

After the first surprise of the intelligence had a little abated, a rumour was spread through the intrenched camp, which stretched along the margin of the Hudson, forming a chain of outworks to the body of the fort itself, that a chosen detachment of fifteen hundred men was to depart with the dawn for William Henry, the post of the northern extremity of the portage. That which at first was only rumour soon became certainty, as orders passed from the quarters of the commander-in-chief to the several corps he had selected for this service to prepare for their speedy departure. All doubt as to the intention of Webb now vanished, and an hour or two of hurried footsteps and anxious faces succeeded. The novice in the military art flew from point to point, retarding his own preparations by the excess of his violent and somewhat distempered zeal; while the more practised veteran made his arrangements with a deliberation that scorned every appearance of haste; though his sober lineaments and anxious eye sufficiently betrayed that he had no very strong professional relish for the (as yet) untried and dreaded warfare of the wilderness. At length the sun set in a flood of glory behind the distant western hills; and as darkness threw its veil around the secluded spot, the sounds of preparation diminished; the last light finally disappeared from the log-cabin of some officer; the trees cast their deeper shadows over the mounds and the rippling stream; and a silence soon pervaded the camp, as deep as that which reigned in the vast forest by which it was environed.

According to the orders of the preceding night, the heavy sleep of the army was broken by the rolling of the warning drums, whose rattling echoes were heard issuing, on the damp morning air, out of every vista of the woods, just as the day began to draw the shaggy outlines of some tall pines of the vicinity, on the opening brightness of a soft and cloudless eastern sky. In an instant the whole camp was in motion; the meanest soldier arousing from his lair, to witness the departure of his comrades, and to share in the excitement and incidents of the hour. The simple array of the chosen band was soon completed. While the regular and trained hirelings of the King marched with ready haughtiness to the right of the line, the less pretending colonists took their humbler position on its left, with a docility that long practice had rendered easy. The scouts