

immense territory. These forts extended in a chain from the narrow isthmus of Acadia to the Gulf of Mexico, touching the Great Lakes in passing.

"These preparations for legitimate defense caused bitter complaint to be made by the company of merchants who had the concession. They made their complaint to the Governor General. While this one was despatching Washington in great haste to M. Gardeur de St. Pierre, commandant of the Western country, for his very Christian Majesty, for the purpose of engaging him to suspend his works of fortifying, certain courier de bois, partly French and partly savages, fell suddenly upon the merchants who had begun to survey their concessions, and having captured three, they brought them to the fort at Presquille.

"In the meantime Washington was returning with the answer received from M. de Gardeur de St. Pierre. This reply, so military and so brief, informed the Governor General that he would guard the West in general, and the Ohio valley in particular, because it belonged legitimately to France, since something like sixty years ago, when La Salle had discovered them, he had taken possession of them in the name of the king.

"Then the company of merchants, wishing to have some forts themselves, sent a detachment of workmen, supported by a company of militia under the command of Captain Trent, to the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers, to build there a fort. But to their sorrow, after having made there some earthworks, they were surprised and driven away by M. de Contrecoeur, who had gone to replace M. de St. Pierre. Finding the place an excellent one he finished the work and named it Fort du Quesne.

"Following this M. de Contrecoeur, having been notified that Washington was hastening to the support of Trent, sent out to meet him M. de Jumonville, with an escort of thirty soldiers. He was to summon the American colonel to leave the French territory.

"On the 18th of May, 1754, very early in the morning,