

of prolonging it until the last of his artillery had arrived. But when the last division of boats hove in sight, and all the benefit that could be reasonably expected from its continuance had been secured, notice was given that it would end on the 8th of September,

Four hundred batteaux, loaded with artillery and stores, had come in from Oswego; great quantities of provisions had been collected; a large number of scows and boats, suitable for the passage of the river, had been built: several thousand additional troops had arrived, and more were on the march, yet the American general hesitated to assume the offensive. The panic created by the surrender of Detroit had by that time reached Albany, and Dearborn wrote to warn him that an attack upon his position was imminent. British troops had been seen ascending the St. Lawrence, and he must be prepared to fall back if hard pushed, and not be caught in a trap like Hull. The disembarkation of detachments of soldiers, both at Fort Erie and Niagara, close upon the heels of this information, alarmed and perplexed him. Colonel Fenwick, commanding at Fort Niagara, reporting that an attack was expected by him, the stores were removed, the siege-guns buried, and every preparation made for the hasty evacuation of the post.

Stephen Van Rensselaer, who held chief command by virtue of his rank as Major General of the New York state troops, was an utter novice in all military affairs, and could scarcely even be termed an amateur soldier. The last *patron* of the manor of Rensselaer-Wyck and the leading Federalist in the state, his appointment was a sharp stroke of party tactics on the part of the governor, who discovered in him a prospective and dangerous opponent. The recent Congressional elections had seemed to indicate that the Federalists had regained the confidence of the people of New York, and most of their leaders were uncompromising in their hostility to the war. If Van Ransselaer accepted the command, his immediate following would be committed to its prosecution; if he refused, his conduct could be denounced as unpatriotic.

Five generations of the Van Rensselaers had reigned in the ancient manor-house near Albany, and their estates stretched along the Hudson