

the first importance, as the staple of that productive region which fringes its shores.

In the following year, the Chicasaws having recommenced their ravages, Vaudreuil, the successor of Bienville, marched against them with a force of seven hundred French soldiers and a large body of Indian allies. He laid waste their country, and left an additional force at the Fort of Tombeckbee, to keep them in check, but, for want of artillery, was unable to take their fortified places.

The provinces of Canada and Louisiana, nearly as distant from each other as from the mother-country, had now, with admirable military skill, been almost completely connected by a chain of posts extending from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to that of the Mississippi. The extent of country over which the French asserted their claim, and great part of which, however sparsely, they occupied, was vastly greater than that of their neighbours, the powerful English colonies—though the population of the latter now exceeded a million, while that of both the French provinces was but little more than a twentieth of that amount. It may well be supposed that the former, so long and obstinately striving to wrest Canada from the few but valiant hands which held it, would not entirely overlook the far richer and more feebly-defended regions of Louisiana.

After the conclusion of peace between the rival nations, in the middle of the eighteenth century, an association, called the Ohio Company, had obtained from the English crown a large grant of land lying within a district to which both had laid claim. The governor of Canada, Du Quesne, having remonstrated in vain against its occupation, made prisoners of the company's servants; and proceeded vigorously in the work of completing his cordon of military posts. In 1754, the province of Virginia dispatched Washington, then a young officer of twenty-one, with a provincial regiment, to check what was in turn considered an encroachment on its territorial right; and in a skirmish with the French, the commander of a small force of that people, with ten of his men, was killed. The Virginians, entrenching themselves against a larger force, were in turn compelled to capitulate. War was at once vigorously recommenced, the eventful progress of which against the French of Nova Scotia and Canada has been already detailed. In 1758, the year before the fall of Quebec, Fort Du Quesne, the connecting link between the two French provinces, was taken by the English, the garrison setting it on fire, and escaping in boats down the Ohio, and

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