

flotilla crept along the low shores, in these days so instinct with vigorous humanity, in those presenting to the restless lake a continuous background of silent and sombre woodland.

Captain Pouchot, of the regiment of Béarn, was in command at Fort Niagara, an excellent officer, and one of the many combatants in this war who has left memoirs of it. The Indians for once—a sign of the change of times—had failed the French as newsmen, and Pouchot was taken by surprise. Some of his men were absent, and his garrison reduced to less than 600 all told. At the very head of the Ohio watershed, near Lake Erie, there were still some small French posts, and Pouchot now sent to these for assistance. Many of the French guerilla leaders, with wild, miscellaneous bands of followers, were yet stirring in this dark country, in vain hopes of dashing down and catching Fort Pitt, now garrisoned with Provincials, unawares. It was to some of these that Pouchot now sent, and they hastened to his succour.

The old fort at Niagara stood on much the same site as the present one, in the angle, that is to say, where the river meets Lake Ontario. It was large, substantial and well armed, as became the portal and defence of the illimitable trading country behind. Prideaux had over 2,000 men with him, besides Johnson's 900 Indians. One-half of his force guarded the boats, the other was free for the attack. The Engineers, like Abercromby's, proved incompetent, and their first trenches were untenable. "Fools and block-heads, G—d d—n them," was the written criticism of an indignant Highland officer. When fresh approaches were constructed and the British guns opened fire, a still worse thing happened, for a shell burst on leaving the mouth of a coehorn and instantly killed Prideaux, who was standing near. Johnson now took command, and the batteries were actively served. In a fortnight the walls were badly shattered, over a hundred of the small garrison were killed or wounded, and

Pouchot realised that nothing but immediate succour from the West could save him. On the 24th Johnson's scouts reported that a French force was approaching from above Niagara Falls. He therefore pushed forward during the night some light infantry, Grenadiers, and part of the 46th regiment. They took up their position in the immediate path of the approaching French, just below the mighty cataract. In the cool of the morning, De Ligneris, Aubry, Marin, de Répigny, the cream, in short, of the Canadian backwoods leaders, with a wild following of 1,200 men, came down the portage road from above the Falls. The force included the small garrisons at Venango and Presqu'île, with a horde of fighting traders from Detroit, the Illinois, and the West, truculent, ill-favoured men who lived among the Indians, and, like them, went to battle strung with beads and quills, and smeared with paint and grease. They were brave enough, but the banks of the river above the rapids had been cleared. It was an open, not a woodland fight, though, indeed, long years of practice had made even the British linesman no mean performer among the trees. Here, however, he was in the open and flanked by a band of the Iroquois, the finest of savage warriors. The French threw themselves with undisciplined courage and loud yells upon the British front. The linesmen received them as Wolfe's troops on the Plains of Abraham six weeks later received Montcalm's assault—with a steady, withering fire. They had enough men here, however, for a flank attack, which was carried out by the Indians and light infantry with deadly effect. In an hour the broken column of white savages and bush-rangers were flying back in wild disorder past the Falls and the long stretch of rapids above them, to where their canoes were waiting, in smooth water, to bear them back into Lake Erie, whence they came.

Two hundred and fifty of the Ohio garrison troops alone had been killed