

# EAYRS HUGH STERLING

SIR ISAAC BROCK

Hugh Eayrs

**Sir Isaac Brock**

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# Hugh S. Eayrs

## Sir Isaac Brock

### PREFACE

As this book is published, Canada is celebrating her fiftieth birthday. The thoughts of all of us travel back along the line of those fifty years since Confederation swept away all divisions and made the people of what is now Canada one in name, that they might become one in purpose, ideal, and spirit. We see our country served by a succession of great men. Their greatness consisted in trying to weld Canada into this oneness and in trying to develop our illimitable resources. For this fifty years and for the fifty before it, Canada had no war to engage her attention until, in 1914, she joined with Great Britain in the Great War that the world might be “made safe for democracy.”

While we look with pride at the progress our country has made during this time of peace, we may well go further back and see some of the ultimate contributory factors. And as we do this we shall see that in those troublous days as in the calmer that succeeded them, the history of Canada gathers itself round two or three men. One of these is Major-General Sir Isaac Brock.

Brock is called “The hero of Upper Canada.” That he undoubtedly was, but he was more. He was the hero of Canada, for while his efforts both as soldier and statesman were peculiarly for one province, their effect was felt by Canadians of later days from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Indeed it is not too much to say that Brock’s part in the War of 1812-14 made fast and sure what is now the Dominion of Canada for the British Empire. This makes him at once the primal hero of Canada. We have our other heroes. The names of Frontenac, Wolfe, Montcalm, Carleton, and others stand out from Canada’s “storied page” and deservedly so, but not one of them served our country in a way eventually so signal as did Brock. Wolfe conquered the French; Carleton defended Canada against invasion in 1776; but their work had not the crucial quality of Brock’s.

He was certainly a man of action, and his biography is fittingly the first title in a series of *Canadian Men of Action*. The older nations of the world have their great ones. France has its Joan of Arc, Italy its Garibaldi, Russia its Peter, and Britain its Arthur and its Alfred. In ten short years in Canada, Brock accomplished much, for while he lost his life but four months after war was declared, it was his action and, after, his spirit which animated the defence of his adopted country against invasion. In considering him and the noble part he played we may well contrast this man of action with another, who drew his sword three years ago not that he might help to establish peace, but for his own selfish end of vainglory. Brock, like thousands of Canadians to-day, fought for honor and that his country might be free. The spirit of Brock animates Canada to-day, and “the brave live on.”

## CHAPTER I

### Early Years

The year 1769 was an important one for Europe. In it were born two men who were destined between them to change the face of that continent. These were Wellington and Napoleon. There was another man who first saw the light in that year. His name was Isaac Brock, and while his life and work were hardly comparable in their effect and result to those of the two great Europeans, they were nevertheless an important factor in shaping the destiny of Canada. It may, perhaps, be laying undue stress on the work he did to call General Brock the Wellington of Canada. Necessarily he left less mark on the times in which he lived than did the Iron Duke, for his task was less monumental and his sphere less wide. Yet, in relative degree, Brock's work was immensely important. We are beginning to realize, a hundred years after his death, just how directly he affected Canada and indirectly Europe. It would be interesting, however, to speculate on just what would have been the result had he remained in Europe. It might, – who knows? – have been his as much as Wellington's to save the world from the ambitious schemes of Napoleon, but in the part he played, Brock admittedly did a very great deal to make the bounds of Empire "wide and wider yet."

Isaac was born on October 6th, 1769, and was the eighth son of John Brock. Of his father we know little. He was a sailor, had been a midshipman in the navy, and his duty had carried him far afield, to India and other outposts. Isaac's birthplace was Guernsey, an island in the English Channel, which is one of the beauty spots of the world. There could have been no more fitting cradle for a child who was to become indeed a man of action than this rugged little island, with its rocky weather-beaten coast, stern and bold in outline. The heavy seas of the Channel beat upon it in vain, and it is possible that in after-life, when he was buffeted by circumstances, his thoughts may have gone back to his island home, a small but hardy defence against thundering waves and shrill winds and raging tempest.

He had good blood in his veins, for, far back, there was a Sir Hugh Brock, a valiant knight of Edward III. Sir Hugh lived in Brittany, just across the Channel from England and at that time an English duchy. The French, however, bitterly mindful of Crecy and Poitiers, bided their time, and when Edward was old and enfeebled, rose and drove the English out of Northern France. Brittany again became French, and, when the English were expelled, it is thought that Sir Hugh's family came to the Channel Islands, which was like a half-way house between France and Britain, and there settled.

There were other Brocks in nearer relationship who had won their spurs both in battle by land and sea and in journeyings afar. As has been said, Isaac's father, John Brock, was a midshipman and had travelled to India, in those days a great distance away. Another relative was the famous Lord de Saumarez, also a Guernsey man, who had distinguished himself at St. Vincent and at the Nile. Brock's mother was Elizabeth de Lisle, daughter of the lieutenant-bailiff of Guernsey, a position which corresponded to that now held by our lieutenant-governors, an office the duties of which, as we shall see, Isaac Brock himself, in later years, discharged in Upper Canada.

It was not, however, in family tradition and example alone that young Brock found inspiration for heroic and valorous deeds. He could not but be imbued with love of adventure. This island home of crag and headland was the vault of many a memory of heroic deeds, the past scene of many a stirring exploit of the hardy seafaring folk who had been its dwellers as long as ever dwellers had been there. Young Brock learned numberless stories

"Of moving accidents by flood and field,  
Of hair-breadth scapes i' the imminent deadly breach."

Long, long years before, the Druids had their caves and catacombs tucked away in quaint hiding-places, and to the young adventurer these haunts and the tales told of them furnished idea and scope for many an escapade. Stories of Cromwellian and Stuart days, when Cavalier and Roundhead in turn found refuge in this land of his birth, and evidences of the resolute defence which the Islanders had offered to the maraudings and attackings of the French, fostered in Brock an ambition to emulate the Guernsey folk who were dead and gone.

So, in boyhood days, he played for a while with the things of nature. He became strong and robust. He was, like his seven brothers, tall and manly, a precocious boy, a better boxer, a stronger and bolder swimmer than any of his companions. He would scale jagged headland, or sighting Castle Cornet, a landmark half a mile from the shore, would brest the swiftly-running tide, meeting and overcoming

“ every wave with dimpled face  
That leaped upon the air.”

He did not entirely neglect his studies, but gave some time to reading, particularly along historical lines. There seems to be no doubt, however, that, like many another boy, his prowess in games was gained at the expense of his education. At the age of ten he was sent to school at Southampton, and later was at Rotterdam, where his tutor was a French pastor. Neither his parents nor himself would be aware, at that time, of the use that the knowledge of French he there acquired would be to him when he came to Canada later on.

He chose his profession early in life. For him there could be only two careers, the navy or the army. Guernsey men, from time immemorial, had favored the services as a means of earning their living, for the love of adventure was ingrained in the people. Besides, Brock had two brothers in the army.

One brother, Ferdinand, had been in the 60th Regiment, and when Isaac was a lad of ten, had given his life at the defence of Baton Rouge, on the Mississippi, fighting against the colonial revolutionists. The other, John Brock, was a captain in the 8th, known as the King's Regiment, and probably with the idea of being near his brother, Isaac in 1785 purchased a commission as ensign in the 8th. Thus he had in John a hand and mind steadied and practised by reason of ten years' service to guide and help him in the career he had chosen.

Isaac was keenly enthusiastic about this new life, and his brother's example spurred in him the ambition to be a distinguished soldier. His love for history and his liking for serious reading stood him in good stead. He had had, perhaps, too much sport and too little study in those Guernsey days. He allotted his time differently now, and sedulously spent some hours each day locked in with his books. He was wise enough to know that he was not too well-equipped for his work. These were the years when his mind was receptive and plastic, and he used them well. He served five years and purchased his lieutenancy in 1790, when he was twenty-one. These were uneventful and quiet days, but they were days of preparation. Barrack-room and camp taught him the essential elements of soldierliness. He returned to Guernsey, for he had been quartered in England, and raised an independent company. This he commanded with the rank of captain, being placed on half-pay. The quietness and sameness of soldiering in England palled on him, however, and in the next year he arranged a transfer to the 49th Regiment, then quartered in the Barbadoes. These were the men whom he was to learn to love, and many of whom fought with him when, some years later, he received his death wound.

Joining his regiment in Barbadoes, he served there and later in Jamaica. There is a story told of him at this time which shows that the courage of the boy who had been the hero of a hundred daring escapades was his distinguishing mark in young manhood. A captain in the 49th, who was a crack shot, was the bully of the mess. Brock, who treated him with indifference, was singled out as a mark for his insult and was involved in a duel. The braggart was a little man, but Brock was

six feet two – not a difficult target. Brock had the right, as he had been challenged, to name the conditions of the duel. When the party reached the grounds where the duel was to take place, Brock drew out his handkerchief and insisted that he and his opponent should fight their duel across it. This would minimize the disadvantage of his own great height. The bully, recognizing that for once he was fighting with equal chance to kill or be killed, refused the condition and fled. His brother officers declared that Brock had won a moral if not an actual victory, and they and he compelled the expulsion of the bully from the regiment.

Shortly after this incident the 49th moved to Jamaica. Though he enjoyed the more eventful life there, Brock was a product of a hardier clime and could not stand the enervating air of the tropics. He fell a victim to fever and indeed nearly died of it. His man, Dobson, tended and restored him, and Brock, big-hearted and kindly then as later, never forgot what he owed to his trusty servant. Dobson remained with him till his death, which took place a short time before Brock set out on the expedition against Detroit.

In 1793 Brock returned to England on sick leave and re-visited his old home, there to regain his health and strength. Subsequently, until the return of his regiment from Jamaica, he was engaged in the recruiting service. While employed in this most important work he kept up his hours of study, fitting himself for the greater things to come.

In 1795, he purchased his majority, and in 1797, at the age of twenty-eight and after only twelve years service, was gazetted lieutenant-colonel of his regiment, soon afterwards becoming the senior officer.

As commander of the 49th he had no easy position. The *morale* of his men on their return from abroad was bad. The former commander was a poor disciplinarian, and his men had been allowed to get out of hand.

These were queer days in the services. The men in the navy were in a perpetual state of mutiny. There had been cases where the seamen had risen and murdered their officers. There had been a lack of actual naval fighting for some time, and the consequent dullness, added to the poor pay, made the navy a somewhat ragged and discontented unit. The seamen usually took the lead in revolt, and the soldiers sympathized with them. In the army there was additional reason. The officers were often bullies. Different ideas of discipline were held from those we know to-day. The average British officer terrorized over his men. He punished them heavily for the slightest offence. It was considered the proper thing to give a man fifty lashes or so for a mild misdemeanor, such as having dirty boots on parade, and on that scale the punishment was allowed to over-fit the crime. Bad barrack-room conditions and little leave were other reasons for growing discontent which smouldered, and then broke out in mutiny.

So far as his own regiment was concerned, Brock showed his ability to solve this problem of lax discipline. He was indefatigable in his efforts to familiarize himself with what was wrong, and unwearying in the task of setting it right. As we have already seen, he was thorough in whatever he did. It was so now. He never relaxed vigilance and rested little either day or night. When he slept, it was with pistols ready to his hand. Daily he would make the round of the barracks. Whatever displeased him he ordered changed and frequently he would tear down insurgent notices from the walls with his own hand. He tempered justice with kindness. He was aware that former regimental rulers had tried the patience of the men a good deal, and he made generous allowance for this in his own treatment. By so doing he won them over to himself, and they learned to respect and love him. The men knew that he would insist on rigid discipline and orderliness, but they knew too that on their side they might count on justice, not unmixed with generosity and affectionate regard. Brock made a great change in the temper and behavior of the 49th. When the Duke of York inspected the regiment, therefore, he put himself on record that the 49th, under Brock's direction, had become instead of one of the worst regiments in the service, one of the best.

## CHAPTER II

### EGMONT-OP-ZEE AND COPENHAGEN

Brock was soon to realize his dream of active service. Europe was in a turmoil. Bonaparte's ambition was insatiable, and unless effective opposition was offered quickly, he was in a fair way to over-run the Continent. England, under Pitt, was averse to participation in the Continental wars, but the prime minister saw that to keep out meant real danger. In 1798 Pitt agreed with Russia that an army should be sent to Holland, which was at that time occupied by France under the name of the Batavian Republic. The ultimate aim of the allies was to seize Northern France, and thus hold Bonaparte in check. Of the 25,000 men which England agreed to send, the 49th, Brock's regiment, was a part.

In early August of 1799 the first detachment of this invading army, 10,000 men, left England, under command of Sir Ralph Abercromby. He was to pave the way for the larger allied force under the Duke of York, which would leave as soon as the advance guard had landed in Holland. Brock took his men with Sir Ralph. The 49th was part of the brigade commanded by Major-General John Moore, who, later, fell at Corunna in Spain.

Nearly two hundred vessels were needed to convey Abercromby's division. Ships were different in those days from the great transports that have carried our own Canadians to France. The expedition set off in fair enough weather, but hardly had they set sail before they encountered real opposition in the heavy seas and strong winds of the North Sea. It was not till two weeks later, towards the end of August, that they were able to anchor off the Dutch coast. While the army landed, the fleet fired heavy volleys on the enemy's position on the low sand hills which fringed the shore. A few hours later the British occupied the Helder Peninsula, though it cost them hours of stern fighting and the loss of a thousand men.

The weather continued against the invaders. The British had no protection from the heavy rains and bitter winds, and they could do nothing but await reinforcements. Meanwhile they had several short and sharp, but minor engagements. In a few days the Duke of York arrived with the remainder of the British forces, about 7,000, and was joined shortly afterwards by 10,000 Russians. Much time was taken up by the landings and the adjusting of the forces, during which the enemy, protected from the storms, made stronger his position. On September 19th the Duke ordered an attack on Bergen, but the Russians, who were impetuous and unused to military discipline, blundered badly, and the attack failed.

On October 2nd a more determined attack was made upon Bergen, during which Moore's brigade led the advance along the sand to Egmont-op-Zee. This was Brock's first real battle. The enemy, concealed in the sand-dunes, offered heavy opposition. The 49th, with the rest of the 4th Brigade, were the advance guard for a column of 10,000 men under Sir Ralph Abercromby, and moved along the low-lying coast line for five or six miles before they were halted by what Brock described as gunfire comparable to "a sea in a heavy storm." General Moore ordered the 25th and then the 79th to charge. The 49th came up on the left of the 79th, and while they were held ready, Brock, disregarding personal safety, rode out to view the position. He returned, and taking six companies, which left Lieutenant-Colonel Sheaffe, his regimental second in command, in charge of the other four, covering his left, cried "Charge!"

The men crashed forward, in sorry array from the point of view of order, but with such daring and boldness that the enemy fled before them. This was Brock's first victory, and a real victory it was, though it cost him over a hundred men and several officers. Brock, describing the action, wrote to his home that "nothing could exceed the gallantry of my men in the charge." He himself had a narrow escape. He was looking over the ground he had taken when a bullet struck him, and, says his

brother Savery, who was an aide to General Moore, and present, “the violence of the blow was so great as to stun and dismount him, and his holsters were also shot through.” Luckily he was wearing a thick muffler over his cravat, and the bullet did not penetrate to his neck.

Savery Brock shared his brother’s indomitable courage. He was paymaster to the 49th, but anxious to be in at the fighting. He disregarded his brother’s instructions and was in the thick of it. “By the Lord Harry, Master Savery,” said Brock, “did I not order you, unless you remained with the general, to stay with your iron chest? Go back, sir, immediately.” But Savery detected the pride as well as the rebuke in Isaac’s tone and answered cheerfully: “Mind your regiment, Master Isaac! You surely would not have me quit the field now?”

But though Abercromby’s column was successful at Egmont-op-Zee, the operation against Bergen was a failure through the defeat of the other columns. The allies retreated. They were in an unenviable position. A winter campaign was out of the question, and food and supplies could be had only from the ships at anchor, since Holland was so uncertain a quantity. So the expedition fitted out at great expense and very hopeful of success, ended in the shameful abandonment of Holland to the French. The British returned to England, while the Russians wintered in the Channel Islands. Brock learned much from Egmont-op-Zee, and if on the whole the campaign was inglorious, his own part had been a worthy one and the experience was invaluable.

Brock’s regiment on its return from Holland was quartered in Jersey, where it remained until early in 1801. By this time Britain found herself forced to fight a multiplicity of foes. Even Russia had gone over to the enemy, whose forces daily grew larger and who were spending time and money in preparation. The line-up looked unequal. On the one side was Britain. On the other was France, Russia, Sweden, Denmark, and Prussia. Denmark and Russia had a large fleet in the Baltic. If the fleets of these two nations should combine with that of France, British supremacy on the sea would be endangered. As long as she ruled the waves she was safe from the schemings of Napoleon. Although war had not been declared, a naval expedition against Denmark as the pivotal foe was decided upon.

Meanwhile there was more trouble in Brock’s regiment. His second in command, Lieutenant-Colonel Sheaffe was a brave soldier, but he laid too much stress on the necessity for rigid and even harsh rule. The men were sick of this unnecessarily stern disciplinarian who, unlike Brock, did not temper justice with kindness, and were daily growing more resentful. On one occasion, when Brock returned after a temporary absence, his men on parade cheered him wildly. He sensed in a moment the situation. He knew that Sheaffe was needlessly autocratic, and he could see that the men had grown more and more dissatisfied. Still the display of rejoicing at his return was a flagrant breach of army discipline. Unwillingly enough, he ordered his men to be confined to barracks for a week. We can appreciate what it cost him, under these circumstances, to be stern.

When the fleet was ready for action it was despatched to the Baltic under the command of Admiral Sir Hyde Parker, with Nelson as second in command. With the fleet went a land force under the command of Colonel William Stewart, a fine soldierly man, who had the virtues of initiative and action; Brock with the 49th accompanied Colonel Stewart, to whom he stood next in seniority. When the expedition reached its destination it was decided to attack Copenhagen at once with a portion of the fleet and the land forces, all under the command of Lord Nelson. Brock, who with a part of his regiment had his station on the *Ganges*, had instructions to lead in the storming of the Trekoner batteries. The attack, however, did not take place. The Danes offered such a spirited resistance that the British infantry never got a chance to do their part. In fact, they remained inactive through the engagement. They could only wait and watch, quartered for the moment on the decks of British vessels, and suffer heavy fusillade from the Danish batteries and ships. The Danes pounded the British squadron hard. Brock, on the deck, had several narrow escapes, while his brother Savery, again to be found where the bullets were thickest, was firing a gun. Savery was momentarily stunned by grape shot, and Isaac rushing to him, cried: “Ah, poor Savery is dead.” But Savery was far from dead and proved it by leaping to his feet with his usual nonchalant smile, and continued behind his

gun. Towards the end of the battle, Brock, accompanied Captain Freemantle of the *Ganges* to the *Elephant*, Nelson's flagship. He saw Nelson write his celebrated message to the Crown Prince of Denmark, which ran, "Lord Nelson has directions to spare Denmark, when no longer resisting; but if the firing is continued on the part of Denmark, Lord Nelson will be obliged to set on fire the floating batteries he has taken, without having the power to save the brave Danes who have defended them." The Danes were compelled to bow to Nelson's ultimatum, and surrender. Thus the courage of Nelson had saved Britain from attack. The defeat of the Danes, followed as it was by the death of the Czar of Russia, broke up the coalition. Britain was no longer in danger. Brock himself learned much from the Battle of the Baltic. He took heed of Nelson's wise and bold action in continuing the engagement in the face of definite orders from Sir Hyde Parker to retire, and pigeon-holed the occurrence in his mind. Eleven years later he himself was to take a similarly bold and strong course when he sent his message to General Hull commanding the American forces at Detroit, even though his commander-in-chief had instructed him not to attack the enemy. But Brock, after Copenhagen, knew that it sometimes paid to risk all and say: "What men dare, I dare!"

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## CHAPTER III

### Canada: Mutiny in the 49th

Brock collected his men and returned to England. At Copenhagen it will be remembered that he had part of the regiment with him on the *Ganges*, but others had been on different vessels. In August of 1801 he reviewed the 49th at Colchester, to which place they were ordered. They were now experienced, in some sort, in battle and had shown themselves to be brave soldiers. Brock could look with pride on the men he had trained.

In the spring of the next year the 49th Regiment was ordered to Canada. Probably Brock received his orders regretfully. It meant leaving Europe when in England war was daily imminent, and Brock, as a man of action, loved action. So did his men. America, at this time, was peaceable enough, and even had Canada been attractive in other ways, the commander and men of the 49th would rather have stayed where there was a prospect of fighting. Moreover, Canada was deemed, at that time, a land of hard weather and few attractions. It was little known and supposed to be even less livable. The journey over the Atlantic was feared by some, far more than the fire of the enemy in battle. The 49th had no very pleasant memories of garrison duty, and this was all there was to look forward to.

We can imagine a not very cheerful regiment crossing the uncertain and treacherous ocean under conditions much less agreeable than exist to-day.

One wonders what must have been Brock's thoughts when he first saw the St. Lawrence. He was seaborne, and the salt and the breeze were his inheritance. He must have been greatly impressed as the ship sailed up the stately river, its shores heavily wooded and all the wonder of its rolling might stretched out in front of him. He came in time to Quebec, and no doubt as his eyes rested on those defences which had withstood siege after siege, his thoughts often turned to Wolfe and Montcalm and how, within this area on which he now gazed, they had made history. He was by now a man of grave and serious character and, as many another in lowlier state has done since, he may have asked himself what this vast unknown country held for him. It was to hold much, and he for it.

We may try and think, for a moment, what the Canada of those early years looked like to this new-comer from the Mother country. There were not more than three hundred thousand people in this country of ours whose people now number over eight million. More than half were in Lower Canada. Brock was a military man and he early noticed how badly protected were the supposedly fortified posts. York, the capital of Upper Canada, had no defences. Montreal, the greatest city then as now, had little to repel attack. Kingston had fairly good fortifications, and Quebec was in a position stubbornly to resist an enemy. These things Brock came soon to see.

Perhaps even more portentous to Brock was the state of mind of the average soldier in Canada. These men had come from Britain where the garrison life was pleasant and full of incident and where the cities offered excitement and amusement. Canada was a great contrast. It was sparsely populated. There were no cities, as these British soldiers understood the term, and the sameness of the life aroused unrest and discontent. The United States offered an easy refuge for deserters. There was to be had across the border the daily eventfulness and excitement which soldiers wanted. Desertions were frequent, and becoming more so, and Brock saw the danger for his men of the 49th. He did all he could to make their lot, under not very accommodating circumstances, a happy one, but the spirit of the regiment was not the cheerful one it had been a year or so before.

Brock had not been long in Canada before trouble began in the regiment. He had an idea that one of his men, Carr by name, was waiting his chance to desert. He questioned him closely, but the man was sullen. "Tell me the truth like a man," said Brock. "You know I have always treated you kindly." The man broke down at the words and tone of his commander and confessed that he and others were planning to desert to the United States. Here we see that Brock was a man who

knew human nature. He decided to cure by kindness, and he ordered Carr to tell his companions of what had happened. "Tell them that, notwithstanding what you have told me, I shall still treat you all kindly," he said. "Let them desert me if they please." Wise Isaac Brock! He knew the value of placing a man on his honor.

After a short stay at Quebec, Brock and his men began their journey to York, the small but important town that was later to become the great city of Toronto. The 49th journeyed by water, for there were no trains. A schooner took the men up to Montreal, where, after resting, they took boats up the St. Lawrence. Picture what it meant to brave the wildness and storm of our great river, to these voyagers a waterway quite unknown, in small and open boats. They had a new experience in portaging their boats where the rapids were too strong for them. They plied their oars through the exquisite loveliness of the Thousand Islands, and Brock, remembering the fairyland of Guernsey, must have marvelled at this country which, in one place, had a thousand islands, some of them almost as big as Sark. Eventually the 49th arrived at Kingston, the second stage. They made the rest of the journey over Lake Ontario in another swiftly sailing schooner.

By the time the whole trip was completed Brock had been afforded much food for thought. He saw a country whose resources were barely touched. Where we now have thriving communities, he saw settlements where the people might be counted by handfuls. In the long journey up the St. Lawrence the abundance of fish and game and the vast sources of wealth contained in the land alone must have amazed him. He came from a country across which the stage coach could travel in two or three days. But his journey across but a section of Canada took him weeks. In England the lakes were not a twentieth of the size of the one upon which York stood. The meadows and lanes of England were a far cry from the densely timbered stretches of Canada. The contrast between his country and ours is sharp enough to-day. It must have been infinitely more so when Brock made his first Canadian journey.

It was not long after the pardoning of Carr that Brock had again to face a similar trouble. Part of his men had gone on to Fort George, while the others remained with him at York. Brock's kind treatment of Carr had had a salutary effect upon most of the regiment, but there were still a few malcontents. The next summer six of these, at the instigation of a corporal in another regiment stationed near, deserted, and in a military batteau – a big flat-bottomed boat, forty feet in length – which they had stolen, started for Niagara. Brock, the man of action, thought quickly. He took his servant, Dobson, and manning two boats, started in pursuit. It was midnight and Lake Ontario was to Brock an unknown quantity, but the boy who had played with the English Channel in all its moods was unafraid. After a hard row the pursuers reached Fort George in the morning, and search parties were organized. The deserters were secured and made prisoners at Fort George. Brock was as stern this time as he had been kind before, and his prompt action and personal pursuit put an end to desertions when he himself was commanding the regiment. It is said that the commander-in-chief, Lieutenant-General Hunter, who was then at York, was very much annoyed with Brock for risking his life by going in person to seek the deserters and read him a severe lecture on his conduct.

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