

Stanwix to its fate, and withdrew towards Albany, the country on the Mohawk would fall into the power of the English, and they might form a junction with colonel St. Leger. Their army, thus reinforced, and victualled by the Mohawks, would be in a situation to move forward. From these operations it must result, either that the enemy would resolve to stand an action, and, in this case, Burgoyne felt assured of victory; or that he would gradually retire down the Hudson, and thus abandon to the English the city of Albany. If the propriety of a rapid movement forward was therefore evident, the difficulty of finding means to execute it was not less manifest, as the want of subsistence still continued; and this want would of necessity increase with the distance of the army from the lakes, through which it received its provisions. To maintain such a communication with Fort George, during the whole time of so extensive a movement, as would secure the convoys from being intercepted by the enemy, was obviously impracticable. The army was too weak to afford a chain of posts for such an extent; and continual escorts for every separate supply would be a still greater drain. Burgoyne therefore perceived distinctly that he must have recourse to some other source of supply, or totally relinquish the enterprise. He knew that the Americans had accumulated considerable stores of live cattle, corn, and other necessities, besides a large number of wheel carriages, at a village called Bennington, situated between two streams, which, afterwards uniting, form the river Housack. This place lies only twenty miles distant from the Hudson; it was the repository of all the supplies intended for the republican camp, which were expedited from New England by the upper part of Connecticut river, and thence through the country of Vermont. From Bennington they were conveyed, as occasion required, to the different parts of the army. The magazines were only guarded, however, by detachments of militia, whose numbers varied continually, as they went and came at discretion. Though the distance was considerable from the camp of Burgoyne to Bennington, yet, as the whole country through which the corps of Reidesel had lately passed appeared peaceable, and even well inclined to submission, the English general, impelled by necessity, and allured by an ardent thirst of glory, did not despair of being able to surprise Bennington, and bring off the provisions of the enemy by means of his own carriages. Having taken this resolution, he intrusted the execution of it to lieutenant-colonel Baum, a German officer of great bravery, and well versed in this sort of partisan war.

The force allotted to this service, amounted to about five hundred men, consisting of two hundred of Reidesel's dismounted dragoons,