

Small as these different groups of inhabitants may seem, living as they did in different parts of Acadie, they might still have furnished great resources in time of war, if the French government had been careful in fostering their development. But who then thought of Acadie? Colbert was dead; the magnificence of the Grand Monarque left France exhausted and incapable of carrying on the only legitimate war in which she was engaged during this long and glorious reign—the war of the Spanish succession, which was about to begin. Vauban alone traced on paper vast plans for the future success of the colonies, which were never to be realized. In Canada, the commotion caused by the terrible massacre of La Chine by the Iroquois had not yet subsided; and far from being in a position to aid the Acadians, they themselves were on the brink of destruction, and were only saved by the valor of Frontenac.

Despite the state of neglect in which Acadie was allowed to remain, despite the disadvantages of its position, the increase and development of the country were rapid. In 1703, Minas counted four hundred and twenty-seven inhabitants, Beaubassin two hundred and forty-five, Cobeguit eighty-seven; but at Port Royal there were only four hundred and eighty-five. The total population of Acadie was about thirteen thousand.

Unimportant as the result of these figures may seem to the reader, it appeared formidable to the authorities at Boston, who formed their calculations less on the number than the valor of the colonists. So many were not required in 1696 to dismantle their principal strongholds. New England was, moreover, seriously threatened by the Canadians, who, after the great Treaty of 1700 with the Iroquois, had assumed the offensive with alarming results. Hertel de Rouville and Beaubassin had successively marched small army corps from Casco to Wells, from the Alleghany Mountains to Durfield and Portsmouth in Massachusetts, and had left all the forts and villages along their line of march in ruins. Too meek, or confiding too little in their strength, to attack Canada at first, the English resolved to finish at least with Acadie.

The Acadians had foreseen the blow now threatened; they knew that the time had come for deciding on the field of battle to which of the two peoples—English or French—the empire of the New World would belong. But they vainly sought aid, at least some officers to command them, to strike the first blow, invade New Eng-