"In a moment the fleet saw through the haze what Perry was trying to do —the Americans with aching anxiety for his fate—the British with a fierce determination to destroy him. A hell of sulphurous flame and smoke belched from the side of every British ship. Every gun of every sort in their squadron that could be brought to bear was aimed at the tiny craft. The round shot ploughed—the grape and canister and musket balls rained about the boat, filling the air with spray and spoondrift—but Perry, standing erect that he might inspire his squadron with his own courage, faced it all—faced it until his men mutinied to save his life and declared they would row no further unless he sat down. And when a round shot crashed, at the last, through the side of the boat, he pulled off his coat, plugged the hole with it, and so reached the side of the *Niagara*.

"The British had yelled as they fired; now the cheers of the Americans rose triumphantly above the roar of battle. The shifting of his flag to the *Niagara* was the decisive movement of the battle. Perry saw his opportunity, was quick to take advantage of it, and victory was at hand.

"'How goes the day?' asked Lieutenant Elliott as Perry reached the *Niagara's* deck. He had been too far away to see for himself.

"'Bad enough,' replied Perry. 'Why are the gun-boats so far astern?'

"'I'll bring them up,' said Elliott.

"'Do so,' said Perry, and jumping into the boat Perry had left, Elliott rowed away to the lagging gun-boats. As Elliott shoved clear, Perry's pennant and great blue burgee fluttered aloft, with signals for closing in on the enemy. The flags were greeted with cheers from every American ship but one. Over on the abandoned *Lawrence*, Yarnall, having not one gun that he could fire, hauled down his flag to save life. A shout arose from the near-by *Detroit*. The wounded on the lower deck heard the ominous sound. They asked the cause, and when told that the flag was coming down forgot all else in their patriotism and cried: 'Sink the ship! Sink the ship!'

"But no such despair was felt in any other American ship. On the others the crews, with dancing muscles, sprang to make sail or knelt with clear eyes to look through the sights of the guns they were aiming anew at the British ships. Putting up his helm, Perry squared away and drove his ship through the British squadron, now bunched so that he had the *Lady Prevost* and the *Chippeway* on the left and the *Detroit*, the *Queen Charlotte* and the *Hunter* on his right, and all of them but a few yards away as he passed. Into these he fired broadsides double-shotted, as each came in bearing of the guns. The crew of the *Lady Prevost* fled below, leaving only their captain, Lieutenant Buchan, standing on the quarter-deck, leaning his wounded face on his hands, and staring with insane eyes upon the scene.