

CHAPTER VI.

COL-O-NEL OF VIR-GIN-I-A TROOPS.

The troops in Vir-gin-i-a were left with-out a head. There was no one to lead them out to war, and if this fact came to the ears of the French, they would be more bold.

Wash-ing-ton's friends urged him to ask for the place. But this he would not do. His brother wrote him thus: "Our hopes rest on you, dear George. You are the man for the place: all are loud in your praise."

But Wash-ing-ton was firm. He wrote back and told in plain words all that he had borne, and how he had been served for the past two years.

"I love my land," he said, "and shall be glad to serve it, but not on the same terms that I have done so."

His mo-ther begged him not to risk his life in these wars. He wrote her that he should do all that he could to keep out of harm's way, but if he should have a call to drive the foes from the land of his birth, he would have to go! And this he was sure would give her much more pride than if he were to stay at home.

On the same day, Au-gust 13, that this note was sent, word came to Wash-ing-ton that he had been made chief of all the troops in

Vir-gin-i-a, and the next month he went to Win-ches-ter to stay.

Here he found much to do. There was need of more troops, and it was hard work to get them. Forts had to be built, and he drew up a plan of his own and set men to work it out, and went out from time to time to see how they got on with it. He rode off thus at the risk of his life, for red-men lay in wait for scalps, and were fierce to do deeds of blood.

The stir of war put new life in-to the veins of old Lord Fair-fax. He got up a troop of horse, and put them through a drill on the lawn at Green-way Court. He was fond of the chase, and knew how to run the sly fox to the ground. The red-man was a sort of fox, and Fair-fax was keen for the chase, and now and then would mount his steed and call on George Wash-ing-ton, who was glad to have his kind friend so near.

In a short time he had need of his aid, for word came from the fort at Will's Creek that a band of red-men were on the war-path with fire-brands, and knives, and were then on their way to Win-ches-ter.

A man on a fleet horse was sent post-haste to Wash-ing-ton, who had been called to Will-iams-burg, the chief town.

In the mean-time Lord Fair-fax sent word to all the troops near his home to arm and haste to the aid of Win-ches-ter.

Those on farms flocked to the towns, where they thought they would be

safe; and the towns-folks fled to the west side of the Blue Ridge. In the height of this stir Wash-ing-ton rode in-to town, and the sight of him did much to quell their fears.

He thought that there were but a few red-skins who had caused this great scare, and it was his wish to take the field at once and go out and put them to flight. But he could get but a few men to go with him. The rest of the town troops would not stir.

All the old fire-arms that were in the place were brought out, and smiths set to work to scour off the rust and make them fit to use.

Caps, such as are now used on guns, were not known in those days. Flint stones took their place. One of these was put in the lock, so that when it struck a piece of steel it would flash fire, and the spark would set off the gun. These were called flint-lock guns.

Such a thing as a match had not been thought of, and flint stones were made use of to light all fires.

Carts were sent off for balls, and flints, and for food with which to feed all those who had flocked to Win-ches-ter.

The tribes of red-men that had once served with Wash-ing-ton, were now on good terms with the French. One of their chiefs, named Ja-cob, laughed at forts that were built of wood, and made his boast that no fort was safe from him if it would catch fire.

The town where these red-men dwelt was two score miles from Fort Du-quesne, and a band of brave white men, with John Arm-strong and Hugh Mer-cer at their head, set out from Win-ches-ter to put them to rout.

At the end of a long march they came at night on the red-men's strong-hold, and took them off their guard. The red-men, led by the fierce chief Ja-cob, who chose to die ere he would yield, made a strong fight, but in the end most of them were killed, their huts were set on fire, and the brave strong-hold was a strong-hold no more.

In the mean-time Wash-ing-ton had left Win-ches-ter and gone to Fort Cum-ber-land, on Will's Creek. Here he kept his men at work on new roads and old ones. Some were sent out as scouts. Brig-a-dier Gen-er-al Forbes, who was in charge of the whole force, was on his way from Phil-a-del-phi-a, but his march was a slow one as he was not in good health. The plan was when he came to move on the French fort. The work that was to have been done north of the fort, by Lord Lou-doun, hung fire. It was felt that he was not the right man for the place, and so his lord-ship was sent back to Eng-land.

Ma-jor Gen-er-al Ab-er-crom-bie then took charge of the King's troops at the north. These were to charge on Crown Point. Ma-jor Gen-er-al Am-herst with a large force of men was with the fleet of Ad-mi-ral Bos-caw-en, that set sail from Hal-i-fax the last of May. These were to lay siege to Lou-is-berg and the isle of Cape Bre-ton, which is at

the mouth of the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Forbes was to move on Fort Du-quesne, and was much too slow to suit Wash-ing-ton who was in haste to start. His men had worn out their old clothes and were in great need of new ones, which they could not get for some time. He liked the dress the red-men wore. It was light and cool, and, what had to be thought of most, it was cheap. Wash-ing-ton had some of his men put on this dress, and it took well, and has since been worn by those who roam the woods and plains of our great land.

I will not tell you of all that took place near the great Lakes at this time, as I wish to keep your mind on George Wash-ing-ton.

The schemes laid out by Gen-er-al Forbes did not please Wash-ing-ton, who urged a prompt march on the fort, while the roads were good. He wrote to Ma-jor Hal-ket, who had been with Brad-dock, and was now on Forbes' staff: "I find him fixed to lead you a new way to the O-hi-o, through a road each inch of which must be cut when we have scarce time left to tread the old track, which is known by all to be the best path through the hills." He made it plain that if they went that new way all would be lost, and they would be way-laid by the red-skins and meet with all sorts of ills.

But no heed was paid to his words, and the warm days came to an end. Six weeks were spent in hard work on the new road with a gain of less than three-score miles, when the whole force might have been in front of the French fort had they marched by the old road as Wash-ing-ton had urged.

At a place known as Loy-al Han-nan, the troops were brought to a halt, as Forbes thought this was a good place to build a fort. Some men in charge of Ma-jor Grant went forth as scouts. At dusk they drew near a fort, and set fire to a log house near its walls. This was a rash thing to do, as it let the French know just where they were.

But not a gun was fired from the fort. This the King's troops took for a sign of fear, and were bold and proud, and quite sure that they would win the day. So Brad-dock had thought, and we know his fate.

At length--when Forbes and his men were off their guard--the French made a dash from the fort, and poured their fire on the King's troops. On their right and left flanks fell a storm of shot from the red-skins who had hid back of trees, rocks, and shrubs.

The King's troops were then brought up in line, and for a while stood firm and fought for their lives. But they were no match for the red-skins, whose fierce yells made the blood run chill. Ma-jor Lew-is fought hand to hand with a "brave" whom he laid dead at his feet. Red-skins came up at once to take the white-man's scalp, and there was but one way in which he could save his life. This was to give him-self up to the French, which both he and Ma-jor Grant were forced to do, as their troops had been put to rout with great loss.

Wash-ing-ton won much praise for the way in which the Vir-gin-i-a troops had fought, and he was at once put in charge of a large force,

who were to lead the van, serve as scouts, and do their best to drive back the red-skins--work that called for the best skill and nerve.

It was late in the fall of the year when the King's troops all met at Loy-al Han-nan, and so much had to be done to clear the roads, that snow would be on the ground ere they could reach the fort. But from those of the French that they had seized in the late fight, they found out that there were but few troops in the fort, that food was scarce, and the red-skins false to their trust.

This lent hope to the King's troops, who made up their minds to push on. They took up their march at once, with no tents or stores, and but few large guns.

Wash-ing-ton rode at the head. It was a sad march, for the ground was strewn with the bones of those who had fought with Grant and with Brad-dock, and been slain by the foe, or died of their wounds.

At length the troops drew near the fort, and made their way up to it with great care, for they thought the French would be in wait for them, and that there would be a fierce fight.

But the French had had such bad luck in Can-a-da, that they had lost heart, and those in the fort were left to take care of them-selves. So when the Eng-lish were one day's march from the fort, the French stole out at night, got in-to boats, set the fort on fire, and went down the O-hi-o by the light of the flames.

So the fort which had been the cause of so much blood-shed, fell at last with-out a blow, and on No-vem-ber 25, 1758, Wash-ing-ton, with his van-guard, marched in and placed the Brit-ish flag on the wreck of the once proud strong-hold, the name of which was changed to Fort Pitt.

The French gave up all claim to the O-hi-o from that time. The red-skins were quick to make friends with those who held sway, and there was peace with all the tribes twixt the O-hi-o and the Lakes.

Wash-ing-ton had made up his mind to leave the field when this war came to an end, and in De-cem-ber of the same year he bade his troops good-bye.

He had been with them for five years in a hard school, and the strain on his mind had been so great that he lost his health, and felt that he could war no more.