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General Jacob Brown. A Bucks County Hero of the War of 1812.

BY REV. D. K. TURNER, HARTSVILLE, PA.

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Many of the native citizens of Bucks county took part in the war which the Government of the United States felt compelled to declare against Great Britain in 1812. None of them, however, rose to such eminent distinction as Gen. Jacob Brown, and it seems not inappropriate to spend a little time in dwelling upon his life, his character and his achievements.

Born in Falls township about three and a half miles below Morrisville, near the banks of the Delaware river, May 9, 1775, he was fourth in descent from one of the earliest settlers of Pennsylvania. His father, Samuel Brown, was a faithful member of the Society of Friends. His ancestors had lived in the county almost a hundred years, and the family were deeply imbued with love for America and her institutions, though there is no evidence that any of them disregarded the requirements of their religious faith by taking up arms to engage in warfare.

At the period of his youth schools were few in number and widely scattered, and he gained from teachers, only the simple rudiments of learning. But like many others who have made their mark in the world, he endeavored to train his own mind and to secure knowledge by reading and study in private. So successful was he in these exertions, that at the age of eighteen he began teaching at Crosswicks, N. J., eight miles from Trenton, where there was a Friends Meeting, under whose special care probably the school was. About three years elapsed in this congenial employment, during which time he enlarged his acquaintance with the science and practice of surveying land.

When he reached his majority in 1796 he went to Cincinnati, Ohio, then a small straggling village, surrounded by an almost pathless wilderness. The infant city was laid out in 1788,

only eight years previously, on a patent, obtained by John Cleves Symmes, of New Jersey, and was settled by a colony from that State. Probably the subject of this sketch and Symmes were acquainted, as they were together in some of the same battles in the last war with England, and it may have been through Symmes' influence that Brown turned his steps toward the West. His journey from Pittsburg was made down the Ohio river on a boat, or ark, managed by oars and poles, the only means of transportation at that day between the two places. In 1790, six years before his visit, emigrants were often fired on by Indians from the banks, as they and their goods slowly floated by. But two years before his coming a line of Keel boats was established, that were protected by breastworks with loop-holes for the use of muskets, which occupied four weeks in the lonely voyage, and it was doubtless on a craft of this kind that he arrived safely at his destination.

People in considerable numbers were pressing into the rich country of the Miami, and the services of the surveyor were often needed. In this business Brown engaged with industry and success a year or two, when he returned East, and was appointed Principal of a Friends' school in New York City. This position he resigned after a brief period, being ambitious to advance his fortunes more rapidly than he could do in the uneventful, though honorable, calling of an instructor of youth. While in the city he had more facilities for studying jurisprudence than elsewhere, and employed his leisure hours in gaining acquaintance with the principles of law, though he did not carry it so far as to be admitted to the bar.

In 1799, he was attracted to Jefferson county, N. Y., then a region covered with primeval forests near Lake Ontario, of which the principal town was Sackett's Harbor. Hither also at this juncture his father and his family removed from Bucks county. Here he surveyed, bought and sold lands, and under the superintendence of father and son the first house was built in the town named for them, Brownsville. His speculations in real estate were highly successful; his property, judiciously managed, increased, and he became one of the most widely-known and esteemed citizens of the northern part of New York. When

the militia was organized, early in this century, he was appointed Colonel of the regiment, and ere long made Brigadier General. Attentive to his duties, firm and strict in discipline, yet kind and considerate toward the soldiers in the ranks, he was a respected and popular officer, and won the confidence of the highest authorities of the Commonwealth.

The arrogance of England in forcibly taking from American vessels, seamen whom she claimed as her subjects, and impressing them into her navy, and other arbitrary measures contrary to the law of nations, brought on war between that country and our own. As was expected, the border between Canada and the United States became the theatre, in which was enacted an important part of the conflict. General Brown was directed to take command of a brigade in defence of the northern frontier. He had not been trained in the regular army, and had never gained experience by passing through campaigns or battles. But he possessed natural traits, which, when called into action, constitute a successful military general, and where others failed, he won distinguished renown and greatly benefited the cause of his country.

The first important service he performed in the field was in October, 1812, when the British made an attack upon Ogdensburg, on the St. Lawrence. With 750 men, they attempted to cross the river in boats, under cover of a fire from guns at Prescott's, on the Canada side. The Americans had a battery of two cannon and a body of militia under General Brown. Though the enemy fought with conspicuous bravery and determination more than an hour, yet they were repulsed, losing three killed and four wounded, when they took to their boats and hurriedly escaped. This success highly encouraged these raw troops, who had known scarcely anything of actual war before, and correspondingly elevated their commander in their esteem.

On April 25, 1813, Generals Pike and Dearborn of our army with 1,600 selected troops left Sackett's Harbor in vessels on Lake Ontario, as was supposed, to attack Kingston, which was just across on the Canadian shore, but they actually proceeded westward, and after a sail of two days reached the vicinity of York, the germ of what is now the flourishing city of Toronto.

Here were large quantities of military stores and provisions, belonging to the enemy, which it was desirable to capture or destroy. The British resisted the landing of our soldiers, but were compelled to give way before their impetuous charge, and retreated to their principal fortifications. Our men, forming on the bank of the river, marched three miles in pursuit of the foe, and were about to storm the works, when the magazine containing an immense quantity of powder exploded with tremendous force. It was not known whether this happened accidentally or by design on the part of the British.

The shock was like an earthquake on land and water. Stones, debris and timbers were thrown far and wide, even on to the decks of our vessels. Between one and two hundred Americans and some of the English were killed. General Pike and two of his aids were among the victims. The General was literally stoned to death in the moment of victory; his breast and sides were crushed. As he was lifted from the ground he heard a shout, and asked what it meant. An officer near answered, "The British Union Jack is coming down, and the Stars and Stripes are being raised in its place." This revived the flickering flame of life, and being carried on board the Commodore's ship, he requested that the captured flag be placed under his head, and lying in this position he expired. He was one of the heroes who have sacrificed their lives for the honor and independence of their country. The victory achieved here should have been followed by the pursuit and detention of the garrison; but Gen. Dearborn, remaining on his vessel, allowed the regular English troops to escape, and secured as prisoners the Canadian militia alone, who were at once paroled and dismissed. The stores taken were conveyed in our ships to Sackett's Harbor, where by a misapprehension they were soon after burned. We lost about 300 men and the enemy 500, mostly wounded. We realized little benefit by this engagement, though victory perched upon our banners.

To offset our good fortune at York, the enemy a month later fitted out an expedition against Sackett's Harbor. On May 28, 1812, they advanced upon the town from the northern shore of the St. Lawrence with 900 men in eight vessels and 30 boats. To

oppose them, the Americans had 800 men of the line, and 500 militia, the latter under Gen. Jacob Brown; he was requested, however, by Gen. Dearborn to take command of the entire force, to which he acceded, and the direction of the whole battle was in his care.

The first day the Indians, who were aiding the British, cut off some American boats, but effected little more. Our yeomen soldiery were unaccustomed to meeting savages. They had heard of their fiendish cruelty in torturing prisoners, and dreaded coming into their power. The English denied that they encouraged their Indian allies in inhuman warfare. But there is indubitable proof that they did incite the red-men to put to death with fearful barbarity all Americans that fell in their way, not only during the Revolution and the War of 1812, but before the beginning of this century in a time of peace. When York was taken by our forces, among other things found, was a scalp suspended over the Speaker's chair in the Parliament House, as a trophy of Indian prowess in some recent raid upon the territory of the Union. This was sent to General Armstrong, Secretary of War of the U. S., but he refused to receive it or allow it to have a place in his cabinet of curiosities. At the close of the Revolution in 1783 a computation was made of the Indian warriors, who had been employed by the British against the revolted Colonies. There were twenty-seven different tribes, or sub-tribes, represented, including 12,690 fighting men. Hon. Charles J. Ingersoll says: "In both the first and later wars with England, that power had a greater number of Indians under arms than Europeans employed against the Americans;" and we may add, that they were used not in civilized conflict alone, but in murdering, scalping and burning at the stake the inhabitants of our Northwestern borders.

In 1782, Captain Gerrish, of the New England militia, in an expedition against the British and Indians, captured some bundles of dried skins, which he brought home, and concerning which he writes to a superior officer as follows:

ALBANY, March 7th.

"The peltry taken in the expedition will, you see, amount to a good deal of money. The possession of this booty at first gave us pleasure, but we

were struck with horror to find among the packages, eight large ones containing scalps of our unfortunate country folks, taken in the last three wars by the Seneca Indians from the inhabitants of the frontiers of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Virginia, and sent by them as a present to Col. Haldimand, Governor of Canada, in order to be by him transmitted to England ; and they were accompanied by a curious letter to that gentleman."

In this letter, that went with the scalps, is a list and minute description of all the eight bundles, and their contents. The whole number was 951, of which 190 were of boys of various ages ; 211 were of girls, big and little ; 43 were of Congress soldiers killed in different skirmishes ; 88 were of women, with long hair ; and the remainder were of farmers ; and all were marked with Indian signs and devices, by which the savages indicated to what class they belonged, how they were slain, by muskets, tomahawk, knife or club, and in what they were employed at the time of death, whether in the house or the fields, and many other particulars. In this communication, which was signed by James Crawford, an Indian or half-breed, he claims that there were very few gray heads among the scalped, almost all being young or in middle age, which he says makes the service to the English government more essential, and earnestly requests that supplies be sent to his people, of which they were in great need, as " they had not been idle friends."

The savages were wont to inflict inconceivable sufferings upon their prisoners, as Francis Parkman abundantly shows in his interesting volumes. They pulled out the finger-nails and toe-nails of their hapless victims, burned the bottoms of their feet with red hot irons, thrust hot irons into their bodies, and roasted their flesh at a slow fire to prolong their agonies. The militia under Gen. Brown were well aware what would be their awful fate, if they should be taken alive by the red-skinned denizens of the forests, and it is not surprising that they should recoil when they saw them in the ranks of the enemy.

In the attack on Sackett's Harbor at first the British gained some advantage, driving the militia within the intrenchments, and an American naval officer, supposing the day was lost, set on fire the stores, that had been taken at York. But Gen. Brown

rallied his wavering lines, and cheered them on against the foe, soon compelling them to retreat, leaving many killed and wounded, whom they deserted to be cared for or buried by the Americans. Hon. C. J. Ingersoll uses the following language about the General, who was unexpectedly called to direct the operations of the day: "Gen. Brown, no soldier by profession, was one of those natural offsprings of war, who seem born to excel in it, a man stout of person, strong of nerve, bold, brave, sagacious, full of resource, indefatigable, whose exploits were among the most brilliant of that war." I will here introduce a part of a letter which Gen. Brown wrote immediately after the engagement.

MAY 29, 1813.

"We were attacked at the dawn of this day by a British regular force of at least 900 men, most probably 1,200. They made their landing at Horse Island. We are completely victorious. The enemy lost a considerable number of killed and wounded on the field, among the number several officers of distinction. After having re-embarked, they sent me a flag desiring to have their killed and wounded attended to. I made them satisfied on that subject. Americans will be distinguished for humanity and bravery. Our loss is not numerous, but serious from the great worth of those who have fallen. Colonel Mills was shot dead at the commencement of the action, and Colonel Backus, of the first regiment of light dragoons, nobly fell at the head of his regiment as victory was declaring for us. I will not presume to praise this regiment; their gallant conduct on this day merits much more than praise. Sir George Prevost landed and commanded in person. Sir James Yeo commanded the enemy's fleet. In haste, yours, &c.

JACOB BROWN."

An author of distinction has made the following observation: "General Brown was a Pennsylvania Quaker, a village schoolmaster not far from Philadelphia, and soon rose, like Greene in the War of the Revolution, to military eminence; two men of genius for military affairs, only second, if that, to the first military commanders of this country, *Greene* and *Brown*, of whom it was jocularly said, that both proved *true blue*."

The ruling authorities of our government were much gratified with the military skill and heroic conduct of General Brown, shown in the defeat of the British at Sackett's Harbor, and soon after promoted him to the rank of Brigadier General in the regular army. In November, 1813, he was at the head of the advance force in the expedition of General Wilkinson down

the St. Lawrence. The enemy had been driven from the region of Niagara more than three-fourths of the distance to Montreal. Col. Winfield S. Scott, afterwards Lieutenant General, was serving under General Brown, and was fifteen miles ahead of General Wilkinson. The English, 800 strong, were overtaken after a rapid march by our troops, consisting of about the same number, and were routed at Hoophole creek, leaving many prisoners in our hands. If the vigorous measure of General Brown had been seconded by Wilkinson, there is little doubt that Montreal would have been captured. No considerable obstacle was in the way. The only thing necessary was to press on and the coveted prize would have been grasped.

But on the 12th of November, when it was expected that Gen. Hampton would have added his force to that of Wilkinson, and made assurance doubly sure, he sent a message to the latter, positively declining to aid in the onward movement or to proceed further into Canada. This afforded sufficient excuse to Wilkinson to arrest all aggressive operations and retire into Winter quarters. General Brown and Col. Scott were recalled, and inaction settled like an incubus upon our army.

Soon after this Gen. Brown was appointed Major General in the regular army of the U. S., and assigned to the command of the Niagara frontier. During the Winter of 1813-14 he was engaged in completing the organization of the forces in Western New York, perfecting their discipline, and preparing them for energetic action in the Spring. At the opening of the season arrangements were made for an invasion of Canada. Gen. Brown's headquarters were at Buffalo with his soldiers in two brigades under Generals Winfield Scott and Ripley, numbering 3,300. The English were encamped about three miles away near the Chippewa river, a confluent of the Niagara, under General Riall, who had 2,500 men, some cavalry, artillery superior to the American, and a body of Canadians and Indians.

Early in the morning of July 3d, Gen. Brown's troops crossed the Niagara and seized Fort Erie, the garrison of 140 men surrendering without resistance. On the next day they drove in the British outposts and ere long came near the main body, when the General determined to attack them in their present position.

That his men might be fresh and vigorous, however, he deferred the contest till the following morning, July 5th. The English commander, influenced by similar considerations, adopted the same plan. Both parties then left their camps and deployed into a plain two miles wide. On the American side Gen. Scott's brigade was in front; General Ripley's some distance in the rear. The two armies marched steadily towards each other, with colors flying, the light gleaming from their bayonets, as if on parade, till they had approached within eighty yards, when the flash of musketry burst forth on each side all along the line. General Brown, fearful that Ripley's brigade would not arrive in time to lend their help, dashed back to hurry them up. While he was gone, General Scott seeing some confusion among the Canadians, occasioned by the blowing up of an ammunition wagon, shouted to McNeill's battalion, "The enemy say we're better at long shot than steel. Eleventh! give the lie to the slander—charge! charge the rascals!" This was done obliquely in gallant style, and another battalion raking them on the opposite flank, they broke and left the field to the Americans. This was all accomplished in a short time, and when General Brown returned the English were in full retreat, they continued across the Chippewa, burning the bridge behind them. The British had 2,100 engaged in the battle; the Americans 1,900. The former lost in killed and wounded 503; the latter 335. With nearly equal numbers on each side and a fair field, victory rested with General Brown's army on account of the superior discipline, to which it had been subjected during several months, the skillful disposition of the different regiments, and the promptness of the commanding officers to seize the favorable opportunity for charging the enemy.

Two days after the conflict at Chippewa, another sanguinary engagement took place with the English in the same vicinity, at Lundy's Lane, sometimes called the battle of Bridgewater, or Niagara, in which General Brown again saw triumph salute the flag of his country. He was at the head of about 3,000 soldiers. The Canadians had 4,000, with a heavy battery of cannon, and were posted on high ground in a most desirable location. Want

of time will prevent my giving a description of this fearful struggle, which occurred late in the afternoon and evening of July 25, 1814. Major General Brown and Brigadier General Scott were both severely wounded. A writer says about that memorable contest: "At length the enemy broken and foiled at all points retired for the third time, and a profound silence ensued, interrupted only by the groans of the wounded and dying, and the monotonous roar of the great waterfall, moaning as it were over this fatal scene of patricidal strife and military glory." And he calls it the "most hotly contested battle perhaps that had at that time ever been fought upon the American continent."

For his bravery, ability and success in the several campaigns of the war General Brown received the thanks of Congress and a gold medal, which the resolution declared was designed to be "emblematical of his triumphs." The Winter of 1814-15 he spent in Washington recovering from his wounds, preparing for another campaign, as he supposed, in defence of his native land, and enjoying the respect and homage of every patriot. By the Treaty of Ghent in 1815 peace was restored between Great Britain and the United States, and General Brown remained in the regular army as Major General until 1821, when he succeeded to the supreme command under the President. In that year he was stricken with paralysis, but lived in an enfeebled condition seven years, departing this life at Washington, February 24, 1828, in the 53d year of his age.

His remains were deposited in the Congressional Burying Ground at Washington, and the following inscription appears upon the monument at his grave: "Sacred to the memory of General Jacob Brown. He was born in Bucks county, Pennsylvania, on the 9th of May, 1775, and died at the City of Washington, Commanding General of the army, on the 24th of February, 1828.

" Let him, who e'er in after days
Shall view this monument of praise,
For honor heave the patriot sigh
And for his country learn to die."