

**PRIMARY
SOURCE****BRADDOCK'S DEFEAT**

CHAPTER 3

The beginning of the French and Indian War proved disastrous for the British. In 1755 an advancing force of some 200 Frenchmen and 600 Native Americans soundly defeated about 1,400 British troops within 10 miles of their goal—the strategically located Fort Duquesne. Below is an account of the military disaster written by Benjamin Franklin.

This general was, I think, a brave man, and might probably have made a figure as a good officer in some European war. But he had too much self-confidence; too high an opinion of the validity of regular troops, and too mean a one of both Americans and Indians. George Croghart, our Indian interpreter, joined him on his march with one hundred of those people, who might have been of great use to his army as guides, scouts, etc., if he had treated them kindly. But he slighted and neglected them, and they gradually left him. . . .

Having before revolved in my mind the long line his army must make in their march by a very narrow road, to be cut for them through woods and bushes, and also what I had read of a former defeat of 1,500 French who invaded the Iroquois country, I had conceived some doubts and some fears for the event of the campaign. But I ventured only to say, “. . . The only danger I apprehend of obstruction to your march is from ambuscades of Indians, who, by constant practice, are dexterous in laying and executing them; and the slender line, near four miles long; which your army must make, may expose it to be attacked by surprise in its flanks, and to be cut like a thread into several pieces, which; from their distance, cannot come up in time to support each other.”

He smiled at my ignorance, and replied, “The-

se savages may, indeed, be a formidable enemy to your raw American militia, but upon the King's regular and disciplined troops, sir, it is impossible they should make any impression.” I was conscious of an impropriety in my disputing with a military man in matters of his profession, and said no more.

The enemy, however, did not take the advantage of his army which I apprehended its long line of march exposed it to, but let it advance without interruption till within nine miles of the place; and then, when more in a body . . . and in a more open part of the woods than any it had passed, attacked its advanced guard by a heavy fire from behind trees and bushes, which was the first intelligence the General had of an enemy's being near him. This guard being disordered, the General hurried the troops up to their assistance, which was done in great confusion, through wagons, baggage, and cattle; and presently the fire came upon their flank. The officers, being on horseback, were more easily distinguished, picked out as marks, and fell very fast; and the soldiers were crowded together in a huddle, having or hearing no orders, and standing to be shot at till two-thirds of them were killed; and then, being seized with a panic, the whole fled with precipitation.