

## THE ERECTION OF FORT NECESSITY – THE BATTLE OF GREAT MEADOWS – THE OPERATION OF 1754

Col. Washington immediately commenced enlarging the entrenchment and erecting palisades, anticipating an attack from the French. He gave the place, thus fortified, the name of *Fort Necessity*.

Captain Mackay of the royal army, with an independent company of one hundred men from South Carolina, arrived at Fort Necessity, and the army now numbered about four hundred men. Leaving one company, under Captain Mackay, to guard the fort. Col. Washington leaving him in command, pushed over the Laurel Hill, cutting the road with extreme labor, through the wilderness, to Gist's plantation, near where the town of Connelsville now stands. It occupied two weeks, although the distance is only thirteen miles.\*

The preparations by Washington, the arrival of the French and the battle at the Great Meadows, are so well related by Sparks, that we copied it entire:

“When the council of war was held at Gist's† plantation, on the intelligence received that the French at Fort Du Quesne were reinforced, and would speedily march against the English, it was resolved to send an express to Captain Mackay, then at the Great Meadows, desiring him to join Colonel Washington with his independent company so South Carolinians, and also call in Captain Lewis and Captain Polson, who were out with separate detachments, the next morning, when another council of was convened, and it was unanimously resolved to retreat. A good deal of labor had been expended at Gist's in throwing up entrenchments, with the intention of waiting the approach of the French at that place, but the news of their increased numbers rendered this an inexpedient measure.

“Preparations for a great retreat commenced immediately. The horses were few, and Colonel Washington set a noble example to the officers by lading his own horse with ammunition and other public stores, leaving his baggage behind, and giving the soldiers four pistols to carry it forward. The other officers followed this example. There were nine swivels, which were drawn by the soldiers of the Virginia regiment over a very broken road, unassisted by the men belonging to the Independent Company, who refused to perform any service of the kind. Nor, would they act as pioneers, nor aid in transporting the public stores, considering that a duty not incumbent on them as King's soldiers. This conduct had a discouraging effect upon the soldiers of the Virginia regiment, by dampening their ardor, and making them more dissatisfied with their extreme fatigue; but the whole party reached the Great Meadows on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July.

“It was the intention of Colonel Washington at first to halt at this place, but his men had become so much fatigued from great labor, and a deficiency of provisions, that they could draw the swivels no further, nor carry the baggage on their backs. They had been eight days without bread, and at the Great Meadows, they found only a few bags of flour. It was thought advisable to wait here, therefore, and fortify themselves in the best manner they could, till they should receive supplies and reinforcements. They had heard of the arrival at Alexandria of the two Independent Companies from New York, twenty days before, and it was presumed they must by this time have reached Will's creek. An express was sent to hasten them on, with as much dispatch as possible.

“Meantime Colonel Washington set his men to felling trees, and carrying logs to the fort, with a view to raise a breast-work, and enlarge and strengthen the fortification in the best manner that circumstances would permit. The space of the ground, called the Great Meadows, is a level bottom, through which passed a small creek, and is surrounded by hills of a moderate and gradual ascent. The bottom of glade, is entirely level, covered with long grass and small bushes, and varies in width. At the point where the fort stood, it is about two hundred and fifty yards wide, from the base of the hill to that of the opposite. The position of the fort was well chosen, being about one hundred yards from the upland, or wooded ground, on the one side, and one hundred and fifty on the other, and so situated on the margin of the creek as to afford easy access to water. At one point the high ground comes within sixty yards of the fort, and this was the nearest distance to which an enemy could approach under the shelter of trees. The outlines of the fort were still visible, when the spot was visited by the writer in 1830, occupying an irregular square, the dimensions of which were about one hundred feet on each side. One of the angles was prolonged further than the others,

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\*Day's Historical Collection, p. 334.

† Gist's house was thirteen miles from the Great Meadows, not far from Stewart's crossing of the Youghiogheny river; five or six miles from Dunbar's camp. The council was held the 28<sup>th</sup> of June.

for the purpose of reaching the water in the creek. On the west side, next to the nearest wood, were three entrances, protected by short breast-works and bastions. The remains of a ditch, stretching round the south and west sides, were also distinctly seen. The site of the fort, named *Fort Necessity*, from the circumstances attending its erection and original use, is three or four hundred yards south of what is called the National Road, four miles from the foot of Laurel Hill, and fifty miles from Cumberland at Will's creek.

On the 2d of July, early in the morning, an alarm was received from a sentinel, who had been wounded by the enemy; and at nine o'clock, intelligence came that the whole body of the enemy, amounting, as was reported, to nine hundred men, was only four miles off. At eleven o'clock they approached the fort, and began to fire, at the distance of six hundred yards, but without effect. Col. Washington had drawn up his men on the open ground outside of the trenches, waiting for the attack, which he presumed would be made as soon as the enemy's forces emerged from the woods; and he ordered his men to reserve their fire till they should be near enough to do execution. The distant firing was supposed to be a stratagem to draw Washington's men into the woods, and thus take them at a disadvantage. He suspected the design, and maintained his post till he found the French did not incline to leave the woods, and attack the fort by an assault, as he supposed they would, considering their superiority of numbers. He then drew his men back into the trenches, and gave them orders to fire according to their discretion, as suitable opportunities might present themselves. The French and Indians remained on the side of the rising ground, which was nearest to the fort, and sheltered by the trees, kept up a brisk fire of musketry, but never appeared in the open plain below. The rain fell heavily through the day, the trenches were filled with water, and many of the arms of Col. Washington's men were out of order, and used with difficulty.

In this way the battle continued from eleven o'clock in the morning till eight at night, when the French called and requested a parley. Suspecting this to be a feint to procure the admission of an officer into the fort, that he might discover their conditions, Col. Washington at first declined listening to the proposal, but when the call was repeated, with the additional request that an officer might be sent to them, engaging at the same time their parole for his safety, he sent out Capt. Vanbraam, the only person under his command, that could speak French, except the Chevalier de Peyrouny, an Ensign in the Virginia regiment, who was dangerously wounded, and disabled from rendering any service on this occasion. These he read and pretended to interpret, and, some changes having been made by mutual agreement, both parties signed them about midnight.

By the terms of the capitulation, the whole garrison was to retire, and return without molestation to the inhabited parts of the country, and the French commander promised, that no embarrassment should be interposed, either by his own men or the savages. The English were able to take away everything in their possession, except their artillery, and to march out of the fort the next morning with the honors of war, their drums beating and colors flying. As the French had killed all the horses and cattle, Col. Washington had no means of transporting his heavy baggage and stores; and it was conceded to him, that his men might conceal their effects, and that a guard might be left to protect them, till horses could be sent up to take them away. Col. Washington agreed to restore the prisoners, who had been taken at the skirmish with Jumonville; and as a surety for this article two hostages Capt. Vanbraam and Capt. Stobo, were delivered up to the French, and were to be retained till the prisoners should return. It was moreover agreed, that the party capitulating should not attempt to build any more establishments at this place, and beyond the mountains, for the space of one year.

"Early next morning, Col. Washington began to march from the fort in good order, but he had proceeded only a short distance, when a body of one hundred Indians, being a reinforcement to the French, came upon him, and could hardly be restrained from attacking his men. They pilfered the baggage and did other mischief. He marched forward, however, with as much speed as possible, in the weakened and encumbered condition of his army, there being no other mode of conveying the wounded men and the baggage, than on the soldiers backs. As the prisoners were nearly exhausted, no time was to be lost; and, leaving much of the baggage behind, he hastened to Will's creek, where all the necessary supplies were in store. Thence Col. Washington and Capt. Mackay proceeded to Williamsburg and communicated in person to the Governor of the campaign.

"A good deal of dissatisfaction was expressed with some of the articles of capitulation, when they came to be made public. The truth is, Col. Washington had been grossly deceived by the interpreter, either through ignorance or design. An officer of his regiment, who was present at the reading and signing of the articles, wrote as follows on this point, five weeks afterwards, in a letter to a friend:

“When Mr. Vanbraam returned with the French proposals we were obliged to take the sense of them from his mouth; it rained so hard, that he could not give us a written translation of them; we could scarcely keep the candle lighted to read them by; and every officer there was ready to declare, that there was no such word as *assassination* mentioned. The terms expressed were *the death of Jumonville*. If it had been mentioned, we would by all means have had it altered, as the French, during the course of the interview, seemed very condescending, and desirous to bring things to a conclusion; and, upon our insisting, altered the articles relating to the stores and ammunition, which they wanted to detain; and that of the cannon, which they agreed to have *destroyed*, instead of *reserved for their use*.

“Another article which appears to our disadvantage; is that whereby we oblige ourselves not to attempt an establishment beyond the mountains. This was translated to us, *not to attempt buildings or improvements on the lands of his most Christian Majesty*. This we never intended, as we denied he had any there, and therefore thought it needless to dispute this point.

“The last article, which relates to the hostages, is quite different from the translation of it given to us. It is mentioned *for the security of the performance of this treaty*, as well as for the return of the prisoners. There was never such an intention on our side, or mention of it made on theirs, by our interpreter. Thus, the evil intention or negligence of Vanbraam, our conduct is scrutinized by a busy world, fond of scrutinizing the proceedings of others, without considering circumstances, or giving just attention to reasons, which might be offered to obviate their censures.”

“Vanbraam was a Dutchman, and had but an imperfect knowledge of either French or English languages. How far his ignorance should be taken as an apology for his blunders is uncertain. Although he had proved himself a good officer, yet there were other circumstances, which brought his fidelity in question. Governor Dinwiddie, in giving an account of this affair to Lord Albemarle says, ‘In the capitulation\* they made use of the word *assassination*, but Washington, not understanding French, was

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\* Capitulation accordee par Monsieur De Villier capitaine d’Infanterie commandant des Troupes de sa Majesti tres Chretienne, a cel des Troupes Anglioses actuellement dans le Fort Necessity, qui avoir ete construit sur les Terres du Domain du Roi, ce 3 Juillet, a huit Heures dur soir scacoir, 1754.

Comme notre intention na jamais ete de troubler la paix et la bonne harmonioe qui regnoit entre les deux Princes amis, mais seulement de vanger l’assassin qui a ete fait sur un de nos officiers, porteur d’une sommation, et sur son escart, comme aussi d’empêcher aucun etablissement sur les terres du domain Roi mon maitre a ces considerations, nous coulons bien accorder grace a tous les Anglois qui sont dans le dit aux conditions apres.

1. Nous accordions as commandant Auglois de se retirer avec toute sa garrison, pour sen retourner paisiblement dans son pays; et lui promettons d’empêcher qu’il luy soit fait aucune insulte par nos Francois et de maintenir, autant qu’il sera en notre pourvoir, tous les sauvages qui sont avec nos.
2. Il lui sera permis de sortie, et d’emporter tout ce qui leur appartiendra a l’exception de l’artillerie, que nous reservons.
3. Que nous leurs accordions les honneurs de la guerre, qu’ils sortoront tembour batant, avec une piece de petit canon, voulant bein par-la leur prouver que nos les traitors en armis.
4. Que sitot les articles signez de part et d’ autre, ils ameneront le pavilion Anglois.
5. Que demain a’ la pointe du jour, un detachment Francois ira pour faire defiler la garrison, et prendre possession du dit fort.
6. Que comme les Anglois n’ont Presque plus de chevaux ni boeufs, ils seront libres de mettre leurs effets en cache, pour venir les chercher, quand ils auront rejoints des chevaux ils pourrons a’ cette fin y lassier des gardiens en tel nombre qu’ils coudront. aux conditions qu’ils deneont parole d’honneur de ne plus travailler a’ aucun establishment dans ce lieu ni en de ca la hautuer des terres pendant une annoe a’ compter de ce jour.
7. Que comme les Anglois n’ont en leur pouvoir un officier, deux cadets, et generalement les prisoniers qu’ils nois ont fait dans l’ assassinat du Sr de Jumonville, et qu’ils promettent de les renoyer avec sauve garde jusqu au fort Du Quesne, situe sur La Belle riviere et que pour suretie de cet article, ainsi que de ce traite Mr. Jacob Vanbraam, et Robert Stobo tous deux capitaines, nous seront remis en otage jusqu a l’ arrivee de nos Canadiens et Francois cy deses montioner, nous obligeons de notre cote a donner escorte pour ramener en surete ces denx officiers; qui nous promettent nos Francois dans deux mois et demi pour le plustard.

Tait double sur un pes postes de notre Blocus ce jout et an que dessus.

COULON VILLIER.

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\* (Continued from previous page.)

NOTE. – The words in *article 2d* – a l'exception de l'artillerie, que nous, nous reservons.

*Article 6* – aux conditions qu'ils donneront parole d'honneur de ne plus travailler a aucun establishment dans ce lieu, ni deca de la hauteur des terres, pendant une annee a compter de ce jour.

*Article 7* – dans l'assassinat du sieur de Jumonville \* \* ainsi que de ce taaité – were, says Sparks, misrepresented the interpreter, or at least the meaning of them so imperfectly and obscurely expressed by him, as to be misunderstood by Colonel Washington and his officers. The words *pendant une annee a comptre de ce jour*, i.e. during the year to be accounted from this pay, are not found in a copy of the articles printed by the French government.

#### TRANSLATION

Capitulation granted Mons. De Villiers, captain and commander of infantry and troops of his Christian Majesty, to those English troops actually in the fort of Necessity, which was built on the lands of the King's domain, July the 3d, at eight o'clock at night, 1754.

As our intention has never been to trouble the peace and harmony which reigns between the two princes in amity, but only to revenge the assassination which has been done on one of our officers, bearer of a citation, as appears by his writing, as also to hinder any establishment on the lands of the dominions of the King, my master, upon these considerations, we are willing to grant protection or favor, to all the English that are in said fort, upon the conditions hereinafter mentioned.

1. We grant the English commander to retire with all his garrisons, to return peaceably into his own country, and promise to hinder his receiving any insult from us French, and to restrain as much as shall be in our power to savages that are with us.

2. It shall be permitted him to go out, and carry with him all that belongs to them except the artillery, which we keep.

3. That we will allow them the honors of war, that they march out drums beating, with a swivel gun, being willing to show them that we treat them as our friends.

4. That as soon as the articles are signed by the one part and the other, they may strike the English colors.

5. That to-morrow at break of day, a detachment of French shall go to make the garrison file off, and take possession of the fort.

6. And as the English have few oxen and horses, they are free to hide their effects, and come and search for them when they have found their horses; and that they may for this end have guardians in what number they please, upon condition that they will give their word to honor, not to work upon any building in this place, or any place this side of the mountain during a year, to be accounted from this day.

7. And as the English have in their power an officer, two cadets, and most of the prisoners made in the assassination of Sr. De Jumonville, and that they promise to sent them back with safe guard to the fort Du Quesne, situated on the *Fine River*, and for surety of this article, as well as this treaty, Mr. Jaacob Vanbraam and Robert Stobo,\* both captains, shall be put as hostages, till arrival of the Canadians and French above mentioned.

We oblige ourselves on our side to give an escort, to return in safety these two officers. We promise our French in two months and a half at farthest.

A duplicate being made upon one of the posts of our blockade the day above.

COULON VILLIER.

\* *Captain Stobo*, it appears, was born in or near Glasgow, Scotland, and probably emigrated early to Virginia. He was a man of more than ordinary genius, and possessed a cultivated mind. He was sent as a hostage to fort Du Quesne. In the month of September, 1754, he was sent away from fort Du Quesne to Quebec, where, says Burke, he effected his escape; and after "various adventures," he visited Williamsburg, Va., in the month of November, 1759, when the Assembly "Resolved, That the sum of £1,000 be paid by the treasurer of *this* colony to Captain Robert Stobo, over and above the pay that is due to him from the time of his rendering himself a hostage to this day, as a reward for his zeal to his country, and a recompense for the great hardships he has suffered during his confinement in the enemy's county."

Humme writing Dr. Smollett, mentions a Captain Stobo, in a letter dated, Regley, 21<sup>st</sup> September, 1768 – "I did not see your friend, Captain Stobo, till the day before I left Civencester, and only for a little time;

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\* (Continued from previous page.)

but he seemed to be a man of good sense, and has surely had the most extraordinary adventures in the world. He has promised to call on me when he comes to London, and I shall always see him with pleasure."

*Vanbraam*, as well as *Stobo*, after having been retained some time at Fort Du Quesne, was sent to Quebec. Late in the fall of 1760, after six years confinement in Canada, he arrived at Williamsburg, Va. During part of the time he was confined in Canada, "he was allowed a pound of bread and a pound of horse flesh per day; but such was the quality of his provisions, that for four months he lived on bread and water only."

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deceived by the interpreter, who was a paltroof, and though an officer with us, they say he has joined the French.' How long *Vanbraam* was detained as a hostage is not known, but he never returned to Virginia; and it was the general belief that he practiced an intentional deception in his attempts to interpret the articles of capitulation. But whether this be true or not, the consequence was unfortunate, as the articles, in their written form, implied an acknowledgement of the charge of assassinating *Jumonville*. The French writers, regarding this as an authentic public document, were confirmed by it in their false impressions derived from *M. de Contrecoeur's* letter, concerning the fate of *Jumonville*; and thus grave historical error, inflicting deep injustice on the character of Washington, has been sanctioned by eminent names, and perpetuated in the belief of the reading portion of the French people.

"*M. de Villiers*, the commander of the French forces, was the brother of *Jumonville*. His account of the march from Fort Du Quesne, and the transaction at the Great Meadows, was published by the French government, in connection with what purported to be extracts from *Col. Washington's* journal, taken at *Braddock's* defeat. Many years afterwards, some persons sent Washington a translation of these papers, upon which he made a brief comment, which it is proper to introduce in this place, after inserting an extract from that part of *M. de Villiers's* narration, which relates to the affair of the Great Meadows.

"As we had no knowledge of the place," says *M. de Villiers*, "we presented our flank to the fort, when they began to fire on us with their cannon. Almost at the same instant that I saw the English on the right coming toward us, the Indians, as well as ourselves, set up a loud cry, and we advanced upon them; but they did not give us time to fire before they retreated behind an entrenchment adjoining the fort. We then prepared ourselves to invest the fort. It was advantageously situated in a meadow, and within musket-shot of the wood. We approached as near them as possible, and did not uselessly expose his Majesty's subjects. The fire was spirited on both sides, and I placed myself in the position where it seemed to me most likely a sortie would be attempted. If the expression may be allowed, we almost extinguished the fire of their cannon by our musketry.

"About six o'clock in the evening the fire of the enemy increased with renewed vigor, and continued till eight. We returned it briskly. We had taken effectual measures to secure our post, and keep the enemy in the fort all night; and after having put ourselves in the best position possible, we called out to the English, that if they desired a parley with us, we would cease firing. They accepted the proposal. A captain came out, and I sent *M. de Mercier* to receive him, and went to the Meadow myself, when we told him, that not being at war, we were willing to save them from the cruelties to which they would expose themselves on the part of the savages, by an obstinate resistance; that we would take from them all the hope of escape during the night; that we consented nevertheless to show them favor, as we had come only to avenge the *assassination* which they had inflicted upon my brother, in violation of the most sacred laws, and to oblige them to depart from the territories of the King. We agreed then to accord to them the capitulation, a copy of which is hereunto annexed.

"We considered that nothing could be more advantageous to the nation than this capitulation, and it was unnatural in the time of peace to take prisoners. We made the English consent to sign that they had *assassinated* my brother in his camp. We took hostages for the French, who were in their power; we caused them to abandon the lands belonging to the King; we obliged them to leave their cannon, which consisted of nine pieces; we had destroyed all their horses and cattle, and made them sign that the favor we granted them was only to prove how much we desired to treat them as friends. That very night the articles were signed, and I received in camp the hostages whom I had demanded.

“On the 4<sup>th</sup>, at the dawn of day, I sent a detachment to take possession of the fort. The garrison defiled, and the number of their dead and wounded excited my pity, in spite of the resentment which I felt for the manner in which they had taken away the life of my brother.

“The savages, who in everything had adhered to my wishes, claimed the right to plunder, but I prevented them. The English struck with a panic, took flight, and left their flag and one of their colors. I demolished the fort, and M. de Mercier caused the cannon to be broken, as also the one granted by the capitulation, the English not being able to take it away. I hastened my departure, after having burst open the casks of liquor, to prevent the disorders which would otherwise infallibly have followed. One of my Indians took ten Englishmen, whom he brought to me, and whom I sent back by another.”\*

Such is the statement of M. de Villiers. The incident mentioned at the close, of a Indian taking ten Englishmen, is so ludicrous, that it must necessarily cast a shade of doubt over the whole, and cause one to suspect the writer’s accuracy of facts, and soundness of judgment, whatever we may think of the fertility of his imagination, and his exuberant self-complacency.

Washington’s remarks on this extract were communicated in the following letter, to a gentleman who had previously written to him on this subject:

“SIR: – I am really sorry that I have it not in my power to answer your request in a more satisfactory manner. If you had favored me with a journal a few days sooner, I would have examined it carefully, and endeavored to point out such errors as might conduce to your use, my advantage, and the public satisfaction; but not it is out on my power.

“I had no time to make my remarks upon the peace, which is called my journal. The enclosed are observations on the French notes. They are of no use to me separated, nor will they, I believe, be of any to you; yet I send them unconnected and incoherent as they were taken, for I have no opportunity to correct them.

“In regard to the journal, I can only observe in general, that I kept no regular one during that expedition; rough minutes of occurrences I certainly took, and find them certainly and strangely metamorphosed; some parts left out, which I remembered were entered, and many things added that were never thought of; the names of men and things egregiously miscalled; and the whole of what I saw Englished is very incorrect and nonsensical; yet, I will not pretend to say that the little body who brought it to me, has not made a literal translation, and a good one.

“Short as my time is, I cannot help remarking on Villiers’ account of the battle of, and transactions at, the Meadows, as it is very extraordinary, and not less erroneous than inconsistent. He says the French received the first fire. It is well known that we received it at six hundred paces distance. He also says, our fears obliged us to retreat in a most disorderly manner after the capitulation. How is this inconsistent with his other accounts? He acknowledges that we sustained the attack warmly from ten in the morning until dark, and that he called first to parley, which strongly indicates that we were not totally absorbed in fear. If the gentleman in his account had adhered to the truth, he must have confessed, that we looked upon his offer to parley as an artifice to get into and examine our trenches, and refused on this account, until they desired an officer might be sent to them, and gave their parole for his safe return. He might also, if he had been as great a lover of the truth as he was of vain-glory, have said, that we absolutely refused their first and second proposals, and would consent to capitulate on no other terms than such as we obtained. That we were wilfully, or ignorantly, deceived by our interpreter in regard to the word *assassination*, I do aver, and will to my dying moment; – so will every officer that was present. The interpreter was a Dutchman, little acquainted with the English tongue, therefore might not advert to the tone and meaning of the word in English; but whatever his motives were for so doing, certain it is, he called it the *death*, or the *loss* of Sieur Jumonville. So we received and so we understood it, until, to our great surprise and mortification, we found it otherwise in a literal translation.

“That we left our baggage and horses at the Meadows is certain; that there was not even a possibility to bring them away is equally certain, as we had every horse belonging to the camp killed or taken away during the action; so that it was impracticable to bring anything off, that our shoulders were not able to bear; and to wait there was impossible, for we had scarce three days’ provisions, and were seventy miles from a supply; yet, to say we came off precipitately is absolutely false; notwithstanding they did, contrary

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\* Memoire Contenant le Preics des Faits, &c., p. 147.

to articles, suffer their Indians to pillage our baggage,\* and commit all kinds of irregularity; we were with them until ten o'clock the next day; we destroyed our powder and other stores, nay even our private baggage, to prevent its falling into their hands, as we could not bring it off. When we had got about a mile from the place of action, we missed two or three of the wounded, and sent a party back to bring them up; this is the party he speaks of. We brought them all safe off, and encamped within three miles of the Meadows. These are circumstances, I think, that make it evidently clear, that we were not very apprehensive of danger. The colors he speaks of as left, were a large flag of immense size and weight; our regimental colors were brought off and are now in my possession. Their Gasconades and boasted clemency, must appear in the most ludicrous light to every considerate person, who has read Villiers' journal; such preparations for an attack, such vigor and intrepidity as he pretends to have conducted his march with, such revenge as by his own account appeared in his attack; considered, it will hardly be thought that compassion was his motive for calling a parley. But to sum up the whole, Mr. Villiers pay himself a great compliment in saying, we were struck with a panic when matters were adjusted. We surely could not be afraid without cause, and if we had cause after capitulation, it was a reflection upon himself.

"I do not doubt, but your good nature, will excuse the badness of my paper, and the incoherence of my writing; think you see me in a public house in a crowd, surrounded with noise, and you hit my case. You

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\* James Innes, in a letter to Governor Hamilton, dated at Winchester, 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1754, makes mention of the same:

"Having notice of a person going to your province immediately, I thought it proper on this occasion to give a short detail of what hath lately happened.

"After having regulated the march and transportation of the North Carolina regiment, I immediately proceeded to Williamsburg, and by my commission from Governor Dinwiddie as commander-in-chief of this expedition, I proceeded to Winchester, where I arrived the thirtieth of June, in order to take command upon me, and bring up the two New York independent companies, with those of the North Carolina regiment, then upon their march from Alexandria for this town.

"Colonel Washington with the Virginia Regiment, and Captain McKay with the South Carolina Independent Company, together did consist but of four hundred men, of which a good many were sick and out of order. On the third of July, the French with about nine hundred men and a considerable body of Indians, came down upon our encampment, and continued to fire from all quarters, from eleven in the morning till night; when the French Called out to our people, they would give them good conditions if they would capitulate. A copy of which I here enclose you.

"After the capitulation the French demolished the works, and in some time after retired to the Ohio, taking two captains as hostages along with them. We all know the French are a people that never pay any regard to treaties longer than they find them consistent with their interest, and this treaty they broke immediately by letting the Indians demolish and destroy everything our people had, especially the Doctor's box, that our wounded should meet with no relief. In this action, it is said, we had about one hundred killed and wounded – a third whereof is supposed to be killed. It is reported we killed double the number of the French.

"If this does not alarm the neighboring governments nothing can, and I make no doubt but the French will soon claim this fine body of land as their right by conquest, if we do not immediately raise a sufficient force to convince them of the contrary. What I can learn of their forces is, that they had seven hundred of their first division, eight hundred in the next, and five hundred in the last, not as yet joined, which, with their Indians, makes a considerable body.

"Colonel Washington and Captain McKay told me there were many of our friendly Indians along with the French, sundry of which came up and spoke to them, told them they were brothers, and asked them how they did, particularly Susquehannah Jack, and others distinguished themselves by their names. It is also reported there were sundry of Delawares there. We had not one Indian to assist when the action commenced or ended.

"It is my real opinion that nothing will secure to us the Indians now in our friendship, if we allow ourselves to be baffled by the French; as it is very natural and common for a more polite people than the Indians to side with the strongest; so there is a necessity either to go into the case in dispute heartily at once, or to give up entirely. We all may see the unlimited encroachments of the French, who in time will very modestly look on every part of America as their right, if they can worm the unhappy and unthinking people out of it by degrees, which at last must happen by the same rule. Witness Hispaniola from the Spaniards, and St. Lucia from us. Many more instances might be given to which you are no stranger."

do me particular honor in offering your friendship; I wish I may be so happy as always to merit it, and deserve your correspondence, which I should be glad to cultivate.”

In September, somewhat more than two months after the capitulation, Capt. Mackay wrote to Washington from Will’s creek, stating that he had recently returned to Philadelphia, and adding. “I had several disputes about our capitulation, but I satisfied every person that mentioned the subject, as to the articles in question, they were owing to a bad interpreter, and contrary to the translation made to us when we signed them.

No more need to be said to show the true light, in which the capitulation was understood by Washington and his officers. It is not to be inferred, however, that M. de Villiers was knowingly guilty of an imposition, in regard to the clause relating to the death of his brother. On the contrary, it seems more that probable, that he really believed the report of the *assassination*, for he had received no other intelligence, or explanation, than the rumor brought to M. de Contrecoeur, by the Canadian and the savages. This fact, however, does not lessen the injury done to Washington, in seriously using the articles of capitulation as a historical document to sanction a charge, equally untrue in all its essential particulars, and unjust in its application.

When the Virginia House of Burgesses met in August, they requested the Governor to lay before them a copy of the capitulation, and, upon due consideration of the subject, passed a vote of thanks to Colonel Washington and his officers, “for their bravery and gallant defense of their country.” The names of all the officers were enumerated, except those of the Major of the regiment, and of Captain Vanbraam, the former of whom was charged with cowardice, and the latter of having acted a treacherous part in his interpretation of the articles. The Burgesses, also, in an address to the Governor, expressed their approbation of the instructions he had given to the officers and forces sent on the Ohio expedition. In short, all the proceedings of the campaign were not only approved, but applauded, by the representatives of the people, and by the public generally. A pistole was granted to each of the soldiers, who had been in the arrangement.

To the vote of thanks, Washington replied as follows:

WILLIAMSBURG, October 23, 1754.

*“To the Speaker of the House of Burgesses:*

“SIR: – Nothing could give me, and the officers under my command, greater satisfaction, than to receive the thanks of the House of Burgesses, in so particular and public a manner, for our behaviour in the late unsuccessful engagement with the French; and we unanimously hope, that our future proceedings in the service of our country will entitle us to a continuance of your approbation. I assure you, sir, I shall always look upon it as my indispensable duty to endeavor to deserve it.

“I was desired by the officers of the Virginia Regiment to make their suitable acknowledgements for the honor they have received in your thanks; I therefore, hope the enclosed will be agreeable, and answer their, and the intended purpose of,

“Sir, your most obedient and humble servant,

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

*“To the Worshipful, the Speaker, and the gentlemen of their Houses of Burgesses:*

“We, the officers of the Virginia regiment, are highly sensible of the particular mark of distinction, with which you have honored us, in returning you thank for our behaviour in the late action, and cannot help testifying our grateful acknowledgements for your high sense of what we shall always esteem a duty to our country and the best of kings.

“Favored with your regard, we shall zealously endeavor to deserve your applause, and by our future actions strive to convince the worshipful House of Burgesses, how much we esteem their approbation, and, as it ought to be, regard it as the voice of our country.

“Signed for the whole corps.

“GEORGE WASHINGTON.”

The exact number of men engaged in the action of the Great Meadows cannot be ascertained. The Virginia regiment consisted of three hundred and five, including officers, of whom twelve were killed and forty-three wounded. These numbers are stated in a return made out by Col. Washington himself. Capt. Mackay’s independent company was supposed to contain about one hundred, but the number of killed and wounded is not known. The two independent companies from New York, which arrived at Alexandria,

never joined the Virginia regiment, although former writers, in describing this event, have said they were present. The amount of the French force is also uncertain. It is believed by Col. Washington, from such information as he could get, to consist of nine hundred men. M. de Villiers says, that he left Fort Duquesne with five hundred Frenchmen and eleven Indians. The number of French, is perhaps correct, but the Indians were much more numerous, when they arrived at the scene of action; and there is good reason for believing, that the French and Indians together made a body of at least nine hundred.

It was a subject of mortification of Colonel Washington, that Gov. Dinwiddie refused to ratify the capitulation in regard to the French Prisoners. The Governor thus explained his conduct in a letter to the Board of trade – “The French, after the capitulation entered into with Colonel Washington, took eight of our people and exposed them to sale, and missing thereof, sent them prisoners to Canada. On hearing of this I detained the seventeen prisoners, the officer, and two cadets, as I am of opinion, after they were in my custody, Washington could not engage for their being returned. I have ordered a flag of truce to be sent to the French, offering the return of their officer and two cadets for the two hostages they have of ours.” This course of proceeding was not suitable to the principles of honor and sense of equity entertained by Colonel Washington, but he had no further control of the affair.

The hostages were not returned, as requested by the governor’s flag of truce, and the French prisoners were detained in Virginia, and supported and clothed at the public charge, having a weekly allowance for that purpose. The private men were kept in confinement, but Drouillon and the two cadets were allowed to go at large, first in Williamsburg, the at Winchester, and last at Alexandria, where they resided when General Braddock arrived. It was then deemed improper for them to go at large, observing the motion of the general’s army, and the Governor applied the Commodore Keppel to take them on board his ship; but he declined, on the ground that he had no instructions about prisoners. By the advice of General Braddock, the privates were put on board the transports, and sent to England. Mr. Drouillon and the cadets were passengers in another ship at the charge of the colony. La Force, having been only a volunteer in the skirmish, and not in a military capacity, and having previously committed acts of depredation on the frontiers, was kept in prison in Williamsburg. Being a person of ready resources and an enterprising spirit, he broke from prison and made his way several miles into the country, where his foreign accent betrayed him, and he was taken up and remanded to close confinement.”\*

The conduct and courage of Colonel Washington, in his surprise and capture of the French detachment under Jumonville, and in the battle of the Great Meadows, were greatly applauded, and the assembly of Virginia voted thanks to him and his officers. He retreated to Will’s creek, and the French retired to their position at the junction of the Monongahela and Allegheny.†

After the battle of the Great Meadows, Colonel Innes was ordered to Will’s creek to construct a fort, which would serve as a rallying point to the remaining forces, and a guard to the frontiers. This was afterwards called *Fort Cumberland*. It was chiefly built by the three independent companies; one from South Carolina, under Captain Mackay, and two others from New York, which were on their march from Alexandria to join Washington, at the time of the action at the Great Meadows. Ten four pounders, besides swivels, were mounted in the Fort.‡

The remains of the army were collected here, together with a company from Maryland; but in consequence of the funds being exhausted and no pledge of future payment, the troops returned home, and left the frontiers without defense.

The necessity of taking bolder measures to contend with the combined forces of the French and Indians, was now evident to the English. The Assembly of Virginia met in October, and granted twenty thousand pounds for the public exigencies, and the Governor received from England ten thousand pounds sterling in specie, with the promise of ten thousand more, and two thousand stand of arms. Upon this he resolved to enlarge the army to ten companies of one hundred men each, and to reduce them all to independent companies, by which there would be no officer in the Virginia regiment above the rank of captain. This expedient he supposed would remedy the difficulty about rank, and the right to command, which had heretofore been the cause of much contention between the Colonial and British troops. Washington accordingly resigned, as he would not accept a lower commission than the one he held, and

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\* Spark’s Washington, Vol. II. p. 456-68.

† Gordon’s History of Penn’a., p. 283 – Spark’s, Vol. II. p. 464.

‡ Spark’s Washington, Vol. II. p. 68.

under which he had exhibited a rare example of bravery and good conduct, that had gained him the applause of the Country\*.

In the meantime Governor sharpe, of Maryland, had received an appointment from the King of England, as commander-in-chief of all the forces engaged against the French; and Colonel Fitzhugh the second in command. Knowing the value of Colonel Washington's experience and reputation, the Commander-in-chief endeavored to bring him back into the army; but Washington, although attached to the service, declined the gradation which would have been planned by Governor Dinwiddie, probably in concert with other British officers.†

Thus ended the military operations of the year 1754. The English colonists had been driven east of the mountains, and the French were in actual possession of the whole West, watered by the Ohio and its tributaries.

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\* Spark's Washington, Vol. II. p. 64.

† Spark's Washington, Vol. II. p. 67.