

## Clark's Conquest of the Northwest

MAJOR JOSEPH I. LAMBERT, UNITED STATES CAVALRY

In writing of a military leader as successful as George Rogers Clark, one is naturally interested in his previous training and preparation, but one looks in vain for any noticeable amount of study or experience in war. He was too young to have taken part in the French and Indian War where Washington received much of his training. Clark did learn to be a surveyor and thus became acquainted with details of terrain. Little is known of the part that he took in the Dunmore Indian War just preceding the Revolution, but he was either a company commander or served on Lord Dunmore's staff. At the termination of hostilities, he was offered a commission in the British service but declined. For several years preceding the conquest of the Illinois country, he had spent much time going back and forth between his home in Virginia and the new land of Kentucky where he took part in several Indian skirmishes. At this time, he was primarily interested in acquiring land for himself and others in the new country.<sup>1</sup>

During his travels west of the mountains, Clark conceived the daring scheme of wresting the country north of the Ohio River from the British. There was a British garrison at Detroit consisting of about three hundred regulars, besides six hundred French militia, and Indian allies. From Michilimackinac to the Ohio River there was militia in varying degrees of organization. At Vincennes on the Wabash River, there were two hundred fifty members, and, at Kaskaskia and at other French towns along the Mississippi, Philippe de Rocheblave, the commandant, organized the inhabitants into military units. The purpose of these organizations was for protection against the Indians as well as for service under the British. The French had taken the oath of allegiance to Britain but their patriotism to that country was questionable. There were approximately eight thousand Indian warriors in the country north of the Ohio, most of whom the British counted upon as allies.<sup>2</sup> Many

<sup>1</sup>-Henry Pirtle, Ed., *George Rogers Clark's Sketch of His Campaign in the Illinois* (Cleveland, 1907), 7; James A. James, *The Life of George Rogers Clark* (Chicago, 1928), 8-29; William H. English, *Conquest of the Old Northwest* (Indianapolis, 1896), I, 66.

<sup>2</sup> Milo M. Quaife, Ed., *George Rogers Clark's Conquest of the Illinois* (Chicago, 1920), xv.

of these warriors were well organized into groups to make forays on the western settlements of Kentucky, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. Rewards were offered by Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton of Detroit for prisoners, and the Americans accused him of also paying for scalps, thus giving him the name "Hair-Buyer." During the year 1778, Clark investigated thoroughly the strength and organization of the enemy by sending spies into the country. It was his opinion that he could conquer it, including Detroit, with five hundred men.<sup>3</sup> He was counting on persuading the French and some of the Indians to join him against the British.

Although Clark's education was quite limited, he must have possessed persuasive powers of a high order, for he soon convinced Governor Patrick Henry of Virginia and his councillors of the feasibility of an expedition to conquer the Ohio country. He was given power to enlist men and an order to gather supplies from Fort Pitt. He soon recruited a sizeable force in the backwoods country, but on account of the jealousy of Virginia and Pennsylvania and the opposition to sending men so far away, the numbers were reduced to one hundred fifty. He was also expecting two hundred men from the Holston River country to join him in Kentucky, but politics played a strong rôle here too in persuading many not to serve. Clark finally set out from Redstone, Pennsylvania, on May 12, 1778, traveling by boat, mostly at night to elude the Indians. His ability to pick highly competent subordinates was proved by the fact that the four company commanders were Joseph Bowman, Leonard Helm, William Harrod, and John Montgomery, each of whom had previously proved exceptional ability as an Indian fighter and leader.<sup>4</sup>

While voyaging down the Ohio River, the little army stopped at the fort at the mouth of the Kanawha River and was there informed that a band of about two hundred Indians had attacked the fort the day before. Keeping in mind his military mission, Clark refused to pursue them for fear the results would interfere with his plans. He proceeded

<sup>3</sup> Temple Bodley, *George Rogers Clark* (Boston, 1926), 26, 53; Hamilton to Haldimand, St. Vincennes, Dec. 18, 1778, Illinois State Historical Library, *Collections*, I (Springfield, 1903), 227, 236; George Rogers Clark to George Mason, Louisville, Falls of the Ohio, Nov. 19, 1779, *ibid.*, VIII (Springfield, 1912), James Alton James, Ed., *George Rogers Clark Papers, 1771-1781*, 116; Joseph Bowman to George Brinker, Kaskaskia, July 30, 1778, *ibid.*, 615.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Henry to Lieut. George Rogers Clark, Williamsburg, Jan. 2, 1778 (secret instructions), *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, VIII, 34; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, VIII, 117; English, *op. cit.*, I, 105-188.

to the Falls of the Ohio River (Louisville), where he constructed a fort. He decided to use this as a base on which to fall back if necessary. Here he would still be between the Kentucky settlements and the enemy, and would have a secure location for future operations.<sup>5</sup> He built the fort on an island in the river and garrisoned it with twenty families that had accompanied him down the river.

Clark had received two sets of instructions from Governor Patrick Henry, a public one which he used for his authority to enlist men and gather supplies, and a secret one which he showed to no one until he reached the Falls of the Ohio. The public document merely stated that he was to proceed to Kentucky with his army, while the instructions ordered him to attack the enemy posts. When he informed his men that they were to proceed to Kaskaskia on the Mississippi River, some of them objected that they had enlisted only to defend Kentucky and were afraid to proceed so far away amidst thousands of savages and a numerous enemy. Clark tells us that at this time he began to use discipline of a stricter order. He placed guards over the boats, and patrolled the camp, in order to prevent the escape of those wishing to desert. Actually, a few did escape but some of them were brought back and forced to go along. Nearly all Clark's men, it should be stated, were willing to risk their lives in the unknown wilderness, and cheerfully followed the great leader in the cause of the Revolution.<sup>6</sup> While at the Falls, Clark received word of the alliance between the United States and France. This made him more optimistic of winning over the French inhabitants of the Illinois country.

Leaving about twenty families on the island at the falls, Clark's little band started down the Ohio on June 24, 1778. After losses through desertion when the men found out the real purpose of the expedition, and some additions from Kentucky, the force consisted of about 175 men. No horses or wagons were taken and only supplies which could be carried on the men's backs. There is very little available information to indicate that the men had received military training, so essential to success in modern war. During the

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, 132; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers, loc. cit.*, VIII, 117; "Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779," *ibid.*, 220.

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Henry to Clark, Jan. 2, 1778 (secret instructions), *Clark Papers, loc. cit.*, VIII, 34; Clark to Mason, No. 19, 1779, *ibid.*, 118; "Clark's Memoir," *ibid.*, 223; English *op. cit.*, I, 139.

month's stay on the island, they were drilled and trained in such basic duties as guard.<sup>7</sup> There were no uniforms worn, the men being dressed in ordinary frontier garb of long fringed coat, leather breeches, and moccasins, with headgear of wide brimmed hat or coon-skin cap. The men were a hardy lot and capable of taking care of themselves in the wilderness. As Clark was a natural leader, he soon impressed his personality upon the men. Large, strong, and of handsome appearance, he was always ready and resourceful.<sup>8</sup>

Traveling in flatboats, with the oars double-manned, the little expedition dropped down the river. Running day and night, they reached the mouth of the Tennessee River in four days. At this time a party of American hunters was encountered which had recently returned from Kaskaskia. By adroit questioning Clark found out from them that there was no British garrison along the Mississippi and that the French militia did not suspect the coming of his force. He did not wish to set the hunters free and run the risk that they might give information to the enemy, so he persuaded them to join his band. The party proceeded about ten miles down the Ohio to abandoned Fort Massac, where the boats were concealed in a gully.<sup>9</sup> Clark had decided to march overland from this point in order to maintain secrecy of movement. If he had followed the Ohio to its mouth and then proceeded up the Mississippi, the enemy would have discovered him since this route was followed by most voyagers. Following in trace of each other Indian style, they started out after resting one day at the old fort.

Clark chose a difficult and unfrequented route overland to Kaskaskia, a distance of about 120 miles to the northwest on the Mississippi River. For the first fifty miles, the country was so difficult that the men became fatigued. At this time, they came out upon a prairie where there was much danger of being discovered on account of the open nature of the terrain. On the third day, John Saunders, the guide, became confused and for a few hours it looked as if the expedition would fail for want of knowledge of the proper route to follow. Clark was deeply worried, fearing that the

<sup>7</sup> Reuben Gold Thwaites, *How George Rogers Clark Won the Northwest* (Chicago, 1918), 26; English, *op. cit.*, I, 167; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, 118.

<sup>8</sup> Bodley, *op. cit.*, 61.

<sup>9</sup> English, *op. cit.*, I, 167; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, 167.

man might be a traitor who was merely leading them into a trap. The guide was told positively that he would be sent out under guard to find the trail and if he did not do so in a few hours he would be put to death. The trail was soon found and thereafter the only other thing to mar the march was the scarcity of game owing to a drought. On the evening of July 4, 1778, after six days on the march, the last two without food, the command reached the Kaskaskia River about one mile above and across from the town. Clark questioned a French family here and found out that the militia of the village were well organized but did not suspect his presence. He soon found plenty of boats in which to transfer his men to the other side of the Kaskaskia.<sup>10</sup>

To capture Kaskaskia and Fort Gage, Clark used one of the most important principles of war—surprise. In addition, he succeeded through careful planning of details, such as creating the impression that resistance was useless because he was attacking with large numbers. Since all of the surrounding country was inhabited by Indians who were friendly to the French, it is difficult to understand how the Americans actually entered the town and fort before their presence was known. A good explanation is that some of the most famous scouts of the day, such as Simon Kenton, accompanied the expedition. About midnight, they were across the river and ready to attack. Clark divided his force into two parts, one half to attack the town and the other to capture Fort Gage which was just below the town.<sup>11</sup> He commanded the detachment directed against the Fort, where the men arrived without the knowledge of the militia. The gate was open and unguarded and the Americans proceeded to take possession. The commander of the fort, Philippe Rocheblave, a Frenchman, was rudely awakened and made a prisoner, preparatory to sending him to Virginia, since he was known to encourage the Indians to kill and capture Americans in the frontier country. The other half of the command marched into the town where it was divided into groups of four or five men to each group to patrol the streets. The soldiers warned all inhabitants that anyone found outside the houses would be shot. Within fifteen minutes, Clark

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Bowman to John Hite, July 30, 1778, *ibid.*, 613; John Reynolds, *Pioneer History of Illinois* (Chicago, 1887), 93, 281.

<sup>11</sup> Thwaites, *op. cit.*, 27, 81; Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, 120; *Clark's Memoir*, *ibid.*, 228; Bowman to Brinker, July 30, 1778, *ibid.*, 615.

was in possession of the village and fort without firing a round of ammunition. Only when an army is opposed by an improperly trained enemy can such a bloodless victory be gained.

Clark was great as a diplomat as well as a soldier. He realized that his force was not sufficient to hold the country occupied by a hostile population. At first he encouraged the people to believe all of the wicked stories the British had told them of the ferocious Long Knives, the name given to Americans. After terrifying them to the point of begging for their lives, he announced that he would spare them if they would take the oath of fidelity to the United States, which everyone promptly did. He obtained their loyalty further by notifying them of the alliance between America and France, and by assuring them that they would be free to worship according to their own religion. In order to retain the submission of the natives and Indians, Clark used another stratagem during the whole campaign of telling them that he had in reserve a large army at the Falls of the Ohio. In truth, the only persons left there were a few families who volunteered to guard the supplies left at the little fort while they cultivated land in the vicinity.<sup>12</sup>

To push further his plan of surprise, Clark sent Captain Joseph Bowman with thirty men, mounted on horses gathered locally, to continue speedily the conquest of other villages to the northward. Starting out on the day following the arrival at Kaskaskia, this force first occupied Prairie du Rocher about fifteen miles away. Fort Chartres near by was no longer occupied as a military post. The same night St. Philippe, about nine miles farther, was reached, where the news had not yet spread of the arrival of the Americans. Bowman used the well known military principle of never allowing enemy civilians to precede the army. On the next day, the little force rode into Cahokia, sixty miles from Kaskaskia, and received the surrender of the town.<sup>13</sup>

The French settlements along the Mississippi in what is now Illinois were completely within Clark's power in three days time. In order to hold this territory, he left a small garrison at Cahokia and placed the remainder of his force at Kaskaskia. The Indians were yet to be dealt with and

<sup>12</sup> Reynolds, *op. cit.*, 93, 97.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 97; James, *op. cit.*, 121; Bowman to Hite, July 30, 1778, *Clark Papers*, *loc. cit.*, 613.

Clark went to Cahokia where he summoned the surrounding tribes to assemble. After several weeks of negotiations he gained the support of all of them. As they greatly outnumbered his small force it was only through his thorough understanding of human nature that he was able to bring them over to his side. Through frequent visits to the Spanish governor, De Leyba, at St. Louis, Clark gained his wholehearted support of the American cause.

Spies were sent eastward to Vincennes, the large French village on the Wabash River, and it was determined that there was no British garrison at the place. From the first, Clark had the support of Pierre Gibault, the priest at Kaskaskia, and decided to send him to Vincennes to gain the support of the inhabitants. In a short time, Gibault returned saying that the American flag was now waving over Fort Sackville at Vincennes. Captain Leonard Helm was sent there to organize the militia. The wooden fort which was in a good state of repair stood on the bank of the river. The four bastions, standing twelve feet above the wall, were each surmounted by three guns.<sup>14</sup>

It was necessary for Clark soon to turn his attentions to his own men. Theirs was the same story that occurred in all of our early wars. Their short enlistments were up and they wanted to go home. Although Clark had just conquered an empire, he was about to find himself without an army to hold it. Troops had been promised him from Virginia, but none had arrived. He had all but performed miracles with the few men who came with him but he was on the verge of losing this small number. Finally, he persuaded one hundred of the men to remain for eight more months, and, in addition, enlisted a company of French natives. The reorganized force started a rigid system of regular training and in a short time Clark tells us no garrison could boast of better order or a finer set of men. To deceive the inhabitants and Indians, especially the British spies, in regard to his real strength, Clark never permitted his men to parade in public. The men to be discharged were sent back to the Falls of the Ohio. The fort at that place was shifted to the mainland in order to make it more accessible.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *ibid.*, 122; "Clark's Memoir, 1773-1779," *ibid.*, 238; James, *op. cit.*, 122.

<sup>15</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers, loc. cit.*, 123, 129; "Clark's Memoir," *ibid.*, 239; Thwaites, *op. cit.*, 37.

As soon as he heard of Clark's occupation of Vincennes, Lieutenant-Governor Henry Hamilton of Detroit made immediate preparations to re-capture it. The French militia at Vincennes had taken the oath of allegiance to the United States, but Clark sent no garrison to occupy it as he could spare no men from Illinois. Captain Helm was acting governor and commander of the militia. Hamilton's force consisted of thirty-six regular troops, eighty French militia, and sixty Indian warriors. After a tedious trip of several weeks from Detroit, his force, which had been increased to five hundred by Indian allies, arrived at Vincennes on December 17, 1778.<sup>16</sup> The militia under Helm refused to fight the British and the post was surrendered without a shot being fired. Hamilton now wished to continue on to Kaskaskia to engage Clark at that place, but, on account of the season of the year, decided to wait until spring when he hoped to gather a much larger force and drive the Americans out of Illinois and Kentucky.<sup>17</sup> During the winter, most of the French and Indians withdrew to their homes leaving a British garrison at Vincennes of about ninety.

Clark was not at once apprised of the loss of Vincennes owing to the fact that the Indians working for the British had captured all of the messengers sent out by Captain Helm. Complete information came on January 29, 1779, when Francis Vigo, a Spanish merchant, returned from Vincennes where he had been detained on suspicion by the British. Clark's prompt action to recover the post was characteristic of the man. He called a conference of his leaders and they concurred in his plan to go at once and re-capture Vincennes. By this time he had the complete coöperation of the inhabitants of the Mississippi valley and decided to ask for volunteers from among them. He soon had enrolled two companies of about sixty men. On February 1, Clark started work on a large row-galley or batteau. It was finished on the third and loaded with two four pounder cannon and four swivel guns in addition to other supplies and ammunition. The next day, the boat, which had been named, the *Willing*, departed under the command of Lieutenant John Rogers and forty-six men. Clark gave orders to Rogers to move the boat down

<sup>16</sup> James, *op. cit.*, 133.

<sup>17</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers, loc. cit.*, 138; "Report by Lieutenant Governor Henry Hamilton on His Proceedings from November, 1776, to June, 1781," *ibid.*, 175-181.



the Mississippi to the mouth of the Ohio, thence up that river to the Wabash, and up that river to a point a few miles below Vincennes. The lieutenant was to coöperate with Clark's force, which was to march overland, and to prevent Indian forays down the Wabash toward Kentucky.<sup>18</sup>

Pack horses and saddles were obtained to carry ammunition and food and enough riding horses for the officers, but no tents were taken.<sup>19</sup> Clark organized his land force into four companies, two of which were native militia, the whole amounting to about 130 men. When it is remembered that Clark had conquered these people only the previous summer, it is remarkable that he had already won their loyalty to such a degree that he had no trouble getting volunteers to fight the British. Most of the little army which originally accompanied him to Illinois had been discharged and some replacements had arrived from Virginia. Amid the cheers of the populace at Kaskaskia, the small army began on the afternoon of February 5, 1779, one of the most dramatic and eventful marches that occurred during the Revolutionary War. They crossed the small Kaskaskia River, made a shakedown march of three miles and then went into bivouac in a drizzly rain. The distance to Vincennes, along the devious way travelled by Clark to avoid detection, was 240 miles. Since it is only 170 miles between Kaskaskia and Vincennes, he went to a great deal of trouble to stay away from the usual route, as will be seen.<sup>20</sup>

From the start the march was severe on account of rain, the flooded condition of the country and the fact that there was no shelter at any time. According to the approved method of that day, camp was made in a square with baggage and animals in the center, with each company guarding a portion. During the first six days of the march, that is, from February 7 to 12, they covered 174 miles, or twenty-eight miles per day, which is remarkable even in good weather and over smooth roads. Although the weather was not freezing, it rained nearly every day. In fact, there had been so much rain that all of the streams were overflowing and the flat ground in the prairies was covered with water. The great effort required to wade through the low places and to cross

<sup>18</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *ibid.*, 156; "Clark's Memoir," *ibid.*, 268; English, *op. cit.*, 280; James, *op. cit.*, 187.

<sup>19</sup> James, *op. cit.*, 187; Bodley, *op. cit.*, 610.

<sup>20</sup> English, *op. cit.*, I, 288.

the streams caused much fatigue, especially since there was no shelter at night. During this period game was plentiful, especially buffalo, and each company took turn at furnishing the meat and cooking for the camp.<sup>21</sup>

Upon their arrival, February 13, at the two Little Wabash Rivers, which were ordinarily three miles apart, they found that the two streams were running as one with a body of water five miles wide. From here onward, Clark's great leadership was the driving force which caused the command to reach its destination. He set to work at once to build a canoe, and to prevent the remainder of the men from getting too discouraged amused them with songs and stories. The baggage was ferried over to a scaffold built in shallow water. Then the pack-horses were brought across and reloaded. All of the command was over by the evening of the fifteenth and camp was made on high ground. All day on the sixteenth, they marched through rain and water. The men were amused by the little drummer floating on his drum. The food was getting low since no more game was found from the time of their arrival at the Little Wabash. After a long march through flooded land, they reached the Embarrass River on the seventeenth only to find that it could not be crossed. The next morning they were amused to hear the reveille gun at Vincennes. A messenger was sent to the rendezvous of the *Willing* to instruct it to join the command. They waded through water down this river to its mouth where camp was made on high ground on the bank of the main Wabash. The men were now entirely without food and some of the militia were talking of returning to Kaskaskia. Several groups were set to work building canoes, while others were sent to the vicinity of Vincennes to steal boats, but these men returned without success. While still at this camp on the twentieth, five Frenchmen were captured travelling in a canoe down the Wabash. They reported that the British did not know of the coming of Clark's men. This day was further made cheerful by the killing of one deer, the first food obtained since the seventeenth.

Hope, that the *Willing* would arrive on time, was given up and the men were ferried across the Wabash on February 21. The horses were left on the west bank of the river. After marching through water all day they made camp on

<sup>21</sup> James, *op. cit.*, 138.

a small hill, but the force was again without food. There were many complaints now from the men and Clark despaired of getting them to proceed. He marched ahead alone to look over the ground but found the water deep. In order to get the men to follow him he decided to resort to a trick. Wetting his hands and pouring some powder in them he rubbed his face to blacken it. He told the men to do likewise, and, before they could question him, he plunged into the water and everyone followed. As the water was deep, they made only three miles this day. Before leaving camp on the twenty-third Clark made a speech to his men, but to make sure that everyone came along on the march, he ordered Captain Bowman with twenty-five picked men to bring up the rear and to shoot anyone who tried to go back. The water was so deep that it was necessary to have the canoes move along with the column to pick up men who were weakened from fatigue. The exhausted column finally reached a dry spot about noon. A canoe with Indian squaws came along and from them Clark got a half-quarter of buffalo meat for his starving men. After a short rest, they plunged again into the cold water and arrived at Warrior's Island during the afternoon. This Island was only two miles from Vincennes and in plain sight of it. The men passed from complete exhaustion to elation and wished to push on at once to the fort.<sup>22</sup>

While still concealed behind the hill, Clark's men noticed toward the town several duck hunters on horse back. One of them was brought in without arousing the suspicions of the others. From him, information was obtained that the British were still unaware of the approach of the Americans. He also stated that the fort had been repaired, and that there were a good many Indians in town. Clark's situation was serious unless he could obtain provisions at once. From information at hand he believed that most of the French inhabitants were friendly and likewise some of the Indians. Since the *Willing* had not arrived, he was without cannon. He was also short of powder on account of part of it getting wet while his force crossed the flooded lowlands. He believed that he could get both powder and food in the town, which he soon did. He decided, before attacking, to warn

<sup>22</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *Clark Papers, loc. cit.*, 140; "Bowman's Journal, February, 1779," *ibid.*, 156-159; "Clark's Memoir," *ibid.*, 268-277.

the people in order to save lives. In doing this, he did not believe the British would gain an advantage in case they found out about his approach as he was now such a short distance away. After the message was sent, he decided to give an effect of large numbers in his force by marching his men in such a way as to show them at the same spot several time. As some of his militia brought guidons, he displayed them above the hill to indicate that he had several companies. Further to conceal his true strength, he waited until dark to attack.<sup>23</sup>

Clark maneuvered to bring his force to the opposite side of the town from the fort. Once more wading through water breast high, they entered the town at eight o'clock in the evening, still without the knowledge of the British as the inhabitants had not notified them of the arrival of the Americans. The Indians upon hearing of the pending fight between the Long-Knives and the red-coats hastily decamped. Lieutenant John Bayley, with fourteen men, was sent to attack Fort Sackville, while the remainder of the command was distributed through the town to watch the people and obtain supplies and munitions. The surprise was so complete that when fire was first opened on the fort the British did not reply as they thought the Indians were shooting their guns to celebrate. After a reconnaissance of the area, Clark ordered Bowman's company to dig entrenchments about the fort. As most of Clark's men were soon ordered to attack the stockade there was brisk firing on both sides. The British cannon were located in the blockhouses eleven feet above the ground and could not be used to shoot at anyone near the walls. The Americans soon found this out and some crawled up as close as thirty yards. In this position, they were safe from the enemy cannon and could see the gunners operating the guns. Several of those operating the cannon were killed or wounded, which was, according to *Bowman's Journal*, "fine sport for the sons of liberty". It became necessary for the portholes to be closed in order to avoid more casualties. Every time a porthole was opened in order to fire a cannon, several marksmen fired into the opening. Clark's men were warned to take no chances of being

<sup>23</sup> Clark to Mason, Nov. 19, 1779, *ibid.*, 279.

<sup>24</sup> "Bowman's Journal, February, 1779," *ibid.*, 160; "Clark's Journal," February, 1779," *ibid.*, 165.

hit, and they must have heeded the advice, for only one man was wounded. A party of thirty men from the fort returned to the edge of the town during the night from a scouting expedition. In order to prevent them from going among the hostile Indians and bringing reinforcements to the fort, Clark decided to draw off some of his men in their vicinity and allow them to re-enter the fort.

At daylight, the Americans near the walls were withdrawn to the entrenchments in order to keep down casualties. Firing was heavy from now until about nine o'clock when Clark sent a message to Hamilton demanding the surrender of the fort. During the truce on the twenty-fourth, the men had their first regular meal since the eighteenth. At the interview between Hamilton and Clark, the latter explained that if the fort was not surrendered at once his men would storm it and probably kill everyone there. After thinking the matter over Hamilton capitulated with the honors of war, giving in his report his reasons as "the remoteness from succor, the state and quantity of provisions, the unanimity of officers and men on its expediency, the honorable terms allowed, and lastly, the confidence in a generous enemy." The British marched out and laid down their arms the next day, February 25, 1779. The British officers and a few of the soldiers were sent away to Williamsburg, Virginia, as prisoners of war, and the French partisans were paroled and sent back to Detroit where Clark knew they would create a favorable feeling for the Americans.

Hamilton had been expecting a convoy of boats with provisions from Detroit about this time. On February 26, Clark sent Captain Helm with fifty men to intercept them. The convoy was surprised a few miles south of Ouiatenon, near the present Lafayette, and the entire force of forty-seven men and seven boats laden with supplies was captured. This booty, valued at \$50,000, was distributed among the soldiers. As the captured property at Fort Sackville was disposed of in a similar manner, Clark's followers were now "rich," except the officers who were not allowed to share in the spoils. Three days after the capture of Fort Sackville, the *Willing* arrived, the crew much chagrined that they were unable on account of delays to take part in the capture of the Fort.

The achievement of Clark's army is one of the finest in

history. Confronted by apparently insurmountable difficulties, it won complete success in the end. On an incredibly miserable march of 240 miles from Kaskaskia to Vincennes the men showed a perseverance that won them permanent fame. To Clark must go the credit for victory in the entire campaign, for it was his leadership, daring, and resourcefulness that kept the army moving toward its goal. Although the number of men in the expedition was small, they were handled in such a way that we recognize in Clark a military commander of a high type. There was coupled with his tactical knowledge a sense of strategy, that brought him to the right place for victory. He must also be given credit as a diplomat for he won over to his cause the loyalty of Frenchmen and Indians wherever he went. His ability to understand the mind of savage or Creole won him support throughout the northwest. Clark's love for the land pictured the country that he fought for filled with settlers, but his military instinct showed him how it could be won. To him and the brave men who followed him must be given the credit for performing the first necessary exploit in the winning from the British the area included in what is now more than five states.