Table Annexed to Article: John Armstrong's Notices of the War of 1812 in MR Text

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CHAPTER V.


Finding nothing in the plunder acquired on the coast of North Carolina either rich or rare, Cockburn speedily returned to Chesapeake bay; where, resuming his predatory system, he visited, in succession, Nonsing ferry, Matchedoc, Wicomico, St. Clement, Coon river, Marlborough, and St. Mary's — carrying off all the tobacco, grain, flour, household furniture, negroes, and bay or river craft, he could find; after which, the better to illustrate his labors, he set fire to the houses of such of the inhabitants as showed any disposition to defend their property.

Selecting, soon after, the shores of the Patuxent, as a new theatre for similar exploits, he pushed forward his gun-boats and barges into that river; when, somewhat to his surprise, and still more to his disappointment /1/
\{125\} he found himself opposed by a bold and practical seaman, who, recently placed in the command of a small flotilla of armed vessels, had already handled roughly a portion of his small craft, and, on more than one occasion, set at defiance even the brigs and frigates of his Britannic majesty.\(^\wedge\) Audacity like this, so affrontful to the British flag, and so little favorable to the rear-admiral's pecuniary views, could neither be overlooked nor pardoned; and hence it was, that, on Cochrane's arrival in the Chesapeake, the punishment of Barney, and the destruction of his flotilla, became the first object of the campaign.\(^\wedge\)

After detaching two small squadrons for purposes of demonstration, one in the direction of Baltimore, and another in that of Fort Washington, what remained of the armament, naval and military, ascended the Patuxent as high as Benedict, where the seamen and marines assigned to the water attack, were placed in boats, barges, and schooners; while the army, debarked on the southern bank of the river, began a covering march, pari passu with the ascending vessels. From causes indicated alike by professional precaution, the extreme heat of the weather, and the debilitated state of the troops,\(^\wedge\) the progress made by the assailants was uncommonly slow, nor was it till the evening of the 21st

> Barney's reports from the 1st to the 26th of June, 1814. — Historical Register, p. 117, vol. 4.

8 British campaigns at Washington, &c., p. 99.

8 " During this short march of six miles, a greater number of soldiers dropped out of the ranks, and fell behind from fatigue, than I recollect to have seen in any march in the peninsula, of thrice its duration." — /\em, p. 102.
of August, that the army reached Nottingham. Informed here, that their object of attack had taken a position higher up the river, and now lay at anchor off Pig’s Point, the chase was renewed in the morning of the 22d; when it was soon after discovered, that the flotilla, abandoned by Barney and his seamen, was now enveloped in flames.

Cockburn, finding his first and great object, thus quickly and cheaply obtained, lost no time in visiting Ross, and suggesting to him the adoption of another. The argument employed to obtain the General’s concurrence, was substantially as follows: — "Our antagonist, from deficiency of force, or want of confidence in what he has, having hitherto shown no disposition to obstruct our views, and having at last blown up his flotilla, which, if well fought, might have cost us many lives — may we not fairly conclude, that his defence of Washington will not be more vigorous? And if so, has not the condition on which we are permitted to attack that town arisen? It is true that Washington presents no object strictly military — a navy-yard comparatively empty, and a small and poor population — but we must not forget that inconsiderable in this view as it may be, it is the metropolis of the nation, and that names, as well in war as in peace, do much. By capturing it, we shall give no small eclat to our arms abroad; and to ourselves, a more solid gratification, if the government, to save the city, be disposed to make a liberal donation of their money."

1 Appendix, No. 23.

2 Statement made by Dr. Thornton, of the reasoning which in-
It can scarcely be supposed, that a dashing Irish General, who had acquired his morals as well as his tactics, in the Spanish war, would hesitate in adopting a project, addressed alike to his pride and his poverty. The arrangement was accordingly soon made; leaving behind a naval officer, and a party of seamen, to ship tobacco and other plunder at and near Marlborough, Ross and Cockburn, at the head of a column of three thousand five hundred combatants, unencumbered with baggage, and carrying with them only two 3-pounders, dragged by seamen, and three days' provision on their backs began a march in the evening of the 22d on Washington.

At this stage of our story, it becomes proper that we should no longer be silent with regard to the means of defence, prescribed by the President for the safety of the city and district. Officially informed on the 26th of June, of the pacification in Europe, and aware of the great disposable force, this event would give to Great Britain, in prosecuting her contest with the United States, the heads of departments, and the Attorney General, were convened on the 1st of July, for purposes of consultation; when it was decided —

1st. That ten or twelve thousand draughts, from the militia of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, should be held in reserve in their respective States, ready to march at a moment's warning.

duced an attack on Washington, as declared to him by the naval commander.

1 Dr. Catlett's estimate of the number of the British army. — See Appendix, No. 24.

2d. That not less than two, nor more than three thousand of the afore-mentioned draughts, should be as-
sembled for immediate service, at some central point between the Potomac and Baltimore. And,

3d. That the militia of the district of Columbia, forming two brigades, the 36th United States regiment of infantry, one battalion of the 38th, two companies of the 10th, one company of the 12th, two troops of regular dragoons, two companies of fencibles, and one hundred marines — making an aggregate of three thousand combatants — should constitute a corps at all times disposable, under the direction of the commanding General.

Nor will it appear from the report made by the congressional Committee of Inquiry, that any time was lost in giving effect to these measures, so far as their execution depended on the War Department. "On the 2d of July," says the report, "the tenth military district was constituted, and the command given to General Winder. On the 4th, a requisition on the States for 93,500 men was issued; on the 14th, the Governors of Pennsylvania and Virginia, acknowledged the receipt of the requisition, and promised promptitude. On the 10th, the Governor of Maryland was served with a copy of the requisition, and took measures to comply with it. On the 12th, Gen. Winder was authorized, in case of either menaced or actual invasion^ to call into service the whole of the Maryland quota (6,000 men); and, on the 18th, 5,000 from Pennsylvania, and 2,000 from Virginia; making an aggregate (the regular infantry and cavalry, marines, {129} flotilla men, and district militia included) of sixteen thousand six hundred men. Such was the measure of defence designated for military district No. 10, and such the measures taken by the War Department for assembling it, up to the 18th of July," twenty-six days before the enemy's approach to the capitol*.

It is not, however, to be dissembled, that much of
this force, from causes to be hereafter stated, was not found on the field of battle. As early as the 13th of August, the General having doubts whether the draughts made on Maryland for half her quota, would not be nearly a total failure, the Secretary of War, to supply the deficiency, adopted the expedient of accepting, as part of the six thousand men required from that State, such corps of militia, as were already organized and in service under State authority; which, with a number of volunteers, brought out by the exigence, had the effect of giving, in rank and file, on the 24th of August, six thousand three hundred and twenty-six combatants.

Of this force about one half was, on that day, stationed in or near Bladensburgh, to guard the approach by that route to the city; while the other moiety occupied a position on the southern end of the Eastern branch bridge; on the supposition, that "the enemy's first attack would be made on Fort Washington, in conjunction with Gordon's squadron, then ascending the Potomac." This ill-founded opinion was fortunately corrected, about 10 o'clock of the 24th, furnishing, however, barely time to unite the two brigades, when the head of the British column was seen fast approaching the village.

Ross's decision was soon taken; finding little in the appearance of his enemy to inspire respect, and bred up in a school in which audacity was generally found to be wisdom, he at once made a rush at the head of his elite, not exceeding fifteen hundred combatants;
crossed the bridge which his adversary had forgotten to destroy or obstruct; threw out a few sharp-shooters and rocket-men on his flanks; directed his column of attack on the American batteries; and, in a period of time almost incredibly short, succeeded in putting to rout the whole of Winder's first line; after which, all further contest on our part being thought hopeless, a general retreat was ordered.

No immediate pursuit was either made or intended by Ross — the effect of two causes — his hopes from * negotiation, as already suggested, and the exhaustion and absence of a large part of his army. Two hours were accordingly given for the arrival of the absent, and the refreshment of all; when the march was resumed, and continued till within a mile and a half of the capitol. At this point, being sufficiently assured of Winder's retreat to Georgetown, orders were issued

I Winder's report.

* Cockburn's official report of the action.

3 For the condition of the British army, before arriving at Bladen*-burgh, see Appendix, No. 25.

{131} for bivouacking the troops for the night; while the two commanders, naval and military, accompanied by a small escort, not exceeding two hundred men, entered the city, visited the public buildings, set a price on their ransom, and detached an agent to open a negotiation with some competent American authority, on the subject. The return of the messenger with a rejection of the terms, became the signal for destruction; when every national building, excepting the postoffice, was speedily consumed. The greater part of the 25th was employed in carrying out this policy at the navy-yard, Greenleaf's point, and the Potomac bridge; after which, a retreat, under many precautions, was begun
in the night, and, with the exception of a few pauses, continued till the 27th, when the troops arrived at Nottingham. The 28th being employed in removing the wounded, the artillery, and the plunder, and the 29th in resuming their former position at Benedict; they were soon after embarked and carried to the shipping.

It has been already stated, that, when Ross and Cockburn began their expedition on Barney's flotilla, two naval demonstrations were deemed necessary — one in the direction of Baltimore, the other in that of Washington — for the obvious purpose of preventing any part of the force assembled at either place from aiding in the defence of Barney. Sir Peter Parker, to whom the command of the vessels ascending the

1 The only American having any connexion with this negotiation, was Dr. Thornton, as the facts were reported to us. Of the proposition itself, the President spoke with becoming contempt.

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Chesapeake had been given, being informed, while lying off Waltham farm, that a body of militia had assembled in the neighbourhood, he hastily determined to carry the camp by a night attack, and, with this view, debarked about two hundred men in the evening of the 29th of August. The movement, though made with much circumspection, could not entirely escape the vigilance of the American commander, whose patrols soon discovered and speedily reported the landing of the party, and the direction given to their march. Instead, therefore, of finding, as he had expected, the militia either scattered or asleep. Sir Peter found them carefully imbodied, strongly posted, and wide awake. After a moment’s pause, the attack was directed on the centre of the American line, but, failing to make any serious impression upon it, was soon extended to the flanks, when, the firing becoming general, two effects were
produced — an exhaustion, nearly total, of ammunition on the part of the militia; and on that of the seamen, the loss of their gallant leader — circumstances inducing a retreat, nearly simultaneous, of both parties.^

Captain Gordon, who commanded the Potomac squadron, was more fortunate. Beginning his movement on the 17th, under orders "to ascend the river as high as Fort Washington, and try upon it the experiment of a bombardment," he, on the 27th, reached the neighborhood of that post, when, after discharging a single shell, doing no injury to either the fort or its garrison, the latter was found to be rapidly retreating. Thus promptly anticipated in the accomplishment of his object, the captain brought up his squadron in front of Alexandria, where, on the 29th, he prescribed the only terms on which the city could be saved from plunder and destruction.^

It will not be thought extraordinary, that, in choosing between total and partial ruin, there should be little if any hesitation on the part of a defenceless town, the male population of which did not then exceed one hundred combatants. Gordon's terms, though hard and humiliating, were accordingly speedily accepted, and would no doubt have been rigidly enforced, had not the discretion of that officer, getting the better of his rapacity, admonished him of the danger of continuing longer in a position, necessarily exposing his retreat to many physical embarrassments, to which might soon
be added others of a more menacing character — hot shot on his flanks, and fire-ships on his rear. Under these views of the case, the British commander ameliorated his conditions, and contenting himself with such booty as could be most promptly transported, began his retreat on the 3d of September, and, though actually encountering much of the danger he had anticipated,* was able on the 9th, by a combination of skill, diligence, and good fortune, to anchor securely his whole squadron, with twenty-one prize-vessels laden with booty.

The speedy and successful issue of the attacks made on Washington and Alexandria, could not fail to suggest a similar enterprise on Baltimore, and the less so, as the approaching stormy season made an immediate prosecution of any more important object unsafe for both fleet and army. This new project was therefore promptly adopted, and means taken to give it a speedy and successful execution. On the 10th, a large portion of the fleet, carrying with it the army, now increased to six thousand combatants, began its movement up the Chesapeake, and on the 11th, presented itself off the mouth of the Patapsco. Early on the 12th, the troops were landed at North Point, while the frigates and bomb-ketches ascended the river and took such positions as would best enable them to sustain the intended attack on the city.

Ross, who knew well the value of moments in the discharge of military duty, lost no time in seeking his enemy, and approaching his object. Meeting, after a
rapid march in the morning of the 12th, an advanced party of the city militia, he hastened to put it to flight, when a skirmish ensued, which, though of small importance in other respects, was marked by a circumstance, having a powerful influence on the character and issue of the expedition. It will readily occur to the reader, that, in making this statement, we allude to the death of the British commander, who, in the constant habit of leading his attacks, and thus giving to his columns the impulse of his own chivalrous excitement, had, on this occasion, driven from a covering of sedge and underwood, a few militia riflemen, one of whom firing upon him, inflicted a wound which in a few minutes terminated his life and his labors.

The command of the army, now devolving on Col. Brooke, of the 44th British regiment, the march was resumed, and a battle fought, of one hour and twenty minutes' continuance, much to the credit of General Strieker and his militia, if we take into consideration the relative strength of the combatants — which, in point of number, was as six to three in favor of the enemy. Strieker's retreat being undisturbed by Brooke, was made in good order to a position one mile and a half from the city; where the brigade bivouacked for the night.

During the occurrence of these events, Vice-Admiral Cochrane, who had taken on himself the direction of the naval attack, was busily employed in testing the capacity of bombs and rockets, in reducing forts and batteries. Ascending, as already stated, the Patapsco, with a fleet of frigates, rocket and bomb-ketches, and anchoring these at the prudent distance of two miles from the guns of his enemy, he began a bombardment on Fort McHenry, which lasted twenty-five hours. During this attack, he threw fifteen hundred shells; four hundred of which exploded within the walls of the fort; but without making any unfavorable impres-
sion on either the strength of the work, or the spirit of
the garrison -^ a fact which, added to that of the fate

i The defence of the fort was under the immediate direction of

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of Ross, soon brought the Admiral to the conclusion,
that " the demonstration,^^ as he called it, " had been
carried sufficiently far," and that his Britannic Majesty’s
interests would be best promoted by withdrawing both
fleet and army, and descending the bay to their former
station.^

Brooke, who, after his combat of the preceding day,
had cautiously followed in the track of Strieker, had
now gained a position, which gave him a distinct view
of Chincapin Hill, and a chain of redoubts and in-
trenchments, abundantly supplied with cannon, and
bristling with bayonets;^ which had no tendency to
lessen his respect for the opinion of the Vice-Admiral —
to which he promptly subscribed ; and availing himself
accordingly of a dark night, and a heavy rain, began
and accomplished a retreat of twelve miles to the
neighborhood of North Point; where the army was
again taken on board the shipping. This movement
not having been discovered by the besieged, till after
daylight, no pursuit of the enemy could be successfully
made.

While the preceding events took place in the south,
others not wholly unworthy of notice, occurred in the
east. In despite of the coquetry which had hitherto

thp late gallant Colonel George Armistead of the U. S. corps of
artillery.

1 Cochrane's official report.
The veteran who had superseded Gen. Winder, in the command of the district, knew well the value of defensive works, and was careful to supply them. It will not be forgotten, that the distinguished officer to whom we allude, was the late General S. Smith, of Baltimore.

 existed between British authorities and our eastern Magi,' fleets were assigned, early in the spring, for blockading the ports of New York, New London, and Boston; and for inflicting on smaller seacoast establishments such chastisement, as, in the opinion of the commanding naval officer, might be deemed advisable. In the exercise of this discretionary authority, two launches, and four barges, strongly manned and armed, entered the river Connecticut, on the 7th of April, and ascending as high as Petty Paugh point, destroyed four ships, as many brigs, and nine smaller vessels. Visits of similar character were soon after made to Warehara and Scituate, in Massachusetts; where several vessels were burnt, and other outrages committed.

Admonished by these repeated acts of hostility, directed on small trading towns wholly unprepared for defence, the inhabitants of Stonington wisely determined to construct a battery, equip it with ordnance and ammunition, and place in it a few volunteers, on whose fidelity and courage, they could entirely rely. This measure, though obviously one merely of precaution, was not regarded as such, by the senior naval officer on the station. Affecting to see in it, not only intentions of ordinary hostility, but projects the most malignant and barbarous in relation to the squadron he commanded, Sir T. Hardy hastened to present himself and a number of armed vessels, in front of the town; making three demands upon it: 1st, that the

» See Sherbrook's proclamations.

t Torpedo attack?.
family of Mr. Stewart' be speedily removed on board of the shipping; 2d, that the fort be immediately dismantled; and, 3d, that the torpedo be either made, kept, or used by the inhabitants;" to which was added a menace, "that if not complied with, the town should be destroyed." After due consideration, (in concert with Brigadier-General Gushing of the United States army, commanding the district,) the following determination was manfully taken — that "No. 1 of the demands, be referred for decision to the national government; and that Nos. 2 and 3, be peremptorily rejected — inasmuch as to dismantle a fort, or to limit ourselves in the use of weapons, on the mandate of an enemy, would be degrading to the American character, and unwise, as regards our peculiar interests."^1

It will be readily supposed, that, on receiving an answer so entirely unexpected. Sir Thomas would not be slow in trying the effect of his professional persuaders — balls, shells, and rockets, in reconciling the population of a small trading village, to the terms he had offered. Positions, proper for the purpose, were accordingly given to the ships, when a cannonade and bombardment, accompanied by showers of rockets, opened on the town and battery, and continued without remission for several hours of the 9th and 10th; when finding the attack hopeless, and some of his vessels not uninjured, the British commander weighed his anchors, spread his sails, and withdrew from the harbor. "Such," says General Gushing, "was the issue of a conflict.

1 A British consul whose family resided at Sionington.

2 See Gen. Cushing's letter to the Secretary of War.
between a land battery, fighting only three guns, and a number of armed vessels, fighting more than one hundred! What a lesson of encouragement to us, and of discouragement to the enemy."

The time had however arrived, when operations of this kind were to give place to others of more ambitious character; when, in a word, a war of conquest was to be substituted, for one of pillage and destruction. In pursuance of this new system, a fleet and army were put at the disposal of General Sir J. Sherbrooke and Admiral Griffith, with orders "to overrun and subjugate all that part of Massachusetts Bay lying on the eastern side of Penobscot river." Nor will the wisdom of this selection be questioned, when we add, that the entire purpose of the campaign was accomplished, with little if any loss, within the short term of a few weeks; Eastport, Castine, and Machias, falling in succession, without resistance. Encouraged by these successes to enter the interior and complete the conquest, the British commander was preparing to do so, when General Brewster (acting understate authority) made a formal surrender of the whole territory, to the arms and dominion of his Britannic majesty!^  

1 Gen. Cushing's second letter to the Secretary of War of the 10th of August, 1814. See also his public letter of the same date.

2 "I beg leave to congratulate you on this important accession of territory, which has been wrested from the enemy. It embraces one hundred miles of seacoast, and includes that intermediate tract of country separating the province of New Brunswick from Lower Canada. We have taken twenty-six pieces of ordnance, &c., and I have the pleasure to add, that this service has been effected with out the loss of a man, on our part." — A Pilkington's official report

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Remarks. The error of first occurrence in this campaign, belongs exclusively to the administration; and
will be found, in the selection made of a commanding General, not on the ground of distinguished professional service or knowledge, but simply on a presumption, that, "being a native of Maryland, and a relative of the governor, Brigadier Winder would be useful in mitigating the opposition to the war, and in giving an increased efficiency to national measures, within the limits of the state;" — an opinion which, though somewhat plausible, was wholly unsustained by the event.^

2d. The first duty assigned to this officer, under his new" appointment, was to select a central point between the Potomac and Baltimore, for the rendezvous and encampment of two or three thousand militia draughts, to be called into immediate service. It was not, however, till the 16th of July, that anything having relation to this object was received from him; and what he then offered, w^ as of so undecided a character, as, in his own opinion, made necessary another and careful examination." Of this new labor and its result, no

to Lieutenant-General Sir John Sherbrooke, dated lAth of September, 1814, Machias.

1 The person recommended by the Secretary of War for this appointment, was Brigadier-General Moses Porter, then at Norfolk, whose whole life may be said to have been military. Entering the army of the revolution a boy, he had, by uniform good conduct, risen through every rank, from that of a private to the command of a brigade. No objection to General Winder, excepting a want of military experience, either was, or could be made; his patriotism and courage had been already tested, and were generally acknowledged.

' Winder's official report.

report was made till the 23d; when, somewhat to the surprise of the cabinet, Bladensburgh was announced as the site, chosen for a central camp between Baltimore
and the Potomac!

3d. In the next experiment made of the General’s executive powers, they were not found to be more successful in procuring militia than they had been in selecting a place, proper for its rendezvous and encampment. On the 12th of July, he had been authorized to call from Maryland the whole of her quota, (6,000 men,) and on the 16th he reported, that "the governor and council had taken the necessary steps for immediately complying with the requisition." On the 20th, he says: "I have seized a moment to visit Annapolis, and arrange the calling of the Maryland militia; this will be immediately complied with by the governor." On the 23d, he adds: "The governor has issued orders for calling three thousand militia to form the camp at Bladensburgh," yet, on the 13th of August, he discovers that the governor’s call would prove nearly abortive; as, instead of giving three thousand men, "it would not bring together more than three hundred."^ "^-

What, it may be asked, under a failure so menacing, on the part of Maryland, was the obvious duty of the General? Unquestionably to call, without losing a moment, on the states of Pennsylvania and Virginia, for their several quotas. Such, however, was not the course adopted. No demand for troops was made on the former, till the 18th of August; and then, instead of calling for five thousand men, the requisition was limited to five hundred. The call on Virginia was not more prompt, being also deferred till the 18th; when, like that on Pennsylvania, it failed "from a want of notice seasonably given."

4th. Nor was the General’s conduct different in relation to corps actually under arms and awaiting his
orders. Stansbury's brigade, though called from Balti-
more on the 20th, was halted for two days on the road,
from an apprehension that, "if permitted to come on,
he would arrive too soon." Sterret's detachment, call-
ed also on the 20th, was ordered to halt at Snowden's
till otherwise directed. Hood's regiment, taken into
service about the middle of August, was left at An-
napolis till the 23d, from a belief that that city formed
the enemy's point of attack. When on the 22d a re-
treat was ordered, for the purpose of assembling his
whole force, unfortunately the motive for making it was
forgotten, the General neither joining Stansbury at
Bladensburgh, nor suffering Stansbury to join him at
the Eastern-branch bridge; thus directly exposing both
corps to be beaten in succession. Young's brigade,
withdrawn by the General's order, from the covering
position it held in the rear of Fort Washington, was,
on the 24th, ordered to cross the Potomac; whence it
followed that its service was lost at both points — at
Bladensburgh in the battle, and at Fort Washington,
when Gordon's squadron appeared before it." Minor's
regiment arriving late on the 23d at Washington, was
stationed by the General on Capitol Hill early on the

' Stansbury's Report.

2 Young's Report, No. 27 of the Appendix.

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24th, with orders "there to await his farther direction,"
which being altogether omitted, had, as in the case
of Young's brigade, the effect of keeping it some miles
distant from the army and the action. Again: though,
in the morning of the 24th, expecting every moment
an attack at the Eastern-branch bridge, the General
gravely proposed detaching from his effective force,
Barney's corps of six or eight hundred men, to Green-
leaf's point and the navy-yard — places remote from
each other, and having no direct bearing on the defence
of the city; and where, had his proposal been approved, they must have fallen uselessly, and the battle at Bladensburgh been deprived of the only circumstance in it, creditable to the arms and consolatory to the pride of the nation. Nor was this all; for though assured, at 10 o'clock, A. M., of the 24th, that Ross was marching directly on Bladensburgh with his whole force, and that Stansbury's brigade, unless speedily reinforced, would be utterly unable to withstand the approaching attack, it was not till 11 o'clock that any order was given to Smith's corps to sustain it; and to render still more striking the indecision, Barney, and his seamen and marines, were left behind at the special request of the General, to explode a few barrels of gunpowder, placed under the Eastern-branch bridge, should Ross's movement on Bladensburgh turn out to be a ruse.

Having thus detailed such acts of the General as directly tended to lessen his means of defending the city, we now proceed to show the use made of those

1 Smith's Report to the Committee of Inquiry.

2 Idem.

{144} he had, when, at 12 o'clock, he determined to risk a field fight with his adversary. And, in performing this duty, the better to avoid injustice to all concerned, we shall make the principal actors in the scene, the expositors of the story.

"The two brigades," says the commanding General, "being united about 12 o'clock, of the 24th, the enemy was seen rapidly descending from Lownd's hill into the village; when an order was given to the advanced artillery to open a fire upon him, which occasioned the head of the column to leave the street, and to creep down under the cover of houses and trees in loose or-
der, so as not to expose themselves to risk from our shot. It was, therefore, only occasionally that an object presented, at which our artillery could fire. In this sort of suspension, the enemy began to throw his rockets, and his light troops 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 fordable, and, in most places, lined with bushes and trees, which were sufficient to conceal the movements of light troops, who act in the manner of theirs, singly. Our 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 invisible — 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, where they halted, and seemed about returning to their position, but in a few minutes entirely broke, and retired to the left of Stansbury's line. I immediately ordered the 5th Baltimore regiment 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 of Stansbury's line — when a universal flight of these two regiments was the consequence. This leaving the right of the 5th 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 5th, 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 Showers, and an officer 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 5th. I directed them to take post on a rising ground, which I pointed out in the rear. The 5th, 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 the 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 the 5th, and the artillery, 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 5th 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 5th, and artillery, to retire up the hill toward a wood, more to the left, and a little in 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 instantly to countermand this order, and direct the ar-
artillery to fire into a wooden ham, 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 5th still more, in wounding several of them; and a strong column of the enemy having passed up the road, on the right of the 5th, and beginning to deploy into the field to take them in flank, I directed the artillery to retire to the hill to which I had directed the Baltimore artillery to proceed and halt, and ordered the 5th 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."

Stansbury's narrative presents nearly the same results, but with the addition of a circumstance which Winder altogether omits, though materially affecting the progress and issue of the combat. "After," he says, "giving an order of battle to the first line, on returning from a short visit to the artillery, I found that RagaTi's and Shutz's regiments had been moved from the jilace where I had stationed them, to a hill upward of Jive hundred yards in the rear of the artillery and riflemen; where, uncovered by the trees of the orchard, their situation and numbers were clearly seen by the enemy, and the flanks of the artillery and riflemen made liable to be turned. Again — while conversing with General Winder, the dth regiment was taken out of the orchard, marched up to the hill, and, as before observed, the luhole at so great a distance from the artillery and riflemen, that they had to contend with the whole British force. Whose plan this was, I know not; it was not mine, nor did it meet with my apprO' bation.'^
5th regiment," he says, "which had been removed from a position where it might have contrived to repulse the enemy, in his attempts to leave the bridge, had now, to the great discouragement of my companies, and of the artillery, been made to retire to a hill, several hundred yards in the rear. The two companies of General Stansbury's brigade, acting as riflemen, had changed their position, so that I no longer perceived them. The residue of the brigade had been moved from the left, and made to take ground (invisible to us by reason of the intervening orchard) on the right of the 5th regiment, with its own right resting on the main road, and disclosed to the enemy."

It is only in the following report, that we are made acquainted with this busy and blundering tactician, whom Stansbury does not know, and whom Pinckney will not name. "The bth regiment,'" says Sterret, ^' was formed under the direction of Colonel Monroe, on the left, and in line with General Stansbury^ s brigade.^^ " I ought also to notice, that the frst line formed on the battle ground, was changed, under the direction of Colonel Monroe.^^ In addition to this information, Colonel Sterret adds: "The action commenced about one o'clock, by an attack on the redoubt, where the riflemen and artillery were placed. These soon retired, and the 5th covered their retreat, and kept up a lively fire, and supported their place in line with firmness, until the enemy had gained both flanks, when the order to retreat was given, hy General Winder {149} himself. The imposing front of the enemy was never disconcerted by the fire of the artillery or the riflemen, and the brigade of General Stansbury was seen to fly, as soon as the action became serious. JVb 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."

The last statement we offer, is that made by Com-
modore Barney, who says: — *' After receiving orders to withdraw my guns and men from the Eastern-branch bridge, we proceeded immediately to Bladensburgh, to join the army. The day was hot, and my men much crippled by the severe marches made for some days before. I preceded the men, and when I arrived at the line which separates the district from Maryland, the battle began. I sent an officer back to hurry up the men, who came on at a trot. We now took our position on the rising ground, put the pieces in battery, posted the marines and seamen, acting as infantry, on my right to support the pieces, and thus waited the approach of the enemy. During this period, the engagement continued; the enemy advancing, and our army retreating before them, apparently, in much disorder. 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 minutes, he again advanced, when I ordered an 18-pounder to be fired, which completely cleared the road. Shortly after, a second and a third attempt were made to come forward, when all were destroyed. They then crossed over into an open field, and attempted to turn our right flank, where they were met by the fire of three 12-pounders, the marines under Captain Miller, and the men acting as infantry, and again were totally cut up. By this time, not a vestige of our army remained, excepting a body of five or six hundred posted on a height, 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 sharpshooters, one of whom shot my horse, who fell dead under me, between two of my guns. The enemy thus kept in check by our fire for more than an hour, now began to outflank us on the right. Our guns were therefore turned that way, when they pushed two or three hundred men up the hill, toward the corps stationed as abovementioned, which, to my great mortification, made no resistance; giving a fire or two, and then retreating. In this situation, we had the whole army of the enemy to contend with; our ammunition was expended, and, unfortunately, the drivers of my ammunition-wagons had gone off in the general panic. At this time, I received a severe wound in my thigh; Captain Miller was also wounded, Sailing-Master Warner killed, and Sailing-Master...
Martin wounded; but, to the honor of my officers and men, as fast as their companions and messmates fell at the guns, they were instantly replaced from the infantry."

Before concluding this article, a brief detail of the rules of war applying to the case, may not be useless.

1. In defensive war, when local and other circumstances forbid fortification, the true resource of the weaker power, will be found in a speedy adoption and strict observance of partisan principles — constant vigilance and unremitting activity. “By these,” says a high authority, “much may be done. The former will sufficiently secure against danger; and the latter, by multiplying small attacks, made by day and by night, on the camp-guards, detachments, and communications of an enemy, will greatly retard his progress, diminish his strength, and, not improbably, exhaust his patience."

Of this important rule, the first injunction only was remembered. Care sufficient was taken to avoid danger; but of the multiplied attacks directed by the second, nothing was seen during the five days of campaign which preceded the 24th of August — whence it followed, that the strength, progress, and patience, of the enemy, underwent neither change nor disturbance till that day.

2. “Pitched battles generally decide the fate of a campaign, and not unfrequently, that of a war; whence it follows as a rule, that conflicts of this kind should never be hazarded by an army hastily collected, and wholly unpractised in war, when contending with another, highly disciplined, well equipped, ably commanded, and nearly, if not entirely, equal to itself in numerical force."

This rule, imperative as it is, was disregarded — a fact the more extraordinary, as the General well knew the high military character of the enemy, and even believed his numerical force to be equal, if not superior, to his own ; while of the American army he declared, that not two men of the whole, knew anything of military service.

3. "The first duty of a General determined to risk a field-fight, and having the choice of ground on which to do it, is to select a position adapted to the arras, number, and character, of the troops at his disposal; and thus qualify
himself for the high additional duty of giving to the whole a corresponding order of battle."

This rule, like its predecessors, escaped the General's notice. He was compelled, as we have seen, to fight a battle on ground unfit for the purpose, and on dispositions made of his troops, by men wholly ignorant of war, either as an art or a science.

4. "In orders of battle of two lines, the second takes the character, and performs the duties of a reserve." It cannot but be thought extraordinary, that a rule so obvious, should have been either unknown or disregarded by men wearing the badge, and exercising the authority of generals; yet such was the fact — Winder, in his excitement, overlooked it, and Smith and his brigade showed no inclination to perform the duty.

» Winder's letter to the Committee of Inquiry. At page 158, of the report to Congress of this committee, we find the following description given by the General of the army he commanded: "A mass of men suddenly assembled, without organization or discipline, or officers of any the least knowledge of service, excepting Major Peters; or if any, unknown to me." Yet to officers thus described — to Slansbury and Smith — he assigns the duty of choosing his position, and to Mr. Monroe, that of forming his order of battle!

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5. "When retreat becomes necessary, the orders for making it should always be accompanied with a short and well-defined designation of a point for reunion. It is only by a strict observance of this rule, that the evils arising from a total dispersion of force, can be avoided." It cannot be forgotten, that in the present case, the omission to give out a rallying point, produced a dispersion of force, which formed the only plausible reason, for refusing to occupy and defend the capitol.^^
6. "If, in a retreat, a beaten army find on its route a defensible position — such as villages and strong isolated buildings often furnish — it should be promptly seized, and strenuously defended." Military history offers many instances in which armies beaten in the field, have, by acting on this rule, become eventually the victors. Our own chronicles present a distinguished case of this kind, in the gallant and successful defence made of Chew's house, by Colonel Musgrave and six hundred British infantry, in the campaign of 1777, when assailed by a large portion of the American army, commanded by General Washington in person. If the two cases be examined in their several relations — the greater force of Winder than that of Musgrave for defence; the smaller force of Ross than that of Washington for attack; and the decided superiority of the capitol to Chew's house for position — the conclusion is irresistible, that, had Winder followed this example and defended the capitol, the result would have been as fortunate in the one case, as it was discreditable in the other — the city would have escaped outrage, the capitol destruction, the army censure, and the nation disgrace.

1 Appendix, No. 28. {154}

2 Appendix, No. 29. {155}