THE RISE AND FALL
OF THE
PATRIOT HUNTERS

by Oscar A. Kinchen

BOOKMAN ASSOCIATES
New York
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Foreword

This study is an attempt to offer a plain and unbiased account of a vast secret society known as the Hunters' Lodges, or Patriot Hunters, that was active on both sides of our northern border in the late Thirties and early Forties of the Nineteenth Century, whose professed object was the "liberation of the Canadian provinces from British thraldom."

At the time of the movement with which this study is concerned a revolutionary party within the two Canadian provinces had met with defeat in the abortive rebellion of 1837. Its leaders, along with thousands of their followers, had found refuge in the cities and towns along our northern frontier where their tales of oppression found sympathetic ears. The enthusiastic response from the American side of the line is not difficult to understand. Indeed, there were thousands still living who could recall the days of the American Revolution and a vastly greater number who had played some part in our second war with Britain only a quarter of a century before. Bred in revolutionary tradition and nourished on Fourth-of-July oratory to the hatred of all things British, they saw those "oppressed Canadians" rising as they themselves had risen against an intolerable British tyranny. Less than two years before the Canadian rebellion of 1837, an American hero, Sam Houston, had led a successful war of liberation that had wrested the vast state of Texas from the misrule of a Mexican dictator, and had founded an independent republic beyond our southwestern frontier. Hence arose the "Patriot War" along our northern boundary, which was to give birth to a huge secret revolutionary society that sprang up along the border states and also in the two Canadian provinces across the line.

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assistance from sympathizers of the American side of the line the Canadians would throw off the shackles of "British thraldom" and take their place among the free nations of the world. It may be added that during a time of widespread unemployment, thousands of idle and restless spirits were not averse to the pursuit of excitement and romantic adventure which a crusade for Canadian freedom would seem to offer.

Charlatans, fourflushers, rogues, murderers, and varied selfish interests among them, there undoubtedly were. But also within their ranks could be found large numbers of respectable people, including persons of integrity and of lofty ideals whose purpose was none other than to "give liberty to the people of Canada." Misguided though they were, they looked upon the Canadian people as had Englishmen upon the struggle for freedom in Greece and Poland, and as millions of Americans had looked upon the Texans while battling against the tyrannical rule of Mexico. Had the Hunters succeeded, some of their leaders might have been awarded a place in history alongside such heroes as Sam Houston, James Bowie, and David Crockett, if not even Washington, Lafayette, and other immortals of the American Revolution. Had they won, the invaders who had fallen at Windmill Point might have found a place in our history, folklore, and legend beside those who died at the Alamo.

Since no records kept by the Hunters have been found, our sources of information about them come chiefly from their opponents, and even these are so fragmentary and full of contradictions as to baffle the sincere seeker of truth. This probably explains why the story of the Hunters has never been told.

The author is deeply indebted to the officials of the Canadian Archives at Ottawa, and to those of the National Archives at Washington for their kindly co-operation and assistance in making available to the writer many valuable manuscript materials within their files. Without such assistance, little if any progress could have been made upon this obscure but highly interesting subject. Thanks are also due to the Library of Congress, the Toronto Public Library, the Cleveland Public Library, the Buffalo Historical Society, the Wisconsin State Historical Society, and the Library of the University of Michigan for supplying many important sources which bear upon the subject.
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CHAPTER ONE

The Patriots of 1838-42

It was the "Patriot War" of 1838-42 out of which emerged the vast secret revolutionary society with which this study is concerned. In its wider connotation the Patriot War may be said to embrace the whole movement for Canadian independence which began with the rebellions in Lower and Upper Canada toward the end of the year 1837, and which continued in the form of border disturbances for more than four years—until the revolutionary spirit which animated the movement was well-nigh spent.

At the outset, it is significant to note that the years during which the Patriot movement was on foot are also those of the great economic depression which followed the financial panic of 1837, when untold thousands roamed the highways in search of work while other thousands swarmed into the towns and cities where "restless spirits gathered into noisy and tumultuous masses, shouting for a change." It was a time when ruined business men dreamed of novel speculative schemes, while bankrupt farmers clamored for free land. The prevailing distress "yielded a harvest of premature ideas" and called for scapegoats upon which public opinion might vent its spleen. The Van Buren administration was not the only target for abuse. Not a few bankrupt business and professional men held that Britain was largely to blame for the prevailing hard times, that in spite of America's war for independence, the country was still "under British thraldom," that the fate of any new enterprise was predicated upon its chances of borrowing money from John Bull, and that the Bank of England was the arbiter of the fate of American business. In the opinion of no small num-
ber, the issues at stake were patriotism and independence and that the real fight was still with the same enemy that Jackson had met at New Orleans. In view of these troublous times and the frenzied state of mind, it is not difficult to see how the outbreak of a rebellion in the Canadas and the current stories of British misrule in these provinces would excite the interest of vast numbers of jobless men loitering about the taverns, saloons, and courthouse yards, or wherever idle and restless spirits were to be found.

The causes that gave rise to the unrest within the Canadian provinces and which eventually led a small minority of the population to engage in an uprising against British rule are too well known to require an extended treatment here. In Upper Canada, the critics of the existing regime had long been in opposition to the so-called Family Compact, an official aristocracy that had monopolized the public offices for more than a generation and which had led to a storm of agitation for a fuller measure of popular government. The ruling clique was blamed by its opponents, with much justification, for its gross favoritism in the awarding of land grants, discouraging immigration to the province, attempting to muzzle the press, to curb freedom of speech, and the persecution of popular leaders who dared to speak out against the irresponsible regime. Moreover, certain religious bodies, including the Methodists and Baptists, were sorely antagonized by an attempt to monopolize Clergy Reserves by the Church of England, a favored denomination with which the governing clique was closely identified.

It is generally admitted, however, that most of the critics of the existing regime looked forward to the winning of popular government by liberalizing the institutions which they already possessed, while only a minority of the discontented elements, including many immigrants from the American side, sought independence from Britain and republican institutions like those of the United States. Conscious of their inability, after the abortive rebellion of 1837, to achieve their purpose through resources of their own, the advocates of independence looked longingly for support from the thousands of sympathizers on the American side of the line.

In the province of Lower Canada, which had been separated from the predominantly British settlements above the Ottawa River in 1791, the discontent among the French majority was not so much in opposition to British rule from beyond the Atlantic as against a relatively small British minority within their midst. Such a view was expressed by the Earl of Durham while on his mission to the North American Provinces in the summer and autumn of 1838. A Lower Canadian rebel, testifying before a court-martial in the autumn of that year, declared that the needless destruction of life and property by the British in the recent rebellion had "only heightened the spirit of revolt and a desire for a radical change, and that nothing had made them more so than the affairs at St. Charles and St. Eustache. They want revenge upon the authors of these attacks." The rebellion, he said, was not so much "the affair of the people against the government as an affair of party against party."

This anti-British feeling in Lower Canada was observed by Colonel C. E. Taylor some months after the rebellion of 1837. Writing from his headquarters near the American border, he expressed the opinion that another uprising was sure to take place which, if successful, would "destroy the English-speaking people" in that part of the province.

While the same type of irresponsible government prevailed in the lower province as in Upper Canada, the revolutionary elements represented in the main a rising French nationality within the shell of a British province. Their most immediate desire was to be rid of an irresponsible British clique in the Executive and Legislative Councils that had been superimposed upon them and which stood in the way of their national aspirations. To secure these ends they were ready, if need be, to follow in the path of republicanism and independence which some of the older colonies had chosen more than half a century before.

The upsurge of Anglophobia on the American side of the boundary was in part a survival of the spirit of the American Revolution which had received a new impetus in the Anglo-American War of 1812, and a desire on the part of the deluded, though often well-meaning citizens to extend the Revolution to still other parts of the North American continent. Indeed,
there were at this time thousands still living who remembered the War of American Independence and a vastly greater number who had played some part in the War of 1812. Recalling the spirit which animated the "Patriot War" that followed the defeat of the Canadian rebels in 1837, Don M. Dickenson, an aged survivor of the Patriot movement of that time, wrote to the editor of the Detroit News in 1890 that "The movement on our side of the border was for the most part born of the old revolutionary sentiment, implanted in the breasts of their children by the fathers and mothers of Seventy-Six." With regard to Upper Canada, he adds that the American people, at the time of the Canadian rebellion, were utterly unable to understand how a mere boundary line could long separate "two peoples of the same race, in national feeling, in conviction and aspiration." A continued animosity toward Great Britain had been fomented, year in and year out, by Fourth-of-July and other patriotic speeches by fire-eating politicians and by jingo editors who gloried in each opportunity to twist the proverbial lion’s tail.

It is interesting to note that western New York, northern Ohio, and the eastern counties in Michigan, chief centers of the Patriot movement on the American side of the border, were settled largely by New Englanders whose influence in numerous reform movements is of particular interest to students of this period. During the decade of the Thirties various crusades for reform were on foot in which the New England element was playing the leading role. Abolitionist societies, temperance societies, and other militant organizations flourished during this period. The yen for forming organizations for the promotion of some cherished object in which certain groups were interested was an outstanding characteristic of American life during these years, and particularly within the border states. In the words of William P. Shortridge, "It was not enough to get along without slavery themselves, the slaves of others must be freed. It was not enough merely to abstain from the use of intoxicating liquors, others must be made free from the evil influence of intemperance." It is of no small interest to find that the leading Patriot newspapers of this time were devoting a generous amount of space to the work of abolitionist societies, temperance organizations, as well as to the extension of the frontier of freedom to the oppressed of other lands.

Another characteristic of this time was a fervent devotion to the principles of democracy. Under the leadership of Andrew Jackson, mid-western pioneer democracy had begun to feel its strength, regarding with particular pride its republican institutions and their development along democratic lines. There was a deep-seated conviction that liberty could be enjoyed under none other than republican institutions and that the same should be extended to the freedom-loving peoples wherever they might be found. Such was the attitude which undoubtedly prevailed with respect to the neighboring peoples beyond our northern frontier.

In the late autumn of 1837, while our relations with Britain were at high tension over the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute, the crusading spirit of American democracy was heighted by the outbreak of the Canadian Rebellion in November of that year, an event which came to be viewed by untold thousands on the American side as but another step toward ridding the continent of British rule. Anti-British feeling was further intensified at the end of the year by news of the destruction of the American steamer Caroline which had been engaged in transporting supplies to Mackenzie’s force on Navy Island on the Canadian side of the Niagara River. The Caroline incident produced great excitement throughout the border states. Governor William L. Marcy, in a special message to the New York legislature, asserted that there were no less than thirty-three persons on board who had been "suddenly attacked at midnight after they had retired to repose, and probably more than one-third of them wantonly massacred." President Van Buren, in a message to Congress, stated that "an outrage of the most aggravated character has been committed, accompanied by a hostile though temporary invasion of our territory, producing the strongest feelings of resentment on the part of our citizens"; and Secretary Forsyth of the Department of State, in a letter to the British Minister, Henry S. Fox, asserted that "the destruction of property and the assassination of citizens of the United States would necessarily form a subject for a demand for redress upon Her Majesty’s Government." The militia in several of the
border states were called out, and for a time an appeal to arms seemed imminent.  

In the meantime, rebel refugees from the Canadian provinces were crossing the boundary in increasing numbers and stopping in towns and camps along our frontier from Vermont to Michigan. French refugees were flowing over the border into northern New York and Vermont as early as the first days of December, finding refuge in such towns as St. Albans, Burlington, Middlebury, Highgate, Swanton, Alburgh, and Rous'e Point. Conspicuous among the rebel leaders were Louis Papineau, Etienne Cartier, Dr. E. B. O'Callaghan, Dr. Robert Nelson, Dr. Cyrile Coté, Julien Gagnon, Mailhot, Dr. Lorimer, and others associated with them in the rebellion of the preceding month. At the village of Derby, just over the boundary in Vermont, a publication called the Canadian Patriot was launched for the promotion of the cause of Canadian independence.  

Farther to the west, refugees from the Upper Canadian rebellion, which had broken out in the first week in December, began crossing over the border to find refuge in such towns as Rochester, Buffalo, Lockport, and other towns on this section of the frontier. To Rochester came Dr. James Hunter who had formerly resided at Whitby in Upper Canada where he had been active in the Patriot cause; John Montgomery whose tavern north of Toronto had been the chief rendezvous of the rebel force which had marched upon the capital city early in that month; and Dr. Thomas D. Morrison, a member of the Upper Canadian Assembly, who had been high in the councils of the rebel leaders. Over the Niagara frontier came William Lyon Mackenzie, chief organizer of the revolt in the upper province, with a plea for American aid in the struggle for Canadian freedom. Across the Michigan frontier came Donald McLeod, a rebel schoolmaster from Brockville, to be followed later in the winter by Dr. Charles Duncombe in woman's clothing, who had been the leader of an abortive uprising in the western part of the province, and still other refugees fleeing from arrest by Canadian authorities.  

A warm welcome awaited these Canadian refugees throughout the length of the frontier. Their tales of oppression fell upon sympathetic ears. Large and vociferous meetings were held in the leading towns of the border states. At Burlington, Albany, Rochester, Lockport, Buffalo, Cleveland, Detroit, and in smaller towns along the chain of lakes, vast crowds of gaping, starry-eyed listeners heard tales of destitution and woe. At these gatherings, sympathy was expressed for the Patriot cause, and money, clothing, food, and weapons were freely subscribed. When Mackenzie's arrival at Buffalo was announced at a mass meeting on December the eleventh, a tremendous applause burst forth from the audience, "such a shout of exultation as was never heard before." On the following evening, Mackenzie addressed a large assembly at the theatre, recounting at length the struggles of the American colonies to throw off the yoke of British oppression, and ending with a fervent appeal for American aid in Canada's fight for freedom. The Eagle Tavern was designated as the place of deposit for gifts of arms and supplies, and great activity was displayed in the collection of guns, swords, and other materials of war, the recruiting of volunteers, and on the early morning of the thirteenth two hundred stands of arms were seized from the local sheriff to supply the new Patriot force.  

Meetings were held in the city hall at Detroit where the Upper Canadian government and the Family Compact were roundly denounced. At these meetings, Dr. E. A. Theller, an Irish immigrant from Montreal and now a druggist and wholesale grocer at Detroit, played a leading role. During the early part of the new year, Manager McKinney of Detroit's leading theatre devoted the net proceeds of his establishment to the Patriot cause. A great public meeting was held at his theatre on the first day of the new year at which money and arms were lavishly subscribed. Four days later, the jail at Detroit was raided and four hundred and fifty muskets were taken for the equipment of volunteers for an invasion of Canada.  

On New Year's Day, a great "Canada Meeting" was held at the courthouse in Cleveland at which "eloquent speeches" were made by two of the leading Patriot orators in that vicinity, the Reverend M. Wiley and Thomas Jefferson Sutherland. When the shouting had subsided, a set of resolutions was adopted, expressing "strong sympathy with the interest of liberty in every country, and alarm over the large bands of blood-thirsty
savages" that the Canadian government was said to have turned loose upon "our unoffending brethren adjacent to the Canadian frontier." At the conclusion of the meeting, a committee was appointed to receive donations for the Patriot cause.16

On the eastern part of the frontier where French Canadian refugees were daily arriving, with resentment in their hearts and a tale of woe upon their lips, meetings of sympathizers were being held in the towns and villages where gifts of money, clothing, food, and arms were subscribed in abundance. Sympathy was found among the wealthy classes and the jobless poor as well as among local officials and ambitious politicians in the Northeastern States. In his deposition before a court-martial, part of the American troops stationed near the border, and the Crown's witness, mentioned above, avowed that "a great almost all the citizens and civil officers of the Republic have supplied arms in abundance and will continue to do so."17

Contemporary newspapers in the border states, replete with accounts of mass meetings, speeches, and resolutions in support of Canadian independence, show that Patriot animosity toward the United States government was well-nigh as strong as that against Great Britain. Especially was this true after the passage of the Neutrality Act of March, 1888, which conferred large discretionary powers upon federal authorities in their efforts to avert breaches of neutrality from within the American frontiers.18 During the summer and autumn of 1888, Patriot meetings were being held in the leading cities and towns in the border states at which the United States government was denounced as a tyranny, and as being no longer worthy of popular support. The "Vauxhall Resolutions," originally adopted at a great mass meeting in New York City,19 were endorsed at numerous other meetings, with such minor alterations as pleased each local gathering. As an example, at a meeting at Fort Covington on November 17, which was addressed by "a number of the most respectable citizens of that place," the usual series of resolutions was adopted among which it was resolved: "that our liberties are in jeopardy when the functions of the civil authorities are suspended by an armed soldiery empowered to execute the law at the point of the bayonet, and the passage of the law of neutrality abridging our constitutional rights, and the attempt to execute that law by quartering troops among the people to overawe them is a most tyrannical act and merits universal reprobation."20

On the Michigan frontier, the Patriots directed their abuse largely toward Brigadier General Hugh Brady, commander of American forces at Detroit, and also toward the local federal judge and United States marshal for their efforts to enforce the recent neutrality act and their allegedly high-handed proceedings in restraining Patriot activities on that section of the frontier.21

The Patriot movement drew its strength from a large variety of persons as well as motives. While there were, indeed, charlatans, rogues, and scoundrels among them, ready to promote their own selfish ends under the guise of furthering the cause of freedom, there were also the jobless poor, victims of the economic depression of these years and now in pursuit of any enterprise that promised notoriety or personal gain. "Many of the middle classes," reported the Collector of Customs at Oswego, "comprehending many persons of enterprise, industry, and property, are now engaged heart and hand in the cause." The proprietor of a small boot factory at Oswego was pointed out by the same official as being "hard at work to expend as much in the cause of Canadian independence as he devotes to his family."22 A correspondent of the Montreal Herald, writing from Jefferson County, New York related that "a large portion of the men, and among them persons of the highest standing and intelligence—gentlemen of princely fortunes and of every profession in life are leagued with the Patriots."23 Through his confidential agents as well as from prisoners taken in raids upon the province, Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur found that many of the most prominent and respectable men on both sides of the border were associated in some degree with the movement.24 The merchants in the border towns, he observed, had found it to their own selfish interest to support the Patriot cause. Writing to the Colonial Secretary Lord Glenelg, at the end of the year 1888, he declared that "every store in Buffalo, Rochester, Detroit, and other towns have been ransacked during the last and present winters for supplies for our militia; and whilst American store keepers have thus received thousands of pounds from our commissary chest, they could well afford
to be liberal contributors to the movement which proves so profitable to them."28 Minister H. S. Fox, with perhaps some measures of truth, insisted that the "real movers" behind the Patriots were "the wealthy citizens in the great towns within the American border." "These villains," he continued, "have a deep and permanent land-speculating interest in maintaining the movement."29

On the American side, there were politicians seeking personal advancement by associating themselves with the "crusade for Canadian freedom." Candidates are said to have announced for office, basing their claim to public favor on the ground of their being identified with the Patriot cause.30 A great many ministers of the Gospel were said to be closely identified with the movement, and particularly those of the Methodist and Baptist denominations.31 Some preachers are known to have exhorted their followers to rally behind the cause of Canadian freedom as an act of humanitarianism in line with their duties as followers of Christ. Jeremiah Winneger captured at the "Battle of the Windmill" in November 1838, related at his trial that he had heard ministers of the Gospel urging their followers to join the struggle for freedom in the Canadas; and though he had a wife and eleven children to support, he had engaged in the movement for the sole purpose of "giving liberty to the people of Canada," and that in following this course he felt that he was "doing God's service."32 As shall later be seen, an astonishingly large number of medical doctors were among the leading spirits in the Patriot movement. In fact, they were the most conspicuous of any single class in the leadership of the "crusade for Canadian freedom"—as though Canada's ills were in need of doctors.33

No small number of newspapers were identified with the movement. Some, indeed, such as the Canadian Patriot, published at Derby, Vermont; the Lockport Freeman's Advocate, published by Dr. A. K. Mackenzie; the Lewiston Telegraph by Samuel P. Hart; the Bald Eagle, published at Cleveland by Dr. Samuel Underhill; the Oswego Bulletin, published by John Carpenter; and a penny sheet called the Buffalonian were all apparently launched for no other purpose than the promotion of the Patriot cause. A large number of others, including the Jeffersonian, a leading paper at Watertown, New York, the Detroit Morning Post, the Detroit Free Press, the Buffalo Daily Mercury, and the Philadelphia Public Ledger were in sympathy with the movement.

Bitter tirades against British rule were given an important place in these publications. As an example, an article in the Detroit Free Press, which was reprinted in several other Patriot papers, charged the British government with interfering in the domestic affairs of the United States by supplying the Indians with guns and ammunition during the recent Black Hawk War, in the internal affairs of Spain, in the Greek war for independence, and in Poland's fight for freedom. It then called attention to her denunciation of American citizens for their interference in behalf of the oppressed Canadians within her own empire.34 Following along the same line, an editorial in the Public Ledger, which also was reprinted in a number of Patriot papers, declared that "Every people have the right to self government. Therefore the Canadians have the right to follow our example, separate from the British Empire, and take a place among the nations... The British Tories very properly commended the Prussians, Saxons, and other German communities for throwing off the yoke of Napoleon. Yet they now talk of exterminating the Canadians for assuming the same right to independence. Such are the inconsistencies of tyrants."35

It is said that fully four-fifths of the residents at Rochester and seven-eighths of those at Buffalo were claimed as being supporters of the Patriot cause, that people were known to have mortgaged their homes to provide funds for the movement, and that a woman was seen moulding bullets in her home to supply the Patriot volunteers.36 The editor of a paper in Jefferson County, New York, writing of the Patriot rallies in his section of the state, avowed that the whole country seemed to be going mad over the subject of Canadian independence. With pardonable exaggeration, he declared that: "Laborers leave their employ, mechanics abandon their shops, merchants their counters, magistrates official duties, husbands their families, children their parents, Christians their churches, and ministers of the Gospel their charges—to attend these meetings."37
A survivor of the "Patriot War" of this time, in a paper read before the Detroit Historical Society in 1861, related that after listening to impassioned speeches by Patriot leaders from both sides of the border and being propaganda by newspapers dedicated to the cause, "the Canadians were thought to be ripe for revolt, if only arms and supplies could be placed in their hands, that once the standard of revolt was erected there, thousands would flock from both sides of the line, and that nothing more would be required but stout resolution and good commanders." Such may well have been the impression that had been registered upon the minds of thousands of American sympathizers as well as upon those who had arrived in haste from across the boundary.

The Patriots had begun to assemble volunteers for an invasion of the upper province as early as the second week of December, 1837. Shortly after the arrival of Mackenzie at Buffalo on December eleventh, while inflammatory speeches were being made and excited crowds were surging through the streets or congesting in taverns and saloons, volunteers were being recruited and arsenals raided to make up an army for the "liberation of Canada." The restless, the intoxicated, the jobless in quest of new sources of excitement and adventure were readily enlisted. Rensselaer Van Rensselaer, a drunken debauché, but believed by some to be a military genius, was made commander-in-chief of the invasion force. According to his own account, Van Rensselaer accepted this post of honor because he believed that "the vast majority of the Canadians were ready for revolution, and if given assistance in winning one battle, the Canadians would then concentrate their forces and do their own fighting." Furthermore, as a representative of the magnanimous spirit of the Northern States, he desired to emulate "the chivalrous example of the South in the case of Texas." 88

Navy Island, on the Canadian side of the Niagara river, was occupied on December 13, where a provisional republican government for Upper Canada was launched with Mackenzie at its head. In a bombastic proclamation, Mackenzie declared that for half a century the province had "languished under the blighting influence of military despots," and that the standard of revolt was being raised for the attainment of constitutional government, perpetual peace based upon equal rights for all, civil and religious liberty, the abolition of hereditary honors, a two-house legislature chosen by the people, an executive elected by popular vote, free trial by jury, vote by ballot, freedom of trade, exemption from military service, educational advantages for all, the opening of the St. Lawrence to the trade of the whole world, and the public lands to be opened to the "industry, capital, skill, and enterprise to worthy men of all nations." Three hundred acres of the best land in the province were offered to each volunteer who would join the forces of the new republic, and a few days later an additional reward of one hundred dollars in silver was offered to volunteers in the republican army. A large reward was offered for the capture of Sir Francis Bond Head, the Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, that ample justice might be meted out to him. A Patriot flag with two stars representing two Canadian republics was unfurled, and a great seal appeared breaking through a bank of dark clouds.87

Within the course of a month, upwards of five hundred volunteers had joined Mackenzie on Navy Island, but his provisional republican government was destined to a very short life. Dr. Duncombe's attempt at revolution in the London District having failed, the main purpose of the seizure of Navy Island had disappeared, and on January 14, the island was evacuated in an orderly manner while the miniature republic collapsed. Back on the American side a "Patriot Executive Committee" which had been set up at Buffalo continued to recruit volunteers, to commission officers, and gather supplies for another attempt at invasion.88

On the Michigan side of the frontier, the "Patriot Army of the Northwest" was organized early in the new year with Henry S. Handy as commander-in-chief, James M. Wilson and E. J. Roberts as major generals, and Dr. E. A. Theller, an Irish immigrant from Canada, as brigadier general with a commission to recruit French and Irish volunteers in the upper province.89

Before the end of the winter there were more attempts at invasion along the western frontier of Upper Canada by the seizure of adjacent islands along the border of that province, which resulted in each instance in an utter failure to gain a permanent
foothold on Canadian soil. While Mackenzie and his provisional government were still in possession of Navy Island in the Niagara River, Patriots on the Michigan frontier attempted a raid upon Amherstburg and Fort Malden by way of Bois Blanc Island near the mouth of the Detroit on January the ninth. On Washington's Birthday, there was another attempted invasion seven miles below the city of Detroit, by the seizure of Fighting Island as a springboard for an attack upon the Canadian mainland. Still another attempt at invasion was made during the first days of March when a thousand Patriots occupied Pelee Island near the northern shore of Lake Erie, only to be driven off by British regulars and local militia who had crossed from the Canadian mainland over several miles of ice to expel the invaders from the foothold they had temporarily gained.40

By this time American federal troops were becoming alert, and particularly those of Lieutenant General Hugh Brady's command on the Michigan frontier where, also, a body of local volunteers had been raised to assist in the enforcement of the neutrality act along this section of the frontier. Then, too, there were traitors within the Patriot camps, as shown in the correspondence of Donald McLeod, a revelation which led the Patriot leaders to see the importance of more closely guarding their secret plans as well as the necessity of weeding out the "Judas Iscariots" and "Benedict Arnolds" from within their ranks. As an example, John S. Vreeland, who had been entrusted with the stores of arms and munitions of the Patriot army before the invasion of Fighting Island, is said to have disposed of the whole supply, pocketed the money, found a sanctuary in the jail at Detroit, and divulged the plans of the invaders to the American authorities. In another instance, a trusted co-worker, while leaning heavily upon the bar in a saloon in Sandusky, and at a moment of extreme elation, revealed to a crowd of starry-eyed listeners "all the secrets that had been made known to him—not however as they were, but in accordance with a bad mind." "He even went farther than this," relates McLeod, "He made known the contents of certain letters he had copied. The result was that the Patriot army received but little assistance from the citizens, and the high expectations indulged in were utterly blasted."41

Under close watch by the authorities on both sides of the border and hampered by "Benedict Arnolds" within their own ranks, the Patriot leaders on this part of the frontier were soon awakened to the urgency of guarding their secret plans and weeding out the disloyal within their ranks by the adoption of some type of underground organization which would be made up of persons bound together by an iron-clad oath of fidelity and secrecy.

On the eastern part of the Canadian frontier the experience of the Patriots had been much the same. In Northern Vermont, another Patriot army had been raised as early as the first month of the new year. A meeting of rebel leaders from Lower Canada was held at Middlebury on New Year's Day, where Dr. Nelson and some twenty others occupied the upper floor of a stonemason's home. To this meeting came Louis Papineau, bellwether of the late rebellion in Lower Canada, who had just returned from a tour of the neighboring states in search of funds for a renewal of the rebellion in his province. At Albany, he claimed to have won the support of Governor William L. Marcy and other state officials, and their assurance that he could borrow two hundred thousand dollars from banks in New York City and other large towns in the Northeastern States. He hoped to obtain the active support of the United States government as well as that of the border states. Short of such assistance, he thought it rash to attempt an invasion of the province with local support alone. A "warm dispute" then ensued between Papineau and Dr. O'Callaghan on the one side as against Nelson and most of the other leaders, the latter insisting upon an early invasion with such resources as they might obtain. While Papineau and Dr. O'Callaghan on the one side as against Nelson came forward and assumed the leadership of the Patriot movement on that section of the frontier. Huddled together in an upper room of the stonemason's home, Nelson, Dr. Côté, Julien Gagnon, Mailhot, Dr. Lorimer, and others of their faction began formulating plans for a Lower Canadian republic and an army of liberation to be equipped by sympathizers on the American side of the line.48

In preparation for the projected invasion, Nelson and his friends drew up a declaration of independence and an outline
of a constitution for a Lower Canadian republic. This document, like that drawn up by Mackenzie in the preceding December, was clearly a work of propaganda, designed to rally the Canadians to a renewal of the rebellion. It contained provisions for the abolition of seignorial rights, freehold deeds to the habitants to lands they had formerly cultivated on their lord's estate, the nationalization of lands hitherto reserved for the support of the clergy as well as the extensive holdings of the British North American Land Company. The union of church and the civil government was to be dissolved. Imprisonment for debt was to cease and the sentence of death was to be imposed for murder alone. Finally, a permanent constitution "according to the wants of the country" was to be the goal of their efforts.  

Before the end of February 1838, Nelson and his force of five hundred refugees, with a prepared proclamation of independence and a draft constitution for a Lower Canadian republic, were looking forward to a triumphal return to the land of their birth. Nelson and his followers were joined by a number of adventurous spirits among whom the most active was C. G. Bryant, "a bold man whose mind was filled with martial ardour," who had recently been involved in the Texan Revolution and who was now ready to join hands with the promoters of Canadian independence and create "a second Texas" on the northern side of our national boundary.  

On the last day of February, having robbed the arsenal at Elizabethtown, New York, the little Patriot army loaded on forty sleds, left its camp near the village of Alburgh, Vermont, and crossed the border into Lower Canada where they began the distribution of printed copies of their declaration of independence and the proposed constitution for a republican government. Encountering a considerable force of provincial militia, Nelson and his followers beat a hasty retreat across the boundary—only to be made prisoners by federal authorities on the American side. Though released a short time later, the leaders of the abortive invasion were convinced that their plans were already known to both the Canadian and American authorities before their crossing had been made.  

To safeguard all future plans of operation from government spies on both sides of the border, Nelson and his associates were driven to the necessity of abandoning an open organization and retiring to the underground where their secrets were to be shared only with the faithful and truly elect within the Patriot ranks.  

Thus it will be seen that by the close of the winter of 1838 the Patriots in both the East and West had been driven to the alternative of retiring behind the screen of secrecy in order to shield their plans and movements from the ever-watchful eyes and itching ears of government spies on both sides of the line. It is therefore not surprising to find that a considerable number of Patriot organizations, more or less secret in character, were born of this movement—after early efforts at invasion of the provinces had failed. Among these are to be mentioned the Freres Chasseurs, or Brother Hunters, founded in Vermont in the early spring of 1838, to be followed shortly by the Sons of Liberty on the Michigan frontier, the Patriot Masons on the Niagara frontier, and still others of a similar character which came into existence during the "crusade for Canadian freedom."  

But the association which came to overshadow all other Patriot societies of this period, and into which nearly all other kindred organizations were eventually merged was that which came to be known as the Hunters' Lodges, or Patriot Hunters. Because of its astonishingly large membership, the magnitude of its resources, the secrecy with which its proceedings were conducted, the vast range of territory over which it operated, and its near identity with the Patriot movement itself, the role of this unique organization is of no small importance to the student of our early Canadian relations.

NOTES

* The name Canada was then applied only to the provinces of Upper Canada later renamed Ontario, and Lower Canada, now known as Quebec. To the East were the four Maritime Provinces, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland.


18. The act of March 10, 1838, empowered customs officials, United States marshals, or any officers designated by the President, to seize any vessel, vehicle, arms or munitions of war which they believed were being provided for an expedition against a friendly power, and that they be detained by such officers "until the decision of the President can be had theron, or until said property shall be discharged by a court of competent jurisdiction." Printed entire in Charles G. Fenwick, The Neutrality Laws of the United States, (Washington, Carnegie End., 1915), 179-81.

19. For an account of this meeting, see: E. A. Theller, Canada in 1837-38, Showing by Historical Facts the Causes of the Late Attempted Rebellion, Together with the Personal Adventures of the Author, (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1841), II 254-56.


22. George H. McWhorter, (Collector of Customs, Oswego), to Secretary of the Treasury, Sept. 14, 1838, and forwarded to the Secretary of State, Records of the Department of State, (R. G. 59), National Archives.


29. Edwin C. Guillette, Lives and Times of the Patriots, (Toronto, 1928), 140.

30. Among the top leaders in the movement were Dr. Robert Nelson, Dr. Cirile Coté, Dr. E. B. O'Callaghan, Dr. Lorimer, Dr. James Hunter, Dr. John Rolph, Dr. A. K. Mackenzie, Dr. Samuel Underhill, Dr. Charles Duncombe, Dr. Thomas D. Morrison, Dr. Blackmar, and Dr. E. A. Theller. The Bald Eagle of December 8, 1838, reporting a Patriot meeting in Cleveland which was addressed by Doctors Theller, Smith, Underhill, and Houston, ended with the remark: "What Patriots the doctors are!"


33. Guillette, 179-80.

34. Quoted in Report of a Select Committee on the State of the Province, House of Assembly, Upper Canada, April 30, 1839, (Toronto, Government publication, 1839), 25.


36. Tiffany, 29.

37. Ibid., 30-31.


40. For a detailed account of these attempted invasions, see Edwin C. Guillette, Lives and Times of the Patriots, (Toronto, 1928); and Michigan Pioneer Col., XXI, 517, et seq.
Rise of the Hunters’ Lodges

According to one account, the secret organization known as the Hunters’ Lodges derived its name from Dr. James Hunter who lived at the town of Whitby on the northern shore of Lake Ontario. Hunter is said to have been active in the cause of Canadian independence and to have joined Mackenzie’s rebel force at Montgomery’s Tavern early in December 1837. After a narrow escape from capture at the Battle of Yonge Street, runs the same account, he found refuge in an old oven ten miles east of Toronto and later escaped to the American frontier where he became associated with a group of kindred spirits which was later formed into a secret revolutionary society bearing his name. A far more reasonable explanation, however, for the name “Hunters’ Lodges” is to be found in a pretext of the Patriots for prowling about the Canadian frontier while armed. A historian of this period, writing of the border disturbances of this time, relates that armed bands of Patriots were in the habit of quieting their inquisitors by saying that they were going on “a great hunt in the north woods.” Indeed, as shall later be seen, the secret signs, passwords, and degrees of this revolutionary society are those of the language of the chase.

The origin of this secret association can be clearly traced to northern Vermont where Dr. Nelson and his followers, finding their plans of operation exposed to their enemies, sought to avoid this difficulty by the formation of a secret organization wherein their secret plans might be made secure from exposure by spies from either side of the border. Nelson and his associates now resolved upon the formation of “a vast secret society” which was to include all of those who wished to have a part in
the struggle for Lower Canadian independence, whether with sword or purse. Such an organization was accordingly founded early in the spring of 1838 under the name of the Freres Chasseurs, or Brother Hunters. 8

In the society of Chasseurs, or Hunters, there were four degrees of initiation with an elaborate set of signs and passwords attached to each. Preceding the ceremony of initiation, a stringent oath was exacted of each candidate. In the initial oath he swore:

to observe the secret signs and mysteries of the society of Chasseurs—never to write, describe, or make known in any way the things which shall be revealed to me by this lodge of Chasseurs . . . to aid with my advice, care and property every brother Chasseur in need, and to notify him in time of any misfortune that may befall him. All this I promise without reservation, and consenting to see my property destroyed and to have my throat cut to the bone. 4

An account of what may have been one of the first meetings of the new secret order was related by a member in a voluntary deposition for the Crown before a general court-martial at Montreal and whose name was omitted from the printed records of the court. He relates that while at St. Albans, Vermont, Nelson, Chevalier de Lorimer, and Doré of St. Eduard arrived from Burlington with the information that "a great secret" was to be confided to all those who were truly devoted to the cause of Canadian independence, and that the new organization had "already ramifications in the whole universe." On the following night, in a secluded room in the Campbell Hotel at St. Albans and in the presence of Nelson, Dr. Coté, Dr. Lorimer, and some others, the candidate was caused to fall upon his knees, with a blindfold over his eyes; and upon taking the required oath of secrecy, he was then inducted into the "mysteries" of the Freres Chasseurs and made acquainted with some of the plans of the militant brotherhood. 5

Toward the end of spring, the spirits of the society were heightened by a report—of doubtful probability—that Russia would aid in financing the movement. Returning from a trip to New York City in quest of funds, Nelson reported an inter-

view with the Russian Consul who had assured him that: "The government of Russia would seize with pleasure this occasion to avenge in Canada the deep wounds the Circassians had sustained by English money and engineers—inflicted, he said, upon the Muscovite armies." 6

The new secret society grew like the proverbial mushroom on both sides of the border. While rapidly spreading in the New England States, lodges were soon being organized in Montreal, Three Rivers, and the city of Quebec, as well as in many of the smaller towns in Lower Canada. Numerous organizers traveled from parish to parish, founding lodges and promising arms and munitions for the great day of their deliverance from British rule. In spite of the great price upon their heads, Gagnon and Mailhot secretly recrossed the boundary into the lower province, the former canvassing the region to the west of the Richelieu and the latter the territory on the eastern side. Their work of persuasion became exceedingly easy when in October the word was spread abroad that Lord Durham had made known his intention of "giving an English character to the province."

As early as July 5, the Crown's witness, above mentioned, made a trip to Montreal where he found the secret headquarters of the society "a busy place, and a clearing house for information on plans for an uprising." At this center, a committee of directors, meeting in the law office of John McDonell, supervised the activities of the association within the lower province. He learned that this office was sending money every week to the society's headquarters in Vermont. McDonell was boasting of his recent success at the city of Quebec where he had initiated Dr. Tasché, A. N. Morin, and many other persons of prominence in that part of the province. In a secluded quarter some distance from the main office, our informant found bullets being moulded in large quantities and cannon being fabricated of wood.

Early in the summer, according to the same source, Donald McLeod, a rebel schoolmaster from Upper Canada and a leader in the Patriot movement along the western border of that province, arrived at St. Albans where he was initiated into the "mysteries" of the Freres Chasseurs, or Brother Hunters, which he declared he had never heard of before. He informed the leaders of the newly-discovered society that "there already ex-
isted a similar association in Upper Canada and on the frontier, but much inferior to this, and much more defective, and that upon his return among his brethren he would cause it to be adopted in preference to all others." 

The secret society in the West to which McLeod had referred was undoubtedly the one which Henry S. Handy had organized on the Michigan frontier in the spring of 1838. As already indicated in the preceding chapter, the Patriot leaders on that section of the frontier had met with much the same experience as those in the East. They, too, had seen the necessity of guarding more closely their secret plans of operation; and under the leadership of Handy they had founded an association under the name of "The Secret Order of the Sons of Liberty."

Having previously assumed the title of "General of the Patriot Army of the Northwest," Handy had hatched a grandiose scheme for the fomenting of a revolution in Upper Canada, and lodges were soon being organized on the Michigan frontier, along the southern shore of Lake Erie, and also in the western part of Upper Canada as well. For the initiation of candidates into this militant fraternity a stringent oath of fidelity and secrecy was exacted. "In the name of Almighty God," candidates were made to swear allegiance to the "Sons of Liberty engaged in the Patriot service in the cause of Canadian independence." Members were to obey their superior officers, and never to divulge the plans, purposes, or even the existence of the society to which they belonged. Nor were they to "sell, barter, or in any way alter" any badge bestowed upon them to designate their rank within the organization, or reveal the contents of their oath to persons outside the lodge. 

As commander-in-chief of the Sons of Liberty, Handy sent agents into Upper Canada, who were to initiate persons who could be trusted, organize lodges, and enlist their members in the Patriot army of liberation. An agent was to be stationed within each square mile of the populated areas, with power to confer the rank of captain upon suitable persons in each locality. Lodges were to elect their colonels, and one hundred spies were to make frequent reports to Handy, each of whom was to have a beat of ten miles daily and to communicate with his fellow spies, both ahead and behind his beat. Handy's plan called for the organization of a revolutionary army of at least twenty thousand men capable of being mobilized at race horse speed by special agents from the supreme command. The revolution in Upper Canada was to be initiated by the capture of Windsor on the fourth of July with arms obtained from the arsenals at Fort Dearborn and Detroit by connivance with the custodians who were to be persuaded to leave the windows unlocked. Upon the capture of Windsor, couriers in Canada were to spread the glad tidings to all parts of the province and members in each locality were to seize all available arms and to fortify all places of strategic importance.

Handy's elaborate scheme, however, was hopelessly wrecked when a band of forty ruffians crossed over into Canada and raided the town of Sarnia on the east side of the St. Clair River. The alarm spreading to Detroit, the guards at the arsenal were changed, and the scheduled raid upon the stores of arms ingloriously failed. As a last resort, the Sons of Liberty made an urgent appeal for arms and supplies to the Patriot leaders at Cleveland, but their solicitations proved in vain. Indeed, the Patriot leaders in the Cleveland area, where another secret society was springing up, were busy with plans of their own—nothing less than a full-scale invasion of the upper province which was being mapped out by Dr. Charles Duncombe and his associates for the fourth of July. This probably explains the reluctance of the Patriots, then concentrating about the city of Cleveland, to divide their resources with Handy's organization in the West. 

Little if anything seems to be known about the Sons of Liberty as a separate organization after the abandonment of their scheme for an invasion on July the fourth, its membership probably being merged with the secret association called the Hunters and Chasers which had begun organizing at Cleveland in the latter part of June. As shall later be seen, the latter organization differed materially from the Sons of Liberty, not being made up wholly of persons under strict military orders, but taking in all those who wished to support the Patriot cause with gifts of money and arms, though quite unwilling to expose their persons to the hazards of the firing line.

The question arises as to whether the society then springing up at Cleveland was an entirely new organization, as formerly
supposed, or merely an extension of the Freres Chasseurs, or Brother Hunters, into the West. A comparison of the signs, passwords, and degrees of the two respective organizations will show that, in spite of some differences of no great importance, they are essentially the same.\textsuperscript{12} It would therefore appear that McLeod, after his initiation into the Freres Chasseurs in Vermont, had fulfilled his promise to the latter when returning to the western part of the frontier by urging the adoption of the eastern scheme of organization, not only upon the new secret society then organizing at Cleveland and the near-by towns, but also upon the Sons of Liberty of which he probably was a member. The party who provided the oaths, passwords, and degrees for members from different and distant parts of the country, perhaps with imperfect memories of minor details. Sir John Colborne, then in command of the British forces in Canada, writing to General Alexander Macomb of the United States Army on October 26, avowed that the signs and passwords of the various secret lodges had been revealed to him “by sworn members from different and distant parts of the frontier” and that “they fully concur with each other.”\textsuperscript{13} Any differences, therefore, that may have originally existed between the Freres Chasseurs in the East and the Hunters and Chasers in the West was soon to be forgotten, while the common appellation “Hunters’ Lodges” became current throughout all sections of the frontier. A member of a Hunters’ Lodge in Lower Canada, testifying before a court-martial late in November of that year, admitted that the association to which he belonged extended “all over Upper and Lower Canada and the Northern States.”\textsuperscript{14}

Foremost among the propagandists for the association being organized along the lake frontier was Dr. Charles Duncombe, a great admirer of republican institutions and with a strong inclination toward utopian socialist views,\textsuperscript{15} who had been expelled as a radical from the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada, and lately the leader of an abortive rebellion in the western part of that province. Since early in June, Duncombe had been haranguing large audiences at the courthouse in Cleveland and at other places in the near vicinity wherever listeners were to be found, railing out against monarchical institutions as having no rightful place on the North American continent, and agitating in behalf of an independent republic for Upper Canada. Another leading propagandist for the movement was Dr. Samuel Underhill of Cleveland, formerly the editor of an “infidel paper” called the \textit{Liberalist}, but now the editor and publisher of the \textit{Bald Eagle}, one of the official organs of the Hunters’ Lodges and heavily subsidized by this society. Underhill is said to have been one of the most able speakers in behalf of the movement, though often so violent and “rampant” in speech as to alienate the more sober-minded who might otherwise have been won over to the cause.\textsuperscript{16}

One of the most active in the organization of lodges along the lake frontier was Orrin Scott, a nephew of General Winfield Scott of the United States Army. Young Scott had recently escaped from a prison at Kingston, and was now fired with zeal for the overthrow of British rule in Canada. Scott and his associate, Dr. Blackmar, traveled tirelessly through this section, denouncing the alleged evils of monarchical government and organizing lodges of Hunters and Chasers in towns and villages along the way. The newly initiated might look forward to speedy promotion to positions of responsibility in this rapidly expanding organization. As an example, Scott organized a lodge of one hundred and thirty-five members at Amherst, Ohio, of which our informant, William Jones Kent, was made a member. Before the end of the summer, Kent, who presumably had passed to the higher degrees, was appointed master of a lodge at Brownhelm which Scott had just organized a few nights before.\textsuperscript{17}

The extent to which the organization had grown by the end of the summer is indicated by a report of the Collector of Customs at Oswego, New York, who had under his supervision two traveling investigators sent out from the Treasury Department some time before. Writing to the Secretary of the Treasury, Levi P. Woodbury, on September 14, he expressed his amazement at the growth of the society. “I doubt,” he declared, “that there is a city, town or port on the lake frontier in which associations are not found. Some of these, and probably all of them, are active in collecting money, arms, and munitions of war.” He estimated the membership of the society to be forty thousand, though he surmised that this figure might be far too small.
Their financial manager, Judge J. Grant, was reported to have on hand no less than one hundred and fifty thousand dollars, collected from various lodges or donated by wealthy business men in the larger towns along the border. He had learned that no small number of business men and other persons of position and property were "engaged heart and hand in the cause." From the reports of his agents, he had learned that the society already possessed a great secret arsenal near Cleveland and that other collections of arms and munitions were being secreted at several points along the shores of the lakes.10

A convention of one hundred and sixty delegates from lodges in the West, including several delegates from Upper Canada, met at Cleveland on September 16, and continued in session for seven days. Although there is a statement to the contrary,20 it does not appear that the lodges in Lower Canada and the New England States had any share in the work of this convention.21 Indeed, the proceedings of this body were centered upon the creation of a provisional republican government for Upper Canada, while the Hunters in the East had already adopted a scheme for a Lower Canadian republic early in that year.22

While the "Patriot Congress" which assembled at Cleveland undoubtedly included some very disreputable characters, most of the known delegates appear to have been fairly representative of the middle-class business and professional men of that time—though deluded in the belief that Canadian independence was a worthy and righteous cause. Dr. Charles Duncombe and Donald McLeod appear to have played a leading role in the work of the convention. The delegate from Oswego, New York, was a man named Milles, the proprietor of a small boot factory in that town. A. D. Smith was reported to be a rebel refugee from Upper Canada, and at this time chief justice of the peace at Cleveland. Colonel Nathan Williams was a wholesale grocer at Cleveland and an officer in the Ohio militia. Colonel Loving P. Harris was in business at Amherst, Ohio, and an officer in the militia of his state. Lucius Verrus Bierce was an attorney at Akron, and brigadier general in the Ohio militia, and later a local historian of some repute. A man named Truax, of the firm of Truax and Phillips, was reported to be a wealthy merchant at Kingston on the Canadian side of the lakes, and a "bosom friend" of Marshall Spring Bidwell who had fled to the States after the rebellion. Benjamin Stone was a grocer from Upper Canada and Judge J. Grant had been a collector of customs at Oswego, and at this time a financial manager of the Patriot forces on the lake frontier. A man named White was a shoe manufacturer at Rochester, another named Brunson a merchant at Buffalo, and another named Faron was in business at Lockport. Bill Johnston, who is said to have appeared at the convention disguised as an Indian chief, was a notorious ruffian who maintained a stronghold in the Thousand Islands and who had taken the lead in the destruction of the British steamer Sir Robert Peel late in the preceding May. John Grant, an Indian chief, was present at the convention posing as a representative of his race.28

The principal work of the convention, or "Patriot Congress" as it was called by some of its members, was the launching of a provisional republican government for Upper Canada. A. D. Smith of Cleveland was elected "President of the Republic of Lower Canada," and Colonel Nathan Williams of the Ohio militia as vice president. A cabinet was formed and J. Grant was designated as secretary of the treasury and Donald McLeod as secretary of war. Lucius V. Bierce was elected commander-in-chief of the "Patriot Army in the West," and a man named Brunson, of Buffalo, as commissary general. Gilman Appleby, formerly master of the Caroline, destroyed at Niagara Falls in the preceding December, and now captain of the steamboat Constitution, was made commodore of the Patriot navy on Lake Erie, and Bill Johnston,24 destroyer of the Sir Robert Peel, was named commodore of the Patriot navy on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence.26

The banking scheme adopted by the convention as a means of financing the Patriot cause and the new republic for Upper Canada, was the brain child of Dr. Duncombe who entertained utopian ideas about money and banking and who later wrote a book upon the subject.28

In a circular addressed "To the Different Lodges on the Subject of a Joint Stock-Stock Company Bank," it was declared that "all institutions of the country should be for the benefit of the people. There should be no landed aristocracy, no estab-
lished church, no bank monopoly, no union of the monied aristocracy with the executive.” Paper money should be issued only by “a republican bank controlled by the people through delegates chosen to elect directors,” and that the bank and its profits should be equally the property of every member of the state.

The scheme which was actually inaugurated late in September provided for a capital stock of $7,500,000 divided into 150,000 shares of fifty dollars each, but it was afterwards to be so increased as to offer every individual an opportunity to own a share. As the purpose of the bank was to aid the cause of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity,” the first loans were to be made to the president for the Patriot service before any loans for private business could be made. Funds deposited with the bank and notes issued by this institution were to be secured by the public property of the province which was still to be conquered. It was declared that the entire resources of the “Patriot Dominions that they now have, or that they may hereafter have dominion over are pledged for the faithful repayment of whatever principal and interest may be loaned to the President as aforesaid.” Upon the bills issued by the bank were to appear “the heads of the late martyrs to the cause of liberty in Canada, the head of Matthews on the left end of the bill, the head of Lount in the center, and the head of Moreau on the right.” On the margin of the bills were to appear the words: “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.”

J. Grant, already in charge of the Patriot purse at Buffalo, was elected president of the “People’s Bank,” and E. Bagley and S. Moulson as vice presidents. From a letter written by the British Minister, Henry S. Fox, on the twenty-first of the following month, it appears that bills of this bank were already being printed and that some were in the hands of a number of persons at Buffalo. But according to a letter from a member of the society at Cleveland, “who was in all the secrets,” only three hundred dollars in bank stock had actually been subscribed by the first of November, although the convention is said to have pledged itself to raise ten thousand dollars within two weeks after the close of the session.

During the autumn months, the Hunters in the West along with their brethren in New England and Lower Canada continued to grow in numbers, resources, and apparently in popular favor as well. Sir John Colborne wrote to General Alexander Macomb of the United States Army on October 26, that from Michigan eastward through the New England States the Hunters were organized “in every city and village” along the Canadian frontier and that they possessed a Patriot army of at least twenty-five thousand on the American side of the border, that they were boasting that the arsenals in the border states were subject to their command. A force of six hundred Kentucky riflemen as well as a great many Indians were reported to be at the disposal of the Hunters. Dr. A. K. Mackenzie of Lockport, who was active in the organization of lodges among the Canadian refugees, had been telling prospective members that the Vice President of the United States, Colonel R. M. Johnson, was “an initiated Hunter,” and that President Van Buren, himself, was in sympathy with the movement. At about this same time, Kent, in his deposition before Councillor R. B. Sullivan, related that he had learned at a lodge meeting that Governor Stephen T. Mason of Michigan was a member of the society and that he had pledged himself to leave the state arsenal unlocked so that arms could be had by the Hunters when needed, that Governor William L. Marcy of New York, Governor Edward Kent of Maine, and Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky were active members. John Grant, an Indian chief and a delegate at the Cleveland convention, was said to have promised to bring six hundred Indians into the service of the society. By this time the Hunters were claiming to have at their command nine to twelve vessels upon the lakes, including the steamboats Constitution and the Daniel Webster.

On November 3, the British Minister at Washington, H. S. Fox, with an extensive set of reports before him, wrote Secretary Forsyth of the State Department that the secret association already extended all along the frontier “from Maine and Vermont to the state of Michigan and far into the states of New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and likewise into the neighboring state of Kentucky,” and that its membership, which he estimated to be at least forty thousand was “daily and hourly increasing.”
It is interesting to learn that about the same time that Fox was writing the above-mentioned note concerning the alarming growth of the revolutionary society, a Hunters' Lodge was organized in our national capital. Early in November a meeting of Patriot sympathizers was held in Carusi's Saloon in Washington, which was addressed by E. A. Theller, who had recently escaped from a prison at Quebec, "and that very night," writes Theller, "there was established in the metropolis of the United States, and under the very nose of Mr. Fox, one of those 'secret lodges' which he seemed to fear so much, and out of the number who joined and were initiated that night, fully four-fifths of them were clerks and others connected with some of the departments of the government."88

The chief hotbed of the organization at this time was to be found in western New York and particularly in Jefferson County which borders on the east shore of Lake Ontario. A correspondent of the Montreal Herald, then residing in this section of the state, wrote early in November that Hunters' Lodges were organized in every town and neighborhood and immense sums of money were being raised for the cause. "Those who belong not to the association are a minority of the adult men in this region and know nothing whatever of the designs of the Patriots. An incomprehensible mystery hangs over the movement. Meetings are held in all parts, and the leading men of their members are continually on the move from one place to another. Nothing is communicated on paper... It is estimated that they number 10,000 men in this county and that there are 40,000 members within one hundred miles of this place."89

As early as October 21, Dr. Duncombe was boasting that in Upper Canada large numbers of the provincial militia were being initiated into the new secret society and that some of the outstanding leaders of the various religious denominations were "beginning to see the light."87 Lieutenant Governor Sir George Arthur, who had long been contending that the organization was made up almost entirely of American citizens, had begun to alter his opinion before the end of November. In a letter to Sir John Colborne of the twenty-first of that month, he declared that the whole western part of his province was "full of traitors," and that there were "a goodly number of them in Toronto, they having formed Hunters' Lodges since the month of June."88 By the last day of the month, his eyes were further opened, and in a letter to Colborne he wrote: "I have ascertained beyond all doubt that lodges have been formed throughout this province in connection with infamous vagabonds from the States."89 The Cobourg prisoners said that there were no less than a thousand Hunters in and near that town, alone, and that more than one hundred persons were initiated into the lodge at Toronto in a single night.40

Writing of the growth of the society in Lower Canada, after quelling a Hunter-inspired insurrection in that province, Sir John Colborne informed the Upper Canadian governor on November 27, that in spite of their recent defeat, the society was still "extensively organized in most parts of the province, that no less than three thousand persons had been initiated in the vicinity of Quebec, and that a still greater number was to be found in and near Montreal and in the valley of the Richelieu "under strong and determined leaders, still waiting for an opportunity to disrupt the province."41

So confident were the Hunters of their strength and influence that they began to take a hand in politics, especially in the states of Ohio and New York. In the autumn of 1838, the Hunters in Ohio were supporting an "Emancipation Party" and a slate of candidates for the various state offices and for seats in the legislature. The society at this stage of its growth is said to have been almost unanimous in its support of candidates who favored the policies of Van Buren, since the President was then believed to be in sympathy with the Patriot cause.42 In the state of New York the Hunters carried on a vigorous, if unsuccessful, campaign for the re-election of Governor William L. Marcy who was said to be a member and a consistent supporter of the militant brotherhood.43 In Vermont, John Smith of St. Albans, the administration candidate for Congress in that district, was being supported by the Hunters on the ground that he was wholeheartedly in favor of the Patriots in their efforts to revolutionize the Canadas.44

In Lower Canada, at least, the influence of the society in the courts of justice was becoming manifest in trials involving members of the organization. In the trial of several members on
August 7, 1838, who were charged with the murder of Joseph A. Chartrand, where the evidence of guilt was beyond question, the defense attorney, Richard Hubert, afterwards boasted that “more than four of the jurymen were members of the society and had decided, even before hearing the proof, to acquit the prisoners charged with the bloody act.”

Before the end of November of that year, and within a period of scarcely more than seven months, a secret association bent upon the overthrow of British rule in the Canadas had mushroomed into a vast organization stretching across the border states, from Maine to Michigan, and far into the British possessions across the line. During the state trials at Montreal following the November uprising in Lower Canada, a witness for the Crown mentioned earlier in this chapter, declared that the association extended “all over Upper and Lower Canada and the Northern States,” and that it had already “connected all the ties that united the radicals.” A prominent resident of Detroit, writing to a friend in Toronto near the close of the year, expressed the opinion that “the Hunters’ Lodges will be the engine that is to shake the United States to the very center. They will make the next president unless Van Buren gives them a war. I have reason to believe that more than one-third of the inhabitants of Michigan are members already. The loafers are engaged to join by the hope of plunder in Canada, the ambitious politicians by the hope of personal aggrandizement.”

At about the same time, Lieutenant Governor Arthur, now well-informed of the growth of the society through his spies on both sides of the border, estimated its membership at one hundred and sixty thousand. Although he believed the American government to be “indeed, sincerely trying to put them down,” he feared that if Van Buren should fail to act in time, “these lodges will revolutionize the United States and certainly decide who shall be the next president.”

While the Hunters are believed to have continued to grow in numbers and resources until well into the spring of 1839, there is, however, the likelihood that its membership was grossly exaggerated by its enemies as well as its most ardent supporters.

There is probably a measure of truth in the statement of an editor at Oswego who declared in the following September that a very large part of its membership was purely nominal, and that a considerable portion of those initiated never attended a second meeting, their interest having waned as soon as the real purpose of the society had become clear to them. But even so, there can hardly be any doubt that the organization had grown to such a proportion as to become a formidable threat to Anglo-American peace.

While the Patriot Hunters had been growing in numbers and resources, so were British and Canadian preparations for the expected attack. Aside from Colborne’s army of British regulars in Canada, Arthur by the month of November had assembled a provincial militia of no less than thirteen thousand, and a considerable force of militia had been called into service in the lower province. A total land force of probably thirty-five thousand—four times as large as the United States Army—was ready and waiting to challenge the invader, while several British armed vessels under the command of Captain William Sandom were tightening their patrol on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River.

A belief on the part of the leading Hunters that their hope of “liberating” the Canadian people would have to be speedily accomplished before British military and naval resistance should become too strong is shown by a letter from Duncombe to Dr. Thomas D. Morrison of October 27, in which great uneasiness is expressed about the extent of the defense preparations which was thought to be under way in the Canadas. The British, he believed, were “arming every vessel on the lakes and fortifying every place they can on the frontier.” The long-discussed invasions, so he had been informed, were therefore to begin on the first day of the following month.

At this point, it may be expedient to inquire into the general nature and organization of this vast secret brotherhood, and especially as it was to be found on the eve of “the great hunt in the north woods.”
NOTES

   Samuel P. Hart, arrested as a participant in the Cobourg Conspiracy of
   July, 1839, mentioned Dr. Hunter as being a former resident at
   Whiby, but who then resided at Rochester where he dispensed informa­
   tion among the Patriots of that vicinity. Digest of Statements of
   S. P. Hart and Other Prisoners Taken Near Cobourg. Canadian
   Archives, Series Q, Vol. 420, pp. 43, et seq.

2. A. C. Flick, (ed.), History of the State of New York, (10 vols., New


5. Ibid., 548-49.

6. Ibid., 550.
   President Van Buren was later convinced that money was being sup­
   plied to the Hunters by Russia, their purpose being to embroil
   Britain and the States in war. Minister H. S. Fox, however, was of
   a different opinion. Fox to Palmerston, Dec. 1, 1838, Series Q, 250,
   p. 133. See: L. S. Stavrianos, “The Rumor of Russian Intrigue in


8. Charles Lindsey, The Life of William Lyon Mackenzie, with An Account
   of the Canadian Rebellion and the Subsequent Border Disturbances,
   Chiefly from Unpublished Documents, (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1862),
   II, 192-93. See also: Guillet, 112-13.


10. Deposition of Ensign Thadeus Patrick, June 30, 1838, Durham Papers,
   The invasion planned at Cleveland was also abandoned, due pro­
   bably to the Short Hills Raids into Upper Canada, June 10-21, and
   the consequent precautions being taken by Canadian authorities in

11. Orrin Edward Tiffany, The Relations of the United States to the
   Canadian Rebellion, (Buffalo Hist. Soc. pub., 1905), 61.

12. Deposition of William Jones Kent, late of Brownhelm, Ohio, before
   the Hon. Robert B. Sullivan, Toronto, Oct. 22, 1838, respecting a
   great society in the United States known as the Hunters and Chasers’
   Lodges. Durham Papers, Sec. IV, Vol. I, 789, et seq. For those of the
   Chasseurs, see: Report of State Trials, II, 554-55; and Filteau, III, 149-50.

   1838-39), 24-25.

18. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PATRIOT HUNTERS

31. Since March 17, Dr. Mackenzie had been head of an organization known as the Canadian Refugee Relief Association of which Donald McLeod was a leading member. (Lindsey, II 177-78). A considerable part of its membership probably joined the Hunters.


33. Deposition of William J. Kent, above cited.

34. Fox to Forsyth, Nov. 3, 1838, British Legation, notes, XIX, Nat. Arc.

35. E. A. Theller, Canada in 1837-38, Showing by Historical Facts the Late Attempted Revolution and its Failure......together with the Personal Adventures of the Author, (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1841), II, 264-65. The lodge in Washington is also mentioned in Nile's Register, LV. 193.


39. Same to same, Nov. 30, ibid., 404-5.

40. Digest of statements of Cobourg prisoners, above cited.

41. Colborne to Arthur, Nov. 27, ibid., 401.

42. Deposition of William J. Kent, above cited.


44. Montreal Herald, Nov. 12, 1838.


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SCENE OF THE BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL

To the north of the windmill tower, now used as a lighthouse, are numerous unmarked graves of men who died in battle on November 13 to 16, 1838.
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To the north of the windmill tower, now used as a lighthouse, are numerous unmarked graves of men who died in battle on November 13 to 16, 1838.
BATTLE OF THE WINDMILL

A representation of the first phase of the battle which resulted in the withdrawal of the Canadian forces to await the arrival of additional troops and heavy guns for the demolition of the windmill tower.

SECOND BATTLE OF ODELLTOWN

In the background is to be seen the Methodist Church in which the Canadian militia found refuge and held off a Patriot force of about one thousand men for more than two hours, until the defenders were joined by additional troops. The Patriots were then driven back with heavy loss, and their commander, Dr. Nelson, fled to safety across the American border.
DONALD McLEOD

After his escape from Upper Canada, following the rebellion of 1837, McLeod became active in the Patriot movement on the American side of the border and a leading organizer of Hunters’ Lodges along the lake frontier.

DR. ROBERT NELSON

A rebel refugee from Lower Canada, Dr. Nelson and a coterie of kindred spirits in northern Vermont launched a provisional republican government for Lower Canada, and later the secret revolutionary society which came to be known as the Hunters' Lodges.

The remainder of his life was spent in the northeastern States where he gained some distinction as a physician and surgeon.
SECRET CIPHER OF THE HUNTER'S LODGES

Shown above, is a brief explanation of the secret alphabet, followed by the oath of the Snowshoe degree in cipher.
There were two main centers around which the Hunters' Lodges were organized, the provisional republican government for Lower Canada set up in northern Vermont early in the year 1838, and a similar scheme for Upper Canada inaugurated at Cleveland in the following September. These two organizations were necessarily interdependent, since the success or failure of the one was bound up with that of the other. That there was a degree of co-operation between the two is shown by Duncombe's letter to Morrison late in October, in which it is plainly indicated that an agreement had been reached between the heads of the organizations at Cleveland and in Vermont upon the time that simultaneous invasions were to be launched.1

While the republican government for Upper Canada was the creature of a convention of delegates sitting at Cleveland, the "Republic of Lower Canada" was the brain-child of Dr. Nelson and a coterie of kindred spirits huddled in an upper chamber of a stonemason's home in Middlebury early in that year. It was this latter group which had sponsored the organization of supporting lodges in Lower Canada and the New England States. In neither of these provisional governments, however, was there anything more than a group of inexperienced executives, serving as a directive agency for carrying out the revolution which they had in view.

Below the central organizations were the superior, or grand lodges. The most important of these were located at Detroit, Cleveland, Buffalo, Rochester, St. Albans in Vermont, and Montreal in Lower Canada.2 There is some evidence pointing to the existence of a grand lodge in Upper Canada by the summer of

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SECRET CIPHER OF THE HUNTER'S LODGES

Shown above, is a brief explanation of the secret alphabet, followed by the oath of the Snowshoe degree in cipher.
1839, where a convention of delegates from all parts of the province is said to have met in an abandoned log house on the night of the twenty-second of July.8 These superior lodges, if one may judge by those at St. Albans, Cleveland, and Montreal, were headed by "central committees" presumably responsible to the local lodges within their respective jurisdictions. To these central committees lodges of inferior rank were required to make frequent reports and financial contributions. At the St. Albans headquarters it was reported that the committee remained in "constant session," receiving weekly and sometimes daily reports by way of messengers from the principal lodges on the American side of the border as well as from the headquarters at Montreal.4 Until November 7, 1838, the central committee at Montreal met in the law office of John McDonell, on St. Vincent Street, and its principal members were McDonell, Francois Mercure, Francois Lemaitre editor of the Quotidienne, Celestin Beausoleil, J. Mailhot, and George de Boucherville. This center was organized on the departmental plan, and a large corps of assistants worked under the direction of department heads. Julien Gagnon, for a time, acted as corresponding secretary while Mailhot, who bore the exalted title of "Grand Eagle," was in supreme command of the Patriot army within that jurisdiction. Another member of the committee, probably McDonell himself, supervised the collection and disbursement of funds.8

At Cleveland, the headquarters of the grand lodge as well as that of the provisional republican government for Upper Canada was located in Miller's Block on Superior Street where "President" A. D. Smith and his staff maintained offices. Their headquarters included a spacious hall on an upper floor where meetings were held and which also served as a place for in-door drill for Patriot troops. During the heyday of the Hunter movement strangers were to be seen until far into the night, walking to or from the Hunter headquarters "in close confab with known members" of the secret brotherhood.7

Probably the most important function of the central committee, or grand lodge, was the collection and disbursement of funds. The collections are said to have amounted to as much as nine hundred dollars by a single lodge at one meeting.8 Funds from the local lodges were forwarded to the grand lodge where a part was retained for the payment of expenses incurred by members of this committee, the purchase of presents for Patriot captives in Canadian prisons, and rewards for the destruction of loyalist property in Canada. Prisoners taken near Cobourg in July, 1839, declared that Benjamin Lett, who claimed to have slain Captain Edgworth Usher, an officer of the Canadian militia in November 1838, drew one thousand dollars from the Buffalo headquarters for his alleged performance of the dastardly act.9 On the lake frontier, a portion of the funds was forwarded by the central committees to Commissary General Brunson for the purchase of supplies for the Patriot army. The funds of the organization in the West were reported by a collector of customs to be deposited in a bank at Buffalo.10

Large amounts of the funds of the society are said to have found their way into the pockets of members of the central committees. Lindsey was in possession of a letter from the master of a local lodge, which was addressed to the central committee, or grand lodge, at Cleveland, accusing its members not only of bad management of the funds of the society, but with downright embezzlement of monies entrusted to their hands, and threatening at the same time a secession from the Hunters and the creation of a new organization in its stead.11 Samuel P. Hart, one of the Cobourg prisoners, declared that if the lay members should become aware of the corruption of the central committees and other higher officials and the way their money was being spent, the lodges would dissolve at once. Hart relates that he had exposed the misuse of the funds of the society in his paper, the Lewision Telegraph, and that he was called upon to prove his charges which he claims he did at a lodge meeting in the courthouse where the Hunters were accustomed to convene. He further relates that he was in position to prove "by sworn Hunters," that at least thirty thousand dollars collected by the society for the Patriot cause had been spent by its officials "in rioting and lewdness, while the poor dupes believed their money to be safely deposited in the banks."12

Evidence of downright betrayal of the fraternity is also to be found within its ranks. A member at Buffalo, in an anonymous letter to Lieutenant Governor Arthur, wrote that he had just been offered a position as corresponding secretary at the
association's headquarters there and that for a stipulated sum he would accept the office, located in a building which he owned, and sell the secrets of the Hunters to the Canadian governor. "As money is my object," he wrote, "and very little patriotism . . . I am willing to betray the confidence of the society. £1500 down and £50 a month will buy me." If requested, the writer assured the Governor that he would be in position "to abstract a Patriot Dictionary" from the records of the society there. Two members of a lodge near Montreal, from quite different motives, informed the Solicitor-General, Michael O'Sullivan, that due to the pangs of their religious conscience, they would willing expose the secrets of the organization if the government would guarantee to indemnify them for the loss of their property which was sure to follow as the penalty for the violation of their oath.

Local lodges were in charge of a master who might call meetings in the various degrees, depending upon the nature and gravity of the subjects to be discussed. When opened in the first, or Snowshoe degree, all members were expected to attend; but when opened in the higher degrees, only members of that particular rank, or above, were allowed to enter the lodge. The several degrees were graduated to the position of responsibility that members might occupy within the ranks of the organization. Another important officer of the lodge was the corresponding secretary, who carried on extensive communications in a secret cipher. Still another officer of considerable importance was the "master of ceremonies" who presided over the initiation of candidates and who was assisted by two other members in the performance of this function.

The work of the local lodge included the initiation of candidates for the various degrees, recruiting volunteers for the Patriot army and navy, collecting money, arms, clothing, and other supplies for the movement, and the making of numerous reports and donations to the central committee, or grand lodge, under whose jurisdiction the local society belonged. No requirements appear to have been exacted of the candidate for admission so long as there was no suspicion of his being a spy, and large numbers are said to have joined the lodges through mere curiosity alone, only to be frightened away when the real purpose of the organization was learned.

As in the case of the Patriot movement in general, all sorts of individuals were to be found in these lodges. When Samuel Lane, a newspaper man at Akron, was initiated into the Hunters' Lodge in that city, his eyes fell upon a variety of notorious bums, charlatans, and transgressors of the law; but upon closer inspection he observed many of the most respectable residents of that city, including a number of lawyers, physicians, magistrates, members of the city council, and other persons of prominence sitting among the rest. Some among them, he later learned, were in pursuit of adventure, excitement, or personal gain, while others actually believed that the Canadian issue was that of the American Revolution all over again. Anthony Hood, a spy who gained entrance into the lodge rooms at Watertown, Dexter, Sackett's Harbour, and several other towns in western New York, "was surprised to see the respectability of the people who attended these lodges and the large amounts of money they subscribed and paid."

Lodge members did not always wait for candidates to appear at the door and apply for admission on their own initiative. George Tihe related that while in Lockport he was reading a copy of the Freeman's Advocate when some members engaged him in conversation on the subject of Canadian independence. He was asked if he were "willing to see the light?" He replied that he was ready for any light that might come his way. A member then escorted him to the door of a lodge which met in a house on Main Street where he was admitted to the first degree. A sportsman in northern New York is said to have been approached by being asked whether he would be interested in joining "a hunting party, after deer on the Rideau River?" Quickly discerning the import of the question, he replied that he was confident that he could find "better shooting" on this side of the border. Among the Lower Canadian French, however, the art of solicitation was not always so gentle and suave. Sir John Colborne learned through his confidential agents, as well as from prisoners taken in the November uprising of 1838, that the habitant who hesitated to join the revolutionary society might be led to consider the invitation in a more favorable light by an
anonymous threat of having the torch applied to his house and barn.22

Lodge meetings usually took place at night in some secluded house or vacant building on the outskirts of town, though as already seen, courthouses were sometimes used for this purpose. In Lower Canada, lodge meetings were quite frequently held in barns when farmers had finished their evening chores.23 In these meetings the members were harangued by traveling propagandists, who denounced the alleged evils of monarchical government while extolling the blessings of liberty, equality, and brotherly love. Responsible self-government for the Canadians was bitterly denounced as a delusion and a snare to entice liberty-loving people to turn away from the pursuit of democratic institutions and republican government.24

Writing of the lodge meetings at Heath's Tavern in Detroit, Levi Bishop, in a paper read before the Detroit Historical Society in 1861, recalled the long and inflammatory speeches to which the Hunters were exposed until far into the night—though he declared that there were some addresses "that would have done credit to the days of Seventy-Six." As in the case of many secret lodges of the present day, bounteous suppers were sometimes served, very likely for the purpose of promoting the attendance of luke-warm members whose waning interest might otherwise have kept them away. The same writer relates that on meeting nights at Heath's the proprietor would "freely spread his well-loaded table to his Hunter brethren, receiving only what they were willing and able to pay, and who thus spent a handsome fortune in his devotion to the cause."25

As indicated in the foregoing chapter, the discussion of politics and the advocacy of candidates deemed favorable to the Patriot cause occupied no small place in the program at these lodge meetings. During the autumn of 1838, the lodges in New York and Ohio were backing a slate of candidates for the various state offices as well as for representatives in Congress.26 While this campaign was in progress, Lieutenant J. T. W. Jones, Arthur's spy extraordinary, reported that in the lodge at Oswego, New York, the meetings were chiefly concerned with the promotion of candidates for office and were attended for the most part by "fellows who delight in hearing themselves speak, but who

would never venture to take an active part in an invasion of Canadian territory."27 As we shall later see, in the presidential campaign of 1840, politics again became the principal subject of discussion in the lodge meetings. Harrison being supported for the Presidency while his opponent, Van Buren, was denounced as a traitor to the Patriot cause.28

At the Hunter lodge meetings, a considerable part of the time was devoted to the initiation of candidates into the various degrees, though some candidates are said to have been initiated outside the lodge, as in the case of Major Warren, a Canadian officer, who was reported to have been "put through the degrees" by Dr. Duncombe in his own private quarters.29 A candidate seeking admission to the first, or Snowshoe Degree, at a lodge meeting was conducted into an ante-room where his eyes were securely bandaged with strips of cloth. The door of the lodge room was then opened and the candidate knelt upon his knees and repeated, word for word, the oath of the Snowshoe as it was read to him by the master of ceremonies. While the words of the oath administered in the western lodges differed somewhat from those in use in Lower Canada and the New England States, the substance was essentially the same. As decoded from a cipher letter written by Dr. Duncombe, the "five points of the oath" read as follows:

I solemnly swear in the presence of Almighty God and this lodge of Hunters that I will not give the secrets of this degree, or any secret that may come to my knowledge, in the body of this lodge, to any person to whom they do not justly and lawfully belong—that I will not write, print, stain, stamp, hue, scratch, indent, or engrave upon anything whereby the secrets of this degree may be unlawfully obtained.

I further swear that I will not give the secrets of a brother Hunter, when given to me in charge as such, to any person to whom they do not justly and lawfully belong.

I further swear that I will aid the cause of liberty, equality, and fraternity whenever I can do the same without injury to myself and family.

I further swear that I will give a brother Hunter timely notice of approaching danger when the same shall come to my knowledge, provided I can do the same without injury to myself and family.
I will attend the lodge when summoned, if within three miles, if I can do so without injury to myself and family. So help me God."80

In lower Canada and the New England States, a special penalty was attached. For the violation of this oath, the candidate agreed to have his throat cut to the bone, his house burned to the ground, and the remainder of his property totally destroyed.81

After taking the required oath, the candidate was commanded to "behold the light." The bandage was then yanked from his eyes, and he now confronted the sharp edge of a sword pointed directly toward his breast and two pistols being flashed before his eyes. In the eastern lodges a burning torch would burn his house, should he reveal any of the secrets confided to him by the society. The master of ceremonies then said: "As you see light, so you also see death, presented to you in the most awful shape and form, from which no earthly power can save you, the moment you attempt to reveal any of the secrets or signs which have, or may be revealed to you."

The newly initiated was next informed of the signs of recognition to be used in the first degree, which signs were to be universal among members, should they enlist in the Patriot army. One of the principal signs of this degree was made by crossing the hands in front of the body, the left above the right, then letting the hands fall to the sides. Another was made by pinching the end of the coat sleeve of the second party while shaking hands. Still another was made by the question: "Are you a Hunter?" Should the day be Monday, the proper answer would be: "Yes, on Tuesday," the day following the one on which the sign was given being always used.82 When not satisfied by the responses from the preceding signs, members of lodges in the East made an additional sign by placing the index finger of the right hand in the right nostril, or the little finger of the left hand in the corresponding ear, the proper response being a repetition of the same.83

Loyal members were admonished to set the "Hunters' Trap" for suspicious persons claiming to be members of the society, and especially for suspected spies seeking information about their secret plans. The trap was sprung for the suspected imposter by asking him to make the sign of the Snowshoe. Should he attempt to draw a picture or any representation of a snowshoe, he was at once to be known as a pretender, since such an act would be a violation of his oath.

Candidates for the second, or Beaver Degree, swore "in the presence of Almighty God and this lodge of Beavers," that they would never reveal the secrets of this degree to a Snowshoe, or to any person to whom they do not belong. The sign of the Beaver was made by the question: "Do you know the Beaver to be an industrious animal?" The proper response was made by clamping the thumb between the teeth, the nail upward, with the fingers curled beneath the chin to imitate a beaver gnawing a tree.

Candidates for the third, or Grand Hunter's Degree, upon the attainment of which its holder might share in the management of the funds, were made to swear that "whatever monies" might be entrusted to him would be applied strictly in furtherance of the Patriot cause. The sign of the Grand Hunter was made by the question: "Trouble?" The answer was: "Calm," at the same time moving the right hand, palm downward, from left to right.

Candidates for the fourth or Patriot Hunter's Degree, also known as the Patriot Mason's Degree among members of the society in the East,84 swore that they would never reveal the secrets of this degree to a Grand Hunter, a Beaver, a Snowshoe, or to any person to whom they did not rightfully belong. The sign of recognition was made by the question: "Do you snuff and chew?" The answer was: "I do," at the same time drawing a snuff or tobacco box from the pocket and scratching three times upon the lid. Another sign for the degree was made by speaking softly into the ear of the other party the words: "Have you any news for me?" The answer was: "For me?"

Members enlisting in the Patriot army as soldiers without rank were required to take the first degree, commissioned officers the second, field officers the third, and commissioned officers of the highest rank the Patriot Mason's degree. Persons of the latter rank were to be the recipients of the highest secrets
and most important plans of operation. These in turn might be communicated only to persons of the same importance, such as the eagles and grand eagles of the Patriot army, grand masters of the superior lodges, and others of high rank who could be trusted with secrets of the most serious character.

Soldiers in the Patriot army who were about to attack the opposing force were to give the "sign of distress" to avoid being fired upon by their brethren within the opposite ranks. This sign was made by raising the left hand, palm forward, the thumb pointing toward the collar of the coat."

The Cobourg prisoners relate that a number of persons were put to death by the Hunters for divulging their secrets and for giving information to outsiders concerning their plans or movements. A man named Chamberlain, accused of betraying the organization, was said to have been killed at Salina, New York, and his body burned in one of the furnaces at the salt works there. Samuel Harper, who gave information to persons not entitled to receive it, was reported to have been thrown to his death from the bridge at Niagara Falls. Another accused person, according to the same source, was slain at Lewiston, New York, his legs cut off and his body thrown into the river, later to be recovered by the coroner several miles below that town. Still another accused member is said to have been drowned in the river at Detroit, and George A. Clark, who was merely under suspicion as a traitor to the society, was punished by having his house in Chicago burned in compliance with an order from Hunter officials.

Almost from the beginning of the movement spies were able to become members of the Hunters' Lodges and to obtain important information about their plans and movements. The lodge at Cleveland had scarcely been established when a Canadian army officer, calling himself John McManman and claiming to be a victim of persecution by the Family Compact, was initiated into the lodge and for several weeks kept the Canadian government informed about the plans and preparations of the revolutionary society before his identity was finally discovered. William Jones Kent, many times mentioned in this study, was an English spy who became master of the lodge at Brownhelm, Ohio, and who later exposed the society to the Canadian authorities. T. R. Preston, who made extensive investigations on both sides of the border during this period, relates that as the organization grew in membership its secrets became more and more difficult to conceal, largely as the result of Canadian and American spies and the increasing number of lukewarm members who could easily be induced to sell its secret plans for a negotiated price. Much the same observation was made by the Oswego editor. Writing in the late summer of 1839, probably with a considerable degree of exaggeration, he declared that the proceedings of the lodge in that locality had already become "so public that there are, in fact, no secrets to be kept" as numerous spies and investigators had become members of the lodge and were attending meetings as often as they wished.

As the result of this leakage of important information, some changes in the signs of recognition began to be made as early as the year 1839, if not before. On the American side of the boundary the chief sign of recognition for the first degree is said to have been made by a circular movement of the index finger of the right hand, which was answered by a waving motion of the left hand. On the Canadian side, the new sign for the same degree was made by jingling some small coins in the pocket along with the remark: "Times are easier," the proper response being the word: "Truly."

Such appears to have been the character of the Society of Hunters whose purpose was to "liberate the Canadian provinces from British thraldom." With what fortunes would this elaborately organized band of adventurers meet on their "great hunt in the north woods?"

NOTES

5. On November 7, McDonell was arrested near Three Rivers, his head­quarters at Montreal raided, and also his residence in the St. Antoine suburb where secret consultations had frequently been held. *Montreal Herald*, Nov. 12, 1838.
8. McWhorter to Sec. of Treas., Sept. 14, and forwarded to the State Department, General Records, State Dept., N. A.
10. McWhorter to Sec. of Treas., Sept. 14; Lindsey, II, 226.
11. Lindsey, II, 201.
15. Collector of Customs, Oswego, to Sec. of Treas., Sept. 14, 1838.
CHAPTER FOUR

The Great Hunt in the North Woods

As already seen, the Hunters had organized two Patriot armies, one for the conquest of the upper province under the command of Lucius V. Bierce, who had served for some time as brigadier general in the Ohio militia; the other for the conquest of Lower Canada, under the command of Dr. Robert Nelson, a refugee physician from the lower province and now "President of the Republic of Lower Canada." Under the direction of each of these commanders were a number of divisional officers bearing the title of major general, or "grand eagle." As examples, C. G. Bryant, formerly in the service of the Republic of Texas, was in command of a division whose headquarters was at "Patriot Camp," near the Vermont border while on the Canadian side J. Mailhot commanded a division of French Canadians. John McDonell, when taken prisoner near Three Rivers on November 7, possessed papers revealing his title as a "grand eagle" and his commission from Nelson to raise an additional division of French Canadians in that part of the province.

Soldiers in the Patriot armies are said to have been well paid from the funds of the society, or to have been induced to join by extravagant promises of future rewards. Those under the command of John Ward Birge in northern New York, most of whom were common laborers without work, had been promised a wage of ten dollars per month while in service, a bonus of eighty dollars as soon as they should land on Canadian soil, and one hundred and sixty acres of land in Upper Canada when British rule in that province should come to an end. Lower Canadian habitants who joined the Patriot
army of liberation, or should otherwise support the revolution­ary movement, were promised freehold deeds to the lands they had hitherto cultivated for their lord. Volunteers in Bryant's division in northern Vermont were reported to be "well paid, well fed, and comfortably clothed." As already seen, November 1, had been agreed upon by the Hunters in both East and West for beginning the work of "liberating Canada." Late in October, Colonel Nathan Williams, vice president of the provisional government for Upper Canada, began distributing circulars entitled: "General Orders from the Commander-in-Chief," in which it was stated that preparations were being made for an invasion of the upper province on the first day of November. Notices were also being sent out from Nelson's headquarters in Vermont that operations in Lower Canada were to begin at the same time. In announcing these plans to Dr. Thomas D. Morrison, Duncombe proudly claimed that the Upper Canadian militia had promised not to turn out to resist the invaders. But in spite of these bright prospects, it was feared that any further delay of their intended invasions would endanger their chances of success, in view of the mounting preparations for resistance by Colborne and Arthur, who had built up a force of regulars and militia of some thirty-five thousand and had equipped several armed vessels on the lakes.

As already seen in a previous chapter, preparations for an uprising in Lower Canada were being made by the Hunters on both sides of the border since early in July. Organizers were being sent out by the grand lodges at St. Albans and Montreal, who traveled from parish to parish establishing lodges and promising arms and other assistance from the United States. Canadian Hunters had been busy, searching for such antiquated weapons as could be found, fabricating wooden cannon and pikes, moulding bullets in large quantities, and hiding their war materials in secret caches. Canadian lodge officials had been in constant communication with their confederates on the American side, their secret messengers crossing and recrossing the boundary in the darker hours of the night. Lower Canadian Hunters had been assured by their brethren in the States that as soon as they could assemble at certain selected points of concentration on the night of the uprising, they would be joined at each meeting place by a large group of their comrades from the American side with an abundance of arms, that no less than seven thousands stands of arms and fifty-two pieces of cannon would be supplied to the Canadian rebels, and that the total British force to oppose them would not exceed five thousand men.

At the time designated for the uprising, printed copies of Nelson's proclamation, the same as that issued in the preceding February, were being distributed throughout the province, declaring Lower Canada to be absolved from all further allegiance to Great Britain, and calling upon the habitants to rise in support of the new republic that was soon to be inaugurated where a British province had formerly existed. On November 5, a similar proclamation was issued by C. G. Bryant who had already moved his "Missisquoi Division" into Canada about the first of the month and established a camp in Caldwell's Manor on the east side of Lake Champlain.

On the night of November 3, large bodies of French Canadians began gathering at Napierville, Chateauguay, Lacolle, Beauharnois, and other towns and villages previously designated as meeting places for the Patriots, expecting to be met by their confederates from the American side with an abundance of arms and munitions of war. The rebellion began at each center with an attack upon the loyalist population, many of whom were imprisoned within their homes, while others escaped capture by running through woods and fields to find some place of refuge. At Beauharnois, a manorial village where the elder Edward Ellice was the feudal lord, the loyalists were attacked by four hundred rebels, and after a spirited battle of nearly half an hour the leading loyalists, including a member of the British Parliament, found refuge in a cellar, some bleeding from wounds. At about the same time, the steamboat Henry Brougham, with passengers and mail from Upper Canada, was seized by the rebels at Beauharnois with the intent of converting her into an instrument of war. The rising in the vicinity of Montreal was followed by a large number of arrests of the leading Patriots, the seizure by government agents of two steamboats that were being prepared for the Patriot service, a spectacular
run on the Montreal banks, and the arrest of L. M. Viger, president of the People's Bank, under suspicion of backing the Patriot cause.²

On the morning of the fourth, an attempt was made by the Patriots to obtain arms and stores from the homes of Indians in the village of Caughnawaga while the residents were attending church. The plan was upset when a squaw, while searching for her cow, discovered the raiders in the nearby woods. Quietly hastening to the church, she gave the alarm, and when the raiders appeared and dived for the guns stacked near the door, red Indians swarmed out of the building and a wild scuffle ensued in front of the church door, in which an Indian chief set an example before his brethren by wrestling with the leading raider for the possession of his gun. For a time the two antagonists waltzed back and forth, twisting and straining in a contest of brute force for the coveted prize, while a mixed audience of whites and Indians looked breathlessly on. Seeing their leader worsted in the tussle, the raiders threw down their improvised weapons and took to the woods, racing over brush piles, through briars and bushes, while infuriated Indians followed in hot pursuit. In the end, the red men returned with seventy-five captives—while the rebel army at Napierville waited in vain for the much-needed arms.¹²

Early on the same morning the local militia were assembled by Colonel C. E. Taylor, the field officer for that district, and hastened to the border so as to shut off all aid from the American side. Meanwhile, the rebels who had gathered in large numbers at the designated points, impatiently waited for the promised arms and munitions from the American side of the line. After hours of anxious waiting, while receiving no orders from their leaders or any news of developments from other centers of concentration, the greater part of the Patriot volunteers returned to their homes in disgust, while the more determined Hunters made their way to Napierville, fifteen miles north of the boundary, which had been designated as the headquarters of the republican forces.¹⁸

On the night of November 5, Nelson and two French officers named Hindenlang and Touvrey, whom he had persuaded to join the expedition, boarded a schooner on Lake Champlain, which had been loaded with arms and munitions of war. Passing the boundary without being observed, they landed at Vitman Wharf on the Canadian side. An hour later, five or six of the Patriot party appeared, unloaded the arms, and hid them near the place of their landing. Nelson and the French officers then mounted horses and hastened toward Napierville where they arrived next morning. In the presence of several hundred men under the command of Coté, Nelson was proclaimed “President of the Republic of Lower Canada,” and Hindenlang, much to his surprise, was appointed brigadier general of the Patriot forces in Lower Canada. The first day was spent in bringing up new recruits and scouring the surrounding country for such weapons as could be found. The force at Napierville was soon enlarged to about three thousand men which were organized by Hindenlang into companies and divisions.¹⁴

In the meantime, the Patriot forces on the American side were unable to cross the international boundary, by this time closely patrolled by American troops under the command of Colonel John Wool while on the Canadian side the provincial militia watched all roads leading to the border. On the evening of the fifth Bryant, whose “Missisquoi Division” on the east side of the lake had been wasting away through nightly desertsions, loaded his materials of war on a chartered sloop with the intent of forming a junction with Nelson’s force to the west of the lake. As the sloop approached Nelson’s base of supply at Rouse’s Point the vessel, crew, cargo and passengers were seized by American customs officials, and Bryant’s role in the abortive rebellion came speedily to an end.¹⁵ At about this same time, the American steamboat Burlington, commanded by Captain R. V. Sherman, transported a large detachment of Canadian troops from their base at St. Johns and landed them in the rear of the rebel forces on the west side of the lake so as to cut them off from all aid from the American side.¹⁶ As a consequence, Nelson found himself alone with his Canadian brethren, most of whom had only pitchforks, sickles, and pikes for arms.

On the afternoon of November 5, Dr. Coté with about four hundred men set out for Rouse’s Point, probably for the purpose of taking over the remnant of Bryant’s force and his cargo of arms and supplies. On the way, near Lacolle, his detachment
encountered two hundred loyalist militia during a heavy rain, and a brisk battle raged for more than an hour. Their powder becoming wet from the incessant rain, "a short and desultory conflict at close quarters ensued which resulted in the loyalists being driven from the field." As Coté’s men returned empty-handed from the American border, they were met by a much larger loyalist force near Lacolle, and after a sharp conflict lasting half an hour, Coté and his followers beat a hasty retreat across the boundary line, leaving behind them fifty dead and wounded, a number of prisoners, a six-pounder field piece, and a litter of pitchforks and pikes.

When Nelson, at Napierville, learned that communications with his base of supply at Rouse’s Point had been completely severed and that Colborne was on his way to the rebel headquarters with a large force of regulars and volunteers, the rebel commander decided to fall back upon Odelltown near the boundary line, probably with the intent of an easy escape in case of defeat. Arriving at Odelltown on the evening of November 9, he found the village occupied by Colonel Taylor with about two hundred local militia. Driven back into the village by the onset of the Patriots, the loyalists took up their position at the Methodist Church commanding the road which led into the village, and held off the Patriot army for more than two hours. Nelson’s forces, which were spread out through the fields on each side of the road, maintained a vigorous fire upon the Church, but a large number of the rebels kept out of range. The greater part of Nelson’s army, wrote Hindenlang, “kept out of shot, threw themselves upon their knees, with their faces buried in the snow, praying to God and remaining as motionless as if they were so many saints hewn in stone, many remaining in that position as long as the battle lasted.” Upon the arrival of another company of militia, the fire from the defenders became so intense that the rebels retreated toward Napierville, leaving nearly a hundred dead and wounded upon the field—while their commander-in-chief fled to safety across the boundary line. Hindenlang and about nine hundred followers had scarcely reached Napierville when Colborne’s army approached. Seeing that all was lost, the miserable remnant of Nelson’s republican army fled quietly to their homes.

Shortly afterward, a force of Glengarry Highlanders dispersed the rebel force that had taken the village of Beauharnois, and liberated the loyalist residents imprisoned there. In the meantime, John McDonell, head of the grand lodge in Lower Canada, while recruiting volunteers near Three Rivers, was seized by a band of the Glengarry Highlanders and conveyed as a prisoner to Montreal. Here he was met by a loyalist mob who pelted the “Grand Eagle” with stones and sticks until he was safely “caged” in a military prison.

The first phase of the Hunter-inspired rebellion, scarcely a week old, had come to an inglorious end. The grand lodges at St. Albans and Montreal that had sponsored the adventure had envisaged a large-scale uprising of the habitants followed by an invasion of their brethren from within the American frontier, bringing along with them the necessary arms and supplies. But the supply lines having been severed, the boundary closely guarded and Hunter reinforcements from the American side unable to cross, the French Patriot volunteers were left to their fate. Of the hundreds of prisoners taken by the Canadian authorities twelve died on the gallows and scores of others were transported to the prison colony of Van Dieman’s Land, on the other side of the world, to wear their lives away in years of toil.

During the remainder of the month, he is said to have burned twenty-four houses and twenty barns. Six homes are said to have been completely destroyed and three hundred and thirty-six pillaged by troops under his command. Two hundred and thirty-one women and two hundred and forty-three children, it is claimed, were turned out of their homes during this winter month. Much of this disgraceful devastation was later attributed to the Glengarry Highlanders, one regiment of whom was reported to have “marched out of Beauharnois as infantry, three hundred and fifty strong, and returned as cavalry three days later.”

While the insurrection was taking place in Lower Canada, there were to have been similar risings at several selected points in the upper province, but as Arthur had called out so many troops in anticipation of such a move, the Upper Canadian Hunters were afraid to assume the role that had been assigned
to them. Their scheme having been broken up, the leaders on the American side were apparently waiting for some favorable turn of events before deciding upon further plans. At this stage a self-appointed “liberator” appeared in northern New York in the person of “Major General” John Ward Birge, a romantic figure from the town of Cazenovia, who, without the knowledge of the commander-in-chief at Cleveland, began planning a crusade of his own. At Salina, he was able to persuade Nils Von Schoultz, a former officer in the Polish army; Martin Woodruff, a militia; and Dorephus Abby, an editor from Connecticut, who stage a self-appointed parade of his own. At Salina, he was able to persuade Nils Von Schoultz of the commander-in-chief at Cleveland, began planning an attack upon Prescott, on the Canadian side of the river where there was a small stronghold called Fort Wellington. Once possession of this town and fort, Birge argued, the whole eastern part of the province would be laid open to invasion by Patriot forces from the American side. As soon as a firm foothold could be secured at this point, the Canadian Hunters might be expected to join in large numbers, while hundreds more from the American side would swarm across the river with arms and supplies for the Canadian brethren, and a speedy overthrow of British power in the province would surely follow.

Of the leaders whom Birge had engaged at Salina, Nils Szoltevsky Von Schoultz was the most outstanding character. Highly educated as a chemist in his native land of Poland, he fought for the freedom of his country in the Polish rebellion of 1830. He later served for a time in the French Foreign Legion, taught music in Italy, and eventually became involved in an unfortunate marriage with an English girl. Coming to the United States in 1836, he engaged in the salt business at Sackett’s Harbour on the steamboat United States which proceeded down the St. Lawrence on its regular course. This force was considerably augmented at Cape Vincent, French Creek, Miller’s Bay, and other landing places along the American side of the river. On their way down stream two schooners, the Charlotte of Toronto and the Charlotte of Oswego, were taken into tow by the United States and most of the men on the latter vessel were transferred to the schooners where they were soon to be seen removing guns and pistols from the boxes on board.

Birge, now gaudily attired in a flashy uniform with tassel-ed epaulets, bright buttons, and the glittering bald eagle and twin stars of the Patriot insignia, was in supreme command. Second below him in rank was Von Schoultz who was in charge of the Charlotte of Toronto. Colonel Martin Woodruff was in command of one detachment and Dorephus Abby another. Bill Johnston, who bore the title of “Commodore of the Lower Division of the Patriot Navy,” was in charge of the Charlotte of Oswego and Daniel George, the former schoolteacher, was paymaster of the army of invasion. The rank and file of the Hunter force was made up almost entirely of young men, their average age being scarcely more than twenty-four years and some as young as sixteen. For the most part common laborers without work, these men had been lured by the prospect of good wages, and finally a farm in Upper Canada when British rule in that province should come to an end.
As the expedition moved down the St. Lawrence, a warm dispute arose among the leaders over the tactics that should be employed in taking possession of the town of Prescott and the neighboring fort. Von Schoultz urged a bold attack from the main landing at Ogdensburg on the American side of the river where more recruits might be obtained. When the expedition arrived at Miller's Bay the two schooners were detached from the United States while Birge and some two hundred of his men went on toward Ogdensburg after stoutly promising to secure reinforcements and to join Von Schoultz and Johnston at Prescott at an opportune time. But before reaching the wharf at Ogdensburg, the commander-in-chief, "pale as a ghost," shut himself up in his cabin "sick of an ailment commonly called the bellyache," and took no further part in the invasion scheme.81

The two schooners headed down the river toward Prescott, but Bill Johnston, a seasoned river pirate though apparently with no stomach for battle, succeeded in grounding his vessel, the Oswego, so securely on a bar of mud that the combined efforts of the United States and the ferry-boat Paul Pry, which the Hunters had seized, ingloriously failed to haul her off.

On the early morning of November 12, Von Schoultz's schooner, the Charlotte of Toronto, with about one hundred and fifty men on board, reached Prescott where the crew succeeded in tying her up to the wharf. Now a new dispute arose among the would-be invaders as to the course that should be followed in taking the town. As the argument grew in intensity the rope broke and, after drifting down a mile and a half below the town a landing was finally made. Here they took possession of a number of stone buildings including a windmill tower six stories high. At the top of this lofty structure the Patriot flag was soon unfurled with the bald eagle in the center and a white star on either side.82

On the same morning the Hunters had seized the American steamer United States and the ferry boat Paul Pry and converted them into vessels of war. While these vessels were engaged in an effort to rescue Johnston's schooner, still grounded on a bank of mud, they were attacked by the British armed steamer Experiment, and a small-scale naval battle raged throughout most of the day. Despite the efforts of the latter vessel to sever communications with Windmill Point, the United States apparently did succeed in landing one hundred and ten additional men at the windmill late in the afternoon of that day. The latter vessel proceeded on her perilous journey to the Canadian side under the command of O. B. Pierce, an itinerant lecturer on grammar and phrenology, "displaying a great deal of spirit, standing on the wheelhouse and cheering his men while the balls were flying around."83 Further crossings became well-nigh impossible by the close of the day when Colonel W. J. Worth arrived with two companies of federal troops, accompanied by the United States Marshal, Nathaniel Garrow, and seized the United States, the Paul Pry, and the two schooners, the latter "laden with rifles, muskets, pistols, cutlasses, and three pieces of cannon, two of them loaded and primed."84

That night a "council of war" was held by the leaders who remained on the American side, including Johnston who had abandoned his grounded vessel hours before. In view of Birge's serious illness with a pain in his middle, the council laid upon the shoulders of Johnston the responsibility of backing up the men at Windmill Point.85 Learning of the decision of the council, the sick man warned the "Commodore" of the magnitude of his task. Next morning he wrote:

Dear Johnston:—The fate of the men on the other side of the river is in your hands. Nothing is expected of the British above Prescott; and if you can rally your men and go to Jones's Mills and kindle some fires, you will save the men and save Canada. Start fires also at Gananoque, and the British will think Kingston is being attacked. Do, for God's sake, rally your men and start immediately. J. Ward Birge.86

But if Johnston had any stomach for going to the rescue of the men at the windmill, or kindling fires on the Canadian side, the way had already been blocked by an effective river patrol.

Canadian Hunters had assembled in considerable numbers in the vicinity of Prescott, but remained at a distance to watch the outcome of the struggle that was sure to follow. Seeing all
communications severed with Windmill Point by British and American forces, the supplies for the Canadian Hunters shut off, and that the whole adventure was doomed to fail, they departed for their homes.87

T. R. Preston, after an interview with some of the Canadians who participated in the "Battle of the Windmill," related that while the contest was going on, a vast throng of Hunters and their sympathizers came flocking into Ogdensburg from all parts of the adjacent country, "including wagon loads of men ready to take part in the affray." He adds that repeated attempts were made to send over reinforcements from the American side, but the presence of British and American vessels patrolling the river forestalled every attempt of that kind. Frantic with rage ready to take part in the but the presence of British and American vessels patrolling the river forestalled every attempt of that kind. Frantic with rage at their inability to send aid to their comrades at the windmill, a great crowd lined the river bank on the American side, "rendering the air with their shouts of encouragement" to the invaders on the opposite shore.88

On Monday, November 12, while the naval battle was raging on the river, Von Schoultz and his men at Windmill Point spent the day in throwing up breastworks around the huddle of stone buildings, encountering little opposition from the small forces of raw militia at Prescott, numbering scarcely two hundred men, under the command of Colonel Plomer Young. On the following night Captain William Sandom, commanding the Royal Navy at Kingston, arrived with two steamers, the Queen Victoria and the Cobourg, with seventy marines and regulars on board. Later in the night a detachment of Glengarry volunteers appeared upon the scene, and another force of one hundred and fifty militiamen reached Windmill Point before the break of day. Early Tuesday morning several hundred additional militia arrived at the scene of the incursion.89

The invaders, estimated by local observers to be about three hundred in number, were organized into three detachments, one occupying the windmill tower, another some adjacent stone buildings and the third was posted on the brow of a hill near by.40 The first phase of the "Battle of the Windmill" began about sunrise when the British and Canadian forces under Colonel Young opened fire upon the outer fortifications which the Hunters had erected the day before. At the same time, Captain

Sandom's naval force began a bombardment of the stone buildings where the greater part of the Hunters were lodged, but could make little impression upon their massive walls. A correspondent of the Albany Argus described the scene of the battle as he observed it from an elevated point on the opposite shore:

Soon after daylight on Tuesday morning, I was called upon to witness the engagement between the Patriot forces and the British in the neighborhood of Windmill Point. Looking across the river from a commanding position, I noticed the Queen Victoria and the Experiment plying up and down the channel just opposite the Point, and discharging cannon and bombs at the Patriots who on their part were discharging field pieces at the steamboats from their battery on the shore.

At the same time a general and severe engagement had taken place upon the land. I could distinctly see the masses of men moving along the fields, advancing and retreating, the blazing of musketry and the columns of smoke . . . The action continued a little over two hours and was undoubtedly attended with considerable slaughter. Toward the conclusion of the fight, it was farther from the river and nothing but smoke could be seen from the shore.

After the firing had ceased, numbers of the British were seen returning to Prescott unpursued. But the steamboats remained opposite the Point, occasionally discharging their guns on shore. It is evident that the Patriots were not dislodged. My impression is that the Patriots had retreated within the walls, and that the British were unable to dislodge them and were waiting for more forces to arrive.

The same observer was surprised to learn that during the course of the battle most of the persons "who were ascertained to have taken a prominent part in bringing these men together and conducting them down the river were in safety on our soil during the time of peril."41

Next day, Colonel Young, in a report to Lieutenant Governor Arthur, estimated his losses in killed and wounded to be at least forty-five, including the death of two officers and the wounding of a third, that twenty-two prisoners had been taken; though he admitted that his report was premature.42 An eve-
ning edition of the Ogdensburg Times of November 13, reported the grounds in front of the stone buildings to be littered with dead and wounded soldiers of the British, while but thirteen of the rebels were known to have fallen. The dead and wounded on both sides lay where they had fallen until Wednesday, when a truce of one hour was arranged in which to recover the wounded and bury the dead. According to Theller's account, more than forty of the invaders fled during the course of the battle, leaving only one hundred and twenty-eight within the windmill and adjacent buildings to face more than one thousand British regulars and volunteers.

There was little further activity at Windmill Point during the following day, though a desperate struggle is said to have taken place upon the river during the ensuing night when numerous attempts were made to send over assistance to Von Schoultz's dwindling force.

On Thursday morning at daybreak, a fire was opened on the windmill tower by a heavy piece of artillery and the fire was returned by the men at the mill. The British occupied a position near some buildings on a rise of land to the east of the windmill tower. At eight o'clock, the Hunters were reported to have made a sortie, beaten back the enemy, and set fire to the buildings behind which the loyalists had formed. The buildings were seen enveloped in flames when the firing of artillery had ceased and the retreat of the loyalists was "sudden and irregular."

A letter written by J. M. Doty, an observer on the American side of the river, states that a party actually succeeded in landing at the windmill on Thursday night for the purpose of rescuing their comrades from their desperate plight. "But they refused," declares the writer, "saying that they were confident that their brethren would not desert them, and that there were thousands of men in the country bound by oath to assist them."

The last phase of the struggle began early in the afternoon of Friday, November 16, when Colonel Dundas arrived from Kingston with two steamers, each having in tow an eighteen-pounder gun. These heavy guns were brought into position at about four hundred yards from the windmill tower and the scene of demolition began. The mammoth pieces of artillery began firing eighteen-pound balls point-blank at the circular walls of the lofty tower. In a matter of hours the larger structure as well as the nearby buildings were being badly riddled. The "Battle of the Windmill" ended at sundown when a last vain attempt at escape by the flank had failed. As darkness approached, a white flag was seen protruding from a window of the tower which signaled the end of a hopeless struggle and an abortive attempt at an invasion of the province.

Late in the evening of the last day of battle Doty, the observer from the opposite bank of the river, gave his own version of the closing scene at the windmill tower:

I hasten to give you the latest news... The Patriots have until today firmly held their own, but this day at noon the Cobourg and other boats brought down 800 regular British troops and some of the heaviest cannon in the province. These, added to 1000 militia, were too much for the Patriots. They were surrounded by land, and the steamboats kept up a murderous fire from the river... At this time two of the houses occupied by the Patriots are burning, and the British regulars are around the mill, looking on but not molested. There is now no firing on either side.

A total of one hundred and fifty-seven prisoners taken during the course of the week were tied together with ropes and shipped to Fort Henry at Kingston to await their trial before a military court.

The captives were defended by John A. Macdonald, a rising young lawyer at Kingston, who later became the first prime minister of the Dominion of Canada. Frightened and dejected, the prisoners strove desperately to save themselves from the hangman's rope. Some pleaded ignorance of the real purpose of the expedition they had hastily joined, while others claimed they had been forced to join the adventure by older men. Not a few claimed to have joined the expedition from lofty motives, with a missionary zeal for the extension of freedom to the Canadian people. One, at least, confessed that under the influence of his pastor, he had left his wife and eleven children to engage in the movement for the sole purpose of extending liberty to his Canadian brethren, and that in choos-
ing this course he felt that he was “doing God’s service.” Von Schoultz, alone of them all, insisted on pleading guilty, endeavoring only to clear himself of any charge of cruelty or inhumanity toward any of the enemy that had fallen into their hands. He sought only to defend his honor. Though freely admitting his guilt, he insisted that he had been misled by his Hunter brethren into the belief that the Canadian people were being subjected to a tyranny not unlike that of his own countrymen in Poland for whose freedom he had fought eight years before.81

During the course of these trials at Kingston, nearly all of the captives were convicted and sentenced to death,82 but only seven or eight of the leaders, including Von Schoultz, Martin Woodruff, Dorephus Abby, and the ex-school master Daniel George, actually suffered the supreme penalty, while many more were shipped off to the prison colony in Van Dieman’s Land.

While awaiting the sentence of death, Von Schoultz blamed Birge and Bill Johnston for not coming to his aid with the reinforcements they had stoutly promised. To this, Birge replied in a letter to Mackenzies Gazette with the plea that Von Schoultz, by moving on Prescott with such a small force and without his consent, had invited a disastrous failure in advance.83

Some of the ring leaders on the American side of the river were by no means safe in their own native land. Still another scene in the “great hunt” was staged by Birge and the “Commodore” while racing through the timber, bushes, and briars along the south bank of the river with Marshal Garrow and his deputies in hot pursuit. Not only had they run afoul of the law of the land but also the wrath of their brethren whom they had left behind at Ogdensburg. Both were finally taken prisoners several miles above the town, to await their arraignment before a federal court.84

The defeat of the Hunters at the “Battle of the Windmill” brought to an end their attempts at invasion in the East, but they were to make still another serious effort to revolutionize the province before they could come to realize the futility of these tactics with the resources at their command. The third and last attempt at an armed invasion was made at Windsor on the early morning of December the fourth. According to General Brady, then stationed at Detroit, the plan of the Hunters was to first gain possession of Windsor on the east bank of the Detroit and then to move on into the interior as far as the London District where a large number of their confederates were expected to rise and assist them in seizing the fortified places in that part of the province.85

While preparations were being made for an invasion from the West, the Hunter’s Lodge at Port Huron, with some aid from their comrades at Detroit, were to create a diversion by launching an attack upon Sarnia, on the Canadian side of the St. Clair River. However, General Brady learned of their plans and informed the Canadian authorities of the intended attack. When it was known that a strong force of Canadian troops under Captain Louis Rendt had been deployed along the Canadian side of the river and that no aid could be expected from Detroit, the Port Huron Hunters, a leading member of whom was a son-in-law of Rendt, were obliged to abandon their scheme for an attack at that point.86

The invasion at Windsor is said to have been planned at Cleveland, the headquarters of the Hunters on the western part of the frontier. In the latter part of November a force of some five or six hundred men, composed largely of recruits from Ohio and Pennsylvania, left Cleveland for the Michigan frontier. Arriving at Brest, thirty miles south of Detroit, they established a camp at that point.87 A “land-looker” who visited this camp late in November reported upon his return to Oswego that about six hundred men had arrived at Brest and that more recruits from Kentucky were daily expected. He found the morale of the men exceedingly low, large quantities of hard liquor being daily consumed, and no chicken roost in the surrounding country immune from their nightly raids.88 It was about this same time that one of the officers ran away with the purse, leaving the whole camp without means for the purchase of supplies. This event may explain their marked fondness for poultry which so impressed the “land-looker” from the East.

Probably in view of the increasing disorder and the nightly desertions from the camp at Brest, the noisy band of recruits was moved to a camp at Bloody Run a short distance above
Detroit where they remained for a time secluded in thickets along the bank of the stream. William Putnam, said to be a nephew of General Israel Putnam of American Revolutionary fame and the organizer of the Hunters' Lodge at Detroit, was on hand with a small force of local recruits, and at about the same time Colonel Harvel arrived "with a considerable force of Kentucky men." 62

While a much larger body of Hunters were expected to assemble at Detroit before an invasion of the province was to be launched, scarcely more than five hundred men, under their ranking officer, Lucius V. Bierce, appear to have been on hand at the time the crossing was made. Those who were financially able had obtained lodgings at the hotels, taverns, and boarding houses in Detroit. For the most part these volunteers were exceedingly impatient, rowdy, and critical of their commanding officers and especially of their commander-in-chief who was denounced by some as a four-flusher and a coward.

Bierce stoutly contended that the number of recruits on hand was entirely too small for a successful invasion and that it would be necessary to wait until a sufficient force could be assembled. He argued that the sorely needed reinforcements were daily to be expected from the camp at Brest. But the discontent among the men reached such a height that fully half of the Hunter troops in the vicinity of Detroit are said to have left in disgust. The movement was on the point of collapse when a meeting of officers and men was held at the camp on Bloody Run on the evening of December 2. On this occasion Bierce strove to pacify the crowd by "making a strong speech." He again argued that it would be futile to attempt an invasion of the province until more of the Hunter forces could arrive. He contended that new recruits were daily arriving at Brest, thirty miles to the south, and would soon be on their way to Detroit. With these additional forces, he declared, a strong invading army could be thrown into Canada with a fair prospect of success—assuming that their Canadian brethren would join them in considerable numbers. He added that the "Brady Guards," a local volunteer force for the preservation of neutrality, was on the alert and that the small invasion force that remained on hand was sure to be disarmed by federal and local troops—though in large part sympathetic with their cause.

While Bierce was still speaking, tumult broke out among his impatient listeners, and the cries of "traitor" and "coward" were heard from many quarters. When the noise had finally subsided, E. J. Roberts, a justice of the peace and the editor of a Masonic paper called the Craftsman, stepped forward and cried out: "If you will follow me, I will lead you." Bierce, whose pride was now deeply touched, then said: "Now men, if you are bound to sacrifice yourselves, I will lead the way." Some shouted approval, while others in the background remained "gravely silent." 64

On the evening of December 3, the steamboat Champlain was seized by the Hunters, and at two o'clock on the morning of the fourth the vessel was boarded by one hundred and thirty-five men and landed an hour later on the Canadian side at a point three miles above Windsor, then a mere village of some three hundred residents. Having ordered the steamer to move away, Bierce called out to his men: "We have no back door now, boys, we must conquer or die." 65

Upon reaching the village, the invaders set fire to the barrack, manned by a guard of twenty men, and some of its occupants were shot as they sought to escape, while others perished in the flames. Bierce next delivered a bombastic address to his followers and issued a proclamation to the people of Upper Canada, saying that his men came not in search of plunder but to liberate the Canadian people from their yoke of bondage.

The invading force was divided into three detachments, one under the command of Cornelius Cunningham, another under William Putnam, and a reserve of twenty-five men under "Colonel" S. S. Coffinbury, the editor of a newspaper at Mansfield, Ohio. "Armed with muskets, bayonets, pistols, and tremendous Bowie knives," wrote Colonel John Prince about the invading force, "a more murderous crew was never seen." 66

Proceeding to the river bank, the raiders set fire to the Canadian steamer Thames. The cry of "Remember the Caroline" now rose from a huddle of Bierce's men while huge crowds
of on-lookers cheered from the wharf and housetops on the opposite shore. 67

On learning of the commotion at Windsor, an assistant staff surgeon at Sandwich named Hume, who mistook the invaders for Canadians, walked up to Windsor, a distance of two miles, to offer his professional services. As he approached the village, he was shot down by the raiders, who fired several slugs through his body and stabbed him in many places with Bowie knives. A negro, who refused to join them, was murdered in cold blood, and several more buildings in the village were burned. 68

But their period of triumph was exceedingly short. Toward the break of day, while flames from burning houses lighted the whole countryside, several companies of militia, that had been stationed at Sandwich moved swiftly into Windsor and the tables were turned upon the Patriot band. 69

The invaders took up their position in a large apple orchard near the river bank to await the onset of the Canadian militia. Bierce’s men, lined up in battle array behind a row of leafless fruit trees, began firing wildly at the approaching force. Colonel Harvel, holding high the Patriot banner of liberation, whose giant stature offered an easy mark for the on-coming militia, was killed by a bullet through the head. Before the invaders could reload, the orchard was filled with militia, firing point blank at the wavering lines of the Hunter force. It was only a matter of minutes until Bierce’s men were in tumultuous flight, some running southward into the woods, while others, including Bierce, his bodyguard, and “Colonel” Coffinbury, fled to the point on the river bank where the Champlain had landed, three miles above the village. Here they were able to find canoes and skiffs and to make their way across the river while bullets whizzed by on their right and left.

Twenty-one of the invaders, including Putnam and Harvel, were killed in the fight. Twenty-four were made prisoners, four of whom were later shot without trial as the result of an order from Colonel John Prince, then in command of the militia at Sandwich. 70 It is said that Prince might have killed all the prisoners, had he not been restrained by some of the men under his command. Many of those who fled into the neigh-

boring woods are believed to have perished from exposure to the deadly cold. 71

On the following night, Bierce and a small remnant of his invasion force were greeted by a rousing reception at a great Hunter meeting which overflowed the city hall in Detroit. Inflammatory speeches were made in which the British, Canadian, and American governments were bitterly denounced, the latter for its attempt to enforce the neutrality act of the preceding March and otherwise interfering with Patriot efforts to liberate the Canadian people from their yoke of oppression. A committee of five, headed by E. J. Roberts, who had been appointed at an open-air meeting some hours before, presented a set of resolutions which were adopted without a dissenting vote. 72

These resolutions, couched in bold and vigorous language, were replete with “strict construction” and assertions of “state rights.” All except the last were directed against the American government, against Congress for passing the neutrality act of 1838; the President for endeavoring to enforce this act by the United States Army, customs officials, and the United States marshals; and the federal courts for their bold and dangerous interpretation of this obnoxious law. “As citizens of a Sovereign State,” reads the first, “we are jealous of our State Rights, and as Freemen do most solemnly protest against the army being called to the aid of the civil power, unless in case of actual treason and rebellion.” Punishment without trial and conviction, and upon mere suspicion, as sanctioned by the neutrality act, was denounced as a violation of the Constitution; and it was declared that any federal officer who should undertake, without trial, to impose such a punishment “usurps the province of judge and jury, and should never be tolerated in a free country.” Nearly all the remaining resolutions were mere elaborations of the first. The third condemned the firing upon American citizens by federal troops “as a dangerous outrage upon the liberties of the people.” The seventh maintains that the right to bear arms is a fundamental right of an American citizen, and that its recent denial by federal officers on the frontier “is an infraction of a national law and a great stride toward consolidation upon the ruins of State Sovereignty.” The ninth and last resolution charges the British government with the violation
of the sovereignty of the United States "in the unwarranted and inhuman massacre of American citizens on board the steamer Caroline while at profound peace with the United States."73

Dr. E. A. Theller, who returned to Detroit on December 4, after his escape from a prison at Quebec, related that on the morning of the following day large bodies of the long-awaited reinforcements began to arrive at Detroit, and that by noon there were enough Patriot volunteers on hand to have overwhelmed the Canadian forces in the vicinity of Windsor. But by this time, he relates, confusion reigned among the incoming recruits, since the federal authorities were making numerous arrests and the river was being closely patrolled by American vessels.74

On the following day, according to the same source, the Patriot volunteers were openly paraded through the streets while fully armed, and that after being addressed by some of the leading Hunters, the army of invasion was disbanded. Those from the western part of the state were marched to the railroad cars which had been chartered by the central committee, and with three cheers took their departure while those from the north and south marched out in order amidst the applause of admiring citizens. "The rebuke of the people," he declares, "had subdued and tempered the authorities."75

Following the dismissal of the Hunter volunteers at Detroit, Bierce gave up his command of the "Patriot Army of the West," and returned without hindrance to his law practice at Akron. When he was later called before the federal court at Columbus, a grand jury failed to indict him. Not only was he allowed to go scot free, but apparently with no loss of personal popularity. In later years he was four times elected mayor of Akron, at one time elected grand master of the Masonic order in his state, and at the outbreak of the American Civil War he was appointed by President Lincoln as an adjutant general in the Union army.76

The defeat of the Hunters at Windsor brought to an end all serious attempts to revolutionize the provinces by armed invasions. With the exception of a spectacular night raid over the Vermont border at the close of the year by a band of Hunters on sleighs, who burned a number of houses and barns on the Canadian side,77 no further incursions were to take place until late in the spring of the following year.

While the authorities in the border states, and especially in Michigan, Ohio, New York, and Vermont, were inclined to do little or nothing toward the suppression of the movement on the ground that their powers were "strictly limited" and that the preservation of neutrality was the responsibility of the national government alone,78 the federal government slowly awakened to the magnitude of the danger and the threat to peaceful relations with Britain. At this time the United States Army numbered scarcely more than eight thousand men, and a large part of these were concentrated in Florida, where the Second Seminole War was still in progress, and at various frontier posts where Indian outbreaks were feared. Scarcely one-fourth of the regular troops could therefore be spared to stand guard on the Canadian frontier, along a boundary line over eight hundred miles in length, with such co-operation as they might hope to obtain from reluctant authorities in the border states. By the end of October, however, about two thousand federal troops had been stationed at the most advantageous points on the frontier, from Troy in Vermont to Fort Gratiot at the head of the St. Clair River.79 Though few in number in comparison to those of the British on the opposite side of the line, they were able to play an important role in checking Hunter incursions, especially in shutting off all aid to the Lower Canadian rebels and in preventing further landings at Windmill Point. On October 21, President Van Buren issued a proclamation warning the Hunters and other Patriots "who without a shadow of justification or excuse" should invade the territory of a friendly power would forfeit any claim to protection from their government and could expect no interference in their behalf.80

By the end of the year popular opinion on the American side, which had hitherto favored the Patriot movement, had begun to change. Through the late autumn and early winter, General Winfield Scott traveled tirelessly back and forth through the border states "mingling freely and familiarly with his fellow citizens and inculcating with persuasive eloquence the doctrine of obedience to the law."81 Mass meetings in several of the
border towns were held at which the Hunters' Lodges and all kindred organizations were roundly denounced and a cessation of their activities loudly demanded. A meeting at Watertown, New York, a hot-bed of the Hunter movement, resolved to do all in its power to put an end to this revolutionary society and to allow the Canadians, themselves, to decide what kind of government they should have. 82.

The "great hunt," which had extended over a period of barely one month, had come to an inglorious end. The speedy collapse of the Hunter-inspired insurrection in Lower Canada, the defeat of the Hunters at Prescott and Windsor, their failure to provoke a large-scale uprising within the upper province, the mounting military power of British and Canadian forces, and the vigilance of American troops and customs officials in guarding the line must have made clear to the leaders of the conspiracy that their strength was not sufficient to put an end to British rule in these provinces by armed invasions of their own. The only hope of "liberating Canada" that yet remained was thought to lie in such a program of border provocations as might bring on a general war between Britain and the States, or in making these provinces so expensive to defend that the mother country would eventually relinquish them without a fight. As shall later be seen, subsequent activities of this revolutionary society were mainly based upon such a policy; and so long as there was any prospect of engaging the whole Union in a war with John Bull, or of "bleeding him white" on the score of military expense, this militant brotherhood might be expected to live.

NOTES
1. Mackenzie's Gazette, for Nov. 10, inclosed with a letter from James Buchanan, (British Consul at New York), to Col. Charles Grey, Nov. 10, 1838; Series Q. 256, pp. 310, et seq.
3. Alphabetical list of prisoners taken at Prescott and Windsor, (containing a short account of each prisoner), inclosed with Arthur's dispatch to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, Feb. 5, 1839, Series Q. 418, Part II, et seq.
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30. Guillet, 154, McLeod, 255.
32. Correspondent of the Albany Argos, on board the United States, Nov. 14, reprinted in Nile's Register, LV, 201.
34. Correspondent of the Albany Argos, on board the United States, Nov. 14, in Nile's Register, LV, 201.
35. Printed in Nile's Register, Dec. 6, LV, 236.
41. Young to Arthur, Nov. 14, in Nile's Register, LV, 218.
42. Reprinted in Nile's Register, Nov. 24, LV, 199.
43. Numerous unmarked graves are found to the north and east of the old windmill tower which has been converted into a lighthouse.
44. Theller, II, 281.
45. The Jeffersonian, (Watertown), for Nov. 18, reprinted in Nile's Register, Nov. 24, LV, 193.
47. Doty to the editor of the Jeffersonian, Ogdenburg, Nov. 16, printed in Nile's Register, Nov. 24, LV, 193.
49. Doty to the editor of the Jeffersonian, Nov. 16, reprinted in Nile's Register, LV, 200.
50. Donald Creighton, John A. Macdonald, The Young Politician, (Toronto, Macmillan, 1952), 65-67; Guillet, 140. For an official account of these trials see: British Parliamentary Papers, Canada, 1840, (4 parts), I and II.
51. Alphabetical List of Prisoners, above cited.

The Great Hunt in the North Woods

57. Theller, II, 294; Detroit Daily Advertiser, condensed in Nile's Register, Dec. 1, 1838.
60. Theller, II, 294-95.
61. Bierce, 7-8; Elizabeth W. Smith, loc. cit.
63. Theller, II, 303.
65. Theller, II, 294; Michigan Pioneer Col., XXI, 556.
67. Lindsey, II, 227-31; Theller, II, 294-95.
69. Lindsey, II, 227-31; Theller, II, 294-95.
73. Quoted entire in Theller, II, 308-10.
74. Theller, II, 311.
75. Ibid., 312.
81. James D. Richardson, Messages and Papers of the Presidents, III, 582-83.
83. Fox to Arthur, Jan. 31, Arthur Papers, III, 50; Guillet, 185-86.
CHAPTER FIVE

Border Provocation

The tactics hitherto employed by the Hunters were based upon the wide-spread assumption that the great mass of the Canadian population was ripe for revolt against the ruling oligarchy in each of the provinces. Such being the case, it was thought to be only necessary that the Canadian Hunters and their sympathizers concentrate at certain convenient points, after which their confederates on the American side could cross over with the necessary arms and ammunition and the overthrow of the existing regime would shortly follow. Since the scheduled uprisings in Upper Canada had been thwarted by the presence of large bodies of Canadian militia, the second alternative of the Hunters was to send across at selected points vanguards of picked raiders who were to demonstrate their ability to gain a firm foothold on Canadian soil. Such an accomplishment was expected to bring on large-scale uprisings of the Canadian population, after which hundreds more from the American side would cross over and join their brethren, bringing along with them an abundance of arms for the Canadian rebels. As in the case of the attacks upon Prescott and Windsor, probably less than three hundred men actually crossed the Canadian boundary though larger bodies remained behind to watch the outcome and to see what number of Canadian Hunters would join the invaders should the latter meet with success.¹

As it turned out, such vanguard tactics failed both at Prescott and Windsor, though a considerable number of Canadian Hunters did assemble near the former place, but returned to their homes when they saw that the adventure was doomed to fail.² Only in the case of the Hunter-inspired insurrection in
By the end of the year 1838, many of the old leaders in the movement had disappeared. After the defeat of the Hunters at Windsor, Bierce had resigned his position as commander-in-chief of the “Patriot Army in the West” and returned to his law practice at Akron. Birge and Johnston had been arrested on a charge of violation of the neutrality law. McDonell was in prison at Montreal. Von Schoultz, Woodruff, Abby, and George had died upon the gallows and Putnam and Harvel in the “Battle of the Orchard.” Some new leaders were to appear among the Hunters in the West. H. S. Handy, one time head of the Sons of Liberty, was now Bierce’s successor as commander-in-chief; and a former Polish officer named Sobrienski, a near relative of Von Schoultz, was now becoming a prominent figure among the Hunters in western New York. In the light of later developments, it would appear that the more respectable among the membership were dropping out of the movement, leaving the rougher elements to play an increasing role in the activities that were to follow.

During the winter and early spring of 1839, the Hunters remained in comparative quietude along the entire length of the frontier, in high anticipation of a general war between Britain and the United States. The Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute was approaching a critical stage, a dispute which was to come to a crisis in the bloodless “Aroostook War” in February of that year, when three hundred frontiersmen from Maine came to an open clash in the disputed territory with a larger force from New Brunswick and fifty Americans were made prisoners by the provincial militia.

It is known that during the last days of the old year, Nelson and his “executive council,” including Côté, Gagnon, Mailhot, Duvernay, and Bouchette, were huddled in a lengthy conference at Swanton, in northern Vermont; and it is probable that a new procedure was being discussed, in view of the approaching crisis in the boundary dispute. In high expectation of an Anglo-American war, they may well have imagined themselves marching into Lower Canada at the heels of a victorious American army and taking over the province with little effort of their own.

In the following March, Arthur learned through his confidential agents that the Hunters were holding meetings at Rochester, Lockport, and Buffalo, and that the society was still increasing in numbers and resources. He expressed his fear that “If the boundary dispute brings war, it will bring these vagabonds upon us in considerable numbers.”

At about the same time that these early spring meetings were taking place, “General” Henry S. Handy, the new commander-in-chief in the West, was circulating a highly optimistic report about a new Patriot army which Donald McLeod was said to have been recruiting since the beginning of the year. When fully mobilized, the new army would include fifteen hundred Indians, seventeen hundred and fifty Americans, Irish, and Dutch from the Illinois country and regions beyond the Mississippi river, and this force was to be joined by four thousand Upper Canadians at the time their services would be required. Handy added that many others were expected to join the great crusading army, especially more Indian tribes that were known to be friendly to the cause, and that as soon as a sufficient fund could be raised, a foundry at Detroit would be ready to supply the necessary weapons of war.

That a stand-by force of some size, waiting to take advantage of the expected war was not altogether a myth seems to be born out by reports that began to appear in Canadian newspapers as well as from military officials on the American side of the frontier. The Montreal Transcript published an account of a large Patriot force on the Michigan frontier that had been reported by General Brady to be stationed within fifteen miles of the Canadian border, which was believed to number no less than three thousand men.

Near the end of the month, Colonel Richard Airey informed the Lieutenant-Governor of various preparations that were thought to be in progress on the Michigan frontier and the likelihood of a sudden descent upon the province, and General Winfield Scott was reported to have warned General Brady at Detroit of the “threat of Patriot disturbances on a large scale.”
Nothing further, however, was ever heard of such a force on the Michigan frontier. Indeed, by mid-spring of that year the crisis in the Maine Boundary dispute had passed and the prospect of a real shooting war with Britain had receded for the time. In view of the diminishing prospects of an Anglo-American war, the Hunters began to concentrate upon another line of tactics—a program of border provocations, designed to keep up the excitement along the frontier and ultimately involve Britain and the United States in a general war. On May 4, General Brady wrote to Colonel Airey that the Hunters had planned “to commence operations at about the time that farmers begin planting their corn,” and that their plan was “to send over small marauding parties to burn houses and destroy other property in the hope of producing retaliation” and thereby bringing on a full-scale Anglo-American war.

Such activities had already begun in the region of the Thousand Islands at the foot of Lake Ontario, then in a wild and primitive state, where Bill Johnston’s gang of ruffians, including his four sons and some twenty others, maintained a rendezvous at the head of Wellesley Island. From this vantage point, they began a whole series of robberies and other depredations in the vicinity of Kingston while keeping up a continuous disturbance along the lake shore and the upper St. Lawrence River. This line of provocative activities was inaugurated by a spectacular robbery of the Upper Canadian mail between Kingston and Gananoque by some of Johnston’s men, who escaped to the thickly-wooded islands with their loot. A plan to burn the town of Gananoque was thwarted by the timely vigilance of Captain William Sandom, commander of the British naval forces on Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, who had been informed of the plot by Colonel W. J. Worth in command of American forces along that section of the frontier.

After the destruction of several houses and barns along the Upper Canadian frontier, there was an attempted raid on Cobourg, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, in the last week of July, by a band of ruffians led by Samuel P. Hart and Benjamin Lett, with the intent to rob and murder several Tory property owners in that town. Though the “Cobourg Conspiracy” is said to have been hatched at John Montgomery’s tavern in Rochester, the headquarters of the Hunters in that vicinity, the leaders of the society probably knew nothing of the projected attack. In this abortive adventure, several local Canadian sympathizers had a part.

This program of minor provocations, which was being carried out by the Hunters and their friends, was well understood by the British Minister at Washington. In a letter to Arthur later in the summer, he expressed his conviction that “we shall have nothing more serious than isolated crimes and provocation to retaliation,” since the state of military preparations in the Canadas by this time rendered a full-scale invasion of the provinces a hopeless adventure.

By the latter part of June, a great campaign of rumors had been launched. The first to be circulated was about an impending invasion of the upper province, which was said to be scheduled for the fourth of July, probably with the intention of encouraging an uprising in the Canadas. Upper Canadian officials were the recipients of numerous reports about the magnitude of the coming invasion, and persons were sent into Canada for no other purpose than to propagate rumors of formidable attacks that were said to be planned upon both provinces. In Lower Canada the rumor of an intended invasion on the fourth of July was industriously circulated in every part of that province, a line of tactics which Colborne believed was intended to encourage an uprising of the habitants. These rumors and threats so frightened the people that large sums of money were withdrawn from the banks in Montreal and several other towns in Lower Canada. But after an uneventful Fourth of July had passed, the bogus character of these rumored invasions became obvious to all, and on July 7, Colborne explained in a letter to Arthur that “On this frontier, it is the business of Coté and Nelson to circulate reports of projected movements of the brigands—but each report has proved untrue.”

Later in the month of July, another report was being circulated in Upper Canada that a former Polish army officer named Sobrienski and a cousin of Nils Von Schoultz who had been taken at Windmill Point in the previous November, would avenge his cousin’s death by leading a large invasion force into
that province, and that he and "President" A. D. Smith of the "Upper Canadian Republic" had already made a scouting expedition through the Newcastle district where the intended invasion would duly take place.20

In the meantime, the Hunters and their sympathizers had celebrated the Fourth of July in grand style by gathering at hotels and taverns in the leading towns along the frontier, where toasts were drunk to such watchwords as liberty, fraternity, Canadian independence, and brotherly love.21 At Buffalo, Senator Henry Clay was reported to have made a rabble-rousing speech in which he is said to have warned the Patriots that the destruction of the Caroline "still remained unatoned for."22 But the much-discussed invasion of Canada, reported to be planned for Independence Day, appears to have been completely forgotten at these uproarious meetings, where the crowds of wild-eyed listeners were exposed to long-winded speeches and the fumes of tobacco, whisky, and beer.

By mid-summer the Durham Report was being hotly discussed in Upper Canada as well as in most of the other British provinces to the north of the American border. That part of Lord Durham's Report which had become the principle point of contention was his advocacy of "responsible government." By this he meant that the principal executive officers within the province, excepting the governor and the provincial secretary, were to continue in office only so long as they were able to retain the confidence and support of the legislature, and particularly its elective branch. The old Executive Council was to be transformed into a real cabinet, similar to the British Cabinet, though the scope of its powers were to be limited to provincial matters alone, while certain enumerated powers were to be reserved to the imperial government.

As the excitement over "responsible government" gained in momentum, the "Durham Meetings" had become in some instances the scenes of disorder, and even of violence. Armed clashes between the "reformers" and the more conservative elements were not uncommon, the latter maintaining that "responsible government" was "but another name for independence and disloyalty to the Crown." Lieutenant-Governor Arthur, who was closely identified with the interests of the Family Compact, assured the Colonial Secretary that the advocates of this scheme could not be trusted, that "while reform is upon their lips, rebellion is in their hearts."23 Writing to Ex-Governor Francis Head near the close of summer, he declared that: "The Report has set all the reformers and republicans into motion again . . . . While they were cautious under Mackenzie's banner, they are now exceedingly bold under the Earl of Durham's colors."24

The Hunters were not slow in taking advantage of this revival of unrest in the Canadas. Interpreting these meetings and the clamor for self-government as a sure indication of hostility toward British rule, they hailed these gatherings as the long-sought opportunity to mingle freely with the discontented elements within the province, and particularly with the critics of the Family Compact regime. Emboldened by this new upsurge of unrest and turmoil, a convention of Upper Canadian Hunters, which is said to have included delegates from all parts of the province, met in secret session in an abandoned and isolated log house on the Rice Lake Plains, north of Cobourg, on the night of July 22.25 While nothing definite is known as to the nature of their proceedings, it can hardly be doubted that they were planning to capitalize upon the prevailing agitation and excitement and turn the "responsible government cry" into one of revolution and independence. Samuel P. Hart relates that Sobrienski, who was now becoming quite influential among Hunters and other Patriots in New York, had been attending "Durham Meetings" in Upper Canada and had reported the prevailing excitement as "a grand thing, as a revolution could be organized under it." The Cobourg prisoners further relate that the Hunters and their friends had hitherto denounced the "Durham Meetings" as delusive affairs until Sobrienski had shown the importance of directing them into revolutionary channels, and away from the goal of self-government under the Crown. Following up this suggestion, the Hunters had resolved to pursue the opposite course, and to steer these turbulent meetings in the direction of republicanism and independence.26

While Canadian policy and the Durham Report were engaging the attention of the British Parliament, reports had begun to arrive by way of American newspapers of animated
debates in the House of Commons over the expense involved in the maintenance of military defense for the Canadas. The Chancellor of the Exchequer was said to have told the House of Commons that the Canadian Rebellion had already cost the British treasury nearly ten million dollars, and that the continued expense of keeping up a large military establishment in those distant provinces could not much longer be borne. It was also said that certain members of Parliament, in the confidence of the Ministry, were already advocating an early abandonment of these colonies.27

Inspired by these reports, a printed circular was sent out by the “Safety Committee” on August 18, entitled: “Glorious News for the Patriots” which was to be discreetly handed out to trusted members on both sides of the border. In this circular, signed by J. L. Quinn as chairman of the Committee, it was asserted that in view of the encouraging news from Britain, Canadian independence might eventually be achieved without the long-sought war, since the imperial government was already growing weary of the burdensome cost of Canadian defense. Upon this assumption, the belief was expressed that John Bull would never enter upon a bloody war in order to retain such unprofitable possessions as the Canadian provinces. “four thousand miles from England, which costs the latter millions of dollars more than they are worth and which they no doubt wish to get rid of.” It was further argued that “should Queen Victoria be advised to declare war upon the United States, pray tell us, ye wise men, what she would gain by such a step? The Committee say nothing whatever. What then would she lose? All her North American Colonies. Would the Canadians remain a day under Great Britain? Nay – but why dwell upon the subject?”

In view of these glad tidings from the mother country, it was believed that a line of tactics should be adopted “with a view to keeping up a high state of excitement and alarm in the Canadas.” and thereby compel the British government to spend more and more on Canadian defense until the day when she would willingly relinquish these colonies from further control. In pursuance of such an objective, the Committee recommended that further raids be made upon the points along the border where there would be little or no danger of encountering a superior enemy force, and especially where there were Canadian Patriots ready to co-operate with the invaders. In case of being taken by the enemy, captives might find consolation in the fact that the British government had already released several prisoners taken by the authorities in Canada and might be expected to liberate still more Patriot captives from time to time.

The circular ended with a high note of optimism about the ultimate outcome of the struggle for Canadian freedom and the special rewards for the faithful when their object should be achieved. “The Committee look forward, at no distant period, to see these provinces a second Texas; and when that day arrives, be it sooner or later, the names of those registered, as directed by the instructions of the Committee, will be sure to receive such rewards as their services may justly entitle them to obtain.”29

Buoyed up by the “glorious news” from across the Atlantic, a convention of nineteen delegates, sworn not to mention their names to each other, met at Lockport, New York, on September 18, to consult upon the course of action that should be taken in view of the brightened prospects that seemed to lie ahead. After considerable discussion, it was decided that an attack should be made upon Windsor, the identical spot where the Patriots had landed in the preceding autumn. Several thousand stands of arms and a few field pieces were said to be already stored at Detroit, and more arms and munitions at Oswego. It was reported that three thousand men could be relied upon to take part in the attack. Arms were to be smuggled into the upper province, six hundred to the town of Whity, five hundred to Presque Isle, and large quantities to other towns near the western border. When the landing was to be made at Windsor, the Patriots in the various districts of the province were to rise for the purpose of distracting the attention of the government so as to prevent the sending of troops to the West. It was the belief of the delegates that if Windsor could be held for only a few days, large numbers of volunteers from the States, already waiting for such an opportunity, would rush to the aid of the invading force. McLeod and Sutherland were reported to be already on their way to Detroit to make preparations for
the attack which was to be led by a former officer in the Polish army. Once upon Canadian soil, they were "to follow the example of Colonel Prince and show them how it works" by giving no quarter to the enemy who might fall into their hands.

In the meanwhile, the war of provocation was to be continued, and various points along the frontier were suggested as suitable places for harassing the province. Tory houses and barns near the border were to be burned in order to impoverish the enemy and benefit the friends of the Patriots. The new St. James's Cathedral at Toronto was to be burned when completed, and a Patriot lawyer in that city was suggested as the proper person to light the fire.

Finally, the "Durham Meetings" were highly approved as affording the Hunters an opportunity to appear at these public meetings and to mingle freely with the discontented elements of all the various shades, and under the guise of "reformers" they were to promote them in as many places and as often as they could. 80

Early in October, Colonel James Bankhead, in command of American troops at Buffalo, informed Colonel Bethune of the British army of a meeting that had just taken place at Lewiston, on the east bank of the Niagara, at which the "Secretary-at-War" Donald McLeod, along with T. J. Sutherland and Benjamin Lett was the leading spirit. At this meeting, attended by one of Bankhead's spies, it was learned that the projected invasion at Windsor was to be given up, and that no attack was to be made upon the province until "a considerable rising in Upper Canada should actually take place." To hasten and encourage such an uprising, large quantities of arms were to be smuggled into the most disaffected parts of the province against the day when the Canadian Patriots would assume the initiative in the fight against British rule. 81

Following the meeting at Lewiston, there was a marked decline in Hunter activities on both sides of the border. No uprisings took place in either of the provinces, and no further attempts at invasion from the American side were made. There was probably much truth in a statement of Sir John Colborne at this time, that "the Americans will not enter the province unless they can see proof of a successful revolt, while the inhabitants will not rise unless they can see American aid coming." 82

By this time it was becoming evident that the Hunters had already passed the zenith of their power and popularity. The decline in their activities as well as their support, noted by Lieutenant-Governor Arthur as early as mid-autumn of that year, 83 is without explanation. In the first place the American troops which had been thinly distributed along the border, from Troy in Vermont to Port Huron in Michigan, were being considerably reinforced by this time. In October a regiment of artillery, eight hundred strong, was ordered to Detroit to aid in holding the Hunters in check on that part of the frontier. Colonel Bankhead's troops at Buffalo were strongly reinforced, and the Secretary of War had promised that every regular soldier that could be spared would be sent to the northern frontier should their services be required. A working agreement had been made with the Canadian authorities for a mutual exchange of information about any Patriot plans that might be discovered. Orders were sent out by General Winfield Scott to the various commands along the frontier to use every measure in their power to prevent any hostile incursions into Canadian territory, and officers along the frontier were supplied with funds for the purchase of information about threatened attacks. Any plans for hostile incursions that might be discovered were to be disclosed to the Canadian authorities at once. 84

Another important factor contributing to the decline of the movement was a remarkable change in public opinion respecting this revolutionary society. Returning from an extensive mission to the United States at the close of the year, Lieutenant J. T. W. Jones, in a detailed report to the new Governor General, Charles Poulet Thomson, declared that a vast change had taken place in the minds of the American people respecting any interference in Canadian affairs. Three classes of Americans could be distinguished, he said, with respect to their attitude toward the Canadas. First, there were those who had supported the movement from what they considered to be lofty motives, such as the extension of free institutions to the Canadian people, who were believed to be oppressed by a tyrannical government. A second class, while loudly professing their devotion to the
same principals, had been supporting the movement solely from interested motives, regarding it as a speculation which, if successful, would yield vast rewards in the end. "Large sums," he reported "were to be raised by the sale of Crown lands and the sequestration of property of the loyalists upon the foundation of a 'Canadian Republic' and of course the leaders of the liberation party were to get their fair share of the spoils." Both the above classes, he observed, "have discovered their error. The first finds that a majority of the people are opposed to their projected change of government, and the latter that the speculation is essentially a bad one."

A third party, he continued, "who were from the beginning against any interference with the affairs of a friendly power, but who dared not, in the first instance, express their sentiments, are now able to speak without fear; and they denounce upon all occasions any further attempts upon Canada." In view of this change in public opinion within the States, customs officers and other federal officials would no longer dare "to wink at any scheme of invasion which might come to their knowledge."85

A well-known authority on Canadian-American relations, after an extensive study of the leading American newspapers of this time, was impressed by the revolution in public opinion respecting the Hunters' Lodges and the Patriot movement in general. "The people as well as the newspapers," he declares, "had begun to realize that they had misunderstood the nature of Canadian unrest and the meaning of the Durham Report."86

On the Canadian side the malcontents, as well as the public at large were already awakening to the fact that a more liberal regime was being inaugurated by the new Governor-General, who had published the famous circular dispatch on the tenure of resident colonial officers, sent out by the Colonial Secretary, Lord John Russell, on October 16. This reform in official tenure was soon to destroy the monopoly of the public offices so long enjoyed by the Family Compact and thereby to remove a fundamental cause of Canadian unrest. Indeed, so wide-sweeping in character was this reform in official tenure that it was hailed by some of the popular leaders as a virtual concession of the "responsible self-government" so dear to the advanced "reformers" within the North American Provinces.87

As late as January 1840, however, some attempts were still being made by the Hunters, in conjunction with W. L. Mackenzie's Canadian Association,88 to recruit volunteers in Upper Canada for the Patriot cause. Early in that month two agents were arrested in Toronto while endeavoring to distribute blank commissions in the Patriot army, signed by Henry S. Handy as commander of the Hunter forces and countersigned by John Montgomery, then president of the Canadian Association, which had been founded in March, 1839. But few, if any, recruits were being secured, and the arrest of these men is said to have created no excitement in that part of the province.89

While the Hunter movement was surely on the decline, there was still some hope on the part of its leaders that the long-desired war with Britain could be produced by the cumulative effect of numerous provocations of a minor nature which might bring on a general war—or at least by forcing Britain to spend more and more until the burdensome cost of Canadian defense would lead to an abandonment of the provinces to the promoters of independence and republican government.

Frequent border disturbances, therefore, were to continue throughout the following year, though it would hardly be correct to attribute all these depredations to the Hunters alone. Some, indeed, were probably the work of lawless elements who were merely taking advantage of these troublous times to rob and plunder as did the Quantrell Gang during the American Civil War, who looted and murdered under the cloak of supporting the Confederate cause.

Among the several border outrages committed upon the Canadian provinces during the year of 1840, there may be mentioned the blowing up of the Brock Monument at Queenstown on April 17, and an attempt to set fire to the town of Kingston some days later. In the following June, Benjamin Lett, in apparent compliance with the program of provocations adopted at the Lockport Convention, made an attempt to burn the steamer Great Britain while it was anchored in the harbor at Oswego, but he was arrested when his confederate, David Dafoe, turned state's evidence against him at his trial.41 Apparently in pursuance of the wishes of the Lockport delegates, a number of Tory barns were burned during the year 1840, while rumors
of projected invasions were spread far and wide and threatening were still strong enough to exert a considerable influence in the gestures made.

In spite of their decline in popular support, the Hunters presidential election of November, 1840. A well-known historian of this period finds the influence of the society reflected in most of the border states, especially in New York, where the cry of the Hunters was "Woe to Van Buren," who was accused of turning traitor to the cause by issuing a proclamation against the society two years before. The same writer relates that the large Whig majorities in the northern and western counties of that state "surprised everyone." Harrison's majority of more than thirteen thousand in the state of New York, the author concludes, may have been largely due to the Hunter vote.

Notwithstanding their show of strength and influence in the general election of 1840, and their continued efforts to build up a revolutionary force in Canada, the organization was steadily losing ground. The lack of competent leadership within its ranks, the mounting military power in Canada, the precautionary measures being carried out by the American government, and the great change in public opinion on the American side with respect to the Patriot movement in general may well explain the marked decline of the revolutionary society.

Barring some new crisis in British-American relations, this secret brotherhood might surely be expected to vanish within a matter of time.

NOTES

1. A brief but interesting analysis of these tactics is given by Preston, Vol. I, 161-64.
3. Callahan, 188-89.

11. Preston, I, 178; Guillet, 188.
13. Hart, the descendant of a loyalist settler in Upper Canada, had formerly published a radical sheet at Cobourg called the Woe. In 1836, he moved to Belleville where he launched the Plain Speaker. When an issue of the latter appeared one morning with the British coat of arms turned upside down, his press was broken up by local militiamen, and he fled to Lewiston, New York, where he later edited the Lewiston Telegraph, a paper devoted to the Patriot cause. Guillet, 166.

Guillet quotes from a circular sent out by Donald McLeod, the "Secretary-at-War" at Cleveland, condemning such raids as that attempted on Cobourg.
18. Same to same, July 7, Arthur Papers, III, 190.
19. Sobieniska is said to have arrived at Salina, New York, in November, 1838, where he learned of the capture of his cousin at Windmill Point, and to have sworn revenge upon Britain, should his relative be hanged. Toward the close of the summer of 1839, he was being considered for the command of a projected invasion from the Michigan side of the frontier, in lieu of H. S. Handy. Further Statements of Samuel P. Hart, inclosure No. 1, in Arthur to Russell, Oct. 15, 1839, Series Q, 420, pp. 45, et seq.

In Pursuit of Big Game

After a long interval of comparative quietude, prospects for the Hunters began to brighten by the beginning of 1841—prospects of the long-sought war with Britain and an easy conquest of the Province of Canada.¹

Late in the autumn of the preceding year, a Canadian resident by the name of Alexander McLeod, while under the influence of liquor in an American border town, openly boasted that while acting as a deputy sheriff in Upper Canada he had killed Amos Durfee on the American steamer Caroline, which was destroyed at Niagara Falls late in December, 1837. Arrested at Lewiston, New York, on a charge of murder and arson, he was committed to jail at Lockport to await the action of the grand jury which indicted him in the following January for murder and arson. British authorities demanded his immediate release on the ground that the destruction of the Caroline was a "public act" under orders from the Canadian government, and that McLeod had not been a member of the party that burned the vessel and murdered Durfee on board. The New York authorities refused to give him up, and a spirited diplomatic contest followed, while public anger throughout the border states was again aroused, and a revival of anti-British feeling was the inevitable result.² At London, Lord Palmerston informed the American Ambassador that the execution of McLeod would be a signal for war, and from more than one European capital came rumors of an impending conflict in which Britain was to rush military and naval forces to the North American Provinces and in which the United States was expected to terminate British rule in Canada.³
The Rise and Fall of the Patriot Hunters

The Hunters looked upon the arrest of McLeod as a rare opportunity for taking vengeance upon one who had obstructed the Patriots in their efforts to revolutionize the Canadas. As early as January 7, 1841, when an attempt was made to bail McLeod out of the Lockport jail, several hundred Patriots crowded about the courthouse and jail and demanded that no bail be granted to the prisoner. His bondsmen were virtually forced to withdraw their names from the bail. At midnight, a cannon was brought into the court-house yard and was fired at intervals throughout the remainder of the night, the concussion breaking window glasses, to the amusement of the mob.4

Taking advantage of the revival of anti-British feeling which was spreading across the border states, the Hunters became active once more, and began their work of intrigue with a renewed confidence of popular support. By the month of July, while the clouds of war were looming up on the horizon and spirited debates upon the subject were taking place on the floors of Congress, reports came thick and fast about plans and preparations of the Hunters to capitalize upon the new upsurge of Anglophobia within the States.

Alarmed at the new threat of violence which might disrupt all efforts toward a peaceful settlement of the McLeod affair, President John Tyler called upon Daniel Webster, then Secretary of State, for information and advice as to the steps that should be taken against the secret conspiracy.

Late in July, Webster wrote the President that he had already made a thorough investigation of the secret society and had learned "pretty fully" the real object and plans of the Hunters' Lodges. The society, he said, was still organized "all along the frontier from Maine to Wisconsin," that its leaders were in constant correspondence with the disaffected in Canada, and that its members were continually crossing the border to harangue their brethren in their secret meetings. Webster further explained:

They do not expect to be able to invade Canada with any hope of success unless war breaks out between Canada and the United States; but they desire an event above all things, and to bring it about, they will join in any violence or out-

break if they think they can do so with impunity. They may even attempt violence upon McLeod, should he be discharged by the court, or on his way from the prison to the place where the court shall be sitting . . .

If war breaks out, these persons do not propose to join the forces of the United States, but to unite themselves with the disaffected in Canada, declare the province free, and set up another government. I am told that the regimental officers are already designated for the command of these volunteers.

Webster estimated the membership of the Hunters' organization at this time to be not less than ten thousand, and he was astonished at the indifference of public officials in the border states, especially those of the state of New York who, he said, were loudly insisting that there was no danger of violence. He anticipated that the Hunters would try to murder McLeod, and he shuddered at the consequences that he felt sure would follow. "If a mob should kill him, war will be inevitable in ten days. Of this, I have no doubt."6

Along with the upsurge of the Hunter movement in the northern states, there appears to have been a simultaneous revival of the society in Canada, particularly along the St. Lawrence frontier, though their activities were being carried on in the greatest secrecy in order to steer clear of Lord Sydenham's spies. By this time the Canadian Hunters, like some of their brethren on the American side, were still denouncing "responsible self-government" for Canada as a delusion and a snare, as an empty and fraudulent scheme designed to thwart the movement for Canadian independence and republican government.

The principal leaders in this part of the province, wrote an anonymous observer, were Ebenezer Bacon, who presided over a Hunters' Lodge which held its meetings in his tannery at Prescott; Peter Shaver, formerly a member of the provincial assembly, but "opposed to colonial government, and now doing his best to bring about a change"; John A. Cameron of Brockville, who had been "making tours in the United States for months with the object of stirring up sympathizers"; Peter Cameron of Mallorytown, a captain in the Canadian militia, who had been holding lodge meetings in his barn; and the
Reverend Philander Smith, pastor of the Methodist Church at Brockville, "a great radical, a thorough republican, and a tool of John A. Cameron." Members of these lodges, continued this informant, "have been heard to curse Her Majesty and all royalty, and they hope to see them put down and banished from the face of the earth." Their proceedings were said to be carried on under such extreme secrecy that "many of the most desperate of the members of these lodges hold the others in obeisance through fear.”

The trial of McLeod was set to take place at Utica on September 27, and as early as August 8, a secret agent of the British government sent a confidential note to the British Minister at Washington, stating that he had previously reported to the Legation "positive information" that the Hunters were planning to assassinate McLeod in case of his acquittal by the court. But since federal officers at Washington had become aware of their plans, and had sent Major Kirby as a special agent to investigate the conspiracy on the spot, someone had informed them of Kirby's mission, and as a consequence the Hunters had decided to hasten their designs so as to forestall any interference by federal or state authorities. The writer further explained that:

In order to accomplish their object, they have determined to force open the State Arsenal and remove several pieces of artillery. They have done so, and have now in their possession several field pieces which are at this moment secreted on board of canal boats . . .

It is now their resolution to assemble at Whitesborough where McLeod is confined, surround the jail and demand the delivery of McLeod from the keeper. In case of refusal or resistance, they will threaten to affect an entrance by means of artillery. The strongest detachment will arrive at Whitesborough concealed in canal boats. The other division will assemble in the woods near Whitesborough.

As the date of the trial drew near, the Hunters resorted to their old practice of border disturbances. On September 20, there was an attempt to blow up the locks on the Welland Canal at Allentown, and a day or two later an attempt to destroy the British steamer Chippewa. From Navy Island as a vantage point, there was an abortive attempt to fire upon the British steamships Minos and Toronto with a field piece stolen from American stores.

In a circular letter to the United States marshals in the border states, Webster stated that "the unlawful association called the Hunters' Lodges, which still exist along the whole length of the Canadian frontier," were again in active operation, and were meditating some new movement upon Canada as soon as a favorable season for such operations should arrive. Through his confidential investigators he had learned that the secret society was now collecting "considerable supplies of arms, including cannon, muskets, swords, pistols, and ammunition, all of which is being stored in secret depots at convenient places near the border, ready to be used when the contemplated movement on Canada shall take place.” The adventure, he had learned, was to be deferred until the arrival of cold weather should close the Detroit river and the outlets of Lake Erie and Lake Ontario.

At this stage President John Tyler issued his well-known proclamation of September 25, warning the Hunters to disband. This warning was directed especially to the leaders of the association who, he said, had been enriching themselves by levying contributions upon the ignorant and credulous. He warned them that the laws of the United States would be rigorously enforced against their illegal acts, and that if in any lawless incursion into Canadian territory they should fall into the hands of British authorities, they were not to be protected as American citizens, nor would there be any interference in their behalf. Finally he urged "all well-meaning, but deluded persons who may have joined these lodges immediately to abandon them, and to have nothing more to do with their secret meetings and unlawful oaths.”

But the Hunters did not disband in response to Tyler's threatening proclamation. On the contrary, there is good evidence that at this very time they were forming a close alliance with the Irish Repeal Association that Daniel O'Connell had recently launched and which was now expanding into the United States and the British North American Provinces.
As early as October 10, while the McLeod trial was still in progress, Father T. A. Pulby, a Catholic priest and resident of Paterson, New Jersey, made a confidential report to M. S. Bartlett, the editor of a paper in New York City, in which he stated that "all the Repeal Associations have become united with the Hunters' Lodges." The "Repealers" had already a secret executive committee in New York City and "branch committees" in the leading towns in the Northeastern States. Great pressure, he said, was being exerted upon the Catholic Irish to join the secret conspiracy, the chief object of which was the repeal of the Union Act of 1800 which had united Ireland with the Kingdom of Great Britain. "Tis a crusade, my dear sir," continued Father Pulby, "and like the Crusades of the Middle Ages, any doubt of its justice or wisdom is regarded by the whole body of Irish Catholics in the Northern States as savouring of treason, if not of heresy. As I would not permit a Repeal Association to be established in this town, (Paterson), I was made to understand that my love of Ireland, if not my faith as a Catholic, was doubted; and I can plainly see that in a short time my residence in this part of the country will be very disagreeable, if not attended with danger." 13

In forwarding Father Pulby's report to Sir John Colborne, (now raised to the Peerage as Lord Seaton), Bartlett declared that "every nook and corner where a few Irishmen congregate sees the instant creation of one of these dangerous combinations." The ignorant classes among the Irish, he wrote, were being led to believe by designing leaders that the separation of Canada from the British Empire would be followed ere long, by the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom. Hence their interest in forming a common front with the Hunters' Lodges in the promotion of Canadian independence. 14

In the meantime, McLeod's trial had been postponed until October 4. Due in part to the promptings of Daniel Webster, Governor William H. Seward of New York took precautionary measures for the security of the prisoner, then awaiting trial at Utica. A guard of thirty deputies were stationed at the jail to protect McLeod until his case could be decided, and a volunteer company of infantry was enlisted and held in readiness to assist the special guard in any emergency that might arise, while General Winfield Scott was to move a company of regular troops to the scene of the trial should protection be required. General John Wool, also, was to be present to assist the sheriff in maintaining order. 15

Though the trial took place while a new excitement still prevailed over the seizure of an American citizen in Vermont by an armed band from Canada, the proceedings at Utica were undisturbed. Though the Hunters and their confederates were present in large numbers, and great crowds surged around the court-house walls, "all was hushed and quiet within." 16 Toward the end of the trial, the chief attorney for the defense, J. A. Spencer, roundly declared that the prosecution of McLeod was being engineered "by a combination of the rankest perjury since the sun shown upon Christendom — in a case not only involving the life of an individual, but the interests of two great nations as well." Pointing to the four attorneys and thirty witnesses for the prosecution, he avowed that their real object was not the furtherance of justice as between McLeod and the state of New York, but for "the promotion of a war between this country and Great Britain." If proof were wanting, he declared, "of the existence of this legal combination, it could be found abundantly in the number of witnesses that have been brought forward to swear away the life of McLeod, scarce any of whom appeared originally against the accused." Practically all these witnesses, he said, belonged to the secret society, whose testimony therefore deserved no credit in the estimation of an intelligent jury. All these witnesses against the accused, he added, were being handsomely paid for their testimony, so artfully fabricated and carefully rehearsed for the accomplishment of their evil purpose.

In a lengthy charge to the jury near the conclusion of the trial, Judge Gridley observed that "more than one distinguished actor concerned with recent abortive attempts at revolution in the Canadian provinces" was present in the court room, thirsting for the life of the accused, and he made it plain to the jury that a conviction of the prisoner at the bar would almost surely be followed by a great Anglo-American war. 17

Having proved an alibi, McLeod was acquitted on October 12. He was escorted to the Canadian border under heavy guard.
and placed on board a British ship. Arriving at Montreal, he was given a hero's welcome at a great loyalist rally, while the tension between Britain and the States was eased for a time.

In spite of their disappointment at the acquittal of McLeod, the Hunters and their confederates had not abandoned hope for an eventual war with John Bull and an easy overthrow of British rule in Canada. As observed by Sir Richard Jackson, then administrator of the United Province, the efforts of the Hunters were by no means "confined to Utica and its neighborhood, or directed only to the case of McLeod, but directed toward the creation of disturbances on any part of the frontier so as to bring on a collision between the two countries." There were, indeed, still grounds for hope for an Anglo-American conflict. There remained the Northeastern Boundary dispute, the Oregon Boundary controversy, the quarrel over the burning of the Caroline, which Britain claimed was a "public act" in defense of her border, and several other subjects of controversy involving Britain and the States.

That the Hunters and their associates were planning more mischief is confirmed by a note from the British Minister, H. S. Fox, on the last day of November, warning the State Department that the Hunters were by no means confined to British rule in Canada. As observed by Sir Richard Jackson, acting administrator of Canada, Nov. 3, 1841, Series G 12, Vol. 59, pp. 114, et seq., there were, indeed, still grounds for hope for an eventual war with John Bull and an easy overthrow of Britain.

Indeed, as long as so many serious differences remained unsettled, with the chances of an armed conflict by no means remote, the Hunters and their confederates would surely try to improve these chances by a continuance of the war of nerves which they had revived in the previous spring.

NOTES

1. A bill for the reunion of Upper and Lower Canada had been passed by Parliament in July, 1840, and the two provinces were officially united on February 10, 1841 by a proclamation of Governor General Thomson, now raised to the Peerage as Lord Sydenham.

2. Condensed from Callahan, 175-78.


5. Lyon G. Tyler, Letters and Times of the Tylers, (3 vols., 1884-96), II, 211.


While this paper is unsigned, names and addresses of persons are listed from whom proof of these statements is said to be available.


9. Gov. Wm. H. Seward to Webster, Sept. 22, 1841, Manning Diplomatic Correspondence, Canadian Relations III, 155.


12. James D. Richardson (compiler), Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IV, 72-73.


The letters from Pulby and Bartlett were forwarded by Lord Seaton to Sir George Murray, with the request that they be shown to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, and also to the Duke of Wellington. Concerning Bartlett, Seaton writes that his correspondent is the editor of a publication in New York City, confining his articles mainly to British affairs.

15. Callahan, 179; Tiffany, 114.


17. A complete summary of the McLeod trial is given in a thirty-two page booklet entitled: "The Trial of Alexander McLeod for the Murder of Amos Durfee and as an Accomplice in the Burning of the Steamer Caroline In the Niagara River during the Canadian Rebellion of 1837," New York, published by the Sun Office, 1841. An account is also given in Nile's Register, LXI, 119-28, and 144-45.


19. Fox to Webster, Nov. 30, 1841, British Legation, notes, XX.
CHAPTER SEVEN

Last Days of the Hunters

As the end of the year 1841 approached, discouraging news for the Hunters and their affiliates arrived from across the Atlantic. The Tory ministry, which had come into power in Britain early in September of that year, had resolved upon sending Lord Ashburton (Alexander Baring) to Washington to settle by peaceful negotiation all outstanding disputes between Britain and the States.

Since the chances of the long-sought war with Britain might soon pass away, the Hunters laid plans for more provocative tactics, such as would embarrass the Ashburton mission and thwart the negotiations that were soon to begin. Such a purpose probably explains the fires that were lighted on the night of December 8, along the Canadian frontier opposite the states of New York and Vermont, in which a considerable number of houses, barns, and other property was given to the flames. After an extended inquiry into the cause and extent of these fires by civil and military officials and the collection of numerous reports and depositions from residents along this section of the line, it was found that the victims of these outrages were almost invariably those who had been most active in suppressing the Hunter-inspired uprising of November 1838.¹

Another, and in some respects a more serious effort to embarrass the Ashburton Mission was an attempt to re-enact the McLeod affair by finding a new defendant in the Caroline outrage. As early as February 15, Dr. A. K. Mackenzie, E. A. Thel- ler, and some other leading Hunters in western New York, entered into a conspiracy with John Sheridan Hogan, a young journalist of Hamilton, in Canada West, to re-enact the McLeod
affair and upset the negotiations that were to begin upon the arrival of Lord Ashburton in the coming spring. Hogan was to boast of his part in the destruction of the Caroline, get himself arrested as a participant in the outrage, and after being committed to jail, he was to make a detailed confession of his guilt in an address to the public, and throw himself upon the protection of the British government.2

Presumably with a guarantee of his security in case of his imprisonment, and probably a large sum of money besides, Hogan succeeded in being taken into custody near Lockport late in February. Released by the local magistrate upon a technicality after spending two days in jail, he returned to Queens-town where he wrote a long letter to Clinton Murdoch, chief secretary to Sir Charles Bagot, the new Governor General of the North-American Provinces, in which he represented himself as a persecuted loyalist and a victim of all manner of personal abuse, anonymous letters, and threats from the Patriots on the American side of the border. He concluded his letter with an announcement of his intention to settle in the United States and a request for assurance that, as a resident in the States, he could still claim the protection of the British government.3

Brows must have been raised at the headquarters of the Governor General at the thought of Hogan's determination to return to New York where he was being pointed out as one of the participants in the destruction of the Caroline and a target for personal abuse. Fearing a repetition of the McLeod affair, Bagot replied to Hogan's plaintive letter on March 15, conveying his deep concern about the safety of Hogan, should he return to the States, and the possible consequences of any violence that might be committed upon his person, in view of the persecution which he claimed to have been subjected to during his sojourn in New York.4

Though strongly advised by the Governor General to refrain from such a course, Hogan returned to New York at the close of the month. At Rochester he was arrested by Dr. Theller as being one of the partners in the Caroline affair and "shut up in jail with thirty-three state felons," while a mob roared threats upon his life from the street outside. But again, after a brief judicial inquiry in which he was apparently unable to prove himself guilty as a partner in the outrage, he was finally dismissed by the court. On April 7, he wrote from Rochester another long and plaintive letter to Bagot's chief secretary in which he recited at great length how he had been subjected to a whole series of abuses, insults, and threats upon his life—though he declared that seventy local citizens, desiring peaceful relations with Canada, had waited upon the judge and insisted upon his release.5

By this time the Governor General had become aware of the novel scheme that had been set on foot by the Hunters and their confederates, and in a letter to the Colonial Secretary he explained that Hogan's conduct was "the result of a conspiracy between himself and individuals in the States to bring on a collision with England." But Bagot saw, nevertheless, a brighter side of the Hogan fiasco as affording substantial proof of the vanishing influence of the Hunters and their friends upon the minds of the more respectable people on the American side of the line. He was now convinced that the magistrates at Lockport and Rochester, once among the chief centers of the Patriot movement, were acting in conformity with an enlightened public opinion when they denied to Hogan a long term in prison, such as McLeod had undergone, and the coveted opportunity of an appeal to the Crown and the creation of another crisis that might lead to war.6

Though Lord Ashburton arrived at Washington on April 4, the Hunters and their associates, "now few in number and desperate in circumstances," were to make still another attempt to disrupt the negotiations which had already begun. Once more, it was to be a vigorous campaign of rumors and reports of preparations for invasion that were alleged to be taking place on the American side of the frontier. The negotiations at Washington were scarcely under way when individuals began to appear in the leading towns of Canada West "professing to give information respecting these intended movements." These reports were being so "industriously circulated" by the end of the spring that the Governor General became fearful that they might find their way into the English newspapers and stir up a bellicose spirit within the mother state.
The true nature of this war of rumors was soon to be revealed when the chief of police at Montreal was commissioned by Sir Charles to begin at the head of the St. Clair River and "proceed in disguise" through the lake frontier and learn the real truth about the impending invasions that were said to be in preparation near the Canadian border. At the conclusion of his tour in the following July Bagot's spy extraordinary had found no preparations for invasion from the American side, no concentration of troops or materials of war, or any evidence whatever to sustain the "exaggerated reports" that were still flowing in. While the Hunters were not mentioned by name in Bagot's report to the home government concerning these tactics, there can be little doubt that the few remaining members of the once powerful brotherhood were fighting the last desperate battle in their war of words, using the only ammunition that they still retained.

So ended the last expiring effort to bring about a bloody conflict with John Bull, and a supposed easy conquest of the Province of Canada. In the meantime, the negotiations at Washington were progressing peacefully, and on August 9, the famous Webster-Ashburton Treaty was signed, settling most of the outstanding differences between the two kindred nations. In addition to a successful solution of the Maine-New Brunswick boundary dispute, there was also settled the quarrel over the destruction of the Caroline, the "right of search" of the slave-trading vessels along the African coast, and the mutual extradition of criminals, which had been a lively issue during these critical years. One major question, however, remained unsolved, that of the Oregon boundary which, again, was to lead the two countries to the brink of war four years later.

It may be added that while the prospect of a war with John Bull was growing dim, so was the prospect of "bleeding him white" on the score of Canadian defense. Though it later became known that while the negotiations at Washington were still under way, the Prime Minister at London actually suggested the possibility of severing the connection with the Canadian province, Peel's suggestion, however, stemmed from no consideration of the cost of Canadian defense, but rather from a doubt as to whether the great majority of the Canadian popula-

tion were still the "cordial friends" of the mother country. If such were the case, the people of the metropolitan state, he believed, should no longer be taxed for the defense of a colony whose loyalty to Britain was gravely in doubt.

As to how long the Hunters may have continued on as a distinct organization, no conclusive answer now seems possible. Some authorities are inclined to the view that the society may have lingered on as a skeleton organization, still nourished by the hope of an eventual war with Britain, until the settlement of the Oregon Boundary dispute in the early summer of 1846. Such a belief is not entirely without a foundation, since it is known that when the dispute over the Oregon boundary was approaching a crisis in February of that year, and an early outbreak of war seemed near at hand, wild rumors and reports of a familiar stamp were being spread abroad, rumors of a full-scale invasion of Canada which was said to be in preparation along the American frontier and of volunteer forces being recruited for this purpose from as far south as the state of Tennessee. As late as the spring of 1848, the Earl of Elgin, then Governor General of the North-American Provinces, entertained a suspicion that the Hunters' Lodges were still organized and patiently waiting for an uprising in Ireland, while holding themselves in readiness to effect a diversion upon the United Province.

It seems more probable, however, that the Hunters may not have long survived the signing of the Webster-Ashburton Treaty late in the summer of 1842, since, indeed, the great wave of Anglophobia that had reached its height in the weeks following the destruction of the Caroline was well-nigh spent, and an undertow in the opposite direction had already set in. A vast change in public opinion had taken place in the United States with respect to the British possessions beyond our border. In the now United Province of Canada, responsible self government on a limited scale at least had been attained under the tutelage of Lord Sydenham and his successor, Sir Charles Bagot, and the power and influence of the Family Compact was clearly on the wane. Following the extension of clemency to large numbers of the French Canadian refugees who were permitted to return to their native province in the autumn of 1842, the anti-British
feeling among these groups had begun to subside. Then, too, back at its fountainhead in the "old country" the Repeal Association, that had been closely affiliated with the Hunters in America, "sagged and collapsed" after the arrest of its leaders in the autumn of 1843. Finally, it may be added that the great economic depression which had paralleled the whole Patriot movement was passing and the interests of the unemployed were being turned toward new fields of endeavor and enhanced opportunities for personal achievement.

It has been said that in compliance with an agreement among the leading Hunters, all membership rolls and other records that had been kept by the various lodges were to be burned in case the movement failed. This may well have occurred, since no trace of their records can now be found, records which undoubtedly contained the names of many persons of wealth and position and no small number of ambitious politicians who would shield their identity with a once powerful brotherhood whose day had passed.

Though the great revolutionary society had failed, yet much of the same spirit that had animated the movement was again to find expression, after a brief span of years, in a legitimate successor, none other than the Fenian Brotherhood of the Sixties and Seventies, once more to menace the British provinces beyond our northern border, and to create crisis after crisis through another critical period in Canadian-American relations.

NOTES

1. Jackson to the Colonial Secretary, Lord Stanley, Dec. 20, 1841, with depositions and other papers inclosed, Series G12, Vol. 60.
2. Lindsey, II, 280-81.
3. Hogan to Murdoch, March 4, 1842, enclosed with a dispatch from Bagot to Stanley of March 14, Series G, 404, pp. 176, et seq.
5. Hogan to Murdoch, April 7, inclosed with a dispatch from Bagot to Stanley, April 19, Series G, 404, pp. 166, et seq.
8. For a condensed account of the Northeastern Boundary negotiations, see: J. M. Callahan, American Foreign Policy in Canadian Relations, 185, et seq.
Appendix

APPENDIX I

McWhorter's Report on the Hunters' Lodges

George H. McWhorter, Collector of Customs to Secretary of Treasury, Oswego, New York, Sept. 14, 1838, General Records, State Department.

I have reason to believe from information in which I place great confidence that a plan of operation for the overthrow of British authority in Upper Canada, for the establishment of its independence is in process of organization along the American frontier, from the St. Lawrence to the St. Clair. I doubt if there is a city, village, or port upon the lake frontier in which associations are not formed for the promotion of objects incompatible with the neutral relations of the United States. Some of these associations, and probably all of them, are active in the collection of money, arms, and munitions of war. From such information as I can collect, I am persuaded that those who have associated for Canadian independence are making use of secret obligations and of secret signs as a method of communication derived from the institution of Masonry, and it is probable that more than 20,000 persons upon the frontier have thus connected themselves. When I say 20,000 I am much within the truth. Those from whom I have gathered this information believe the fraternity exceeds 40,000. A still larger number is claimed, but much must be allowed for the spirit of exaggeration.

The active spirits among them seem to be Dr. Duncombe, late a leading radical member of the lower house of the provincial parliament, now expelled and in exile; McLeod, a man already of some notoriety among the Canadian insurgents, seems to have the direction of their military affairs; and William Johnston (of Sir Robert Peel memory) of naval matters. A per-
son named White, who has been for some time past in Syracuse, has been indicated to me as having an important charge in the military preparations and in managing correspondence and other communications.

The head of their financial department has not been named to me further than a mere conjecture. They are satisfied that the Patriots, as they are called, have more than $150,000 on hand. I am not incredulous that this may be the case, if, as I believe, at a single meeting held by the initiated at this place a few evenings ago, upwards of $900 was raised for the common treasury.

No small number of the middle classes, comprehending many persons of enterprise, industry, and property are engaged heart and hand in the cause. A person named Miles, a very industrious shoemaker of this village, who employs some twenty hands, is represented to me to be as hard at work to expend as much in the cause of Canadian independence as he devotes to his own family. These are countenanced in almost every place by respectable citizens, some of the latter of whom are fraternized with them.

Notwithstanding the number of the initiated, they manifest discretion, and access is had to their proceedings with great difficulty. It is believed that considerable purchases have been made of arms and ammunition and that the design is to collect them gradually in small consignments at a depot on Lake Erie. My information is not sufficiently precise to enable me to indicate the spot. My informant believes it to be west of Cleveland. He believes that arms and ammunition are now deposited at several places and that some of the consignments are now in process, that a small collection is at or near this place, and one of the greater magazines at Buffalo.

I have dispatched to the Lake Erie frontier one of my subordinate officers, Mr. John W. Turner, who has already possessed himself of the common signs of communication used by the Patriots and, I think, has a key which will give him access to important information. Turner is to be accompanied by Captain N. Johnson, an experienced lake mariner. An officer that does his duty will necessarily forfeit his popularity and incur the odium of the great majority, since all classes and all parties are for the Patriots.

APPENDIX II

KENT'S DEPOSITION RESPECTING THE SOCIETY OF HUNTERS' AND CHASERS' LODGES

Durham Papers, Section IV, 789, seq.

Upper Canada, City of Toronto: Before me the Honorable Robert Baldwin Sullivan, one of Her Majesty's Executive Councillors of the said province, October 22, 1838, personally appeared William Jones Kent, late of Brownhelm, Ohio, a cabinet maker who being duly sworn. He left England seven years ago, moved to Buffalo and remained there three years. The rest of the time he lived at Brownhelm, Ohio.

A society was established in Cleveland in the month of June under the name of Hunters and Chasers. On the eastern frontier, a similar society was formed about the same time under the name of Patriot Masons. About three months since, a society of Hunters and Chasers was established at Brownhelm under Orrin Scott, a nephew of Major General Scott of the United States Army. This Orrin Scott was, I am informed, one of those who escaped from prison at Kingston. He traveled along the frontier organizing societies of Hunters and Chasers. A lodge of about twenty was formed. Another lodge was formed at Amherst, Ohio, by Orrin Scott, which consisted of one hundred and thirty-five members when I came away.

I joined this lodge at the second meeting. I was taken into the lodge blindfolded. An oath was tendered to me by Dr. Blackmar, which I took to the following effect: "You swear in the presence of Almighty God that you will not reveal the secret signs of the Snow Shoe to any, not even to members of the society. You will not write, print, mark, engrave, scratch, chalk, or in any conceivable manner make the shape or sign of the Snow Shoe to any living being, not even to members of this society. You furthermore solemnly swear that you will give timely notice to any member or brother, if you know of any evil plot or design that has been carried on against him or the society. You furthermore solemnly swear that you will render all the assistance in your power, without injuring yourself or family, to any brother or member of the society who shall at any time make the sign of distress to you. You furthermore solemnly swear that you will attend every
meeting of your lodge, if you can do so without injury to your-
self and family. This you swear as you shall answer to God.”

The bandage was then taken from my eyes after my being
asked to see the light. A naked sword was then pointed at my
breast, and two pistols flashed across my face. The Grand
Master, Dr. Blackmar, then said: ‘As you see light, so you also
see death presented before you in the most awful shape and
form, from which no earthly power can save you, the moment
you attempt to reveal any of the secrets which have, or may be
made known to you.’

There were some other members admitted. The first degree
is called the Snowshoe degree. There are four signs. The mem-
bership test made use of and that upon which most reliance is
placed, in case a stranger should happen to become acquainted
with the other signs, is that of the Snowshoe. If all other ques-
tions should be satisfactorily answered, the person under ex-
amination is asked whether he ever saw a Snowshoe, and he is
required to make the sign on paper. If he attempts to make
any representation of a snowshoe, he is immediately known not
to be a member, since all are sworn not to make that sign. This
is intended as a catch. The first of the signs used in commu-
nication is as follows. Lay the palm of the left hand over the back
of the right, with the fingers of both hands extended and apart
from each other, and let both hands fall carelessly in front of the
body. The second sign in the Snowshoe degree is made in shak-
ing hands, when the parties take the cuff of each other’s coat
between the finger and the thumb. The third sign is made by
asking the question: ‘Are you a Hunter?’ The answer is: ‘Yes
on Tuesday,’ (the day on which the sign is made being Monday,
the day following the one on which the sign is made being
always used.) The fourth sign is the lifting of the right hand to
the ear, with the palm in front and by pressing the ear slightly
forward. The signs are answered by the same sign, or any of the
signs.

After they were done admitting members in the first degree,
they admitted and swore them on the second, or Beaver degree.
The oath is: ‘You swear in the presence of Almighty God that you
will not reveal the signs of the Beaver degree to anyone who is
not a member of the same degree with yourself.’ The sign of
the Beaver degree is as follows: ‘Do you know the Beaver to be
an industrious animal?’ No answer is made verbally, but the
left hand is lifted to the mouth, the palm nearest the face, the
forefinger planted under the chin, and the thumb between the
front teeth which are closed upon it to imitate a beaver gnawing
a tree.

In the third degree the oath is similar. You are not to
reveal the signs or secrets of this degree to anyone who is not a
member of the same degree. This is called the Master Hunter’s
degree. The sign is made by the question: ‘Trouble?’ The
answer is: ‘Calm,’ at the same time moving the right hand from
the left side of the body to the right, the back of the hand up-
wards and the fingers and hand horozonal.

The fourth degree is called the Patriot Hunter’s degree.
The oath is similar to the third. ‘These are the signs: ‘Do you
snuff or chew?’ The answer is: ‘I do.’ At the same time, if you
have a snuff or tobacco box with you, you take it out and make
three scratches with your nail upon it. If you have no such
article, you put the thumb of your left hand in your left waist-
coat pocket and make three scratches with the finger nail upon
the waistcoat. The second sign of this degree is made by the
question: ‘Have you any news for me?’ The answer is: ‘For me?’
The third sign is the sign of distress. The left hand is raised,
palm forward, the fingers extended but not apart, the thumb
pointing toward the coat collar.

This is the method of getting into the lodges, exclusive of
all other signs. You go to the door and make two raps on the
outside, answered by two on the inside. You then make one on
the outside, answered by one on the inside. You then make
three scratches on the outside, and you are then permitted to
go in.

The first, or Snowshoe degree, is intended to be universal
in the army of the Patriots. The privates take the first degree,
the commissioned officers two degrees, the field officers three
degrees, the commanders-in-chief four degrees. The members of
the society, whether enlisted or not, may take four degrees, but
they are only to use the first degree in the army, if they enlist.

The object of the society is stated after you have taken the
fourth degree — also some of the plans and operations, but they
do not communicate the whole unless to the grand masters,
commanders-in-chief, and others in whom implicit confidence is
placed. The general object of the society is stated to be: ‘to
emancipate the British colonies from British thraldom.’

I was made a master of the Brownhelm lodge soon after I
joined the society. At the time I joined the society at Amherst,
there was no lodge at Brownhelm. That lodge was formed by
Dr. Blackmar, and I was appointed master.

I had an interview with D. Smith, chief justice of the peace
at Cleveland, and he is elected president of the ‘Republic of
Canada.’ He was elected at a convention held at Cleveland on
the 16th. of September. The convention was composed of 160
deleagtes from the United States and Canada. I do not know
the names of any from Canada, and but a few of the others. One
is Col. Loving F. Harris, delegate from the Amherst lodge; Ben-
jamin Stone, a grocer from Canada and a delegate from the
Vermillion lodge; Bill Johnston, delegate from Eastward; and
John Grant, an Indian chief. I was not at the convention which
was in session when I joined. Col. Williams of the Ohio militia
was elected vice president of the ‘Republic of Canada’ at the
same convention. Major General Bierce of the Ohio militia was
appointed at the same convention commander-in-chief of the
upper division of the Patriot army.

Captain Appleby of the steamboat Constitution, formerly
of the Caroline, was appointed commander of the upper division
of the Patriot navy on Lake Erie; Bill Johnston of the lower
division on Lake Ontario. At the convention he was disguised
as an Indian chief.

President Smith informed me at an interview last Friday
that a movement was intended from Cleveland upon Fort Mal-
den, on the day of the celebration of the expected victory of the
Emancipation Party who were expected to carry the election
which lately took place for governor and members of the legisla-
ture. The Patriots are almost all for Van Buren. The triumph
was to be celebrated on the 27th of this month, but that was not
certain. The advance was to be composed of 300 chosen men
from Cleveland, to be conveyed to Fort Malden by the steam-
boats Constitution and Daniel Webster. They had from eight
to twelve steamboats at their control. They have spies
throughout the country. The sign of distress is to be made by the friendly
soldiers upon which they cannot be fired upon. The Patriots
are reported to have a large sum of money in a bank at Buffalo,
subject to the order of President Smith.

I learned at the lodge that Governor Mason of Michigan was
a member of the society and that he had pledged himself that the
state arsenal would be left unlocked, so that arms could be had
by the Patriots. Henry Clay of Kentucky was also said to be a
member. A regiment of Kentucky riflemen consisting of six
hundred were coming. Governor Kent of Maine is said to be a

member. Governor Marcy of the state of New York is said to be a
member. John Grant, an Indian chief, pledged himself at the
convention to bring six hundred Indians.

APPENDIX III

REPORT OF AN EAVESDROPPER ON THE HUNTERS’ LODGES

Deposition of Anthony Hood before the Hon. R. B. Sulli-
vran, Toronto, Nov. 21 1838, inclosure 7, in Arthur to Glenelg,
Nov. 24, Series Q. 409, Part II, 536, et seq.

Deponent went to the United States and obtained work in
a cloth factory of which Major Kirby, U. S. paymaster of the
district, was one of the stockholders.

A man named Daniel there one day asked me if I were a
Hunter, or if I would like to be one. I said yes, upon which he
offered to take me to a place where I could hear all about it. I
did not go with him, but I watched him to the place, and on the
knocks being given at the door of a large store in Dexter, I
stepped in with some other persons. I saw in the store about
250 men. The place was much crowded. The meeting was
called to order by Mr. Sterling who kept a forwarding office.
He is agent for the schooner Alligator made out of a steamboat.
Mr. Ball, a storekeeper, acted as secretary. A shoemaker named
Wood, who lives next door to Ball, acted as treasurer. Letters
were read from his brother who lives on this side. Sterling made
a speech and stated that the time had come for every man to
join hand and heart for the liberation of Canada. He stated
that many influential men on this side were ready to assist with
means and money, also that they were befriended by many men
of wealth in Europe. He mentioned many grievances under
which he said the people of Upper Canada labored. He then
said that the Americans were to find arms and assistance, that
the people of Upper Canada were to rise in mass as soon as a
landing could be affected. He directed that all who were inter-
ested were to go inside the counters, and those who were not,
to remain outside until sworn. I had gone back of the counter
where I remained, and I was not noticed or sworn.

I heard the oaths administered and saw the signs given to
the initiated, after which ceremony he proceeded to tell the
news. He then read a letter from Wood’s brother, and he said
that a judgment of twenty pounds had been given against a
gentleman in Kingston for tithes. He said that Lord Durham had gone away and that nobody was left in charge of the province, that the militiamen did not turn out but in small numbers, and that those who did appear would join the Patriots when they got their arms. He said that the men were to hold themselves in readiness at a moment's notice.

After this, Ball and Captain Kimble addressed the meeting and explained the bounty pay and the license to plunder to be allowed the Patriots, and the new bank, on the notes of which the heads of Lount and Matthews were to be engraved.

After this night, I attended several meetings at Watertown, Chenong, Brownsville, Three Mile Bay, and Phillip Point opposite Sackett's Harbour; and at each place I heard the same story with the addition of the news as it arrived. At these meetings, subscriptions to the bank and the cause, in shape of money, provisions, articles of clothing, and other things, including arms, were taken. I was surprised to see respectability of the people who attended these lodges and the large amounts of money subscribed and paid. They stated that not one in five of the Canadian soldiers were loyal and that many of them were Hunters. They also stated that members were obtained in Canada by people who went along the roads and inquired into the politics professed by individuals before tempting them to join. They represented their force in Jefferson County as amounting to 1500 and that they had great numbers of adherents in Michigan and along the frontier, that the arms of the militia were within their power. It was also said that Papineau had engaged a Polish general who had promised the assistance of all the Poles in the country who had fought for him in Warsaw.

The invasion of the province was put off several times on the pretense that not all was ready. It was stated that many of the Poles were in Upper Canada and that several of them had crossed under the character of British deserters. I understand that one of the reasons for delay was the non-arrival of the Polish general. Hamilton, Cobourg, and below Kingston were mentioned as points of attack.

About a fortnight ago, orders were issued for everyone to assemble at Sackett's Harbour. They were to make the election then going on the pretense for their assemblage. This I learned in the lodge at Dexter where an extra meeting was called. The Dexter Company under the command of Captain Kimble accordingly assembled to the number of ninety. His brother, a shoemaker who worked with Wood, is sargeant. At the same time, the march commenced from various quarters. They went in small parties. On Monday week last, they amounted to 1500 men. They congested in a large body in a store house, formerly a hotel, the largest in Sackett's Harbour; and every tavern in the place was full of them. The United States troops were ordered into barracks, and no one was allowed into them. The Patriot officers put up at the same hotel with the United States officers.

The General addressed the meeting and asked if there were any members who were not initiated, and if so, let them come forward. About thirty came up, and Bill Johnston came up and swore them in, after which he mixed with the crowd. The General then asked whether any of them hesitated to join the expedition. No one going out, the General then explained that in consequence of the U. S. steamer not arriving, they were disappointed.

(The deponent goes on to say that the captains of the steamers United States and the Telegraph were Hunters, as well as the customs officers at Sackett's Harbour.)

APPENDIX IV
THE HUNTER-SPONSORED BANKING SCHEME


The national institutions of a country should also be based upon the same political foundation. In a monarchical government there should be a landed aristocracy, a church and state union, a restricted system of education so that the wealthy only can be educated for the professions of law, physic, and Divinity. They should have one great government bank as a basis for the monied aristocracy. The people should be taught the Divine Right of Kings and that the many are made to serve the few.

In a republic, where its government is made for the good and equal protection of the whole people, and not the people for the government, all the institutions of the country should be made for the protection and equal benefit of all the people. There should be no landed aristocracy, no exclusive privilege for any, no church and state union or dominant religious de-
nomination, no bank monopoly, no union of a monied aristocracy with the executive. Schools should be public and controlled by the general voice of the people through their representatives, freely and equally chosen from every part of the country. Gold and silver should be the only legal money of the country; but when a paper currency becomes necessary, that should be issued by a republican bank controlled by the people through delegates chosen to elect bank directors with the same qualifications as the electors of the highest officers of the state.

The bank and the profits of the business should be equally the property of every member of the community who should have contributed toward the establishment of this people's bank and the republican government. The stock of the Republican Bank is now offered to you that those who contributed their own means to the support of the cause of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity may eventually—if the cause triumphs—receive their money with interest.

As the object of the Bank is to aid the cause of Liberty, the first loans will be made to the President of the provisional government for the Patriot service, before individuals can be recommended for loans for private business.

The whole of the wealth, reserves, and resources of the Patriot dominions, that they now have or may hereafter have dominion over, are pledged for the faithful repayment of whatever sums and interest that may be loaned to the President as aforesaid.

The capital stock of the Bank at this time is only $7,500,000 divided into 150,000 shares of $50 each, but will be increased as occasion may demand, sufficiently to allow every individual on the Continent to hold one share.

After the first stock of $7,500,000 shall have been sold and the capital stock of the Bank shall have been increased, no individual shall be allowed to take more than one share. Subscription for the present stock may be unlimited. One share will cost expense a week, or half a dollar for every two months. For the government loans from the same, the stock-holders have the pledged success of the enterprise and the whole of the resources of the liberated countries.

The stockholders will be holden for the bank to the amount of their stock actually subscribed. The entire direction is to be by delegates chosen on the third Thursday of September annually.

The vignette on the bank notes are to be the heads of the late martyrs to the cause of Liberty in Canada, the head of Matthews on the left end of the bill, the head of Lount on the center of the bill, with the words in a semi-circle: 'Two Murdered,' and the head of Moreau on the right end of the bill with the names of these heroes under their heads with the words: 'Death or Liberty.' On the margin of the bills will be the words: 'Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.'

The name of the bank is to be the Republican Bank of Canada, to prosper the cause of Liberty, Equal rights, and Brotherly Love.

APPENDIX V

REPORT OF MINISTER H. S. FOX ON THE HUNTERS' LODGES

NOVEMBER 3, 1838


The alarming reports which have reached the United States government respecting apprehended hostile movements against Canada from within the American territory, and which were communicated to me by the friendly orders of the President, have been amply confirmed by the intelligence conveyed to Her Majesty's colonial authorities through various other channels; and I am sorry to add that the mischief appears to be far more serious and extensive, and the danger of hostile disturbances more imminent than have been represented in the information received at Washington.

It is now ascertained beyond the possibility of doubt that a secret combination or conspiracy of vast extent and possessed of great resources in money and military provisions has been formed and is at this moment in active progress within the jurisdiction of the United States for the purpose of waging war upon Her Majesty's provinces of Upper and Lower Canada. The combination extends along the whole line of the Canadian frontier, from Maine and Vermont to the State of Michigan. It extends, also, far into the interior of the States of New York, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and likewise into the neighboring State of Kentucky. It is affirmed that 40,000 American citizens are already enrolled in the criminal association. The above is the lowest estimate. The depositions of some of the informants...
carry the numbers to a much greater extent. To these are joined a few vagrant Canadian refugees. The number of the American conspirators is daily and hourly increasing. The plot is carried on by means of masonic lodges, secretly established in almost every town along the frontier, the members of which communicate with each other by private signs, and are divided into several grades of initiation. A complete system of these secret signs, as well as the cipher or secret alphabet by means of which the associates correspond in writing, are in the hands of Her Majesty's authorities.

The regular organization has been completed of a pretended provisional government for Upper Canada, with assumed official rank and commissions, both civil and military. The names, descriptions, and residences of the chief individuals composing the pretended government—who are American citizens—are also in possession of the British authorities. A pretended national bank of Canada has also been organized, to be established and maintained by the seizure and plunder of the public property. The superior lodges of the association are believed to be situated in the towns of Rochester, Buffalo, and Detroit. A grand central lodge or convention of delegates is held at Cleveland. Another considerable lodge is situated at Cincinnati.

Arms and warlike stores are secreted at various points, and the conspirators also reckon that with their present force and complete organization, they will have no difficulty in again forcing the United States and state arsenals whenever the time for showing themselves in arms shall have arrived. No less than nine steamboats of those that ply upon Lake Erie, the names of which are in possession of the British authorities, have been engaged for the service of the conspirators. I am afraid there is no doubt that a number of magistrates, justices of the peace, and state officers of the above-mentioned states are involved in the present flagitious enterprise.

The direct objects of the vast combination are to invade and conquer Upper and Lower Canada, to subvert and revolutionize the established government of those provinces, and to wrest them from the rightful dominion of the British Crown. These are the designs of the chief directors of the plot, but it is probable that a large majority have enlisted in the scheme for the sole purpose of repine and plunder. The particular mode and time of operation does not appear to have been determined upon by the conspirators, but will be made to depend upon circumstances and the accidental course of events.

The above particulars, a large portion of which are already known to the United States government, are derived from private investigation received through various channels by Her Majesty's authorities in Canada. The evidence which has been submitted by Her Majesty's authorities and by myself is of such a nature that we can entertain no doubt whatever of its truth. There may possibly be error and exaggeration in some of the details, but the general truth of the information admits of no doubt whatever.

RESOLUTIONS OF A HUNTER MEETING AT DETROIT FOLLOWING THE DEFEAT AT WINDSOR ON DECEMBER 4, 1838.

From E. A. Theller, II, 308-10.

I. Resolved: That this meeting do disapprove of the conduct of the general government in authorizing the detachments of the United States Army stationed on this frontier to act either in the capacity of British spies, or civil officers of police. As citizens of a Sovereign State we are jealous of our State Rights; and as Freemen, do solemnly protest against the army being called in to aid the civil power, unless in case of actual treason and rebellion.

The duty of an army is two-fold of a national character, namely, to protect the frontier against threatened invasion, and act offensively in time of war. They have no constitutional power to arrest American citizens without warrant, or inflict capital punishment for civil offenses for which the law has otherwise provided. The offense designated in the act of Congress is but a misdemeanor, punishable by fine and imprisonment, and after trial and conviction. And that officers of the army who undertake, without trial, to impose a higher punishment usurps the province of judge and jury, and should never be tolerated in a free country, boasting the supremacy of her law and the purity of her ermine.

II. Resolved: That our national government is one of limited and express power, recognizing the reserved rights of the sovereignty of the state; therefore it follows that our army officer cannot and will not be recognized as clothed with state or municipal authority and empowered to arrest, with-
out warrant, citizens suspected of a breach of the peace or violation of law. They are not sheriffs or constables, but soldiers in war to defend us, and in peace to prepare for war.

III. Resolved: That we consider the act ordering the United States soldiers to fire at citizens by a United States officer of the army as unwarranted by law and a dangerous outrage upon the liberties of the people; and that if loss of life has ensued, such officer should be guilty of murder.

IV. Resolved: That Congress have not the power to invest the President of the United States with authority to employ the army and navy of the United States in arresting and punishing American citizens for a suspected infraction of either national or state law.

V. Resolved: That we are for the Sovereignty of the States, and for a union of States, but we will not submit to martial law in time of peace.

VI. Resolved: That the advice of the President of the United States, as in his proclamation contained, like the well-mean'd counsel of any other citizen, will be weighed and respectfully considered; but we regret as American citizens to see in the chief magistrate of our country a solicitude for oppressors and a silence in regard to the national insult and wrong which characterized the destruction of the Caroline.

VII. Resolved: That we consider a United States judge as a national and not a state magistrate; and that he cannot take cognisance of offenses against the jurisdiction of the state. The right to bear arms and the right of speech is an American right; and when one is trampled upon and the other denied, or viewed as evidence of a guilty infraction of national law, giant strides are being made toward consolidation on the ruins of state sovereignty.

VIII. Resolved: That peace is a blessing when maintained with honor and by a constitutional means; but a curse to any people if at the price of national submission to foreign pride or the prostration of the civil rights of the citizens.

IX. Resolved: That though we fully appreciate the obligation of national faith under the law of neutrality; yet we are not, cannot be, insensible to their great violations, heretofore, by Great Britain in the instance of the slaughter of the Turks by England and France conjointly in Navarino Bay while in profound peace with the Sultan; in the unjustifiable assump-

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APPENDIX VII

WEBSTER'S REPORT ON THE HUNTERS' LODGES


Webster to Tyler, July, 1841:

I have learned pretty fully the real object and plans of open action of these Hunters' Lodges, Patriot societies, etc., which are in existence all along the northern frontier, from Maine to Wisconsin.

1. They are in constant correspondence with the disaffected in Canada, and these disaffected persons come over the line and harangue them in their secret meetings.

2. They do not expect to be able to invade Canada with any hope of success unless war breaks out between Canada and the United States; but they desire an event above all things, and to bring it about they will naturally join in any violence or outbreak, if they think they can do so with impunity. They may even attempt violence upon Macleod, should he be discharged by the court, or on his way from prison to the place where the court shall be sitting.

3. The aggregate of all the members of these clubs is probably not less than ten thousand. Cleveland is rather their head-quarters.

4. If war breaks out, these persons do not propose to join the forces of the United States, but to unite themselves with the disaffected in Canada, declare the province free, and set up another government. I am told that the regimental officers are already designated for the command of the volunteers. It is evidently full of danger, and I am quite surprised at the apparent ignorance of the government of New York who represent, evidently, that there is no danger of any violence.
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE PATRIOT HUNTERS

Our duty . . . is to have officers all along the frontier in whom we have confidence and to let them understand that there is danger.

We should take all possible care that no violence be used on Macleod. If a mob should kill him, war will be inevitable in ten days. Of this there is no doubt.

I regret that the Attorney General did not go on and confer with Macleod's council, notwithstanding the postponement of the trial. They appear to me to be men of no great force, and to place their main reliance on being able to prove an alibi for their client. But such a defense does not meet the exigency of the case, nor fulfill the duty of this government.

I pray your early consideration of this subject, and shall be glad of an opportunity for consideration and for taking your direction.

(Signed) D. Webster

APPENDIX VIII

TYLER'S PROCLAMATION AGAINST THE HUNTERS

James D. Richardson, (comp.), Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IV, 72-73.

Whereas, it has come to the knowledge of the government of the United States that sundry secret lodges, clubs, or associations exist on the northern frontier; that the members of these lodges are bound together by secret oaths, that they have collected fire arms and other military materials and secreted them in sundry places, and that it is their purpose to violate the law of this country by making military and lawless incursions, when opportunity shall offer, into the territories of a power with which the United States are at peace, and

Whereas it is known that traveling agitators from both sides of the line visit these lodges and harrangue the members in secret meetings, stimulating them to illegal acts, and

Whereas the same persons are known to levy contributions on the ignorant and credulous for their own benefit, thus supporting and enriching themselves by the basest means, and

Whereas, the unlawful intentions of the members of these lodges have already been manifested in an attempt to destroy the lives and property of the inhabitants of Chippewa in Canada and the public property of the British government.

Now, therefore, I, John Tyler, President of the United States, do issue this my proclamation, admonishing all such evil-minded persons of the condign punishment which is certain to overtake them, assuring them that the laws of the United States will be rigorously executed against their illegal acts, and that if in any lawless incursion into Canada, they fall into the hands of the British authorities, they will not be reclaimed as American citizens nor will any interference be made in their behalf; and I expect all well-meaning but deluded persons who may have joined these lodges immediately to abandon them and to have nothing more to do with their secret meetings and unlawful oaths, as they will avoid serious consequences to themselves; and I expect the intelligent and well-disposed members of the community to frown upon all these unlawful combinations and illegal proceedings, and to assist the Government in maintaining the peace of the country against the mischievous consequences of the acts of their violations of the law.

John Tyler
Daniel Webster,
Secretary of State.
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Series G, to which a number of references have been made, consists chiefly of correspondence of the governor generals and the lieutenant governors with the Colonial Office, and correspondence of the lieutenant governors with the governor general.

Series M, to which some references have been made, consists of miscellaneous materials, such as have been found difficult to classify under any of the other series.

Durham Papers. This is one of a group of special collections in the Public Archives. Section IV contains some materials that relate to the activities of the Hunters' Lodges.

II. At the National Archives, Washington, D. C.

Records of the Department of State, and especially notes from the British Legation. Minister Henry Stephens Fox carried on an extensive correspondence with Secretary John Forsyth relating to the activities of the Hunters.

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