

September as a rule proved cool and pleasant, but October was ushered in by furious storms, and sudden changes of temperature which prevented most of the Indian corn from maturing, and blighted the lingering hopes of the farmers.

Besides several large scows for the transport of cannon, the Americans had begun to build three gun-boats at Black Rock, the destruction of which Brock frankly confessed he would have attempted had he not been restrained by his instructions. The Indians were strictly prohibited from crossing the river under any pretence, and were closely watched and guarded. A party which arrived from the west to visit Colonel Claus, bringing with them a bundle of scalps, were sharply rebuked and pledged not to offend in that way again. These rigid precautions had the effect of diminishing the number of those with the army until it did not much exceed one hundred.

A variety of motives absolutely forced General Van Rensselaer to assume the offensive. During September six regiments of regular infantry, five of New York militia, a battalion of rifles and several batteries of artillery had joined his army. The Pennsylvania contingent had assembled at Meadville on the 20th, and was marching to Buffalo. Forage and provisions had already begun to grow scarce, and the autumn rains would undoubtedly increase the ravages of disease already frightfully prevalent among his militia. Dearborn strongly urged him to attempt the passage of the river, as he declared they must reckon upon obtaining possession of Upper Canada before the winter set in, assuring him at the same time that Harrison would invade the province by way of Detroit with six or seven thousand men, while another strong body of troops was already assembled at Sackett's Harbor, where a squadron was fitting out to contest possession of Lake Ontario, and he, in person, would threaten Montreal from Lake Champlain. The ultimate success of these operations he regarded as almost certain, but he warned him that much would depend on his movements on the Niagara. Monroe, Secretary of State, openly ascribed the inactivity of his armies in New York to the effects of disaffection, which he declared had paralyzed the efforts of the administration and rendered the measures of Congress inoperative. The militia now clamored loudly to be led against the enemy, and did not hesitate to accuse their commander of lukewarmness and cowardice, while some of their officers announced their intention of invading Canada without waiting

for orders from him, yet a trifling incident served to indicate how little dependence was to be placed on their assistance. A sentinel near Schlossen was shot on his beat in the night by some unknown person, and an entire company instantly threw away their arms and took to their heels, never stopping till they had gained the main camp at Lewiston. Early in October he summoned a council of war, to which he invited General Smyth, who had just taken command of a brigade of regular troops at Buffalo; General Hall, of the New York militia, and the commandant of each regiment of United States troops. Smyth showed his contempt for the militia general under whom he was forced to serve by neglecting to attend or even to apologize for his absence. Van Rensselaer had intended to concentrate the whole of his regular troops near Fort Niagara and the militia at Lewiston, and attempt the passage of the river simultaneously at both places, but in consequence of Smyth's misconduct this scheme was abandoned and he determined to cross from the latter place, only as he felt satisfied that the forces he had already assembled then were amply sufficient for the purpose. Staff-officers, under one pretext and another, had visited the British lines and the result of their observations coupled with information received from his spies had made him pretty thoroughly acquainted with the members and composition of the forces opposed to him.

No doubt was entertained of at least partial success. He confidently anticipated being able to secure a foothold in Canada where he could establish his army in winter-quarters and prepare for an early campaign next year. More than eight thousand troops were assembled under his command of whom about half were regulars. Three hundred artillery and eight hundred regular infantry occupied Fort Niagara, and nine hundred regular soldiers and 2,270 New York militia were encamped near Lewiston. At Buffalo General Smyth had 1,650 regular troops, three hundred and eighty-six detached militia, two hundred and fifty sailors, and four hundred Indians besides the local militia. Part of the Pennsylvania brigade of two thousand men had also arrived. Many batteaux and flat-bottomed boats were in readiness at Black Rock, Tonawanda, and Gill's Creek above the Falls, and at Lewiston and Four Mile Creek below, and a sufficient number could be collected at any given point in a few hours to carry over a thousand men. His train of field artillery was large and well-equipped.