

## PREFACE.

In the correspondence of Governor Sharpe, the earlier portion of which is now for the first time published, we have one of the most precious sources of information concerning a momentous period in our colonial history, the final struggle between England and France for the possession of North America.

About the year 1745, the Marquis de la Galissonière, Governor-General of Canada, foreseeing the approach of the inevitable contest, began to take steps toward realising the gigantic scheme of linking together all the territories that the French possessed or claimed in North America, by a chain of fortified posts, extending, by the way of the St. Lawrence, the lakes, the Ohio and the Mississippi, from the Bay of Fundy to the Gulf of Mexico. His successor, the Marquis Du Quesne de Menneville, in pursuance of this strategy, after connecting Montreal with the Rivière aux Bœufs (now French Creek) in Pennsylvania, by a cordon of small forts, in 1754 made preparations for further advances on such a scale as seriously to alarm the colonial and home governments, which determined to take active measures in resistance.

Horatio Sharpe, who succeeded Ogle as Governor of Maryland in 1753, was a man of both military and colonial experience, having seen service in the West Indies. His appointment was probably due in part to family influence, as his brother John had been one of the guardians of the young Proprietary, Frederick, sixth and last Lord Baltimore; and partly to the obvious expediency of placing a military man at the head of a province so near the French advance, and already threatened by them, as they laid claim to all the lands watered by affluents of the Ohio.

On his arrival, Sharpe proceeded to place himself in communication with the governors of the other colonies, and soon became a sort of centre for all the military operations in the south. Actual hostilities began in April 1754 by the capture of a small English fort at the junction of the Alleghany and Monongahela rivers, by Contrecoeur, the French commander at Rivière aux Bœufs, who at once proceeded to convert it into a formidable fortification, which he called Fort Du Quesne. Col. Joshua Fry had been sent by Gov. Dinwiddie of Virginia to garrison the English post, with about 300 militia and Col. George Washington as his second in command; but before he reached the spot, the fort had been surrendered. When Washington, who was on the march, learned this news, he advanced cautiously, making a road as he went; and while thus employed he fell in with a party of French