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INDIAN SIEGES,

I. SIEGE OF DETROIT - PONTIAC - PART II.

The Simple Story, by O. O. Howard, Major-General, U.S. Army, (Retired).

Dear Boys:-

Arthur would like to know if Pontiac, like so many Indian Chiefs, was a great orator.

Yes, Pontiac was very much like the famous Apache Chief Cochise in his oratory. He began very quietly, but became more and more excited as his hearers were aroused and with fiery eyes and deep guttural voices uttered their words of approval. His attitude and gestures indicated something of his strong will and his fiery temper, when he threw up his hand as if to strike!

After numerous small bands had found their way to Detroit and had been welcomed by the great Chief to his village, Pontiac called to his lodge on the island the chiefs and warriors whom he trusted. At this big talk Pontiac said (in substance): "The time has come for the Indians to drive out the English; very soon the French, who have been conquered, will take up arms again, and help us hold all the forts which we will take."

He gave them the story of the Delaware dreamer, which was that he, the medicine man, had been led to the top of a mountain and that he had been met there by the Great Father of all. He had sent him back as a messenger to Pontiac, to all the Iroquois, to the Delawares, and to all the other Indians; they must put away from amongst them everything that belonged to the white men; they must take up their old weapons and methods of warfare; and He, the Great Father, would be with them and in spirit help them to destroy all the English soldiers and settlers; but the Great Father charged them to remember the kindness and helpfulness of the French people and never hurt one of the Frenchmen or their fami-

lies.

This message was delivered to the Indians with deep earnestness and believed without question. He then unfolded the part of his plan which was to take Fort Detroit by strategy, kill all the garrison and English white men near by and then go and help their brothers elsewhere.

After this big talk held on the 5th of May, the Chiefs and warriors returned to their several lodges and behaved for the most part the same as if nothing was to take place; but it is said that on the 5th a Canadian woman had come into the village of the Ottawas to make some purchases. As she was leaving she noticed some of the warriors shortening their rifles by the use of the saw and file; the Indians having borrowed these implements from a blacksmith near their village had excited in his mind some suspicion. All this was conveyed to Major Gladwyn, the commander of the Fort. He laughed at these stories and said at first that they could mean nothing; but on the 6th of May an Ojibway girl came from the Potawatamie village to the Major, pretending to make some sales to members of the garrison, as beaded moccasins and other Indian work. The Major, who had been much attached to her for some time, noticed her apparent depression of spirit and began to rally her, and ask what the matter was. At last, though she was sure that it would cause her punishment and probably her death, her affection for Gladwyn was so great that suddenly, as she could speak English, she opened her lips and told him the whole truth, - that the next day Pontiac would lead the Indians to the Fort and gain an entrance, telling some plausible tale; but they would go in with their blankets around them, and under every blanket would be one of those short rifles in hand well loaded. Pontiac was to bring a wampum belt, a nice and attractive one, and make a patriotic speech in the interest of the English and flattering to Gladwyn, and present it to him; when he turned the belt inside out that was to be a signal to the Indians to commence the attack upon the officers and those

near, while outside braves promptly surprised and slaughtered the garrison.

Major Gladwyn thanked the girl, and promising not to reveal her story or connect her with it, told her to go back to her people and go quietly about her ordinary work. All night long it is said that the Major walked post on the ramparts after he had given orders for a thorough preparation for the morrow. It took a good stout heart as well as a clear head to be ready for such an emergency.

The manner Pontiac, a few days before, had taken account of everything inside the fort was a shrewd one. He asked permission for some thirty or forty of his followers to give a harmless dance on the parade-ground to the amusement of the soldiers and their families. While this was being done a designated number of his men were taking note, not by writing but by their sharp eyes, of everything that Pontiac wanted to know about the garrison. This is what a soldier would call a careful reconnaissance before attack.

Arthur thought that Pontiac's coming with his warriors in attendance would have warned Major Gladwyn.

Yes, but Pontiac was quick witted. He had a small host in all sorts of rig, from finery to shabbiness - some painted, having their hair flying and topped off with feathers, some in blankets of all colors, and others half naked, gathered in the open near the fort. He set them to playing their wildest ball-game. This crowd, excited and shouting, hardly noticed the Chief and his sixty men who were crossing in canoes. Many kept out of sight by lying down in the bottom of their boats. As soon as they landed, in respectful Indian file they went straight to the fort. Their blankets hung from their necks and shoulders, the new weapons hidden beneath held in hand.

As soon as Pontiac's column had passed the gate-way, the Chief

saw that something strange was on foot. The garrison was all under arms and well arranged. As he entered the Council chamber, Major Gladwyn and staff sat in the arm chairs ready to receive the red men. Orderlies were near, and sufficient guards to prevent mischief were properly stationed.

Pontiac was taken aback and his warriors held their blankets together to prevent a glimpse of the concealed rifles. Though chagrined and bitterly disappointed he was able, indian like, to control his features; looking around he inquired courteously, "Why, my father, all this show?"

"Oh, only to exercise my soldiers."

To gracefully give Gladwyn the belt, Pontiac made his speech. The Major keenly watched that wampum belt. As the Chief began to turn it in his hand instantly there was a signal - a call and loud drumbeats outside in the fort. Thus Pontiac knew his plan of massacre had been betrayed. The two, Gladwyn and the Chief, like good friends parted as they met without apparent emotion, and the Indians returned to their lodges.

Arthur here inquired: "Were there then many Indians near Detroit?"

Yes, already more than 800 warriors - a new band of the Ojibways remarkable for their fierceness and hatred of the English had come from the upper lakes.

Pontiac, rushing home, caused his own, the Ottawa village, in great haste to be crossed to the west side. Meanwhile he held a large Council in the great bark structure which the Potawatamies had put up for him.

On this occasion his was no ordinary eloquence. Here are a few of his words: "My Brothers: We must wipe out this (English) nation. We can no longer supply our wants as we did when the French sold to us and bought our furs and other things. The English show no kindness as

the French did, and they treat us like dogs. x x x Now is the time - let us strike. I have sent out the red tomahawk and the belt to the men of our Nation asking them to join us. While they are coming let us begin - let us strike. When the English are wiped out we will stop up the ways so that no more can come to our lands." x x x

The following Monday the weather was fair and Pontiac with forty of his principal men proceeded again to the fort. His plan was to have another talk with Gladwyn. His reasons for it are not very clear - probably to try again to allay all suspicion of hostile intentions till the ~~Some of the forty brave~~ ~~sayers-in-wait~~ could get a footing inside the palisades.

Major Gladwyn met the party at his gate. The Chief asked to enter with his friends.

"No, Pontiac, you can come in, but none of your riotous crew can enter this fort."

Arthur - "What happened then?"

As soon as Pontiac told them the answer, the forty men and all the crowd of waiting Indians rushed away giving the Indian war cries - leaping, dancing and yelping in savage fashion. Some of them ran to the house of a poor old English woman, killed her and carried off her scalp; others on the isle (au-Couchon) found an aged English sergeant. They tomahawked him and also took his scalp. Pontiac did not order these murders. That was the infuriated savages' way of beginning war.

Now all possible preparations were made by Pontiac for a siege, such as wild Indians would execute. The Ottawas and Ojibways were above and the Potawatamies below the fort, and the Wyandots opposite on the other side of the river. Two armed schooners, belonging to the garrison, anchored in the channel near enough for constant communication.

With their bows and arrows and all the rifles they could get, the red warriors stopped every road and pathway of approach and in angry

groups watched the river above and below for miles. Many whites were intercepted and slain.

On and after the 12th of May the fort was completely invested - through the cracks of the palisades a hand or head exposed was fired at. Some outbuildings gave shelter to the Indian sharpshooters. At last by the use of a field piece firing hot nails and spikes these were set on fire and the foe driven in yelling crowds back to the shelter of the woods.

It would weary you, Arthur, to follow the details of this siege. Pontiac had a difficult job to protect all the French inhabitants, but he did so. Some of them took on arms and war paint and fought as Indians, but most of them tried their best to be neutral.

Arthur - "Did Pontiac have any leaders of his own to help him?"

He had, of course, the Chiefs and sub-chiefs of tribes, who made very good commanders of small detachments, but it is said that Pontiac always directed in person 250 Ottawas or more, and he had over 150 Potawatamies under Chief Ninivay, 51 Wyandots under Chief Takee, and 200 Ojibways under Chief Wasson; and there were 170 more Ojibways under their own Chief, Sekahos. These warriors represented altogether an Indian population round about Detroit during the siege of upwards of 3000 souls. Some times all the tribes would be hovering about the palisades firing at every loophole and continuing their savage work for six or eight hours at a time. Sometimes they constructed fire rafts and sent them in hot blaze down the river with the hope of setting the vessels on fire, but they did not succeed in this attempt.

Arthur - "How long did this dreadful siege continue?"

It held on, sometimes abating in vigor and sometimes continued with great cruelty, for fifteen months. I will give you two or three instances of attempts to send supplies and reinforcements to Major

Gladwyn.

Arthur - "What became of Major Rogers, who went up to Fort Niagara?"

He commanded an expedition which came to the mouth of the Delaware River where it flows into Lake Erie, the last part of July, 1763. Under the cover of a fog, with his flotilla, he made out to escape the attention of the sharp-eyed Indians. In an early morning when the fog was rising the garrison caught a glimpse of Rogers' fleet of barges apparently approaching the fort. The poor besieged strained their nerves and eyes to look; they were very anxious for they had been deceived several times by the apparent approach of relief which failed them. As soon as Major Gladwyn was satisfied that friends were coming he had a salute fired and very soon answers were made from the vessels. The news went out on swift wings, until every member of the garrison and every French settler, and, in fact, every Indian in their villages and along the shore, knew that Major Rogers and relief had come. It was a wonderful scene when friend met friend and tears coursed down the cheeks of those who came and of the besieged, now filled with joy. Soon the reinforcements were disembarked and properly quartered. Major Gladwyn was able to enlarge the space of his occupancy of the grounds outside of the fort.

It is said that Captain Dalzell, who came with Rogers, a soldier of great courage and ability, begged for the opportunity to lead a sortie with the hope of surprising Pontiac's forces. They were at this time encamped just above Parent's Creek (Now called Bloody River) not quite two miles from the fort. Major Gladwyn discouraged the offer of the ambitious captain, probably on account of his knowledge of the exceeding watchfulness of Pontiac and his followers; but finally yielded to his earnest plea.

The night of the 31st of July was selected for the effort and it probably would have been a success except that the neutral white men (French Canadians) were a little too friendly with the hostiles and somehow gave them hints. The attack was made between three and four o'clock in the morning. Lieut. Brown led the advance. The main body was under Captain Gray, and the rear guard was in charge of Captain Grant. Every Indian Chief was on the alert. Brown with his guard had just crossed the bridge and Gray's force was just crossing when a terrible yell arose from all around them and a well directed Indian fire killed or wounded a third of their force. The officers by almost superhuman exertion managed to keep a remnant together; but Dalzell, undertaking to save one of his men, was slain. The brave Major Rogers pushed out a detachment as far as the house of a Canadian farmer; and Captain Grant, some distance ahead, taking advantage of well grown trees and some fences, held the overwhelming force of Indians in check ~~####~~, until the detachment, few in number, worked its way back to the shelter of the fort. The terrible conflict had continued for upwards of six hours and fifty-nine soldiers had been killed or wounded. The great joy from the reinforcement two days before was now followed by intense sorrow and depression, and, as is always the case in active warfare, the sorrow and depression of the English was followed by almost demoniac joy on the part of the Indians. Their numbers were now greatly increased and the siege prosecuted with renewed vigor.

Arthur - "Can you tell us of any more efforts during that long siege to help the garrison?"

News travelled very slowly in those days, and General Jeffreys Amherst of New York had little news for a long, long time. At one time one of the schooners, named Gladwyn, went from Detroit to Niagara and returned. She had on board besides the crew and guard, six

Iroquois supposed to be friendly. After getting into the stream below the fort the Captain allowed the Iroquois Indians to go ashore. The weather continuing unfavorable the schooner did not come up to the usual anchorage.

The night after the six Iroquois left the vessel some 350 savaged after midnight began to clamber up the sides of the schooner. The guard and crew acted bravely and met the Indians with a sharp fire as their heads appeared over the bulwarks; several sprang on board; then a fierce deck fight ensued. There were so many Indians that the white men had no hope for their lives, so there was nothing to do but continue the fight, for if they gave up they would all be killed and mutilated. One of the officers of the vessel suddenly cried out in English: "Blow up the schooner!" An Indian who understood English screamed the news to his comrades in a shrill voice: "Run for your lives; the ship will be blown up!"

The Indians were instantly terrified and rushed to the boats without delay. Of course the contest was ended. Not a half dozen of the guard and crew escaped being killed or wounded, but there were more than twenty-five Indians disabled by death or wounds and left on the deck of the schooner. This time the schooner "Gladwyn" was successful in getting to the anchorage and in delivering to the garrison a quantity of much needed supplies, yet the soldiers had to be still kept on short rations.

There was, to supply the besieged, another effort made whose termination was very very sad. Quite early in the siege a detachment of nearly a hundred men with ammunition and other supplies were sent forward from Fort Niagara! Meeting with bad weather they were a very long time in getting to the mouth of the Detroit River. For an encampment and rest Lieutenant Cuyler, the commander, had had his men

go ashore and into camp. They had hardly become comfortable in their encampment when Indians in large numbers, some from Pontiac, came upon them. Of the one hundred, only forty, rushing for their boats, many of them badly wounded, with Lieutenant Cuyler himself, succeeded in getting away. He soon reported his disaster to the commander of Fort Niagara. The Indians siezed their boats and carried all the prisoners who were not killed with them up the river towards Detroit.

The garrison one morning discovered the approach of the captured boats. They were on sight supposed to be filled with friends. The English Flag in the first boat was seen leading the way, and as the garrison was in much need of supplies there was great joy and great cheering as the boats approached, but suddenly the truth appeared, half naked figures rose up to view after Major Gladwyn had caused the salute to be fired, and the answer was the Indian warwhoop, and everybody knew then that the convoy had been captured. The Indians had caused English soldiers and sailors to row, and in that leading boat it was noticed that a struggle was going on. There were four soldiers rowing and three Indians watching; the steersman, a very strong man, asked to change place with one of the oarsmen. This change was made without exciting suspicion, then suddenly he seized an Indian, lifted him up and threw him into the water, but the Indian clung to his clothing, and, using his knife, gave him a desperate wound, so they went down together and were drowned. Then the two Indians, seeing that they were at a disadvantage, sprang into the water, and the three soldiers left behind pulled for the shore. Other Indians on the shore, however, fired at the soldiers, but they succeeded in getting to the schooner lying at anchor in the river.

The most horrible picture is that of the torture to which the

Indians subjected the remaining prisoners. A very few, however, by becoming slaves to the Indians, saved themselves from outrage and death.

Arthur - "After so much untold suffering, what was the end of the siege?"

Major Gladwyn, resolute and able, never lost heart. Assisted by his officers and faithful men he made a few successful sorties by the help of one of his armed schooners, and managed to do such execution that he killed and wounded a large number of Ottawas and Ojibways, filled the rest with terror and broke up their encampment.

The siege at last ended by two things which unfavorably affected Pontiac and his cause. First, the Wyandots and the Potawatamies made peace with the English commander independent of him, and next, an overwhelming reinforcement sent by command of Gen. Jeffreys Amherst, reached Detroit; and so Pontiac, unable to persecute his war any further, yielded to the solicitations of Sir William Johnson and entered into terms of peace and amity with the English.

On a visit to his friends in St. Louis, a degraded, infamous man, who is called a Kaskaskia Indian, shadowed the Chief and when he was in camp in a grove, came up behind him and with one blow of his tomahawk ~~#####~~ ^{slew him}. This murderer had been bribed ^{by white men} to follow Pontiac and ^{so} end his life.
