

CHAPTER V

THE LAST WAR (FRENCH AND INDIAN 1754-63) OF THE FIRST EPOCH

The British government, stimulated by the worries and representations of the Anglo-Americans against the French in Canada, tried every way possible to bring on a war between France and England so that, by enjoying the advantage of naval superiority in keeping reinforcements from Canada, they might pour troops enough in the country to drive out the inhabitants or subdue them. The Anglo-Americans commenced by an intrusion into the Ohio Valley.

In 1754 Col George Washington with troops from Virginia entered into the Valley of the Ohio for the express purpose of founding military and trading posts in the territory of a foreign but peaceful country. De Contrecoeur, commanding at Fort Duquesne, sent Lieut. Toulon de Jumville with an escort to warn Washington from French territory. Informed of his approach by scouts, Washington laid an ambuscade and fired on this unsuspecting party. De Jumville was killed. So soon as De Contrecoeur heard of this, he dispatched de Villiers with 600 light armed Canadians who besieged Washington in a fort called "Fort Necessity," which he had constructed, and although Washington had 500 men behind breastworks supported by ten pieces of cannon, so fierce and determined was the battle waged by the Canadians that he surrendered after suffering a considerable loss. Although he acknowledged in the articles of surrender that he was "killed," his life was spared him and he was placed on parole for one year, and allowed to depart. (June 1754.)

But, no sooner was he returned than the news spread that Gen. Braddock had landed from Ireland with 2,000 British veterans, who were to be joined by Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania militia, and all were to advance to capture Fort Duquesne and smash in the French line between Canada and Louisiana. Although his parole had not expired, Washington was very easily persuaded to join the expedition as commander of the Virginia militia and, on account of his knowledge of the country, was attached to the personal staff of Gen. Braddock.

With all the confidence of numbers and strength the army of Braddock, over 2,000 strong, with a numerous train of artillery and supported by many parties of

colonial militia, took its way towards Fort Duquesne. And thus it must be remembered before a declaration of war had been made! Now the commandant there, who had succeeded de Contrecoeur, was the Chevalier D'H de Beaugen, of a family of the ancient nobility, one of whom (Anne de Beaugen) had been Queen of France. This family had been established in Canada since 1700 among the seigniorial families of the country.

When the news of Braddock's advance was made known to de Beaugen, whose garrison numbered but 300, he recognized that it would be impossible to hold the fort against such numbers with their siege artillery. He determined on the audacious policy of attacking the enemy while he was on the march and entangled in the forests, hoping to bring confusion to his rout. He communicated his plan to the chief of the Iro Indians of the neighborhood and induced them to join him. Then he marched to the encounter. At a suitable place he laid an ambush for the head of Braddock's column and succeeded in staying its onward march. But Braddock brought up his heavy cannon, whose detonations frightened the Indians into a momentary flight, until they looked about and saw the French led by de Beaugen, leap from their coverts and charge the rallying English with the bayonet. This gave them courage. Again they returned, and pressing down on both flanks of the British fired so rapidly, and so accurately from behind trees, logs and bushes, that with the French in front and the Indians concealed on both sides, the British army fled, carrying away their wounded general who had had four horses shot from under him in this short but fierce encounter. De Beaugen was killed in the charge which he had led at the beginning of the battle. The British and their colonial allies never stopped their flight until they were in the vicinity of the coast settlements. All the frontiers of Virginia, Maryland and Pennsylvania were deserted by their colonists when this news was known, for they felt now that the hatchet had been dug up, that an enterprising and fearless foe would soon be on their trail.

The French in Canada were urging the home government, in which the creators of Pompadour held full sway, to send supplies to Canada. After repeated prayers, a fleet of transports was started, but, secret orders were given by the British ministry to the captains of all war vessels to seize French property on the high seas, or wherever else it might be found, and although no war had been de-