

## CHAPTER IX.

### COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

The deeds done ere this by the King's troops had made a great stir through-out the land. The chief men of each State met in Phil-a-del-phi-a, and sought out ways and means to help those who were in arms, as foes of King George, and a large force of men, from Ma-ry-land, Penn-syl-va-ni-a, and Vir-gin-i-a, were soon on hand to march and join the troops near Bos-ton.

But who was to lead them? The choice at once fell on George Wash-ing-ton, but he held back. He thought that Mas-sa-chu-setts' troops might not care to be led by a man from the south; and, too, Gen-er-al Ward, who was then at their head had the first right, for Wash-ing-ton's rank was not so high as his.

There was much talk on this score, and in the midst of it a Mas-sa-chu-setts man, John Ad-ams, rose and said that the man he thought fit to lead our troops was in that room, and he came from Vir-gin-i-a.

All knew whom he meant, and as Wash-ing-ton heard his own name he rose from his seat and left the room.

Then votes were cast, and all were for Wash-ing-ton, and he felt that

he could not say No to such a call. He spoke his thanks in a few words, and said that he would do the best that he could, and serve with-out pay. He set out from Phil-a-del-phi-a June 21, 1775. With him were Gen-er-al Lee and Gen-er-al Schuy-ler, and a troop of light-horse, which went all the way to New York.

As soon as it was known that Wash-ing-ton was on the road, crowds ran out to meet him, and to show their pride in him.

When he reached New York he heard of the fight at Bunk-er Hill, and made haste to join the troops in their camp at Cam-bridge. He reached there Ju-ly 2. The next day all the troops were drawn out in line, and Wash-ing-ton rode out at the head of his staff till he came to a large elm tree. Here he wheeled his horse, and drew his sword and took charge of all our troops as their Com-mand-er-in-chief.

He found much to do, and much to bear from his own men as well as from the red-coats. It came to his ears that our men who fell in-to the hands of the red-coats at Bunk-er's Hill, were not well used, and he wrote at once to Gage and asked him to be less harsh. Gage, who had fought by his side in 1753, when both were young men, wrote back that he thought he should have praise and not blame, since he had saved the lives of those who were doomed to be hung.

Wash-ing-ton at first thought he would do as he was done by, but his heart failed him, and those of the red-coats that were in the hands of our troops were set free, if they gave their word they would not

fight for King George.

By such acts Wash-ing-ton sought to show that "A-mer-i-cans are as mer-ci-ful as they are brave."

The camps in which Wash-ing-ton found his troops were as odd as the men them-selves. Some of the tents were made of boards, some of sail-cloth, or bits of both, while here and there were those made of stone and turf, brick and brush-wood. Some were thrown up in haste and bore no marks of care, while a few were wrought with wreaths and twigs, and spoke well for the taste of those who made them.

The best camp of all was that of the Rhode Is-land men in charge of Gen-er-al Na-than-i-el Greene. Here were found as good tents as the red-coats had, and the men were well-drilled and well-dressed. Greene was brought up on a farm. His fa-ther was a black-smith, and at times his son worked with the plough, or took his place at the forge.

At the first note of war, Greene left the farm and in the month of May, 1775, was in charge of all the troops of his own small state. He went to Bos-ten, and took notes while there of all that the red-coats did, and in this way learned much that he could put to good use. His troops had fought at Bunk-er Hill, and there were none in the whole force that bore them-selves so well, or made so fine a show.

Greene was six feet tall, and not quite two score years of age. He was strong and well built, and his frank way won the heart of

Wash-ing-ton, and the two were warm friends from that time.

Wash-ing-ton now set to work to add strength to the weak parts of his line, and to throw up fresh works round the main forts. All the live stock had to be kept off the coast so that they would not fall in-to the hands of the foe.

He sought to draw the red-coats out of Bos-ton, but they would not stir. When Wash-ing-ton took charge of the troops, he thought that he could go back to his home when the cold days came on, and spend some time there with his wife.

But there was no chance for him to leave, so he wrote to Mrs. Wash-ing-ton to join him in the camp. She came and staid with him till the next spring; and this was her course all through the war.

She came in her own coach and four, with her son and his wife. The black foot-men were drest in red and white, and the whole turn-out was in the style in use in Vir-gin-i-a at that day.

Wash-ing-ton had his rooms in the Crai-gie House, in Cam-bridge, and here Mrs. Wash-ing-ton took charge and gave the place more of a home-like air.

At that time the camp of Cam-bridge was filled with all sorts of troops. Some had spent the most of their lives in boats, some were brought up on farms, some came from the woods, and each group wore the

dress that pleased them best, and laughed at those who were not dressed the same.

This made sport for some time and jokes flew thick and fast.

One day some men came in-to camp dressed in an odd garb, such as was worn to hunt in. The suit was made of deer-skin, and the long shirt had a deep fringe all round. This dress was the cause of much mirth to men who came from the sea-shore, and were used to short coats, and rough plain clothes.

There was snow on the ground, and when the jokes gave out, snow-balls took their place, for a war of words is quite sure to end in blows.

Men came up to the aid of both sides. Fists were used, and all took part in the hand-to-hand fight, and there was a great stir in the camp.

While the fight was at its height Wash-ington rode up. None of his aides were with him. He threw the reins of his own horse in-to the hands of the black-man who rode near, sprang from his seat, and rushed in-to the thick of the fray. Then he seized two of the tall stout hunts-men by the throat, and talked to them and shook them while he held them at arm's length.

This put an end to the brawl at once, and the rest of the crowd slunk off in haste, and left but three men on the ground: Wash-ington, and the two he held in his grasp.

As the cold days and nights came on the men grew home-sick, and longed to be by their own fire-sides. It was right that some of them should go, for they had served out their time, and this made the rest lone-some and sad. Songs would not cheer them, and they paid no heed to the words of those who sought to rouse them from these depths of woe.

Wash-ing-ton was full of fears, which were shared by all those who were near him in rank, yet he did not lose hope. Gen-er-al Greene wrote, "They seem to be so sick of this way of life, and so home-sick, that I fear a large part of our best troops will soon go home." Still his heart did not lose hope. All would come right in time; and his words of cheer were a great help to Wash-ing-ton at this time.

The year 1775 had been a dark one for our land, and there was no ray of hope to light the dawn of 1776. There were but 10,000 troops to take the field. There was a lack of arms, a lack of clothes, and a lack of food, and these things made camp-life hard to bear, and were a great grief to the heart of the chief. He could not sleep. Had the foe known of their plight, they would have borne down on them and swept them out of sight. But God took care of them.

In the first month of the year there was a stir on the Bos-ton wharves. A large fleet of boats lay in the stream, on board of which the red-coats swarmed, and there were two sloops-of-war filled with guns and war-like stores.

All were in charge of Gen-er-al Howe, and Wash-ing-ton guessed what his plans were! and felt that the time had come for him to strive to wrest Bos-ton from the King's troops.

The out-look was bright. More troops had come to his aid, and he made up his mind to place part of his force on Dor-ches-ter Heights, and, if he could, draw out the foe to fight at that place. At a sign, the troops on the Heights and at Nook's Hill were to fire at the same time, and rake the town with balls and bomb-shells. At the same time boats full of troops were to start from the mouth of Charles Riv-er, and act in the rear of the red-coats. It was thought that these moves on the part of our troops would bring on such a fight as they had had on Breed's Hill.

On the night of March 4, our men made their way to the Heights, and at dawn of the next day strong forts loomed up, and seemed as if they must have been brought there at the touch of a wand.

Howe gazed on them and said, "The reb-els have done more work in one night than my whole ar-my would have done in a month."

He must drive them from the Heights, or leave Bos-ton. While pride urged him on, fear held him back, for he knew that his loss would be great. But he must make a move of some sort, so he made up his mind to send boats out that night with a force of troops in charge of Lord Per-cy. But a storm came up from the east; the surf beat high on the

shore where the boats would have to land; and the scheme was put off till the next day. But it stormed just as hard the next day; the rain came down in sheets; and the boats staid where they were.

In the mean time our men kept at work on the hills on the north side and south side, and when the storm ceased Gen-er-al Howe saw that the forts were now so strong there would be no chance to take them.

Nor was it safe for him to stay in Bos-ton. Yet the Ad-mi-ral said that if Howe's troops did not seize the Heights, the ships-of-war should not stay near Bos-ton; so his lord-ship would have to leave with what grace he could, much as it might wound his pride.

When the word went forth that the troops were to leave, strange sights were seen in Bos-ton town and bay. For some days the red-coats went this way and that in great haste. More than three-score-and-ten boats were cast loose for sea, with at least 12,000 men on board of them. While this stir took place not a shot was sent from the Heights, and it was well that this was so, as the red-coats had laid plans to set the town in a blaze if our troops fired one gun.

The red-coats left Bos-ton March 17, and our troops, in charge of "Old Put"--as the brave Put-nam was called--marched in-to town in fine style.

For some days the fleet lay off the coast of Rhode Isl-and, and it was feared for a-while that they meant to strike a blow and win back what



they had lost. But no such thing took place, and ere long the fleet sailed out of sight.

"Where they are bound," wrote Wash-ing-ton, "and where they next will pitch their tents, I know not."

He thought they were on their way to New York, but such was not the case. They had steered for Hal-i-fax, to wait there for more troops, and for the large fleet that was to come from Eng-land.

A vote of thanks and a large gold coin with his face on one side of it, were sent to Wash-ing-ton by the chief men of the land, as part of his due for what he had so far done to save A-mer-i-ca from King George's rule.

Wash-ing-ton, who thought the next move of the red-coats would be on New York, set out for that place, and reached there A-pril 13. He went to work at once to build forts, and to send out troops, and to make the place as strong as it ought to be. He did not know the plans of the foe, nor from what point they would hurl the bolts of war.

All was guess-work, but still in the midst of doubt it would not do to be slack.

The town was put in charge of the troops, and the rules were quite strict. Those who went in or out had to give the pass-word. "We all live here, shut up like nuns," wrote one who was fond of a gay life,

"There's no one in town that we can go to see, and none to come and see us."

Good times in New York were at an end. Our troops had been forced to leave Can-a-da, and it was known that the red-coats would push their way to New York. Forts were built on high banks up the Hud-son, and on the isles at its mouth, and all done that could be done to check them in their march.

In the mean time it had been thought a good plan to set a day in which it might be shown through-out the land that A-mer-i-ca was, and, of a right, ought to be, a free land. So in Ju-ly an Act was drawn up and signed by the wise men who met in Phil-a-del-phi-a to frame the laws for the new States, and there was great joy, for it was a great day.

Bells were rung. Shouts and cheers rent the air. Fires blazed, and hearts burned, and men knelt to pray, and give thanks to God.

John Ad-ams said the Fourth of Ju-ly ought to be kept up with great pomp through-out A-mer-i-ca,--"with shows, games, sports, guns, bells, and bon-fires"--till the end of time.

The news did not reach New York till Ju-ly 9, and at six o'clock that night Wash-ing-ton read the Act to his troops.

New York was wild with joy, and felt that more must be done than just to ring bells and light fires.

In Bow-ling Green, in front of the fort, there stood a cast of George Third, made of lead. This a mob of men pulled down and broke up, that the lead might be run in-to small shot and be used in the cause for which they fought.

This did not please Wash-ing-ton, and he told his troops that they must not take part in such deeds.

The joy did not last long, for on Ju-ly 12, the ships-of-war in the bay sent out a broad-side, and it was thought they would at once fire the town. Crowds were on the streets. The troops flocked to their posts. Fear was in each heart, and New York was in a great stir. But two ships--the Phoe-nix and the Rose--left the fleet and shaped their course up the Hud-son.

Then the guns were still, and fear died out for a-while. That night there was a fresh scare. Guns boomed and clouds of smoke were seen near the ships-of-war down the bay.

Men on the look-out told that a ship-of-the-line had come in from sea, and each man-of-war gave her a round of guns as she passed by. At her fore-top mast-head she bore the flag of St. George. No need to tell more. "Lord Howe is come! Lord Howe is come!" was the cry that went from mouth to mouth, and the word soon flew through the town, and all felt that the hour of doom was close at hand.

Lord Howe sought peace, and not blood-shed, and hoped, by the terms he would make, to bring not a few hearts back to their King. But he came too late.

The Kings troops did not think much of the rank that was borne by our men, who, they felt, had no right to put on the airs they did, and call them-selves grand names.

In a few days Lord Howe sent one of his men on shore with a flag of truce, to seek speech with Wash-ing-ton. The man's name was Brown. His boat was met half-way by a barge which had on board one of our troops, named Reed, to whom Brown said he had a note for Mis-ter Wash-ing-ton.

Reed said that he knew no man of that name.

Brown held out to him the note he had in his hand, which bore on its face: George Wash-ing-ton, Esq.

Reed said that he could not take the note. He knew what was due to his chief. So there was naught for Brown to do but to take to his oars. He had not gone far when he came back to ask "What style should be used to please Gen--(here he caught him-self and said) Mis-ter Wash-ing-ton." Reed told him that Wash-ing-ton's rank was well known, and Lord Howe could be at no loss as to the right style.

In a day or two an aide-de-camp came with a flag from Lord Howe, and

asked if Col-o-nel Pat-ter-son might have speech with Gen-er-al Wash-ing-ton. Reed, who met the aide was prompt to grant this and pledged him-self that no harm should come to him who came in the King's name.

So the next day Pat-ter-son came, and when he stood face to face with Wash-ing-ton, bowed and said "Your Ex-cel-len-cy." Wash-ing-ton met him with much form and state. He was not a vain man, but was proud of the rank he held, and thought that no man--were he a king--had a right to look down on A-mer-i-ca, or show the least slight to her Com-mand-er-in-chief.

When he came to hear the terms on which Lord Howe sought to make peace, he found they were not such as he could take, so the war went on.