

some necessary Cloaths made for the Men who were in great want thereof & a little Field Equipage he would obey General Shirley's Orders by proceeding to N York & making the best of his way to Oswego. As that place is not much less than 400 Miles distant from N York I am afraid he will not be able to reach it & reinforce General Shirley time enough to enable him to make a successful Attempt on Niagara this year & I beleive that without his Assistance that Enterprize will not be undertaken; indeed I think that if the General can secure himself, construct a strong place of Defence on the shore & by the Vessels that are building secure the Lake Ontario this year he will do good Service & be in a fair way of making a Conquest early in the Spring; The Fort & pass of Niagara is in my Opinion the most desirable place in N America as I have before hinted to you & as I intimated to General Braddock upon his Arrival on this Continent in a Letter that beginning with an Apology for my Tardiness in waiting upon him in Person was thus continued What Intelligence we have lately received concerning the French who have been sent to take possession of the Country adjacent to the River Ohio & their present strength in these parts you will know from S^r John S^t Clair & I entertain the most sanguine hopes that their Numbers there will not be found very formidable, but I am apprehensive that unless the Communication between Canada & the Forts & Settlements that the French have made to the Southward of Lake Erie can be cut off it will not be an easy Matter to secure our possession of them after the Success of your Arms has recovered his Majestys Dominions on w^{ch} the French Troops have presumed to incroach the permission or Lycence that that nation obtained some years ago to build a Fort in the Country of the 6 Indian Nations at Niagara (the pass or Streight between the Lakes Erie & Ontario) has now given them the Command over those people, an Opportunity of monopolizing the Trade with the distant Nations & has secured to them a short & easy Communication between their Northern & Southern Colonies—

As they are Masters of Ontario Lake by means of their strong & well garrisoned Fort thereon named Cataracui, & the nature of the Adjacent Country renders a Road to Niagara by Land impracticable, they have not hitherto given themselves much trouble to render that place more defensible than Nature has made it imagining for the two Reasons just mentioned that the English would never attempt the Conquest of it however strongly its vast importance might invite them thereto. At present we have only a Trading House destinguished sometimes by the Appellation of Oswego-Fort on Ontario Lake where perhaps 50 or 60 Men from the New York Independant

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