WASHINGTON'S RETREAT FROM GREAT MEADOWS 1754

Washington was in command of the little force which had cut its way through the forest, and he did not understand that he had been sent into the West this time merely to bear a message. When, therefore, one day in May (May 28, 1754) he found a party of French lurking at his front in a thicketed glade, he did not hesitate to lead an attacking party of forty against them * * * Men on both sides of the sea knew when they heard the news that war had begun Young Washington had forced the hands of the statesmen in London and Paris, and all Europe presently took fire from the flame he had kindled. In July Washington was obliged to retire. He had only 350 men all told at the rudely intrenched camp which he had constructed in the open glade of "Great Meadows" as the best place to await reinforcements, and in July the French were upon him with a force of 700. All day he fought (July 3, 1754) and in a drenching rain, the French firing from the edges of the woods, his own men in their shallow, flooded trenches in the open; but by night he knew he must give way. The French offered him an honorable capitulation, and the next day let him go untouched, men and arms, with such stores as he could carry. It was a bad beginning at winning the West from the French; and all the worse because it showed how weak the English were at such work.—*From "A History of the American People" by Woodrow Wilson.*

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