

afforded cover to the besiegers; it was also defended by a Pallade and contained valuable magazines, being at the head of the Portage between the navigable waters of the Mohawk, falling into the Hudson, and the Oneida Lake whose outlet was at Oswego on Lake Ontario. The commandant had timely notice of his danger, being apprised by Sir W. Johnson, who, at the same time supplied him with a quantity of hand grenades and other ammunition. The summons of de Levi was answered by a shower of bullets; but all was ineffectual, the assailants soon discovered the worthlessness of the defences and breaking down the palisades carried the block house by assault putting all the garrison except three to the sword; the fort was then burned and 40,000 lbs. of gunpowder destroyed, the French commander returned to Canada with the loss of three men. Thus whatever imbecility might be displayed by Ministers, the campaign of 1756 was opened with sufficient eclat.

This blow was inflicted within 250 miles of New York, the Legislative Assembly of which was engaged in the laudable task of squabbling with the Council and Governor about some frivolous point affecting the prerogative of the Crown. To complicate matters still more, Governor Morris of Pennsylvania rendered all Sir Wm. Johnson's efforts at detaching the Indians from the French nugatory, by an official declaration of war against the Delaware and Shawnee tribes without consulting him.

On the 25th of June Generals Abercrombie and Webb arrived with reinforcements of regular troops, consisting of the 35th and 42nd Regiments; on his arrival at Albany to assume the command his first act was to announce that the regular officers should have precedence of command; this so enraged the militia soldiers that Gen. Winslow told him it would be impossible to enforce such a regulation, he was obliged reluctantly to yield the point. It was then agreed that the regular troops should do garrison duty while the Provincial militia under their own officers should advance against the enemy. After the destruction of Fort Bull it was of the greatest importance that an advance should be made to cover Oswego and restore the communications with that important position, but Abercrombie, fond of displaying his authority, preferred to squander his own and the time of the troops in digging useless ditches and erecting stockades around the city of Albany; moreover he quartered the troops amounting to 10,000 men on the inhabitants against their will, nor could any justification of such conduct be attempted.

Amidst this universal din of arms and unparalleled slaughter on both sides, the official declaration of war was only issued by Great Britain on the 17th May, 1756, and by France on 16th June following; the mendacity and imbecility of Newcastle and his creatures having tarnished the national honor and compromised its arms in the most shameful manner. Meantime the French Court with an imbecility as marked as that of Newcastle's Administration neglected or refused to perceive the imminence of the crisis or magnitude of the interests at issue, their whole preparation was to appoint Major General the Marquis de Montcalm to the chief command, sending with him 1400 men and some excellent officers, this raised the whole of the French force of regular soldiers to nearly 4,000 men, and this, with the exception of 600 recruits, was the whole reinforcements sent to Canada while the war lasted.

Montcalm arrived at Quebec in May, and at once proceeded to Montreal to hold a conference with M. de Vaudreuil the Gov-

ernor General. The plan of the campaign adopted was to maintain the post at Carillon (Ticonderoga) with a large force, and with similar means to cover Frontenac (Kingston). Niagara was re-inforced by one battalion of the Regiment of Bearn, 1,000 Canadians and savages covered the frontiers between these posts, while the positions on the line of the Ohio were reinforced by 3,500 Canadians and savages, the whole force in the field exceeded 14,000 men. The English forces, regular and provincial, approached 25,000 in number, and their plan of campaign was to renew the attempt on Fort du Quesne with 3,000 provincial troops, operating from Wills Creek, concentrate 5,000 soldiers at Oswego, endeavor to capture Frontenac and Toronto, and then attempt Niagara; 10,000 men were to assemble at Fort William Henry for an attack on Crown Point (Ticonderoga the strongest position of the two, and half way between both forts, was altogether overlooked) and 2,000 men to march by the Kennebec River on the Chaudiere Settlements and penetrate within three miles of Quebec. While the main force of the British army was loitering away their time at Albany, Colonel Bradstreet was exerting himself to carry out the instructions of the council of war held at that place to form at Oswego such magazines of provisions and stores as the importance of that post in an offensive and defensive point of view required.

Early in May M. de Vaudreuil who had been obliged to defer his operations for its capture in the previous year by dispatching the force destined for that service to defend Crown Point from Johnson's attack, had detached M. de Villiers with 900 men to form a camp of observation at the mouth of Sandy Creek, 15 miles east of Oswego.—Bradstreet with 300 batteaux men, and 200 provincial troops, safely passed down the Oneida Lake and Oswego River, threw into the fort, six months provisions for 5,000 men. De Villiers, aware of all his movements, had laid a well planned ambuscade to intercept him, but the party composing it did not reach their position in time. Being advised on his return, of this force lying in wait, he separated his command into three divisions, he was attacked nine miles above Oswego by De Villiers' whole force, after a desultory fight of three hours the French were defeated, according to Bradstreet's account, with great loss, amounting to 100 killed and 70 prisoners, while his own loss amounted to 70 killed and wounded. It is also added that if a heavy rain had not set in the whole French detachment would have been destroyed; what makes this matter more extraordinary is the statement that the whole force were *undisciplined Irishmen*, it is but fair to say that Villiers claimed to have dispersed the batteaux, took several prisoners, killed and scalped many more. At all events Bradstreet learned from some of his prisoners that a large force was already on its way to invest Oswego, and he lost no time in laying his intelligence before General Abercrombie at Albany, when he arrived on the 13th July.

That renowned commander was then awaiting the decision of a council of war on the important question as to—"What effect a junction of the King's troops in the campaign against Crown Point would have upon his Majesty's service," and could not attend to the condition of Oswego and its garrison. It was in vain that Sir W. Johnson told him that his influence with the Six Nation Indians could not restrain them from joining the French in the event of its fall, that it would leave the whole Province of New

York open to the enemies' attacks, and even inspire the forces he commanded; he could not be moved till this point of etiquette was decided, and contented himself with ordering Gen. Webb to hold himself in readiness to march with one regiment, he discharged nearly all the batteaux men lest even they should move, and refused to advance till Lord Loudon's arrival.

On the 29th of July the Commander in Chief arrived at Albany, and his first action was to ascertain whether the Provincial soldiers would act with the regulars and obey the orders of the Commander in Chief. This uncalled for and ill timed address was answered by the officers of the Militia, that they would act with the regulars and obey his Lordship, but that their men had enlisted under the express stipulation that they should be commanded by their own officers, they therefore begged to be allowed to act separately whenever the exigencies of the service permitted it; to this his Lordship graciously acceded, and preparations were at once begun—not to relieve Oswego—but for a descent on Crown Point.

General Webb was detached with the 4th Regiment on the 12th August, but he had hardly reached the portage between the head of the Mohawk and Wood Creek, when he heard that Oswego had fallen. This stream which falls into the Oneida Lake near where Fort Bull formerly stood, was rendered navigable at that early day by a series of sluices by which the batteaux were flushed down the creek. Webb, in his fear of an attack by French and savages destroyed the banks on the upper end, and while they, in dread of an assault from his troops, were busily engaged in destroying the banks at the lower end. After achieving this feat he retreated with all speed to Schenectady, leaving the flourishing settlements at the German Flats to the mercy of the Canadians and savages who completely devastated this rich and fertile part of the Province, killing and scalping the inhabitants, burning and destroying their houses and mills, driving off their cattle and plundering everything which could be carried away, within sight of forts and block houses which were so wretchedly garrisoned that they could do nothing but look on. These depredations were perpetrated up to the stockades at Albany, under the eyes of 3,000 regular soldiers and over 7,000 militiamen, commanded by a pair of imbecile dastards, it was not much wonder that nineteen years later the same stupid imbecility lost the United States to England.

The works at Oswego consisted of Fort Ontario on the East side of the river, in the angle formed by its junction into the lake, it commanded the entrance. Fort Oswego, designed for the principal work, but left unfinished through carelessness and mismanagement, on the West side some distance from the river and lake, and Fort George, a staked entrenchment of earth with a few cannon mounted, six hundred yards South of Fort Oswego, on an eminence which commanded the latter work. In the period which elapsed when Colonel Mercer was put in command in the autumn of 1755, although there were 1400 men in garrison, nothing had been done to make these works defensible, while, with the total want of common sense which is characteristic to the whole proceedings of these campaigns, immense stores of every description were accumulated in a convenient and tempting position for an active and enterprising enemy. Profiting by the experience acquired in this campaign, the United States stores were kept at Oswego Falls, nine miles from the Fort, during the war of 1812.