

The slightest reverse often appears to have produced quite a disproportionate effect on the spirits of the American officials directing the conduct of the war. "The British, back of Fort George," wrote Mr. Lovett, a member of Congress, from Washington, "have lately driven in the picket-guard, killed some and took forty or fifty attempting to reinforce the guard. They have also crossed to Black Rock and destroyed the stores there. The Postmaster-General this morning (July 17), relating to these things, exclaimed, 'It does seem as if the very devil is in our luck.'"

Skirmishes were a matter of daily, sometimes hourly occurrence. Almost every night a small party of Indians or light infantry would steal forward in the darkness until within musket-shot of an American picket, when they would discharge their pieces and run away to repeat this exploit in some other quarter. The entire camp was frequently aroused and put under arms, and this sometimes occurred more than once in the course of a single night.

An occasional glimpse is afforded of some of these affairs. On the 12th of July, Claus writes to Harvey:—"A party of Algonquin and Nipissing Indians, to the number of nineteen, with one interpreter, Langlade, who received a wound on the 8th, went forward yesterday towards Fort George, and fell in with a party of eight dragoons near Mr. Ball's. They killed two and took the quartermaster-sergeant prisoner, with two horses. The sergeant is a Frenchman, three years from France, and a shrewd fellow. The Nipissing chiefs wish to carry their prisoner and deliver him to Sir John Johnson. I promised to make their request known to the General and have the interpreters busy trying to get them to deliver him up."

Again at 8 o'clock on the evening of the same day, he wrote:—"A party of St. Joseph's Indians (10) are just returned from Ball's. They have been engaged with the enemy there, in number near a hundred. One of the Indians is mortally wounded."