

not achieve as much as Porter, did send three fire ships into the flotilla, but without effect. In the end, the American effort to stop the descent concluded on 6 September and the British reached the bay with all ships intact, but with 7 men killed and 35 wounded.

While Gordon's flotilla was in the Potomac, Sir Peter Parker led a naval detachment to harass the head of the bay. He reconnoitered both Annapolis and Baltimore, but then he was ordered back to the main fleet before he had a chance to fight. He sailed southward looking for excitement. When he heard from a Negro of the activity of the militia near Chestertown, Maryland, he prepared to go ashore for "one more frolic with the Yankees." He landed 124 men at 11:00 P.M. on 30 August. Twenty of them were armed with pikes. He then eagerly led them inland five miles, decoyed by the Americans, to a clearing in the woods where the militia made a stand. His men could see the foe because of the bright moonlight, and they fired and charged. There was a succession of fierce thrusts and counterthrusts. Parker himself was killed at the age of twenty-eight, together with 17 of his men and another 27 wounded. The American force consisted of 170 men and 2 cannon, but Parker's successor reported them at 500 and 5. This, the Battle of Caulk's Field, only hurt the British, for in addition to the casualties they suffered the loss of 40 sailors, who it is presumed took advantage of the confusion to desert.³⁰

The Chesapeake campaign produced many accusations in America. John Armstrong, who was the target of most of them, chose to blame the citizen soldiers. "If all the troops assembled at Bladensburg had been faithful to themselves, and to their country," he wrote, "the enemy would have been beaten . . . the determining cause of the failure is to be found in that love of life which in many corps predominated over love of country and of honor." Commodore Barney took more or less the same line. With 2,000 militiamen from Kentucky instead of Maryland and the District, he said, the outcome would have been different. The Englishman George Gleig agreed with Armstrong and Barney: "Had [the American troops] conducted themselves with coolness and resolution, it is not conceivable how the battle could have been won."³¹

Many citizens, in contrast, became openly hostile to John Armstrong. Before Armstrong returned from Frederick, Monroe took over the duties of the War Department on an interim basis and did what he could to bring about Armstrong's removal. Some of the District militia passed resolutions refusing ever again to serve under Armstrong as secretary. They and others saw a conspiracy among officers and leaders to escape blame by alleging bad conduct on the part of the citizen soldiers. Some persons denounced Armstrong to his face. He arrived in Wash-

ington on 29 August and conferred that evening with the President. Madison told him of negative public sentiment toward the administration and especially toward him. The secretary offered to resign, but the President countered with the suggestion that he retire temporarily. Armstrong left Washington, and when he got to Baltimore wrote out his resignation. Madison accepted it at once, and James Monroe stepped in officially as acting secretary of war. Three weeks later he was confirmed as permanent in the post, and thus became the secretary of two major departments, state and war. In the state post he had little to do, but in the other he could not hope to keep up with his duties.

Baltimore

While the Washington diversion was in progress, the British commanders found it necessary to consider their next moves. Since their instructions not to hold captured ground were explicit, none of the three recommended the occupation of Washington. For a time Admiral Cochrane insisted that the expedition must clear out of Chesapeake Bay to escape the deadliest enemies of all, malaria and yellow fever. As late as 28 August he held to his intention to transfer to Rhode Island until November.¹

Thirty days before the start of the Washington campaign, Admiral Cockburn had spoken in favor of attacking Baltimore on the roads leading from the District of Columbia. From the land side Baltimore was vulnerable, but on the water side ships drawing 16 feet could not approach within 5 miles of the city. Cockburn and Ross considered the approach by land, but agreed that it was not viable unless several heavy vessels were standing by in the upper part of the bay to retreat to in case of calamity. Under the circumstances they did not think it was worthwhile to press Cochrane for this naval aid, and with no more backward looks they foreclosed that approach.

The day after the army was re-embarked at Benedict, General Ross voiced his desire to advance without delay against Baltimore by water. At first Cochrane refused. He spoke about the fever and his determination to transfer to Rhode Island. It is possible, too, that he was peeved