

them without much scruple to destroy the American settlements and fortified posts. No commander sent against them up to the Fall of 1813 had been able to make headway. Many posts had been lost and Indian outrages of the most appalling description had occurred again and again. With or without reason it was supposed that the British officers had not tried very hard to check the savages. The government at London was planning to bind their allies permanently to their interest by erecting an ostensibly independent Indian Territory in the West from the region now included in Michigan and Ohio. This land had been given to the United States by the Treaty of Independence, but the British felt no scruples against taking it back again if they could. They planned to hold control over the Indians and thus set up a standing menace to the Union. No doubt they expected to push the advantage thus gained and win back the entire Mississippi Valley before a great while. At the Treaty of Ghent, which closed the war, they made the erection of this territory an indispensable condition at first, but by that time Perry's victory, with McDonough's in the succeeding Summer, had altered matters a good deal on the frontier and the plan was dropped.

Barclay, the British commander on Lake Erie, does not seem to have exerted himself very actively while Perry was assembling his apology for a fleet. He might have sailed into Erie harbor where the Americans were at work almost any day and burned every ship Perry had. Virtually there was no way to defend them against a vigorous attack. The seamen at hand were few and the Pennsylvania militia, which was depended upon for protection, played the old game, which was familiar to state troops in that war. At the critical moment they refused to obey their officers and the officers were too timid to try to compel them to do their duty. Luckily Barclay was lethargic and the ship building went on undisturbed until the fleet was ready. Then came the problem of getting the vessels over the bar of Erie harbor. There were only five feet of water while the Lawrence and Niagara required several feet more, being vessels of 500 tons, built of green timber. To bring them outside the harbor Perry was obliged to remove their guns and buoy them up with hollow tanks. These he filled with water and sunk, making them fast to the ships. Then he pumped the water out and their lifting power raised the ships until they were able to float over the bar. This was a difficult and perilous operation. Had Barclay chosen to attack while it was going on every-thing would have been lost. But he looked calmly on and did nothing. Certainly Providence seemed to help Perry by stupefying his enemy.

As soon as Perry was outside the bar he sailed around the lake, restoring American prestige and cutting off the supplies of the British. Their 14,000 Indian allies required a liberal allowance of food, which