

THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL.

WHEN the British forces retreated from Concord and Lexington on the 19th of April, 1775, they had but one way open to a place of shelter under the guns of their men-of-war, and that was through Charlestown. Harassed all the way from Lexington to West Cambridge, they could not pass through Cambridge, for a hornet's nest of rebels was there; Lord Percy's reinforcements, which had met the main body retreating through Lexington, had come from Roxbury and found the planks on the Cambridge and Brighton bridge taken up; they had replaced them, it is true, and crossed, but they lost their convoy of provisions, and had the return been made that way, the exhausted troops would have found the bridge planks again up, and this time erected into a barricade. There was a quicker route to the protection of their guns, and when they had passed through West Cambridge they took the road round Prospect Hill, receiving there the hottest fire of any point along the route, and so came into the direct road which led from Cambridge to Charlestown. Down that road they poured, still fired upon and closely pursued, narrowly escaping, too, being headed off by Colonel Pickering with the Essex militia, hurrying forward from Winter Hill, whence they had espied the retreating enemy.

At Charlestown Common, lying just outside of the neck, they found their first relief, General Heath staying the pursuit at this point, for fear of injuring the people of Charlestown. The news of their approach had been growing more distinct all the afternoon, and a great number of people had, in alarm, been making their way into the country over the neck, and by means of Penny Ferry (where Malden bridge now is). It was now after sunset, and people were still streaming out, when the approaching regulars, no longer pursued, spent their rage and fear in discharg-

ing their pieces at boys and women, so that the panic-stricken fugitives turned back and fled to the clay-pits and swamps. The troops poured into town over the narrow neck, calling for drink at the houses and taverns, and finally "encamped on a place called Bunker's Hill." Bunker's private and personal interest in the hill having long since become utterly insignificant, the possessive *s* has gradually been dropped in history, though retained colloquially, and the place called Bunker Hill has come to stand collectively for the two hills, Bunker's and Breed's. Here they were under cover of the guns of their men-of-war, and the next day they were transported back to Boston, to the British garrison there.

The two towns were substantially one as regards commercial interests. The Boston Port Bill, which had been a year in operation, had destroyed the commerce of Boston, and was equally disastrous to that of Charlestown. The assistance given to the poor of one town was extended to those of the other, there being a common stock held between the two towns, distributed in a regular proportion to each, Charlestown receiving seven per cent. of it, and the divided spirit of resolution and of adherence to the governing power was seen in each place. The population of Charlestown at this time was a little over two thousand, concentrated mainly at the foot of the elevation which, highest at Bunker Hill, fell by Breed's Hill to the slope of Moulton's Hill, which met the harbor at Moulton's Point. A ferry plied across the channel to Boston, but no goods could be taken over it without liability to seizure. The effect upon the two towns was alike in the closing of stores, and the general suspension of all trades and industrial pursuits.

The pressure thus brought to bear upon the contumacious rebels by the British government was a part of the theory, in-

sisted upon especially by General Gage, that a strong repressive force at the outset would crush the incipient rebellion. All his movements looked in this direction: he called for reinforcements; he sent out the several parties to secure the arms and ammunition which he knew to be in the province—to Quarry Hill, in what is now Somerville, for the powder stored in the powder-house there; to Cambridge for the two field-pieces there; to Salem for a few brass cannon and gun-carriages, which he did not get, and finally to Concord, to seize the military stores there. Up to this point General Gage was the aggressor. He had a force of about four thousand men, and at least five men-of-war; his barracks and camps were seen in all parts of the town, and fortifications at Boston Neck effectually commanded ingress and egress. He asked for twenty thousand men; he held Boston, as it seemed, securely against attack, and as a point from which to exercise his authority as royal governor. The patriots, on the other hand, avoided taking the aggressive, but they were unceasingly active in thwarting Gage's designs, and in preparing for hostilities whenever the time must come. The authority of the royal governor extended just as far as his guns could carry. Beyond that there were constant drilling of troops, secret meetings, accumulation of military stores and provisions, and that incessant correspondence by committees and private citizens which was making the particles of patriotism cohesive, and uniting them into a solid power of resistance. The tone which Gage took was that of a master of the situation, but the retreat of his expedition to Concord marks the real beginning of the siege of Boston. Immediately upon the issue of that event, Boston was invested by an army of observation which seemed to spring from the ground. From all the country about, from all parts of New England, reinforcements came tumbling into camp at Cambridge. "Even the gray-haired came to assist their countrymen." The Massachusetts Committee of Safety called upon the towns of the colony for men, and sent letters to the other colonies of

New England asking for aid; and aid came before they could ask it. Two days after the battle of Concord twenty thousand men, according to one authority, were on the ground. "So that in the course of two days," writes a British officer, narrating the Concord affair, "from a plentiful town we were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of living on salt provisions, and fairly blocked up in Boston." The Provincial Congress, meeting at Concord on the 22d of April, resolved that an army of thirty thousand was required, and that the quota of Massachusetts should be thirteen thousand six hundred. New Hampshire voted to raise two thousand men, and before that many had enlisted in the Massachusetts regiments. Connecticut voted to send six thousand, Rhode Island fifteen hundred; but there were the separate, distinct army of Massachusetts, army of New Hampshire, army of Rhode Island, army of Connecticut. Good feeling and a common purpose prevailed, but no common organization; there were officers without commands, and companies without officers; many of the minute-men who sprang to arms at the first alarm went back to their farms when the immediate occasion for their services had passed; men came and went, bringing what arms they could, and very efficiently could they use them, if they only had powder with which to charge them. General Ward, who had command of the Massachusetts army, was enfeebled by disease; General Folsom, in command of the New Hampshire army, did not appear for nearly two months after the first New Hampshire forces were in the field; Generals Spencer and Putnam commanded the Connecticut forces, and General Greene the Rhode Island army. The fact that he was commander of the largest body of forces secured for General Ward a tacit recognition as general-in-chief, a recognition which was made formal after the battle of Bunker Hill, when the need of a responsible head had been demonstrated.

This collection of companies of armed men sat down before Boston, beginning a leaguer which was shortly to take the

form of a regular siege. Roxbury and Cambridge and Prospect Hill and Chelsea were occupied, fortifications were begun, and preparations made for maintaining the army of observation in its position. But officers, military and civil, were alike uneasy at the straggling order of the occupation. The passage through Roxbury was very inadequately defended; Dorchester Heights were not occupied; there were as yet no fortifications on Winter Hill or Prospect Hill, and, most important perhaps of all, Charlestown lay undefended, and offering itself as a tempting vantage-ground to the beleaguered forces in Boston. It was under the shore of that peninsula that the British troops had been conveyed when they landed at Lechmere Point on their way to Lexington and Concord; it was over the narrow neck joining the peninsula to the mainland that the same troops had rushed when escaping from the minute-men to the protecting cover of their men-of-war. So aware were the inhabitants of Charlestown of the perilous condition of their town, that preparations for abandoning it began immediately after the affair of the 19th of April, and the two thousand or more inhabitants were reduced in a short time to a bare two hundred. The American authorities aimed to stop all passage to Boston by this avenue, and no one was allowed to enter the town without a pass.

The importance of Charlestown was well understood by the British, and it seems at first blush singular that it was not at once occupied after the Concord fight. But although that encounter had disclosed the determination of the Americans, there was all the reluctance to precipitate further conflict that would belong to forces situated as the British were. General Gage was waiting for reinforcements; when they should arrive he would be able to carry out his plans with a display of military strength which would preclude and not invite opposition. The condition of Boston, with its loyalists who desired protection and its rebels who wished to pass out of the town; the condition of the neighboring country, sending Tories into

Boston and receiving patriots and their families from the town; all this produced an uneasy and shifting state of affairs very unfavorable to secret and prompt military action. Gage was busy adjusting the affairs of the town, and while negotiating with citizens for the safe conduct of those who wished to leave, and giving orders cutting off communication with the country, thereby acknowledging the besieged state of the town, he was contemptuous of the preparations made for hemming in his forces, and resented the idea that the British army was under any necessity of remaining in Boston if they chose to pass out.

Meanwhile the American commanders were growing more and more alive to the situation. The impending conflict was clearly perceived; either the British would throw their forces upon the Roxbury pass to gain possession of that, and occupy Dorchester Heights and Charlestown Heights, or they must themselves strengthen the army at Roxbury and preoccupy the two commanding heights. Whichever army was the first to gain the advantage would be dislodged only at great cost of life and fortune. They urged the colonies to send forward more troops; they studied well the character of the ground; they even resorted to manoeuvres to conceal their weakness from the enemy. General Thomas, with his small force of seven hundred men on the highlands in Roxbury, marched his men round and round the hill by a sort of *coup de théâtre*, and so "multiplied their appearance to any who were reconnoitring them at Boston." On the 12th of May, a joint committee consisting of members of the Committee of Safety and of the council of war recommended the construction of strong works on Prospect Hill, Winter Hill, and Bunker Hill; a strong redoubt on this last place, "with cannon planted there to annoy the enemy coming out of Charlestown, also to annoy them going by water to Medford." "When these are finished," the committee say, "we apprehend the country will be safe from all sallies of the enemy in that quarter." The next day, all the troops

stationed at Cambridge, excepting the guard, marched to Charlestown under command of General Putnam. They were twenty-two hundred in number, and the line was so extended as to reach a mile and a half in length. They passed over Bunker Hill and Breed's Hill and as far as where Charles River bridge now is, returning thence to Cambridge. It was a trial of the nerve of the army. The guns of the enemy in Boston and in the shipping could have made deadly havoc amongst them; but though they were probably watched closely by glasses, no more deadly instrument was leveled at them.

A fortnight after this, May 25th, General Gage's reinforcements arrived in Boston. His forces now counted nearly ten thousand men, and he was supported by Generals Howe, Clinton, and Burgoyne. There could be no longer need to delay active operations. The policy of intimidation could be begun at once, and the incipient rebellion utterly put down. On June 12th appeared Governor Gage's proclamation, declaring martial law, offering pardon to those who should lay down their arms, "excepting only from the benefit of such pardon Samuel Adams and John Hancock, whose offenses are of too flagitious a nature to admit of any other consideration than that of condign punishment." The proclamation, exacerbating the people, provoked a counter proclamation from the Provincial Congress, in which Gage and a few others were excepted from pardon in phrases that mimic those of the first proclamation, and its chief effect was to intimate that the British were about to move, and to stimulate the efforts of the patriots to anticipate them. General Gage, it was ascertained, had fixed upon the night of the 18th of June to take possession of Dorchester Heights. News of this reached the American commanders on Tuesday, the 13th, and the Committee of Safety on the same day called for a statement of the condition of the several regiments; on Thursday, the 15th, they recommended the Provincial Congress to take measures for an immediate increase of

forces, and also counseled the people generally to go to meeting armed on the ensuing Sunday, the day fixed upon by General Gage for his movement. They passed, on this same day, the following resolution:—

"Whereas, it appears of importance to the safety of this colony that possession of the hill called Bunker's Hill, in Charlestown, be securely kept and defended; and also some one hill or hills on Dorchester Neck be likewise secured; therefore, resolved unanimously, that it be recommended to the council of war that the above-mentioned Bunker's Hill be maintained, by sufficient forces being posted there; and as the particular situation of Dorchester Neck is unknown to this committee, they advise that the council of war take and pursue such steps respecting the same as to them shall appear to be for the security of this colony." To guard against the plan leaking out, the resolve was not then recorded, but only after the battle, on the 19th.

This quick succession of resolute movements reveals the spirit of the men who were at the head of affairs; without being able to look to any one leader of transcendent ability and authority, with full knowledge of the ill-organized condition of the army and of the excellent condition of the British troops, knowing too how incomplete was their own supply of ammunition, they did not wait to receive the attack of the enemy, they did not even seek to anticipate him on the ground which they knew he was about to seize first, but by a bold counter movement took the aggressive in another quarter, and encountered great risks determinedly and bravely. Gage was to move upon Dorchester on Sunday, the 18th; on Friday, the 16th of June, the commanders of the American army proceeded to carry out the resolve of the Committee of Safety by taking possession of Bunker Hill.

The centre of the American army was at Cambridge, the main body was quartered on Cambridge Common, and General Ward's headquarters were in the old Holmes mansion. The plans of the coun-

oil were carried on in secrecy. Friday, the 16th, orders were issued for a parade at six o'clock in the evening, about a thousand men from Prescott's, Frye's, and Bridge's regiments, and a fatigue party of two hundred Connecticut troops, being ordered to present themselves with all the intrenching tools in the Cambridge camp; with them also Captain Gridley's company of artillery, consisting of forty-nine men and two field-pieces. The detachment was under command of Colonel William Prescott, whose name has received literary honors in the person of his grandson, and whose own name shines brightly out of the smoke of this engagement. He was one of the patriots, of good birth and high connections, whose faith was steady and courage unquestioned. His brother-in-law, the tory Councillor Willard, had tried to dissuade him from the part he was taking, holding before him the warning of confiscation and death. "I have made up my mind on that subject," he replied. "I think it probable I may be found in arms, but I will never be taken in arms. The tories shall never have the satisfaction of seeing me hanged." With Prescott was the chief engineer of the American forces, Colonel Richard Gridley, who had won his honors at the siege of Louisburg. The expedition carried provisions for one day, and blankets.

Three hours seem to have been spent in necessary preparations. Then prayer was offered by President Langdon, of Harvard College, who had recently been appointed chaplain of the army in Cambridge, standing, tradition says, on the steps of the Holmes house, and at nine o'clock the party started, headed by Colonel Prescott, accompanied by two sergeants bearing dark lanterns open in the rear. The plan of the expedition had as yet been kept secret, but its general purpose could hardly have been unknown to any in the party, after these preparations, when they passed down what is now called Kirkland Street, and marched for two miles, past Inman's woods, under Prospect Hill, into the present Washington Street, and so

leaving Cobble Hill, now crowned by the McLean Asylum, on the right, entered Charlestown Common, halting at Charlestown Neck. It is very likely that two months before, some of this little company had halted just short of this point by General Heath's order, and turned back from following the retreating forces of the British.

A company was now detailed to proceed to the lower part of Charlestown as a guard. Here, also, they were joined by General Israel Putnam, a notable reinforcement. It does not appear that Putnam brought with him any men, but his own presence was a host. Brave, frank, and popular, he was known by sight to a great many other than the fatigue party of two hundred Connecticut men. It was he who had led the troops a month before over this same road, when they had marched to Charlestown and back, to rehearse for a bolder expedition. He had been in the council of war which discussed this movement, and had been, with Prescott, a zealous advocate of it. Impatient of inaction, he was for drawing the British wolf out of its den. Brave himself, he believed in the bravery of the troops. "The Americans," he said "are not afraid of their heads, though very much afraid of their legs; if you cover these, they will fight forever."

After this halt they moved forward again, and took the road which began at the neck and led up Bunker Hill, rising gradually for about three hundred yards, when it reached a height of one hundred and twelve feet, sloping on two sides toward the two rivers which flow on either side of the peninsula. The road descended at the farther end of the hill, and then completely encircled the base of Breed's Hill, a lesser elevation, at that time sixty-two feet in height. Another halt was made after the main body had crossed Bunker Hill, and now, under a waning moon, in the clear starlight, began an earnest consultation as to the plan of intrenchment. The orders, now first disclosed by Colonel Prescott, called distinctly for the fortification of Bunker Hill, but with the

work immediately before them, and in full view of the situation, there at once arose a conflict of judgment as to the intrenching Bunker Hill before Breed's Hill, which was nearer Boston, should be secured. It is possible that the somewhat confused condition of nomenclature furnished those in favor of departing from the literal instruction with an excuse for believing that the name Bunker covered the whole ridge; but in view of the undefined relation which subsisted between the civil and the military authorities, and of the not very strict discipline in the army itself, it is not difficult to see that the most weighty arguments at the time would prevail. "On the pressing importunity of one of the generals," we are told, "it was concluded to proceed to Breed's Hill." Moreover, it was very plain that to hold Bunker Hill would not be to hold Charlestown or to command Boston, and that was the object of the movement. It was decided to fortify Breed's Hill, and afterward to strengthen the position by fortifying Bunker Hill.

Precious time had been expended on this discussion, which it seems incredible should not have been anticipated when the plans were first formed in camp at Cambridge. The troops were marched up the hill, packs were thrown off and guns stacked; and at midnight Colonel Gridley had marked out the plans of a fortification, and the men were at work with spade and pick. A party was also sent out to patrol the shore, and especially to keep watch at the ferry, which lay at the end of Main Street, not far from where a thousand men were silently at work, digging and casting up the loose earth. On the Boston side of the ferry, only a mile distant, lay the Somerset man-of-war. Other men-of-war and floating batteries were about them; the opposite shore was patrolled by sentinels, and every once in a while the cry of "All's well" was heard from the watch on the men-of-war. Twice Colonel Prescott left his men and went down to the river

to reconnoitre, anxious lest their design should be discovered. His great concern was for the erecting of some sort of a protective screen against the attack which he knew was sure to come in the early morning. With all his energy, therefore, he urged forward the work, and doubtless when he recalled the patrol party, a little before dawn, he set them also to work on the intrenchment.

The sun rose on the morning of Saturday, the 17th of June, at about half after four o'clock; less than four hours of darkness, therefore, had been allowed to the little band to build its intrenchments. Yet they had worked to purpose. The redoubt itself, that stood in the gray light of that summer morning, was eight rods square, the southern side, running parallel with Main Street, being constructed "with one projecting and two entering angles. On a line with the eastern side, which faced the Navy Yard, was a breastwork nearly four hundred feet in length, running down the hill toward the Mystic. The sally-port opened upon the angle between this breastwork and the northern side of the redoubt, and was defended by a blind."¹ Within this redoubt and behind this breastwork, between six and seven feet in height, were gathered the brave company of men who had toiled all the night and still kept at work. Prescott was everywhere, cheering them on; mounting the works, his commanding presence was the personal power which, above all official authority, governed men who felt the same ardor which he possessed, and knew how to obey a brave man. General Putnam had returned in the night to Cambridge, to urge forward reinforcements and provisions.

The sentries on the man-of-war *Lively*, relieving each other during the night of the 16th, had not heard the thousand soldiers digging within ear-shot, and their cry of "All's well" had sounded very peacefully, but now as the dawn broke, promising the full splendor of a June day, the work of the night was discovered, and

¹ Ellis. In preparing this article the writer has followed, as every one must now follow, in the track of Frothingham, Ellis, and Swett, using the material

which they have so diligently gathered and consulting the authorities which their thorough research has brought to light and pointed out.

the captain, without waiting for orders, opened fire. The sudden noise of the guns gave the alarm to the fleet, to the army, to all the town of Boston, and must have been heard with beating hearts by the patriots in the town and the waiting companies in Cambridge and Roxbury. Then the firing ceased by order of the admiral. It had served as an alarm, and General Gage promptly acted, calling a council of war at his headquarters in the Province House. There was a division of opinion as to the best method of attacking the rebels, one counsel being that under cover of their men-of-war and floating batteries the men should be landed at Charlestown Common in the rear of the fortifications, and be placed also where they could command the approach to Cambridge. It is said that the majority of the council favored this plan, and certainly it had been regarded as the enemy's probable method by General Ward and his associates when planning the enterprise, so that anxiety was felt not only concerning the holding of Charlestown, but also for the safety of the remaining forces at Cambridge, who might be suddenly called upon to meet the enemy. But General Gage not only apprehended the peril of placing his troops between two bodies of the enemy, in a country which abounded in quagmires, but also depreciated the difficulty of an open attack upon the works. His arguments and his authority combined to determine the mode of attack, and orders were immediately issued for the disposition of the forces.

It was now nine o'clock. Firing had been renewed both from the ships and from a battery of six guns on Copp's Hill, in Boston. One man, a private, rashly venturing outside of the works, had been killed, but as yet the intrenchments afforded a safe protection to the men busily engaged in completing their work, raising platforms of wood or earth upon which to stand when the time should come for returning the enemy's fire. But a hotter fire than that from the British guns descended upon them: the hot sun of a summer morning beat mer-

cilessly upon them, worn out with their night's labor, and under it there was such evident failure of the men's strength that urgent efforts were made to induce Prescott to relieve them from further service. He would not do this; he was vehement against the plan of sending off the men who had raised the work; he doubted if the enemy would undertake to attack them; if they did, still these men were able to defend the redoubt. His own fiery determination, the inspiring power of the day, burned in his men. The plan was dropped, but Prescott sent to General Ward for further reinforcements and supplies, detailing for the purpose Major Brooks, who set out on foot, for Captain Gridley refused to allow him one of his artillery horses, since the safety of his pieces depended upon his ability to remove them at any time; the messenger arrived at Cambridge about ten o'clock, where he found the Committee of Safety.

General Ward was still disinclined to weaken the force at Cambridge, where was held the most important collection of military stores; but Major Brooks's urgent call was seconded by one of the members of the Committee of Safety, Richard Devens, himself a citizen of Charlestown, and after an hour's discussion orders were given for the two New Hampshire regiments — Colonel Stark's, posted at Medford, and Colonel Read's, at Charlestown Neck — to join the forces at Breed's Hill; the companies at Chelsea also, of Gerrish's regiment, were recalled to Cambridge. General Putnam was not in Cambridge when Brooks appeared, but was already on his way back to Charlestown, possibly having met Brooks on the way. Riding back and forth he was constantly seen by the men, but as yet had none of his own troops on the peninsula, excepting the two hundred men who came with the expedition. He rode up to the redoubt and expostulated with Colonel Prescott for allowing the intrenching tools to remain as they were, piled up in the rear of the redoubt. Colonel Prescott replied that if men were sent away with the tools, they would none of them re-

turn; he knew well the discouraged condition of many of them. Putnam declared they would return, and a party was sent with the tools to Bunker Hill, where General Putnam gave orders for them to throw up a breastwork, carrying out the original plan of providing protection in case of retreat. Some of the party seized the opportunity to escape from the impending danger; others took part in the engagement.

Meanwhile the British had been keeping up a cannonade from floating batteries and from the men-of-war, while making active preparation for the assault. The activity in the intrenchments had given way to a rest and an anxious looking for reinforcements and provisions. From Boston many eyes were watching the little redoubt. Only a gun now and then was fired from it, but the movement of men could be seen, — the passing back and forth of messengers, and the tall form of Colonel Prescott as he continued to inspire the little army with bravery. General Gage, leveling his glass at him and seeing his activity, turned to a bystander, Councillor Willard, and asked him who it was.

"It is my brother-in-law, Colonel Prescott," said Willard, and likely enough remembered how he had warned him against the pass he had come to.

"Will he fight?"

"Yes, sir; he is an old soldier, and will fight as long as a drop of blood remains in his veins!"

"The works must be carried."

Half after eleven o'clock was the hour named by General Gage for the regiments and companies to parade with ammunition, blankets, and provisions, and march to Long Wharf and the North Battery, while the remainder of the troops were to hold themselves in readiness to embark at a moment's warning. At noon Colonel Prescott and his men, looking down from their intrenchments, saw twenty light barges come through the channel between Boston and Noddle's Island (East Boston) and make for Moulton's Point, where Chelsea bridge now leads from Charlestown.

The bright sun shone upon their splendid accoutrements and polished firelocks, and, in the bows of the leading barges, upon glittering pieces of ordnance. At the same time the Falcon and the Lively swept the low grounds in front of Breed's Hill, to protect the troops in landing, should any sally be made from the redoubt. But the little band on the hill had not built their intrenchment to throw themselves out of it upon this superior force. Turning their eyes inland, the Americans looked anxiously still for the desired reinforcements. They were under a heavy fire from the Somerset, from floating batteries, and from the battery of the redoubt on Copp's Hill, and they could see the Glasgow frigate and the Symmetry transport moored close under the shore beyond Lechmere Point, raking the narrow neck and making any attempt of reinforcements to cross a perilous one.

The roar of the cannon was heard in Cambridge and immediately it was known that the British had landed. It was just after dinner, and the sudden alarm was communicated by the ringing of bells and beating of drums. Reinforcements were immediately sent forward by General Ward, who reserved only a small number of troops to guard Cambridge, and by General Putnam, who ordered forward the remainder of the Connecticut troops. The general himself was ubiquitous, flying back and forth between the camp and the battle-ground; but it seems that upon now sending forward his own army he remained on the field to the end. The effect upon the soldiers is given with great spirit in a letter by Captain John Chester. "Just after dinner," he says, "I was walking out from my lodgings, quite calm and composed, and all at once the drums beat to arms, and bells rang, and a great noise in Cambridge. Captain Putnam¹ came by on full gallop. 'What is the matter?' says I. 'Have you not heard?' 'No.' 'Why, the regulars are landing at Charlestown,' says he; 'and father says you must all meet, and march directly to Bunker Hill, to

¹ Captain Daniel Putnam, son of General Israel Putnam.

oppose the enemy.' I waited not, but ran and got my arms and ammunition, and hasted to my company (who were in the church for barracks), and found them nearly ready to march. We soon marched with our frocks and trousers on over our other clothes (for our company is in uniform wholly blue, turned up with red), for we were loath to expose ourselves by our dress, and down we marched."

But General Howe, who was in command of the British forces which had landed at Moulton's Point, after an examination of the ground sent back to General Gage for reinforcements, not satisfied that the men at his command were sufficient for the attack upon so strong a position. While waiting for the return of the barges, he sent a detachment along the shore of the Mystic, apparently with the intention of executing a flank movement and surrounding the redoubt. This was discovered by Colonel Prescott, who sent Captain Knowlton with the Connecticut troops, accompanied by two field-pieces, to the rear of the redoubt, where a low ridge of land separated the hill from Bunker Hill. From the road which ran along this ridge, a double rail fence, under a small part of which was a stone wall about two feet high, extended to the Mystic. Bringing other fence material, a parallel was made and the space between filled in with grass which had been mown just previous to this, and lay on the ground. This slight breastwork was some seven hundred feet in length, but it began about a hundred feet north of the redoubt and lay nearly six hundred in the rear, so that there was a large gap between it and the redoubt. There were a few scattered trees in this gap, part of the ground being of a clayey, marshy character.

Meanwhile, just before the arrival of the British reinforcements, the Americans were cheered by the arrival of those they had anxiously looked for. Notably there came Dr. Joseph Warren, President of the Provincial Congress, who had just received his commission as major-general, and was perhaps the best known and most popular leader in Massachu-

setts. He was at Cambridge when the news came, and with a bravery of which he had already given signal example, he hurried forward to the post of danger; in common with General Ward, he had on prudential grounds advised against the expedition. He presented himself at the redoubt, and Colonel Prescott at once tendered the command to him, but he refused, only asking that he might serve as a volunteer. He brought news of two thousand reinforcements which he had passed on the way. There came also General Pomeroy, a veteran of the French wars; without a command he had asked of General Ward a horse to take him to the field, but on reaching the neck he would not expose the horse to the murderous fire, dismounted, shouldered his musket, walked across, and joined the men at the rail fence, who received him with cheers, and with them he fought all that day, animating, inspiring them with words and his own courage and enthusiasm. Colonel John Stark, also, who had been ordered forward when Major Brooks had first applied for aid, arrived with his regiment at the neck. The enemy's guns were pouring their fire across that narrow isthmus, — one could toss a stone from the centre into either river, — and he was advised to quicken the pace of his men as they crossed. "One fresh man in action is worth ten fatigued ones," he replied, and marched over in good order and steadiness. He carried his men to the rail fence and helped Captain Knowlton complete his work. Here, too, General Putnam was a prominent figure.

It was now three o'clock, and the hour had struck. General Howe's reinforcements had arrived, and he had about three thousand men drawn up in line. He stepped before them and said: —

"Gentlemen: I am very happy in having the honor of commanding so fine a body of men. I do not in the least doubt but that you will behave like Englishmen, and as becometh good soldiers. If the enemy will not come from their intrenchments, we must drive them out at all events, otherwise the town of Boston will be set on fire by them. I shall not

desire one of you to go a step farther than where I go myself at your head. Remember, gentlemen, we have no recourse to any resources if we lose Boston, but to go on board our ships, which will be very disagreeable to us all."

There was now a general discharge from Howe's field-pieces, from the Copp's Hill batteries, and from those on the ships, while the British columns moved forward in two divisions: the right commanded by General Howe, who proposed to move along the Mystic in order to penetrate the American line stationed at the rail fence, and cut off retreat from the redoubt; the left under General Pigot to storm the breastwork and redoubt. In the redoubt stood Colonel Prescott, awaiting the attack; behind the rail fence was General Putnam. Both of these commanders knew how scanty was the supply of ammunition, and how needful it was that their men should meet the attack with the courage of veterans. "Wait till the enemy are within eight rods;" "Save your powder;" "Aim at the handsome coats;" "Pick off the commanders;" "Fire low;" "Aim at the waistbands," were the orders passed along as Prescott and Putnam moved about among the men. "Men, you are all marksmen," said Putnam; "don't one of you fire till you see the whites of their eyes." The eager men, their hearts beating at the approach of the enemy, who came tramping up the hill and over the shore, could not restrain themselves, and here and there, as the enemy came within gunshot, began to return the fire. Prescott was indignant; he commanded them to obey his orders, and threatened to shoot any man who disobeyed; his lieutenant-colonel, Robinson, sprang upon the top of the works and knocked up the leveled muskets. At the rail fence it was the same; the enemy was steadily approaching but had not yet fired, when the Americans behind the fence began to pick them off. Putnam instantly threatened to cut down any man who fired before the order was given.

On came General Pigot, marching steadily up to the face of the redoubt,

but when his line was within eight rods, the order came from inside the redoubt to fire, and in an instant the Americans, standing on their platform, poured a murderous shower of balls into the advancing lines. Down fell the first rank, swept by the terrible discharge; the next advanced, and that too strewed the ground; and as the enemy staggered forward over the dead and dying, they were met by the same deliberate aim. General Pigot ordered a retreat, and a shout of triumph burst forth from the redoubt.

It was answered from the rail fence. The enemy's artillery, stuck fast in the clay-pits and furnished with balls too large for the pieces, had been left behind, and the troops had advanced, firing with precision, and doing no damage to the Americans, but only to the branches of the trees above them. As they came within the prescribed distance, the word was given, and quickly the marksmen behind the fence began taking deadly aim and thinning the ranks with their cool, deliberate fire, shouting to one another, "There! see that officer! Let us have a shot at him!" They used the fence as a rest; the British could not get over that strange, rustic breastwork of green grass packed between rail fences. They began to lose terribly, and the order was given to retreat. The Americans set up a shout, some of them leaping over the barricade, and eagerly attacking the foe even before they retreated. In the retreat the flying enemy left behind the dead and dying, and some even ran to the boats for security.

The attack had been made and repulsed.

If but reinforcements and ammunition would come! General Putnam rode to Bunker Hill and to the rear of it to urge forward the troops which were gathering about Charlestown Common and the neck. But the Glasgow and the batteries continued to rake the neck, and plowing up the soil to make a cloud of dust and smoke which must have made the passage almost indistinguishable. Some troops struggled forward in an irregular fashion; some reached Bun-

ker Hill, but went no farther; the hasty earthworks begun there had been left incomplete, and the men who had toiled the night through to fortify Breed's Hill, and had borne the brunt of the battle thus far, were left, almost unaided by any new recruits, to meet the second attack which they saw was sure to come; to meet it, too, hungry, exhausted, beaten upon by the hot sun.

In a quarter of an hour more the second attack came. Reinforcements for the British had landed, this time at the ferry, to support the left column. But that column, as they advanced before, had been annoyed by the sharp-shooting of men posted in the wooden houses of the town commanding their approach. The order went out for burning the town, and carcasses¹ were thrown from Copp's Hill, while a party of marines from the Somerset aided in setting fire. The dry wooden buildings sent up their flames and smoke with a terrible roar, but the wind favored the little band of defenders by driving away the smoke and giving them a full view of the left wing under Pigot, advancing as before, while the light infantry that formed the right column again advanced to attack the party at the rail fence. They came on, keeping up a steady fire, but as before the Americans reserved their fire until the columns should come even nearer; then again at the word of command they rose above the breastwork and redoubt, and delivered their fire with fearful precision; the ranks of the enemy fell before it, yet they closed and repeated the attack. General Howe was in the hottest part of the encounter; three times was he left alone, so quickly fell his aids and officers

at his side. From the opposite shore and from the vessels the spectators could see the officers pricking with bayonets the reluctant men who had fallen back from the deadly fire, but the second attack ended like the first, and the enemy was forced to retreat down the hill, leaving the field covered with the bodies of the dead and dying.²

Twice had these resolute men met the attack, and twice repulsed it. The shout of triumph that rang out when they first drove the enemy back was repeated, but the terrible conflict was beginning to tell on them. Prescott, unflinching in his courage, went back and forth, assuring them that they needed only to hold on, and the day would be theirs; that if the British were once more driven back they could not be rallied. "We are ready for the red-coats again," cheered back the now veteran soldiers. Yet scarcely more than two hundred men at this time occupied the redoubt, and, hardest of all, they knew bitterly that their ammunition was nearly expended. A few artillery cartridges alone contained all the powder on hand. Prescott ordered these to be opened and the powder distributed, bidding them "not to waste a kernel of it, but to make it certain that every shot should tell." Some of the men even gathered loose stones from the parapet to serve as shot. About fifty had bayonets fixed, and these were stationed at points most likely to be scaled. The rest could but club their muskets and spend their strength in desperate encounter.

The third attack was ordered in a more prudent manner. General Clinton, who saw the discomfiture of the British forces from Copp's Hill, crossed the river and

¹ Hollow cases, iron-ribbed, filled with combustibles.

² "And now ensued one of the greatest scenes of war that can be conceived: if we look to the height, Howe's corps ascending the hill in the face of intrenchments, and in a very disadvantageous ground, was much engaged; to the left the enemy pouring in fresh troops by thousands over the land; and in the arm of the sea our ships and floating batteries cannonading them; straight before us a large and noble town in one great blaze—the church steeples being timber were great pyramids of fire above the rest; behind us the church steeples and our own camp covered with spectators of the rest of our army which was engaged; the hills around the

country covered with spectators; the enemy all in anxious suspense; the roar of cannon, mortars, and musketry; the crash of churches, ships upon the stocks, and whole streets falling together, to fill the ear; the storm of the redoubt with the objects above described to fill the eye; and the reflection that perhaps a defeat was a final loss to the *British Empire in America* to fill the mind; made the whole a picture and a complication of horror and importance beyond anything that ever came to my lot to be witness to." (General Burgoyne to Lord Stanley, in Force's American Archives.) Several letters from British officers preserved in Force bear hearty testimony to the pluck of the American soldiers.

took command of some five or six hundred men who stood hesitating, without orders, on the beach. His presence and his reinforcement were most timely; if he had not come up "we should have been forced to retire," says the British report on the Conduct of the War. General Howe now left his place at the head of the left column and massed his men on the right, making at the same time a demonstration at the rail fence, chiefly to cover the movement of the artillery, which was placed so as to take advantage of the gap between the breastwork and fence, where it could rake the interior of the redoubt. The extreme left was led as before by General Pigot and by General Clinton, while Howe led the centre. The men were ordered to reserve their fire, to advance in column with bayonets fixed, and to carry the redoubt in front.

Prescott took in the situation at once. When he saw the artillery in position, he knew that a straight, unobstructed line led from the mouth of the guns to the interior of the redoubt; when he saw the solid column advancing without firing, up the hill, right in face, he knew that the storming of the redoubt was to follow. Yet the same resolution and steady nerve held him and his men as before. Again they waited; again the heroic, grimy line of men rose behind the parapet and swept the enemy's ranks with their concentrated fire. The advancing forces staggered; they were pushed forward by those behind, by the swords of the officers, and goaded by the fury of discomfited men. The artillery was plowing up the earth in the redoubt, stones were falling from within upon the desperate British, sure sign that the ammunition was gone, and with shouts they began to scale the face of the redoubt. Brave men within and brave men without, maddened by the conflict, which had been raging for more than an hour, were now engaged in a hand-to-hand fight. The Americans clubbed their muskets, struck down the men that climbed the parapet, and fought for every inch of ground; but the redoubt was now filled with red-coats and

the farmer-soldiers, the dust was filling the air, the soldiers without were swarming into the works, and Prescott, iron and steel to the last, gave the word to retreat. Scarcely could way be found to the sally-port, but, fighting as they went, the little band pushed their way out of the redoubt, over the ridge towards Bunker Hill.

Then it was that the party at the rail fence did good service. The same men who had held the position from the first kept cool and steady possession of it. They had been reinforced by a few companies, which had bravely crossed the neck and entered the fight near its close, and the firm action of this party did much to save the main body in its retreat. General Putnam and General Pomeroy, as before, were the leading spirits here. They held the men by their own heroic conduct, and step by step the whole body retreated toward the neck, principally by the road over Bunker Hill. It was at the brow of this hill that the greatest slaughter took place. Warren, indeed, fell in the redoubt, fighting in the place he had chosen, the place of the greatest peril; Gridley, who had returned, was wounded there; Prescott, almost the last to leave the redoubt, was thrust at with bayonets, which pierced his loose coat and waistcoat. The fight on the retreat was desperate. At the last moment reinforcements had come on, and descending the slope of Bunker Hill faced the enemy, and poured upon them a fire that did much to protect the retreating forces. At the crown of the hill, by the half-finished works which Putnam had vainly sought all day to complete, he called on his men to make another stand.

"Make a stand here!" he cried; "we can stop them yet! In God's name, form, and give them one shot more!" By him too stood the veteran Pomeroy, with his shattered musket, facing the foe and calling on the men to rally. But the day was over; the retreat continued over the hill and across the neck, still raked by the fire from the enemy's ships and batteries. One only of the six field-pieces that went into action was

gallantly rescued. A single piece of cannon at the neck fired upon the enemy and covered the retreat, and here too they met fresh troops coming forward, who could now only serve to aid in conveying the wounded and helping the exhausted troops on their way to Cambridge.

The British forces did not pursue them. At about five o'clock they were in full possession of the contested works, and General Clinton advised an immediate attack on Cambridge: but Howe was more cautious, and while the American forces lay on their arms at Prospect Hill and Winter Hill, expecting an attack, the British, reinforced from Boston, began to throw up works on Bunker Hill. Each side had suffered. The Americans had lost General Warren, and no one can read the history of those days without feeling something of the

general grief over his death, which was so keen as to be a measure of his great worth and of the promise that his life held out. The official record made by General Ward reads, "Killed, one hundred and fifteen; wounded, three hundred and five; captured, thirty; total, four hundred and fifty." The loss of the British by their official account is made to be two hundred and twenty-six killed; eight hundred and twenty-eight wounded; total, one thousand and fifty-four.

Here we leave the story. What follows is the whole story of the war for independence. That hard-fought battle of the 17th of June was the red line which unmistakably divided the new from the old, so clearly that both parties once and for all saw each other face to face. On that day the sword cut in two the British empire.

Horace E. Scudder.

WAKING.

BEFORE my senses or my soul awake,
Sorrow begins to stir within my heart;
Keen anguish dawns before the day doth break;
Ere fluttering birds chirp faintly towards the east,
A bat-like terror flaps above my breast
With a shrill cry that sleeping makes me start,
And moan with unclosed lips, in drear dismay,
Reluctant greeting to another day;
And though perchance through pity of the night
I have not dreamt of misery, but have slept,
Tears stand within my eyes before the light
Smites them with its new beams, — cold tears unwept,
That from their brimming fountain up have crept,
In which the morning rounds her rainbows bright.

Frances Anne Kemble.