

WHEN ANDREW JACKSON REPULSED LAST HOSTILE INVASION OF UNITED STATES

One Hundred Years Ago Old Hickory With 4,000 Undisciplined Raw Troops Defeated Sir Edward Pakenham's Trained Army of 15,000 in the Battle of New Orleans



General Andrew Jackson, whose army of 4,000 raw troops repulsed the last hostile invasion of the United States in 1815.

ONE hundred years ago on the 8th of January the battle of New Orleans was fought and won by the American troops under Andrew Jackson. Since then the continental domain of the United States has never been subjected to a hostile invasion.

The battle of New Orleans has not figured as prominently in many of our histories as it deserved from the magnitude of the victory simply because it was fought after peace was concluded at Ghent, and therefore it was assumed that it would have had no effect in determining the conditions that agreed upon. As an orator said some years later: "But what are treaties in the view of the cabinets of Europe? Treaties, fellow citizens, are instruments of which convenience at once dictated the terms and constituted the obligation. The and consisted of the obligation. The treaty of Ghent had been concluded under the pressure of great difficulties in experience, and greater still in apprehension. The allies were much embarrassed in attempting to arrange the new balance of political power."

In short, they were fearful of Napoleon Bonaparte, and England, as one of them was particularly anxious to withdraw her scattered forces from America to array her fullest strength against her for the purpose of crushing the Corsican.

"Had the British succeeded in their attempt on New Orleans, would they have evacuated it before the battle of Waterloo? Would it ever have been evacuated without a struggle? In answer we have the words of a British officer of great ability, written shortly after the defeat of Gen. Pakenham's army:

"That our failure is to be lamented no one will deny, since the conquest of New Orleans would have been beyond all comparison the most valuable acquisition that could have been made to the British dominions throughout the whole Western Hemisphere. In possession of that point, we should have kept the entire Southern trade of the United States in check and furnished means of commerce to our own merchants of incalculable value."

On November 26, 1814, Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane sailed away from Jamaica with his expedition of sixty sails conveying Sir Edward Pakenham's army of more than 12,000 seasoned troops with New Orleans as their objective. At the battle of the Nile, sixteen years before, Admiral Nelson had a less formidable fleet at his command and the combined equipment of ships and army bound for the Gulf coast cost England a matter of quite \$10,000,000.

Great Britain had spared no expense, for she was being urged to lay her mailed hand upon the richest section of the country. Had she succeeded she might actually have barred the Eastern States from the rest of the continent lying west of the Appalachians. It was a bold strategic move and was aimed against the section of our shores where we were least prepared to resist with anything like commensurate force.

In those days New Orleans was well nigh an alien city. Most of its inhabitants were French or of French extraction and their traditions foreign, for the city had come under our dominance but twelve years before. There were no forts and but few troops and the best naval force the United States could muster were a few gunboats and tenders of modest armament.

Happily Andrew Jackson was not far away. For the better part of the two years preceding he had fought and defeated the Creeks of Florida and later had driven the British away from Pensacola, the property of Spain, where they had sought to establish a base for operations against us. With his hands full of seasoned troops, Old Hickory was able to whip into some sort of shape the militia and recruits that gathered about him when the approach of Lord Cochrane's armada became known.

The British fleet came to anchor off the Chandeleur Islands on December 8 and Sir Edward Pakenham decided to strike toward New Orleans by way of Lake Borgne, thus avoiding the 100 mile journey up the Mississippi River with its grave perils to the sail propelled ships of Admiral Cochrane's squadrons. Along this route the American frigates under Lieut. Thomas ap Catesby Jones could oppose but five gunboats and two tenders against a flotilla of twenty armed launches, forty-two in number, manned by 950 men picked from among the ships of the British fleet. On December 14 the two naval forces met, and for nearly two hours the American flotilla, mustering but 194 men, not only held the enemy at bay but inflicted large losses. In the end our sailors were borne down by weight of men and metal.

Reaching the bayous, the barges reached the levee below New Orleans 42 miles from the city, and there the troops of Sir Edward Pakenham were landed in the early morning of December 23. The British flag was broken loose at the top of a tree, and the regimental bands played "God Save the King."

The defeat of the American gunboats had cut off our reconnoitering parties, and Jackson was without knowledge of the movement of the enemy until they landed below the city. But the days had not been idle, and he had made every moment count in his preparations. His difficulties were many and would have daunted any one less energetic and resourceful. The national Government was unprepared to give him the help he needed, and of some of the soldiers sent him Jackson wrote the Secretary of War: "Hardly one-half of the Kentucky troops, so long expected, are armed, and the arms they have are barely fit for use."

The winter was an unusually severe one for Louisiana, being a season of well nigh daily rainfall, and when the Kentuckians and part of the Tennesseeans reached their destination they went into camp without tents or blankets, with nothing even strong for bedding. They lay down on the muddy ground to sleep with the temperature at times below the freezing point. "This distress and subsequent suffering at once enlisted the sympathies of the public. The Legislature of Louisiana, in session promptly voted \$50,000 for relief, to which generous citizens added \$10,000. With these funds materials were purchased. The noble women of New Orleans, almost without exception, devoted themselves day and night to making up the materials into suitable garments. In some weeks the destitute soldiers were supplied and made comfortable.

As turned out, these backwoodsmen here at the front of the British attack and, by their marvellous marksmanship, crumpled up the British col-

lums as they swept on confidently toward the American breastworks.

According to one historian, "New Orleans at that time contained 30,000 inhabitants. They were animated by the best spirit, but the men capable of bearing arms, including the reinforcements of militia from Tennessee and Kentucky—a part of which arrived after the landing of the British—did not exceed 4,000. They were all officers and men alike, inexperienced in regular warfare.

"On the high road, nine miles off, with no obstruction or defensible point between, was a regular army, consisting, with the reinforcements which came in before the final action, of about 15,000 men—veteran troops, commanded by veteran officers—amply provided, flushed with victory and full of the confidence which itself so often inspires success."

Andrew Jackson's inspiring presence rendered that little corps of undisciplined, raw, unproved American militia an effective and invincible body of fighting men. It was not until December 2 that Old Hickory reached New Orleans, and this is the picture of him handed down by a contemporary. At that time Gen. Jackson was a little less than 48 years old:

"A tall, gaunt man, of very erect carriage, with a countenance full of stern decision and fearless energy; but furrowed with care and anxiety. His complexion was sallow and unhealthy; his hair was iron gray, and his body thin and emaciated like that of one who had

least possible delay. The defenses consisted of earthworks supported by double rows of logs covering a distance of a thousand yards inland from the river and terminating at the inner edge of the levee in a forest flanked by an impassable swamp. The levee was the only line of land approach for the British; upon it ran the public highroad, and such was the narrow battlefield available. Part of the ground to be defended by Jackson's men was so wiry that it could not support the weight of guns, and here it was that the Tennesseeans and Kentuckians were distributed in the hour of final trial. It was this portion of the earthworks that the enemy sought to carry by sheer numbers, and Jackson had expected this and accordingly placed there the cream of his riflemen.

The American defenses were unfinished when news came at 1:30 in the afternoon of December 23 that the British had landed four miles below Jackson's lines, the United States forces themselves having their earthworks five miles below New Orleans along the old canal, which was utilized to facilitate the defence. Gen. Jackson with characteristic promptitude and energy decided to attack the enemy that evening. At the same time orders were issued that the American schooner Caroline drop down the river and anchor abreast the foe.

She left the city at 7 o'clock and halted in the dusk on the flank of the

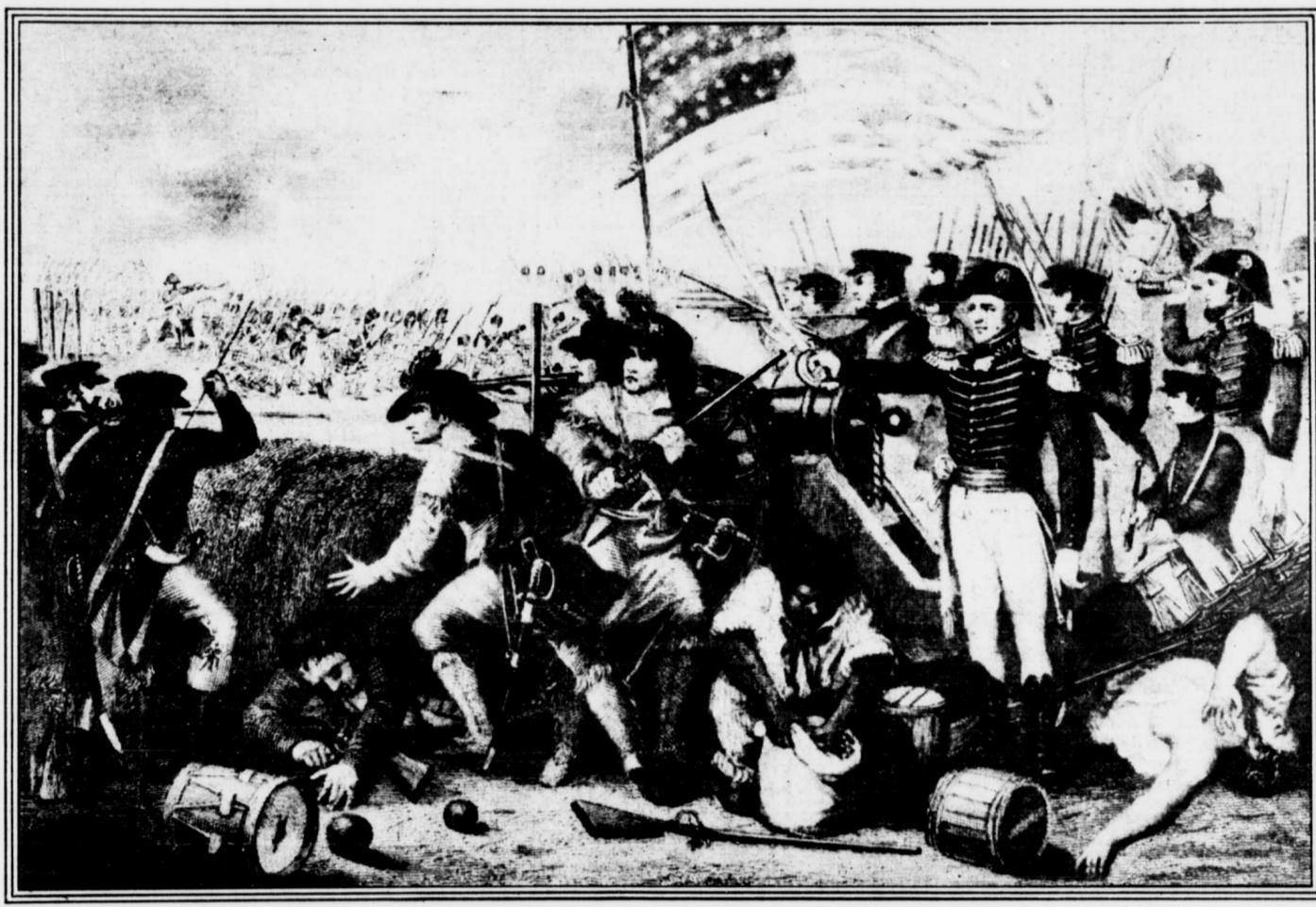
British position, which blazed with campfires. The enemy was so near that the hum of the men's voices could be heard as they refreshed themselves and prepared for a good night's sleep before taking up what they believed would be a victorious march in the morning. The British had the Caroline, but got no answer, and in the uncertain light for a time thought her one of their own craft.

Becoming fearful, however, they fired some muskets at her, and then, at 8 o'clock, a voice from the schooner called to review and organize his troops, and set about rearing defenses with the

inferior as their own guns were in some particulars, the Americans replied with so much skill and effect that in less than an hour the British fire slackened and not long afterward was completely silenced. An English officer present at the time said: "We soon found that it was in vain to think of surpassing the Americans in this kind of fighting."

Sir Edward Pakenham was in a predicament. Finally he elected, as the only remaining course to pursue, to attempt to carry the American lines by storm and superior numbers. Of the details we are told by an orator of long ago: "His plan was to send a detachment of 1,500 men across the river to take possession of a battery which had been erected by order of Gen. Jackson and to turn it against the line, while at the same time in the rest of the army were to attack it in the front. In order to carry into effect the former part of the plan it was necessary to bring the barges into the river, and for this purpose to cut a canal across the levee behind the British camp. This the British, with immense labor and indefatigable perseverance, finally accomplished on the evening of the 6th of January. Meanwhile Gen. Lambert had arrived in camp with another reinforcement of two regiments, which inspired all with fresh confidence."

On the 8th of January daylight broke at 6 o'clock and then dimly the Americans saw the oncoming British, about 12,000 strong, marching in three columns and covering nearly two-thirds of the breadth of the levee between the woods and the Mississippi River. Jackson had behind his earthworks less than 4,000 men to engage the foe, and many of these lacked that training and experi-



Repulsing the British invasion at the Battle of New Orleans.

just recovered from a lingering and painful illness. But the fierce glare of his bright and hawklike gray eye betrayed a soul and spirit which triumphed over all the infirmities of the body. His dress was simple, almost threadbare. A small leather cap protected his head and a short Spanish blue cloak his body, while his feet and legs were encased in high dragon boots, long innocent of polish or blacking, which reached to the knee.

Immediately upon his arrival Gen. Jackson declared martial law, proceeded to review and organize his troops, and set about rearing defenses with the

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ence which prompted to make the British veterans all the more formidable, quite apart from their numbers.

Despite the battery fire of Jackson's guns the British columns preserved pretty good order until they got within reach of the frontiersmen's rifles. Then the muskets of the Tennesseeans and the Kentuckians snapped angrily, and most of the bullets found billets in the bodies of the foe. The British were first staggered and then thrown into confusion. The American artillery and small arms mowed down whole files of the enemy and forced a retreat within twenty-five minutes after opening the

battle. But two other failures had already foredoomed the British attack. Sir Edward Pakenham had ordered the Forty-fourth Regiment to be provided with fascines to fill the ditch in front of the American works and with ladders to mount the parapet. When these troops reached the firing line it was discovered that they had failed to bring along these necessary facilities, and Sir Edward indignantly ordered them back for them. Before the fascines and ladders could be brought to the front the British suffered their first repulse.

This was not all. The 1,500 men that

had been detailed to capture the lone battery off on one of the American flanks were away below that position and substantially mired when the signal for the general advance was given. These troops reached their objective too much weakened to answer the purpose and were quickly driven off by Jackson's troops.

The enemy reformed for a second assault and Zacharia Smith gives this graphic account of what then happened: "The defeated column was rallied by heroic efforts of the officers, reinforced with fresh troops and led to a second attempt at assault, but the carnage and destruction were as great as in the first attempt, while almost no impression was made upon the defensive line of the Americans. But the English again were compelled to retreat in disorder, leaving great numbers of dead or wounded on the ground or prisoners to the Americans."

"Hope of victory had now become a forlorn one to the British. They were broken in numbers, broken in order and discipline and in prestige, yet the brave officers, led by their commander in chief, determined not to give up the contest without a last desperate effort. In vain did they call upon the men to rally and form again for another advance, striking some with the flat of their swords and appealing to them by every incentive.

"They would not move from their shelter in the ditch. The ground over which they had twice advanced and retreated was strewn thickly with their dead and wounded, and such slaughter was enough to appal the bravest of mankind." In this fashion the effort to turn Jackson's right flank was frustrated.

"Nearly one hundred of the enemy reached the ditch in front of the American breastwork, but half were killed and the others captured." This, in effect, was virtually the story at every point of attack. While some of the British even gained the crest of the parapet, their advantage was but momentary, for they were soon cut down, captured or driven back in great disorder. Sir Edward Pakenham lost his life leading the Forty-fourth Regiment, which had returned to the fray without its colonel, and his second in command was also mortally wounded a short while afterward. Indeed, so many of the officers had fallen that the British soldiers failed of leaders, and were utterly dismayed and incapable of continuing the action.

At half past 8, two hours and a half from the beginning of the battle, the conflict was over and the victory of the Americans amazingly decisive. Gen. Jackson lost but six killed and seven wounded, while the total exacted of the enemy amounted to 700 killed and 1,400 wounded—not counting 50 prisoners taken. A British officer who rode over the field under the temporary truce that followed said: "Within a space of 300 yards wide and extending out 200 yards from the American breastworks—an area of about ten acres—I saw before me in this small compass not less than 1,000 men dead or disabled, all in the British uniform. There was not one American soldier among them."

This climax would not have been possible but for the confidence inspired by Andrew Jackson and the wonderful response made by the men under him. In these days when we read so much about the battle trenches in Europe it is interesting to recall what happened in Louisiana when our little army halted Great Britain's scheme of conquest.

"In the woods the ground was so low that the troops were literally encamped in the water, walking often in mire a foot in depth, their few tents being pitched on small mounds surrounded by water or mud. Amid these discomforts, in this aque breeding miasm, the Tennesseeans, under Gen. Coffee and Carroll, and the Kentuckians, under Gen. Adair, for days endured the dangers of battle and privations of camp and campaign. They gave an example of the rarest military virtues. Though constantly living and sleeping in mire, these patriotic men never uttered a complaint or showed the least symptoms of impatience."

Truly, the historian of 1856 may be pardoned in saying: "There is an example in modern military history which for its extent was more complete in all its parts and more brilliant in its results than that conducted by Andrew Jackson in 1814-1815 in the defence of New Orleans." Inside of twenty-six days Jackson reared his earthworks across the enemy's line of advance, whipped his ill armed and badly acquired little army into shape and for his indomitable will guided his men so that they might deal a crushing blow to a reprobable and superior force of seasoned soldiers, and this with a trifling loss.

Such, in short, is the story of the last hostile effort to invade our soil.

War as Seen by a London Clerk Serving With the Red Cross

These extracts from the letters of a former London clerk now in the British Red Cross service contain touches which are different from the usual war correspondence. Some of his observations have already been printed in THE SUNDAY SUN. Several of his brothers are in the British army.

SINCE I last wrote you we have been transferred to a northern base. All of last week was spent in travelling and loading and unloading. I have had a long trip, rain journey and also a ride on one of the huge French engines which haul these trains.

It was a fine experience. The glimpses of the French countryside were charming. Indeed I don't think your Indian summer could be more beautiful than some of the country has been here this autumn. I have seen many castles and historic towns of northern France and also the cathedrals at Nantes and Rouen.

Immediately on our arrival here we filled up our hospital and this week has been a very heavy one, for we are nearer the front than we were.

We realize that it was well to be a long and terrible struggle, although I do not doubt as to what will be the result in the end. Meanwhile the country must make immense sacrifices, but we shall eventually return to a regenerated

England. The nation and empire never showed such a unity of purpose and spirit as in this war, and yet we never went to war before so strictly for principles and so little for any ultimate gain. Were you over here no doubt you would appreciate it better than is possible at such a distance.

All my people are well. My brothers get on very well in their regiments, although the life has been rough. Other members of the family are in the service, so you can see it has rather broken up our home for the present.

My cousin cleared out of Antwerp before the bombardment, but of course he has lost everything. A friend of father's was on the Hogue as chief surgeon when it was torpedoed. He managed to swim for an hour and a half and was picked up eventually. Imagine the reception he had on his arrival home!

Must close now and turn in for the night. "Active service" gives one but very little time for writing letters, and we are always dead tired by the time we

have finished. At least I believe the strong air must make me tired, for I sleep like the dead every night. We sleep in big marquees with two rugs over us, so you see we manage to keep warm these cold nights.

Our corps has taken a hotel at Wimereux, a few miles north of Boulogne, and fitted it as a hospital for the winter. "Hotel" sounds luxurious, but the reality is anything but that. This hotel is open only three months of the year. It stands alone on a headland opposite Folkestone. It is a bleak and lonely spot where the wind has blown a hurricane all the week and the seas rush up fiercely to assault the wall in front. But there's hope for the besieged, for every ten seconds Cape Grisnez light flashes reassuringly in my window.

We men are quartered in a new building about 200 yards away from the hotel proper. This building had never been used and there is lime and building material everywhere. Still we've cleaned a room today in which I am writing this to-night on a newspaper in front of a flickering candle with a thirsty fountain pen. It is a Saturday night and I am very tired.

We are a cosmopolitan lot here—British, French, Belgian, Indians from all parts and sometimes very interesting. The Indians are very interesting. Some

of them are big sturdy fellows—Sikhs and hillmen—and then there are little little Gurkhas with their deadly "kukris" and such a medley of castes that one often can't distinguish them at all, although their caste is indicated by the folds of their turbans.

I am still on my orderly job and go into Boulogne a lot and see many interesting scenes. One day last week I witnessed the funeral procession of Lord Roberts.

It was a wet, gusty day, a fit setting for such a scene. Through long solemn lines of French soldiers and musicians stretching all the way from the station to the quay the coffin passed, borne on the shoulders of a few British soldiers. It was covered by a big Union Jack with the old General's cap lying upon it. Behind followed at slow march the British troops with reversed arms, to the music of the French "Last Post." Then came the staffs of the British, French and Indian armies, followed by soldiers bearing huge wreaths from the French army.

The coffin was lowered into the waiting boat, which soon steamed away and we saw the last of Lord Roberts. He was a grand type of man. He warned us of the war that has come upon us ten years ago, and in many quarters he was ridiculed. Now that the war has

come it is to his honor that he never said: "I told you so."

I never felt so proud of my own nationality as I have since I have been in France. Our men, whatever their faults, have behaved like heroes, and I believe the influence of the British on the morale of the French army may some day be told for France owes a good deal to the British troops here.

Today I saw a number of men from the front who have five days leave. Many of them were ragged and unshaven, but looking hard as nails and wonderfully fit, considering the mode of their living since August 1. I have learned to admire very much the discipline, manliness and vigor of these fellows. It is real grit—that's the best word for it. They will get a rousing reception at home, for they are splendid fellows.

A moonlight night from this coast is a sight you wouldn't forget, and yet I do envy you away in a land of peace, across the enemy's line of advance, whipped his ill armed and badly acquired little army into shape and for his indomitable will guided his men so that they might deal a crushing blow to a reprobable and superior force of seasoned soldiers, and this with a trifling loss.

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