precipitation and disorder.

"The advanced artillery had immediately followed the riflemen, and retired by the left of the fifth. I directed them to take post on a rising ground which I pointed out in the rear. The fifth, and the artillery on its left, still remained, and I hoped that their fire, notwithstanding the obstruction of the boughs of the orchard, which, being below, covered the enemy, would have been enabled to scour this approach and prevent his advance. The

enemy's light troops, by single men, showed themselves on the lower edge of the left of the orchard, and received the fire of this artillery and the fifth, which made them draw back. The cover to them was, however, so complete, that they were enabled to advance singly and take positions from which their fire annoyed the fifth considerably, without either that regiment or the artillery being able to return the fire with any probability of effect. In this situation, I had actually given an order to the fifth and artillery to retire up the hill toward a wood more to the left and a little to the rear, for the purpose of drawing them farther from the orchard and out of reach of the enemy's fire while he was sheltered by the orchard. An aversion, however, to retire before the necessity became stronger, and the hope that the enemy would issue in a body from the left of the orchard and enable us to act upon him on terms of equality, and the fear that a movement of retreat might, in raw troops, produce some confusion and lose us this chance, induced me to countermand the order, and direct the artillery to fire into a wooden barn on the lower end of the orchard, behind which I supposed the enemy might be sheltered in considerable numbers. The fire of the enemy now began, however, to annoy the fifth still more in wounding several of them, and a strong column of the enemy having passed up the road as high as the right of the fifth, and beginning to deploy into the field to take them in front, I directed the artillery to retire to the hill to which I had directed the Baltimore artillery to proceed, and halt, and ordered the fifth regiment also to retire. This corps, which had heretofore acted so firmly, evinced the usual incapacity of raw troops to make orderly movements in the face of the enemy, and their retreat in a very few moments became a flight of absolute and total disorder."

This statement of General Winder shows very clearly the value of the orchard and barn as a military position, the advantage which its possession gave to the enemy, and the difficulty which they probably would have experienced in driving back our troops if they had been suffered to remain near and in it, as

General Stansbury intended; but a mere militia general could not be supposed to have any judgment or tact whatever in military matters, or to be right even by accident.

General Stansbury says:

"The artillery, under the command of Captains Myer and Magruder, and the riflemen, the whole under the command of Major Pinkney, behaved in the most gallant manner (this gallant officer, in the course of the action, was severely wounded); but the superior force of the enemy, and the rapidity with which he moved, compelled them to retire. But one of the pieces was lost, and that was rendered harmless before it was abandoned.

"The enemy took every advantage of the cover afforded them by the trees of the orchard, and their light troops from thence kept up a galling fire on our line. On this part, when advanced nearer, the 5th regiment, under Colonel Sterett, opened a steady and well-directed fire, which was followed by the fire from the right, and ultimately from our centre, when the firing on both sides became general. After a few rounds the troops on the right began to break. I rode along the lines, and gave orders to the officers to cut down those who attempted to fly, and suffer no man to leave the lines. On arriving at the left of the centre regiment, I found Lieutenant-colonel Schutz's men giving way, and that brave officer, with Major Kemp, aided by my aid-de-camp, Major Woodyear, exerting themselves in rallying and forming them again. Captain Galloway's company, and part of Captains Randall's and Shower's companies, were rallied and formed again, and behaved gallantly. The rest of Colonels Shutz's and Ragan's regiments fled in disorder, notwithstanding the extraordinary exertions of their officers to prevent it. On the left, I soon after discovered a part of the 5th regiment giving way, and that excellent officer, Lieutenant-colonel Sterett, with those under him, most actively engaged forming them again. Soon after, the retreat became general, and all attempts to rally them and make a second stand were fruitless. With a body of United States cavalry, I endeavored to protect

the rear and right of the retreating men, so as to prevent their falling into the enemy's possession.

"The men under my command were worn down and nearly exhausted from long and forced marches, want of food, and watching. They had been, with very little intermission, under arms and marching from the time of their departure from Baltimore, with but little sleep, bad provisions, and but little opportunity to cook. They certainly were not in a situation to go into battle."

Lieutenant-colonel Sterett, the commander of the 5th regiment, is very brief in his account of the action. At the conclusion of it he says:

"The imposing front of the enemy was never disconcerted by the fire of the artillery or riflemen, and the brigade of General Stansbury was seen to fly as soon as the action became serious. No second line or reserve appeared to advance or support us, and we were outflanked and defeated in as short a time as such an operation could well be performed."

This statement of Colonel Sterett hardly does justice to his own countrymen and fellow-soldiers. All accounts show that the imposing front of the enemy was disconcerted by the artillery on his advance to the bridge---enough so to induce him to waive dignity for safety, and take refuge behind the houses and Lowndes' Hill. The British accounts alone are not to be relied on, because some of them exaggerate the resistance in order to magnify their own valor in overcoming it. But on comparing all accounts, American and British, it is evident that even Stansbury's brigade stood its ground long enough to show that, under different auspices, it would have performed its part well. Gleig, the writer of the "Campaign at Washington," states that the precipitate retreat upon it of our riflemen "threw it into disorder before it had fired a shot." Stansbury says that before his brigade broke "the firing on both sides became general," and that "after a few rounds the troops on the right began to break."

Sterett says that Stansbury's brigade "was seen to fly as soon as the action became serious." Probably among the circumstances which induced the men to think that matters were taking a serious turn were these: the shower of rockets among them; the hurried retreat of the riflemen upon them; the galling fire from the orchard; the continued advance of fresh troops of the enemy, amounting, as they had been informed, to eight or ten thousand veterans; no knowledge that any reserved troops were in their rear; and the conviction which every man of common sense among them must have felt, that, under these circumstances, to continue longer on the field would expose them to the danger of being cut to pieces. It is difficult to understand the motive for placing or keeping them in such a position. It was not a position to be defended at all hazards and at any cost of life, in order to gain time. What was the time wanted for? The troops in the rear were not advancing, nor does it appear that there was any design that they should advance. Further continuance in such a position could be only for the purpose of testing the experiment whether a body of raw militia-men, in an open field, and in pitched battle, could defeat four or five times their number of regular and veteran troops.

It does not appear how long the action with the first line lasted. Lieutenant-colonel Sterett's assertion that the line was "outflanked and defeated in as short a time as such an operation could well be performed," is altogether vague, and as he was a militia officer, probably never in action before, he could hardly have known the average time required, in general, to perform the operation of outflanking and defeating an army. Mr. John Law, whose statement we have already referred to, says that the Baltimore artillery fired about ten rounds before it retreated; and the last discharges of the artillery, which are usually the most destructive, were in this case the least so, as none of the advanced artillery was furnished with any other than round shot; and Mr. Pinkney states that the half-formed embrasures of the work in which the Baltimore artillery was placed rendered it "difficult, if not impracticable, to depress the guns in those embrasures (the ground of the

battery being considerably elevated) so as to touch the enemy after his near approach."

Cockburn states in his official dispatch that our army, 8000 strong, was "dislodged as soon as reached" by a division of the British army "not amounting to more than 1500 men." Admitting--- and the admission is certainly a charitable one---that he does not mistake the numbers on both sides, diminishing the one as much as he exaggerates the other, and that not more than 1500 of the British army had time to reach the field before the first line was defeated, still, in point of fact, those 1500 had to contend with not more than 700 of our own troops. They were protected by the orchard and barn, and by distance, from the fire of the 5th regiment and Stansbury's brigade. The only part of the line, exclusive of the advanced troops, which could have done them any damage, was Burch's battery of three pieces, and Captain Doughty's company, which was thrown forward, in crotchet form, on the left of Stansbury's line, and which opened an effective fire upon them while they were near the barn.

The British accounts describe but one battle. There were, in fact, two, as distinct as if they had taken place on different days and with different armies. The second line of the American army was nearly a mile in the rear of the first, and there had been no communication between them, no re-enforcement from one to the other, except that before the appearance of the enemy at Bladensburg Captain Doughty's company and Burch's company of artillery had been advanced from the second to the first line. None of the troops of the first line, after its defeat, retreated to or rallied upon the second line, which was left, therefore, to encounter the full force of an enemy inspired by its victory over the first line and outnumbering the second nearly two to one.

The enemy proceeded to make a simultaneous attack on both flanks of the second line, as they had upon the first, their right wing led by Colonel Brooke, of the 44th regiment, continuing up

the old Georgetown road in pursuit of the routed troops, and their left, under Colonel Thornton, advancing along the turnpike to the attack of Barney's battery. The reception which the commodore gave his visitors upon this occasion we shall leave him to relate in his own language, upon which we shall afterward make a few comments. After speaking of the heat of the weather, the crippled condition of his men from the severe marches they had experienced the days before, many of them being without shoes, and the hurried manner in which he had been compelled to take a position, he says:

"At length the enemy made his appearance on the main road in force, and in front of my battery, and on seeing us made a halt. I reserved our fire. In a few moments the enemy again advanced, when I ordered an eighteen-pounder to be fired, which completely cleared the road; shortly after, a second and a third attempt was made by the enemy to come forward, but all were destroyed. They then crossed over into an open field, and attempted to flank our right; he was there met by three twelve-pounders, the marines under Captain Miller, and my men acting as infantry, and again was totally cut up. By this time not a vestige of the American army remained, except a body of five or six hundred posted on a height on my right, from whom I expected much support from their fine situation.

"The enemy from this period never appeared in force in front of us; they pushed forward their sharp-shooters, one of whom shot my horse under me, who fell dead between two of my guns. The enemy, who had been kept in check by our fire for nearly half an hour, now began to outflank us on the right. Our guns were turned that way. He pushed up the hill about two or three hundred toward the corps of Americans stationed as above described, who, to my great mortification, made no resistance, giving a fire or two, and retired. In this situation we had the whole army to contend with. Our ammunition was expended, and, unfortunately, the drivers of our ammunition wagons had gone off in the general panic."

The commodore himself was severely wounded, and while lying in that condition on the ground, Ross and Cockburn came up to him,

behaved to him "with the most marked attention, respect, and politeness," had a surgeon brought and his wound dressed immediately. He says: "Captain Wainwright, first captain to Admiral Cochrane, remained with me and behaved to me as if I were a brother. During the stay of the enemy at Bladensburg I received every marked attention possible from the officers of the navy and army."

But these polite attentions did not prevent the commodore from afterward denouncing Ross for the misstatements contained in his official dispatch. In a communication to the National Intelligencer in relation to that dispatch, the commodore says:

"The general then goes on to state how his troops advanced, and by the irresistible attack of the bayonet the enemy got into confusion and fled. It would have been more to the honor of the general if he had told that his men never had it in their power to use the bayonet but once, and then declined it; for, after every attempt was made by his men to advance on the main road, and were driven by the artillery under my command into the field, they were rallied and again led on by Colonel Thornton, who advanced to within fifty yards of our position, where he was met by the marines under Captains Miller and Sevier, with the flotilla men. Colonel Thornton fell dangerously wounded. Captain Hamilton and Lieutenant Codd were killed. Lieutenant Stevely, of the 'King's Own,' also severely wounded. The veterans of the eighty-fifth and fourth, or 'King's Own,' gave way. So far from using the bayonet, they fled before our men, who pursued them, the sailors crying out to 'board' them. Nor did the enemy rally until they got into a ravine covered with woods, leaving their officers in our power. Then our men returned to their station. General Ross, in person, was obliged to take command, but dared not lead them on in front, but pushed out on our flank. Our ammunition being expended, we were necessitated to retire."

From this statement of Commodore Barney himself, it appears that his men did not, as others have asserted, stand by their guns until several of them were bayoneted. He, however, makes the most

of the part played by the men under his command, which was sufficiently creditable to them to render it unnecessary to enhance their merit by the reflections and innuendoes to the disparagement of others contained in his assertion that "by this time not a vestige of the American army remained, except a body of five or six hundred posted" on his right, which body, to his "great mortification, made no resistance, giving a fire or two, and retiring." The truth is, that none of the troops on his right or left retired until they had been ordered to retreat by the general-in-chief.

From Commodore Barney's statements it would appear that none of the troops of the second line performed any service except those under his command. But the light brigade of the enemy, in advancing through the defile near the bridge over the ravine, came within range of Peter's battery, which opened a cross fire upon them with considerable effect. After the first discharge from Barney's battery, the British eighty-fifth regiment was thrown out on its right with a view to carry the left flank of that battery; and having advanced within range of Magruder's regiment, met a reception which caused it to retrograde; and crossing the road in open order, it united with the fourth, which had deployed on the left on the margin of the ravine, coming in conflict there with Kramer's command, which, after a spirited resistance, fell back to the right of the line. The Subaltern in America speaks particularly of the severity of the fire from every part of the American line commanding the defile until the right of the line was flanked. The loss sustained here by the British, as well from the murderous discharge of grape from Barney's battery, which mowed down whole companies, as from the cross fire of Peter's battery and the discharge of musketry, exceeded, according to the accounts of the British officers who were present, that of any battle in which they had ever been engaged, considering the numbers of the contending forces.

In the mean time, the right wing of the British, under Colonel Brook, was approaching the left of Peter's battery, which,

for want of sufficient support, must soon have been carried. At this crisis, General Winder, who had been vainly endeavoring to arrest or direct the flight of his first line, arrived upon the ground, and perceiving his right flank in the act of being turned, and his left nearly in the same predicament, gave orders for the line to retreat. The manner in which the order was executed by General Smith we shall state in his own words:

"The order to retreat was executed by regiments and corps as they had been formed, and with as much order as the nature of the case would permit. The first and second regiments halted and formed, after retreating five or six hundred paces, but were again ordered by General Winder to retire. At this moment I fell in with General Winder, and, after a short conference with him, was directed to move on, and collect the troops, and prepare to make a stand on the heights westward of the turnpike gate. This was done as fast as the troops came up. A front was again presented toward the enemy, consisting principally of the troops of this District, a part of those who had been attached to them in the action, and a Virginia regiment of about four hundred men, under Colonel Miner, which met us at this place. While the line was yet forming, I received orders from General Winder to fall back to the Capitol, and there form for battle. I took the liberty of suggesting my impression of the preferable situation we then occupied; but, expecting that he might be joined there by some of his dispersed troops of the front line, he chose to make the stand there. Approaching the Capitol, I halted the troops, and requested his orders as to the formation of the line. We found no auxiliaries there. He then conferred for a few moments with General Armstrong, who was a short distance from us, and then gave orders that the whole should retreat through Washington and Georgetown. It is impossible to do justice to the anguish evinced by the troops of Washington and Georgetown on the receiving of this order. The idea of leaving their families, their houses, and their homes at the mercy of an enraged enemy was insupportable. To preserve that order which was maintained during the retreat was now no longer

practicable."

We can add our own testimony, as an eye-witness, to General Smith's statement of the effect which the final order to retreat had upon the troops under his command. Some shed tears, others uttered imprecations, and all evinced the utmost astonishment and indignation; for it was impossible for them to comprehend why troops who were willing to risk an encounter with the enemy should be denied the opportunity.

The official dispatch of General Ross states that the number of his killed on the 24th was 56, and wounded 185, including officers and men, but his real loss was more than double that number. Dr. Catlett, General Winder's staff-surgeon, who was permitted by the enemy to proceed to Bladensburg on the day after the battle to attend to some of our wounded, states that one of the British surgeons there informed him that they had that day buried about one hundred of their men on the field; and, after the retreat of the British, fifty or sixty were found and buried by our own men. Their wounded Catlett estimates at "three or four hundred, besides forty or fifty left in this city."

The loss on our side was 26 killed and 51 wounded.

John P. Kennedy Papers.

We marched on Sunday, the twenty-first---our regiment, the Fifth---accompanied by a battalion of riflemen, commanded by William Pinkney, then recently returned from England, where he had been our minister for several years, and now, at the date of this campaign, Attorney General of the United States. We had also with us a company of artillery, commanded by Richard Magruder, another member of the bar, and a small corps of cavalry from the Baltimore Light Dragoons*---Harry Thompson's company---the detachment being under the command of Lieutenant Jacob Hollingsworth.

A portion of Sterett Ridgeley's Hussars were also in the detachment. These were all volunteers of the city. My father was a member of Hollingsworth's command, and, with John Brown, an old schoolmate of mine, and three or four privates of the corps, served as videttes to our brigade.

It was a day of glorious anticipation, that Sunday morning; when, with all the glitter of a dress parade, we set forth on our march. As we moved through the streets, the pavements were crowded with anxious spectators; the windows were filled with women; friends were rushing to the ranks to bid us good-bye---many exhorting us to be of good cheer and do our duty; handkerchiefs were waving from the fair hands at the windows---some few of the softer sex weeping as they waved adieux to husbands and brothers; the populace were cheering and huzzahing at every corner, as we hurried along in brisk step to familiar music, with banners fluttering in the wind and bayonets flashing in the sun. What a scene it was, and what a proud actor I was in it! I was in the ecstasy

of a vision of glory, stuffed with any quantity of romance. This was a real army marching to a real war. The enemy, we knew, was in full career, and we had the certainty of meeting him in a few days. Unlike our customary parades, our march now had all the equipments of a campaign. Our wagon-train was on the road; our cartridge-boxes were filled; we had our crowd of camp servants and followers. Officers rode backward and forward along the flanks of the column, with a peculiar air of urgent business, as if it required everything to be done in a gallop---the invariable form in which military conceit shows itself in the first movements towards a campaign. The young officers wish to attract attention, and so seem to be always on the most important messages. As for me---not yet nineteen---I was too full of the exultation of the time to think of myself---all my fervor was spent in admiration of this glittering army.

'It were worth ten years of peaceful life
One glance at their array.'

I thought of these verses, and they spoke of my delight. It was not long before we were outside of the town, in full career on the Washington road. It was afternoon in warm August weather when we started. By sundown we reached Elk Ridge Landing, and there turned in upon the flat meadow ground that lies under the hills upon the further bank of the Patapsco, to pitch our tents for the night. Camp-kettles were served out to us and our rations of pork and hard bread. We formed our messes that evening, and mine, consisting of six members, who were consigned to one tent, was made up of pleasant companions. This was all new to us, and very amusing. The company consisted of gentlemen of good condition and accustomed to luxurious life, and the idea of a supper of fat pork and hard biscuit was a pleasant absurdity which

we treated as a matter of laughter. We had our own stores in the wagon to rely upon when we could get at them, and a short, active negro man as a servant for the mess, whom we took into service that evening from the crowd of stragglers who followed the column of march. The first care after getting our tent up was to hold a consultation about our domestic affairs, and it was then resolved that two of us should in turn serve as house-keeper, successively from week to week. The choice to-day fell upon Ned Schroeder and myself. We were to attend at the giving out of the rations and then to cook them. The mess was not likely to grow fat under our administration. Upon repairing to the quartermaster for our supplies, we were given a piece of pork of five or six pounds, a new camp-kettle, and a quantity of hard biscuit. Ned and I had a consultation upon the process of the cooking, the result of which was that we determined to put our pork in the kettle, to fill this with water to the brim, and then to set it over a brisk fire for two hours; so we set about it. To make the fire we resolved to signalize our service by that soldierly act which is looked upon as a prescriptive right---the robbing of the nearest fence of as many rails as suited our purpose---which we did like veterans, satisfying our conscience with the reflection that some time or other, perhaps, Congress would pay for the damage. We got up a magnificent flame, and by placing our kettle on a support of stones in its midst, we made sure that the cooking would soon become a happy success. This being done, we sauntered off to look at the evening parade, from which our culinary labors gave us exemption. In less than an hour we lounged back to take a view of the kettle. There it was, buried in a little mound of hot coals, the water all boiled out, and the iron red hot. In the bottom of this lurid pot we discovered a black mess which seemed to be reduced to a stratum of something resembling a compound of black soap in a semi-

liquid state, and on drawing the kettle out of the fire, and cooling it as quickly as we could, by setting it in water, we came to the perception that our supper, or at least as much of it as we had cooked, was a compost of charred bones, and a deposit of black fat, the whole plated over with the scales of iron which the heat had brought off in flakes from the kettle. Our comrades of the mess gathered around this ruin with amused interest, and we were voted a diploma for our admirable experiment in the art of dressing pork. We had found our company's wagon by the time this experiment was so finely concluded, and, with the help of Elijah, or Lige--- as our servant was called---found a very good resource for supper without the aid of the pork. We had coffee and chocolate, good bread and ham in abundance. The night was chilly, and I had come away without a blanket, trusting to a great coat which I thought would be sufficient for a summer campaign. Luckily, my father came along by our quarters, and perceiving my condition, went out and supplied my need by a contribution from a friend in the neighborhood. At the regulation hour, the members of the mess who were not detailed for guard duty---some four of us---crept into our tent, and arranging our blankets into a soft bed, laid down and fell into a hearty sleep which was only broken by the reveille the next morning. This was my first night of a regular campaign. The next day we marched from the Landing to Vansville, about twenty miles---halting an hour or so at Waterloo, then McCoy's Tavern, where we got our dinner---I mean my comrades and myself, having no need and not very willing to try another experiment in cooking for ourselves. The day was hot and portions of the road in deep sand. It was a great trial. We were in winter cloth uniform, with a most absurd helmet of thick jacked leather and covered with plumes. We carried, besides, a knapsack, in which---in my own case---I had packed a great coat, my newly acquired blanket, two or three shirts,

stockings, etc. Among these articles I had also put a pair of pumps, which I had provided with the idea, that, after we had beaten the British army and saved Washington, Mr. Madison would very likely invite us to a ball at the White House, and I wanted to be ready for it. The knapsacks must have weighed at least ten pounds. Then there was a Harper's Ferry musket of fourteen pounds. Take our burden altogether, and we could not have been tramping over those sandy roads, under the broiling sun of August, with less than thirty pounds of weight upon us. But we bore it splendidly, toiling and sweating in a dense cloud of dust, drinking the muddy water of the little brooks which our passage over them disturbed, and taking all the discomforts of this rough experience with a cheerful heart and a stout resolve. We joked with our afflictions, laughed at each other, and sang in the worst of time. The United Volunteers was the finest company in the regiment, about one hundred strong when in full array, but now counting eighty effective men. These were the elite of the city---several of them gentlemen of large fortunes. William Gilmore was one of them---a merchant of high standing; Meredith, who had so long been among the most distinguished at the bar, was another. It was what is called the crack company of the city, and composed of a class of men who are not generally supposed to be the best to endure fatigue, and yet there was no body of men in all the troops of Baltimore who were more ready for all service, more persistent in meeting and accomplishing the severest duty. To me personally labor and fatigue were nothing. I was inured to both by self-discipline, and I had come to a philosophic conviction that both were essential to all enjoyments of life, and beside this bit of philosophy, I was lured by the romance of our enterprise into an oblivion of its hardships.

The second day brought us to Vansville, by the way, a town consisting of one house, on the top of a hill, where stage-passengers stopped for a change of horses on the road to Washington; and at early dawn the next day---Tuesday morning, the 22d of August---we resumed the road, and reached Bladensburg about five in the afternoon, having marched very slowly, with many halts during the day, waiting for orders from the commander-in-chief. Reports were coming to us every moment of the movements of the enemy. They had passed Marlborough, and were marching on Washington, but whether they were on the direct road to the city, or were coming by Bladensburg, was uncertain. Our movements depended somewhat upon them. General Winder, who commanded the army immediately in front of the enemy, and was retiring slowly before him, was advised of our march, and was sending frequent instructions to our commander. Of course we in the ranks knew nothing of these high matters. All that we could hear were the flying rumors of the hour, which were stirring enough. One of Winder's videttes had come to us. He had a great story to tell. He was carrying orders to Stansbury, who was ahead of us, and fell in with a party of British dragoons, from whom he fled at speed for his life. The country in Prince George is full of gates; the highroads often lie through cultivated field, without side fences to guard them, and every field is entered through a gate which is always old and rickety, and swings to after your horse with a rapid sweep and a bang that threatens to take off his tail. One vidette, a Mr. Floyd, known to us in Baltimore, told us he had been pursued several miles by four of these dragoons. He reported that the British army had a corps of cavalry with them, and that being splendidly mounted, as we saw he was, and having General Winder's servant with him also mounted on a fleet horse, to open and hold open the gates for him, he had escaped and had

got up to us. This was all true as he told it, except that he was mistaken, as we found out the next day when we joined Winder, in one important particular, and that was, that his pursuers were not British dragoons, but four members of the Georgetown cavalry who fell into the same mistake. They supposed him a British dragoon, straggling from his corps, and gave him chase, feeling very sure from the direction they had pressed him to take, that they must soon drive him into our hands. It was only because they could not keep up with him that they failed to witness that happy denouement. This report of cavalry in the enemy's army, of course, furnished us, as green soldiers, with much occasion for remark and reflection. We had a pleasant evening in camp near Bladensburg. Our tents were pitched on the slope of the hill above the town on the eastern side of the river. Stansbury's brigade of drafted militia were there, and Winder, with the rest of the army, which altogether perhaps counted nine thousand men, was not far off. He was falling back before the march of the enemy, who could not have been more than ten or twelve miles off.

The afternoon towards sunset was mild and pleasant, and we had leisure to refresh ourselves by a bath in the Eastern Branch. Our camp was supplied with every comfort, and we did not depend upon the United States for our supper, for Lige was sent out to forage, with money to purchase what we wanted. He returned about dark with a pair of chickens and a handful of tallow candles, which seemed to be an odd combination; and upon being interrogated by me what it meant, he said he found them under the flap of a tent in Stansbury's brigade, and being perfectly sure they were stolen, he thought he would restore them to their proper owners. The stealing was probable enough, and we therefore had little scruple in consigning the fowls to Lige's attentions in the kitchen, and

finding ourselves with an extra supply of candles, we indulged the luxury of lighting some three or four, which, being fitted into the band of a bayonet with the point stuck in the ground, gave an unusual splendor to the interior of our tent. The keg in which we kept our biscuit---Jamison's best crackers---made the support of our table---a board picked from some neighboring house, and here we enjoyed our ease, and ham, chicken and coffee.

My feet were swollen and sore from my day's march in boots, such as none but a green soldier would ever have put on; so for my comfort, I had taken them off, and substituted my neat pair of pumps from the pocket of my knapsack, and in this easy enjoyment of rest and good fellowship, we smoked our cigars and talked about the battle of to-morrow until the hour when the order of the camp obliged us to extinguish our lights and 'turn in.'

I was too much excited by the novelty and attraction of my position and by the talk of my comrades in the tent, to get asleep much before midnight. About an hour after this---one o'clock---we were aroused by the scattered shots of our pickets, some four or five in succession, in the direction of the Marlborough road, and by the rapid beating of the long roll from every drum in the camp. Every one believed that the enemy was upon us, and there was consequently an immense bustle in getting ready to meet him. We struck a light to be able to find our coats, accoutrements, etc., but in a moment it was stolen away by some neighbor who came to borrow it only for a moment to light his own candle, and in the confusion forgot to return it. This gave rise to some ludicrous distresses. Some got the wrong boots, others a coat that didn't fit, some could not find their cross-belts. There

was no time allowed to rectify these mistakes. I, luckily was all right, except that I sallied out in my pumps. We were formed in line and marched off towards the front, perhaps a mile, and when we came to a halt, we were soon ordered to march back again to camp.

What was the cause of this sudden excursion and quick abandonment of it I never learned. But it was evident that there was a false alarm. On our return march our attention was called to the sudden reddening of the sky in the direction of the lower bridge of the Eastern Branch, by which the river road from Marlborough crossed to Washington. The sky became more lurid every moment, and at last we could discern the flames. A despatch which reached us when we got back to camp, and had just laid down again to sleep, brought us information that Winder had crossed the bridge and then burnt it to impede the march of the enemy, who, in consequence, was forced to direct his march upon the Bladensburg road. Winder himself was en route to join us, and we were ordered forthwith to break up our camp and march towards Washington. Here was new excitement---everything was gathered up in a few moments. All our baggage was tossed into our regimental wagon---knapsacks, provisions, blankets, everything but our arms. Among them went my boots. The tents were struck and packed away with the speed of the shifting of a scene upon the stage, and in half an hour from the time of receiving the order we were in full column of march upon the road. Descending into the village we crossed the bridge and moved toward Washington; but after making about two miles at a very slow pace, we found ourselves brought to a halt, and after this we loitered, as slow as foot could fall, along the road, manifestly expecting some order that should turn us back towards the village we had left. What a march that was! I never was so sleepy in my life. We had been too much

exhilarated in the early part of the night to feel the fatigue of our day's march, but now that fatigue returned upon me with double force. It was but an hour or two before day--- that hour when the want of sleep presses most heavily upon all animals that go abroad by day. Nothing could keep us awake. I slept as I walked. At every halt of a moment whole platoons laid down in the dusty road and slept till the officers gave the word to move on. How very weary I felt! The burning of the bridge lighted up the whole southern sky, but it had no power to attract our gaze. At length when we had reached a hill some three miles on our route, we were marched into a stubble field and told we might rest until daylight. Here we threw ourselves upon the ground without any covering, exposed to the heavy dew which moistened the earth and hung upon the stubble, and slept. Mine was the sleep of Endymion. When I awoke I was lying on my back with the hot sun of a summer morning beaming upon my face. Our orders were to march back to Bladensburg. Soon we had the famous 'trial of souls'---the battle of Bladensburg. The drafted militia ran away at the first fire, and the 5th regiment was driven off the field with the bayonet. We made a fine scamper of it. I lost my musket in the melee while bearing off a comrade, James W. McCulloch, afterwards the cashier of the Branch Bank of the United States in Baltimore, whose leg was broken by a bullet. The day was very hot, and the weight of my wounded companion great, and not being able to carry both, I gave my musket to a friend who accompanied me, and he, afterwards being wounded himself, dropped his own weapon as well as mine."

Unpublished correspondence of Henry Fulford* dated Baltimore,
Aug. 26, 1814.

* Henry Fulford, Baltimore volunteer and member of the Independent
Company.

"On Wednesday last at twelve o'clock the British attacked our army in a large field at Bladensburg where we had been drawn up in line for a considerable time to receive them. A stream of water passes through the town where the enemy entered on the opposite side from where we were posted. We had two companies of Baltimore artillery, commanded by Captains Magruder and Myers, placed a long way in front of our line of infantry, so as to rake the enemy as they passed over the bridge. The fire I think, must have been dreadfully galling, but they took no notice of it; their men moved like clock-work; the instant a part of a platoon was cut down it was filled up by the men in the rear without the least noise and confusion whatever, so as to present always a solid column to the mouths of our cannon; they advanced so fast that our artillery had to give way and fall back upon our line, where they commenced again and fired for a short time, when the 5th regiment was ordered to advance on the enemy and fire, which was obeyed and kept up for a considerable time. The British force was greatly superior in numbers to ours. It is my opinion that not one third of their army came into action at all, any further than by amusing themselves by throwing Congreve rockets at us. They were so strong that we had to give way. I think if we had remained ten minutes longer they would have either killed or taken the whole of us.

When the retreat was ordered, I shaped my course for a woods in the rear, where I intended to lay down and rest, being almost fatigued to death, but the bullets and grape

shot flew like hailstones about me and I was compelled to make headway for a swamp where I remained until I had strength sufficient to get to a little farm house where I was hospitably received and got refreshed. I started from this house about nine o'clock at night with a guide through woods and by-paths about five miles to Ross's Tavern, where I spent the remainder of the night. A part of the British force proceeded directly to Washington, which place they took possession of, destroyed everything in the Navy Yard, the Capitol and all other public buildings. They will be here in a few days and we have no force that can face them. I think the only way to save the town and state will be to capitulate."