

COMMUNICATION

AN ANSWER TO THE STATEMENTS IN THE DIARY OF ROBERT LUCAS CONCERNING GEN. WILLIAM HULL.

The July, 1906, number of *THE IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS* "disinters old bones" by the publication of the diary of Robert Lucas, who served in the Detroit army under Gen. William Hull until the surrender of August 16, 1812.

It appears from the introductory preface that this diary has been the source of much literature condemnatory of Gen. Hull concerning the Detroit Campaign, and that Lewis Cass plagiarized its contents in the preparation of his September, 1812, report of the surrender, which report largely contributed to the Court Martial conviction of Gen. Hull, it being received and considered as evidence.

It is uniformly conceded now by all students of history that the surrender of the Detroit army was compelled because the Commander-in-Chief, Major General Henry C. Dearborn, disobeyed his orders and abandoned it (See Vols. 5 and 6 War Records), and because of insubordination in the Detroit army, which culminated in a conspiracy hereinafter shown of which Lewis Cass was the promoter and manager. So far as the Court Martial conviction of Gen. Hull is concerned it was a mere supplement to the army conspiracy, with Gen. Dearborn assuming the role of promoter and manager and Lewis Cass as the star witness. The Court Martial trial was a farce conducted in violation of Hull's legal rights—as any fair lawyer will concede after reading the report of it. The Court was packed with Gen. Dearborn's pets, as the delegates of a caucus are packed. Gen. Dearborn was President of the Court, and as such tried his own case and decided in favor of himself. All the proceedings of this Court Martial were void because a previous Court Martial, with Gen. Wade Hampton as President, was in existence to try the same man for the same offence and had already acquired jurisdiction. The order sub-

sequently entered in the War Office dismissing Hull from the army was a bastard order upon its face, and was a void order because it superceded the final order of remittal made by President Madison who alone by Article 65 of the Military Law, possessed the power to make an order in the case. President Madison did not order that Gen. Hull be dismissed from the army, but by an order of remittal in effect pardoned him and restored Hull to all his rights as a citizen and soldier, and all Courts have uniformly so decided.

That order of dismissal was surreptitiously injected into the War records by the same influence which organized the army conspiracy, which selected Gen. Dearborn as President of the Court Martial, which abstracted and suppressed the War Records from the files, which concealed contents of public records from the people, and which stole Dearborn's armistice from the War Office and concealed its contents.

A perusal of the Court Martial trial report will prove that none of the orders commanding Gen. Dearborn to aid the Detroit army were produced, and neither were the records produced which proved that from the day war was declared, on the 18th of June, until the day of surrender, August 16, 1812, Gen. Dearborn never sent a soldier or a pound of powder or provisions to aid the Detroit army.

All fair-minded students of military law will admit that if Gen. Dearborn had been tried by a Court Martial, accused, first of neglect of his duties as Commander-in-Chief, second of disobedience of orders to aid the Detroit army, third of compelling the surrender of Detroit by signing without authority on August 8th the agreement known as the armistice with the British Commander, Prevost, that his conviction would have been a certainty. That agreement was in force about three weeks and permitted the British and Indians to march unmolested to Detroit and capture it. President Madison indignantly repudiated it and sharply and peremptorily again commanded Gen. Dearborn to relieve the Detroit army from its perilous situation. But Dearborn did not do this, as the letter of Gen. Harrison dated August 10th and Dearborn's letter of August 8th prove.

All this may not be material here, however, except in so far as the statements of this Lucas diary wronged Gen. Hull by being copied

into the Cass report, and by being received as evidence by the Court Martial and subsequently injected into school-books and histories.

In order to destroy Hull three powerful agencies combined as follows:

1st: All the political power of the Madison administration, notwithstanding it had, four months after the surrender, condemned Dearborn for causing it (Vol. 6, pp. 200, 253 &c. War Records) and notwithstanding all of Hull's acts up to August 8th, had been approved officially. (See letter Sec'y War, Eustis, to Hull of August 8th.)

2nd: All the military power of Commander-in-Chief Dearborn. This is why the Court was constituted mainly of his military favorites and the orders and proof of their disobedience commanding Dearborn to aid the Detroit army were suppressed and why that armistice was stolen from the files of the War Office and its contents concealed.

3rd: All the power of the militia conspiracy which was organized at Detroit and was patronized and utilized by Dearborn at Washington.

But this combination, powerful and almost invulnerable as it was in those days, did not condemn Hull by an unanimous vote of the members of the Court Martial, and the farce of its conviction and sentence to be "shot to death" is shown by his being given his liberty and requested to go home and stay until he heard from the President.

But it must be conceded that finally the conspiracy succeeded; and now after nearly a hundred years have passed, this Lucas diary is freshly printed with the avowal that it was the source of many statements which students of history have long since exploded as falsehoods.

That there was a conspiracy in the Detroit army to seize and depose Gen. Hull and place Lewis Cass in command is now a conceded fact, and Cass began the agitation of it as early in the campaign as when the army was at Urbana. It was here that Gen. Hull incurred the enmity of the Ohio militia (by invoking the aid of the regulars and compelling the militia to obey his marching orders), and it was

here that Cass aided and incited the insubordination and began to write letters disparaging Hull and intriguing to supplant him in command.

While the conspiracy was organized, Gen. Hull was not seized because the conspirators could not agree as to whether Col. Cass or Col. McArthur should be put in command. This statement is proven by Hatch's *History of the War of 1812*, page 40 (and by the authority below quoted), Hatch having been present in camp, as follows:

A consultation was held and it was decided to get up a Round Robin as it was called, addressed to the three Colonels of the Ohio Volunteers, requesting the arrest or displacement of the General and devolving the command on the oldest of the Colonels, McArthur. This was on the 12th, of August.

The proof that Cass was the officer selected by some of the conspirators is a paper signed by them of which, however, there are two versions. One version is printed in Wing's *History of Monroe County, Michigan*, page 91, and is as follows:

We signers hereto agree to seize Gen. Hull and depose him from command and to defend the fort at all hazards. Signed by Lewis Cass, Charles Larned, David Cooper, Joseph Campau, Gabriel Godfred and 75 others.

One of the above signers Charles Larned became one of Michigan's renowned lawyers and had a son Sylvester, likewise a famous lawyer, who made a speech in 1889 after the death of David Cooper, the last survivor of the signers. The occasion of the speech was a meeting of the Michigan Pioneer and Historical Society at Detroit, which is reported in Vol. 14, p. 35, of its proceedings, wherein he described the delivery of the other version of the agreement to him by his father as follows:

"Sylvester," his father said, taking out the paper from his desk, yellow with age, "I am about to divulge to you a secret that you must never divulge until I am dead." And never until the last survivor died who had a part in that transaction did I ever state that I held in my hands the secret history of the causes of the success of Detroit's most iniquitous surrender, which was that Lewis Cass and others laid a plan not a conspiracy and signed a Round-Robin with these fatal words in the center to the effect:

"We whose names are here written agree to surround Hull and putting the command in Lewis Cass prevent the surrender of Detroit to the British."

It was the existence of the spirit of this conspiracy which accounts for the refusal of two companies of the Ohio militia to cross the Detroit River, which accounts for the desertion of two companies of the Michigan militia under Capts. Knagg and Shover and which accounts

for the omission of Cols. Cass and McArthur to return to Hull's aid after Brock had demanded surrender of the fort notwithstanding they had knowledge of the fact and received two orders toward sunset of August 15th, to return with their detachment as they admitted under oath, and as proven by the Lucas diary.

This Detroit army was a small one, and the absence of Cass and McArthur with such a large detachment crippled it. Lucas and Cass say the detachment numbered 350; Hull stated its number at 500; Aid-de-Camp Wallace placed the number at 800; and Scribner's military writer, Mahan, after careful investigation fixed it at 500, wherein he is corroborated by leading historians. All accounts agree that Cass and McArthur picked their most effective men as the proposed expedition was regarded as dangerous.

The report of the Court Martial trial proves that Cass and McArthur received word by two messengers towards sunset of the 15th, from Hull, that Gen. Brock had demanded surrender of the fort and orders to return immediately. Some idea of their distance from the fort is gained from the fact that Hull sent his messengers after them immediately after Brock's demand which he refused about noon, who delivered the orders to return toward sunset. Cass and McArthur admitted that the orders were not immediately obeyed as the troops rested, but started early the next morning; and both stated that on the morning of the 16th they arrived within two or three miles of the fort and within sight of it about 10 o'clock. Cass testified that they were within a mile and a half of the fort. Therefore, they had sixteen or seventeen hours wherein to hasten to the relief of their comrades in the fort by traveling the same distance covered by Hull's messengers within a few hours. After arriving near the fort, while they were near Spring Wells where Brock's troops were crossing, instead of giving a signal or firing a gun or sending word of their coming, and while, as Lucas states, the "roar of cannon was tremendous," they precipitately retreated four or five miles back to the woods and waters of the river Rouge and hid there until after dark, an exhibition of cowardice unparalleled in American armies. Cass

testified as an excuse that he heard no cannon, and therefore surely the "hero of Ta-ron-tee" must have been stricken with paralysis of his ear drums.

They were in the rear of Brock's force. Had they obeyed orders and returned or had they attacked Brock's rear, it is fair to say the history of the day would not have been surrender, because Hull's record in leading bayonet charges at Stony Point, and Morrisania and in both of the Saratoga battles proved there was not much of the spirit of surrender in him.

Whether or not Lucas belonged to this conspiracy is not known, but certainly his diary after July 5th proclaims like hostility to Hull. He and Cass and McArthur were close friends as he frequently chronicles their valor, and after the surrender he and Cass worked together to produce harmony of hostile statements as is proven by the editorial preface to the diary as follows:

Comparison of the Cass report with the Robert Lucas Journal reveals the fact that Cass incorporated into his report sections taken verbatim, or with slight alterations from the Journal. The conclusion that Cass copied from Lucas rather than the reverse is strengthened by the fact that the paragraphs in which the duplications occur more frequently are those describing in great detail the events at Detroit, on the day of the surrender, at which time Col. Cass was miles away on an expedition to the River Raisin. It is fair to presume that Lucas loaned the Journal to Col. Cass, to assist him in the preparation of his report.

Immediately after the surrender of Detroit Gen. Hull was taken to Canada as a prisoner of war. Col. Cass however started at once for Washington where he made a detailed report of the Campaign to the Secretary of War. This report severely condemned Gen. Hull for his conduct in the Campaign, and was largely instrumental in bringing about the Court Martial and conviction of that officer . . . and Cass incorporated into his report sections taken verbatim or with slight alterations from the Journal.

The diary discloses the fact that prior to July 5th Hull was all right in the estimation of Lucas; but beginning with that date Hull was all wrong. The reason of it is apparent from the study of the diary. Lucas was of a vain and sensitive nature, and the whole diary trumpets his own prowess and military ability and susceptibility to flattery. In one place he repeats "how his horses were shot", how he "went ahead as usual", how "he was diverted by the boys dodging bullets", how Cass and McArthur "lost their heads" at the Ca-

nard bridge, and the men called upon him to command, how eager he was for the fray when he heard that Tecumseh and 2,000 Indians were around, how he never "felt any fear", &c., &c. Again he notes that he was a Brigadier General of the Ohio militia and Captain in the United States army, that on the 25th of April, he was issuing orders to two companies, that on May 5th, he was received by the troops with "great politeness", that on the 6th he organized companies from "my brigade", that on the 8th Gov. Meigs asked him not to leave the army, and he would write to the Secretary of War about him, that at times he was disciplining officers, that on the 19th and 20th Gov. Meigs and Col. Cass promised him the command of the best battalion, that on the 5th of June he "dined with the Governor", that on the 6th, Capt. Whistler and others treated him with "honor" and "great politeness", that on the 22nd of June he was "politely" received by Gen. Hull who gave him command of spies and a fresh horse, &c., &c., and how after much coaxing he consented to remain with the army.

Thus the diary proves his nature to have been very high strung and sensitive, that he fattened on the "great politeness" and "honor" and deference with which he was treated, and that he had an egotistical idea of what he writes were his "military talents." His entry of July 5th changes all references to the "Genl." and proves that Gen. Hull affronted him, wounded him, cut him, slighted him by requesting him to withdraw from the "Markee" so that he could talk privately with Col. Cass "who had come in." This request of course was tantamount to an order. The Brigadier General of Militia and Captain in the U. S. army brushed aside and ignored and ordered to leave begins on this date the entry about Hull's "keeping a secret" from him and entries of suspicious and distorted conclusions which finally culminate in the epithets of treachery, imbecility, &c. If Hull had reversed his order and had ordered Cass to leave and confided the "secret" to Lucas the defamatory matter of the diary would never have been plagiarized by Cass. Of course Hull did not exhibit "great politeness" or deference, but no doubt the old man was ex-

cited as he had just heard that the British had captured his hospital stores and sick soldiers shipped on board the vessel Cuyahoga.

In his entry of July 23, Lucas is much distressed about the "dally" of the army and the "dastardly" evacuation of Sandwich, but he does not mention that the "dally" was occasioned by the decision of a council of officers whereat Hull offered to lead the attack without artillery if the Colonels would answer for their men. Col. Miller said he would answer for his regulars, but the three militia Colonels would not. The order of the Secretary of War to Hull gave him the discretion in attacking Malden provided he thought his force strong enough and could do so consistently with the safety of his own posts. His reply to the Secretary of War, of July 9th, was that he did not consider his force strong enough. His decision on this point was approved both by the President and the Secretary of War as well as all other points up to August 8th and their letters prove it. Forts Detroit and Malden were eighteen miles apart. Military men can answer whether it would have been good tactics to have captured Malden, split the army in two in order to garrison each fort, with the British fleet menacing both forts and all communication cut off, two hundred miles from aid, no word or relief coming from head-quarters and the roads in the condition described by Gen. Harrison in his letter soon afterwards written and by Lucas in his entry of May 31. The "treacherous imbecile", as Lucas calls him, knew enough not to be caught in such a trap.

The Cass statement about the Canadian militia "deserting by hundreds" is not corroborated by Lucas and is proven false by the reports of the British officers commending the loyalty of the Canadian militia and by the further fact that the British records show that there were no Courts Martial to try deserters.

No doubt some of the inhabitants did go to Fort Detroit of the kind described by Lucas in his entry of June 4th, to-wit: "populated by an ignorant set of French that is attached to no particular principle and no calculation to be made on the militia with regard to defence." Again he says, July 15th, "that a number of deserters from

Malden were daily coming into camp and obtaining protection, some of whom he presumes come along as spies from Malden into the camp and get protection and then return with the news to Malden." This entry shows how little aid was afforded the Americans by the desertions of such a class of people.

Again he finds fault because Hull did not furnish Capt. Snelling artillery to be used at Spring Wells when requested. The answer is that when Hull judged it necessary (to-wit: on the night of the 15th) he did station Snelling with an artillery detachment at Spring Wells to prevent the British landing there. But that night the Indians crossed the river and Snelling left his post without orders dragging his cannon back to the fort and the next morning the British landed there without opposition.

Again Lucas states an erroneous quantity of powder and small arms surrendered, but it is undisputed that the quantity comprised all that Gen. Wayne left there at the end of the previous Indian war. "The small arms were rusty, the powder had lost its strength and the artillery carriages were rotten." That the quantity of good powder was scarce is proven by Hull's orders communicated through Robert Wallace to the artillerymen to fire with more deliberation as the 24 pounders were "consuming powder fast." Lucas' statement that the cannonade did but little injury, is contradicted by every other eye witness. His statement as to the small number of British and Indians is contradicted:— 1st. By the actual count of the garrison at Malden on July 1st, as testified by Lieut. Forbush—820. 2nd. By the white force brought by Col. Proctor when he superseded Col. St. George in command of Fort Malden—330. 3rd. By the force under Capt. Chambers sent to Malden as proven by Gen. Prevost's order of July 31—250. 4th. By the force of 200 whites and 400 Indians which captured Mackinaw July 17 and then started for Fort Malden being at Lake St. Clair, in the fore part of Aug.—600. 5th. By the British regulars who according to Cass and Lucas arrived at Fort Malden on August 10—400. 6th. By the force which arrived with Gen. Brock on August 13, exclusive of the Mohawks—330. 7th.

By the Indians under Tecumseh who met Gen. Brock in council on Bois Blanc island, August 14—1,000. In regard to the force under Capt. Roberts it appears that under convoy of the armed Brig Caledonia, he arrived at Mackinaw July 17, and captured it. The vessel Detroit was also there, upon which Lieut. Hanks and his captured garrison were shipped, arriving at Fort Detroit and held under its battery on July 26, as stated by Lucas. 8th. In regard to the force under Capt. Chambers of 250 with brass field pieces the letter of Gen. Brock dated July 25 proves that he ordered that force to Sandwich to oppose Hull, and on the 4th of August they had arrived on their march as far as the river La Trañch (now the Thames). 9th. It appears that several gun boats and the Queen Charlotte described by Lucas as a "20 gun ship" were there, and that the armed vessels Hunter and Prevost were also there; and without reference to the Caledonia or the Detroit or gun boat No. 7, it is safe to say that the British fleet menacing the fort consisted of three armed vessels with crews aggregating at least a hundred sailors and marines and not one American sailor, marine, or ship to oppose them.

On the other hand there was left of the Michigan militia on the day of surrender only 150 as testified by Col. Watson, who was with them and not 300 as stated by Lucas. All that was left fit for duty of the 4th Regiment regulars, as testified by Col. Miller and Capt. Eastman, was 260. The army had been depleted by killed, wounded, and missing in the battles under Maj. Denny, Maj. Van Horn, and Col. Miller at least 175 men. About 60 men were left to garrison the forts and block-houses built on the road from Urbana to Detroit, 33 were captured on the vessel Cuyahoga, 25 were left sick at the river Raisin, 500 were absent with the Cass detachment, the sick of the 4th Regiment numbered 85 and the same proportion of sick existed in the militia regiments. The 57 men who came on the boat Detroit from Mackinaw were on parole and could not aid. The fort was crowded with decrepit men, women, and children who were of no use. Whether the number of Hull's force was as stated by his Adjutant Jessup, between 750 and 950, or whether as stated by Cass and

Lucas at 1060, is not very material so long as British and Canadian records, as collected by the late Gen. Joseph Wheeler, absolutely prove that Hull's force was outnumbered by the British and Indians more than five to one.

According to Lucas this "army" on the 12th day of August was situated as follows: "the army is in a perilous situation, the British are being re-inforced, the communication cut off, provisions short, surrounded by hosts of savages and all appears dark."

What is called the "Detroit army" in fact never was an army. It was an expedition, about the size of a regiment, organized in a time of peace, without artillery, to protect Detroit and the border from Indians. War was declared on June 18th while this expedition was in the big swamp; and in Washington on paper the expedition was dubbed an "army", expected to wrest Upper Canada and its lakes from the possession of the British regulars, Canadian militia, half a dozen tribes of hostile Indians and powerful British fleets. One characteristic of Hull was excessive caution as chronicled by Lucas and as proven notably by his conduct in command of the rear guard of Schuyler's retreat and the advance lines at Valley Forge. All that is claimed for him is not that he was a great military commander but that he was an honest old soldier who unwillingly accepted command of the Detroit expedition and did the best he could under the circumstances.

It may be that Lucas writes the truth about himself on July 12, when "he could not endure to be behind", that he was "among the first to land in Canada", that "myself rushed into the woods", that he "went on in front as usual", that he "scoured the woods", that he "rushed" and "rushed" and "placed myself at the head in the front guard", but it seems strange that such a hero never was invited to be present at the councils of the officers. Perhaps, however, they did not like his statements of July 16th that Cass and his army was confused at the Canard bridge, that he "was vexed to see men and officers in such confusion", that he was "called upon by the men to take command but refused", and that the "fault was that of the offi-

cers", and on August 5th that the "men retreated in a dastardly manner", and on August 10 that he could have done better with a dozen men than they did with the whole of two companies.

Any lawyer will concede that Hull did not defend himself at all before the Court Martial after his first appeal for the full aid of a lawyer was denied. May be his troubles had broken his spirit somewhat, for it will be remembered that a short time before the Court Martial was ordered his son Capt. Abram Hull was killed by a British bayonet thrust while leading his company at the battle of Lundy's Lane.

The Lucas diary on the whole is a narrow-minded production evincing great shallowness of comprehension. He endeavors to impart the idea that Hull was a "treacherous imbecile", "sleeping off wine," and doing nothing; but every other eye witness contradicts him. It is undisputed that until the morning of the 16th he attended to all his duties in the usual manner.

On the morning of the 16th, having passed a sleepless night, he stood on the parapet of the fort. Afterwards he was around the fort in and out of it on foot and on horseback giving orders to the artillerymen, very nervous and agitated and anxious, especially after the two officers were killed in the fort. His son Capt. Abram Hull at nine o'clock was ordering soldiers back to their regiments and quarrelling with their Colonel who had given them leave of absence. While the attack was going on he sent two letters to Gen. Brock asking that the attack be suspended an hour pending negotiations for surrender. (The historian C. M. Burton of Detroit now has possession of those letters.) He waited until the last moment, until all hope of the return of the Cass detachment was gone, until the British white troops were organized in platoons in position to control the Indians and at last he accepted Brock's pledge of protection from the Indians and surrendered, saying that he did it to prevent a massacre.

The entry in the Lucas diary upon this point is significant, to-wit: "The Indians was not suffered to go into the fort."

EDGAR HULL

FORT EDWARD, N. Y.
August 16th, 1906