

## CHAPTER X.

### IN AND NEAR NEW YORK.

The red-coats had a camp on Stat-en Isl-and, and for the next month or so ships-of-war came that far up the bay, and brought with them a large force of troops. North-east of them was the long stretch of land known as Long Isl-and, where they could land their troops with ease, and make their way to New York.

Wash-ing-ton knew that he could not keep them back, but he meant to vex them all he could. Gen-er-al Greene was placed with a large force on Brook-lyn Heights, to guard the shore, and troops were sent a mile back to throw up earth-works to check the march of the foe if they should try to come up on the land side.

At mid-night of Au-gust 21, a spy brought word that the King's troops were on the move, and would soon show their strength, and "put all to the sword."

The next day the sound of great guns was heard, and a cloud of smoke was seen to rise from the groves on the south side of Long Isl-and. Word soon came to New York that the King's troops were at Graves-end, and that our troops had fled and set fire to the stacks of wheat to keep them out of the hands of the foe.

Wash-ing-ton at once sent off a large force to check the foe at Brook-lyn, and to lend aid to those in the fort on the Heights. He told them to be cool, but firm; not to fire when the foe were a long way off, but to wait till they were so near that each shot would tell. And if one of them should skulk, or lie down, or leave his place in the ranks, he was to be shot down at once.

Sir Hen-ry Clin-ton led the King's troops, and Lord Corn-wal-lis had charge of the field-guns. Corn-wal-lis made haste to seize a pass that ran through the hills, but found Col-o-nel Hand there with a fine lot of marks-men, and so made a halt at Flat-bush.

This was so near New York that great fright spread through the town. Those who had the means left the place. There was good cause for fear, as it had been told that if our troops had to leave New York it would at once be set on fire. This was false, but they did not know it. Their hearts were full of dread.

Gen-er-al Put-nam was sent to take the place of Gen-er-al Greene who was sick in bed. The brave man was glad when he had leave to go, for he did not want to be kept in New York when there was a chance to fight for the land he loved.

It was nine o'clock on the night of Oc-to-ber 26, that Sir Hen-ry Clin-ton set out with his van-guard, on his march from Flat-bush. Lord Corn-wal-lis brought up the rear-guard with all the large guns, and the large force of troops led by Gen-er-al Howe.

Not a drum was heard, nor the sound of a trumpet as they took their course through by-roads and on cause-ways till they came near the pass through the Bed-ford Hills where they made a halt.

No guard had been put on the road or the pass by Gen-er-al Greene, who must have thought it too far out of the way to need such care.

Clin-ton was quick to see this, and at the first break of day his troops were on the Heights, and with-in three miles of Bed-ford.

In the mean-time scouts had brought word to our lines that the foe were in force on the right, and Put-nam at once sent out troops to hold them in check.

At day-light small fights took place here and there. A brisk fire was kept up at Flat-bush. Now was heard the big boom of a large field-piece. Then a ship-of-war would send forth a broad-side on the fort at Red Hook. Wash-ing-ton was still in doubt if this was part of the main fight in which New York was to share. Five ships of the line tried to beat up the bay, but were kept back by a strong head wind. As the day wore on, and there were no signs that the red-coats meant to strike New York, Wash-ing-ton went to Brook-lyn in his barge, and rode with all speed to the Heights. He was just in time to see the fight in the woods, which he could do naught to stay.

He stood on a hill, and through his large spy-glass had a view of the

whole field. He saw his men cut their way through a host of foes. He saw them caught in traps, and hemmed in so that they were 'twixt two fires.

The whole pass was a scene of blood, and through it rang the clash of arms, the tramp of steeds, the storm of shot, and the cries of men who fought for their lives. On this side and that, our troops were swept down or put to rout by a force they had not strength to meet. Wash-ing-ton wrung his hands at the sight. "Good God!" he cried, "what brave men I must this day lose!"

The red-coats went in-to camp that night in front of our lines, but out of reach of the guns of the fort.

Our loss was 3,000.

Theirs less than 400.

The next day New York Bay and the small isles were wrapped in a dense fog, from which New York was quite free. Here was a chance for the troops to leave the works on the Heights, and make their way to New York.

Fresh troops were sent down from Fort Wash-ing-ton and King's Bridge, and Wash-ing-ton felt that no time should be lost. His fear was that the King's ships would come up the bay at the turn of the tide, sail up the East Riv-er and catch in a trap all our troops that were on

Long Isl- and.

It was late at night when the troops stole out from the breast works. In the dead of night a big gun went off with a great roar, that gave a shock to the nerves of those who were in dread that the least sound might warn the foe of their flight to the New York side.

But no harm came of it, the fog shut out the view, and by day-break our troops had all left the fort and were safe on the New York side. Wash- ing- ton, who had not slept for two days and nights, and had spent the most of the time on horse- back, would not step in- to the boat till he saw that all his troops were on board.

The fog rose as the rear boats were in mid- stream, and when the red- coats climbed the crest of the earth- works they found not a sign of life there, and not a thing they could use. Our men had made a clean sweep, and were proud of the way in which they stole a march on the red- coats.

Still, New York was not safe; and Wash- ing- ton sought in all ways to find out the plans of the foe. Ships- of- war went up the Sound, and up the Hud- son, and guns were fired on the forts that lay on each side of the town. But he knew that if the red- coats took New York they would soon be made to give it up, and so he made up his mind that his best course was to with- draw his troops, to Har- lem Heights. This was done, with the loss of a few men who had a fight with some red- coats on the way, and there he staid a few days, and spent much time on horse- back.

He took note of the land, and chose sites for forts, and breast works, and on Oc-to-ber 23, took his stand at White Plains, where a strong fort was built.

Soon the din of war was heard. The guns from Fort Wash-ing-ton and Fort Lee poured their fire on the men-of-war, but could not keep them back, and the red-coats still gave chase to our troops. Fort Wash-ing-ton fell in-to the hands of the foe in spite of a strong fight made to hold it.

One day Wash-ing-ton went out with some of his staff to look at a height at the north where it was thought he might make a stand, and leave the camp where he then was.

One of them said, "There is the ground where we ought to be."

"Let us go then and view it," said Wash-ing-ton.

They were on their way to the place, when a horse-man rode up in haste and cried out, "The red-coats are in camp, Sir!"

"Then," said Wash-ing-ton, "we have some-thing else to do than this," and at once put spurs to his horse and set off for the camp at full speed.

When he reached there he found all his troops drawn up to meet the foe

that was close at hand. In his calm way he turned to those who had been out with him on the hills, and said "Go back to your posts, and do the best you can."

A short, sharp fight took place, in which our troops made a brave stand, but the red-coats were too strong for them, and drove them back to the camp, and seized the hill on which they had stood.

That night the troops of Wash-ing-ton and Howe lay not far a-part. Wash-ing-ton kept his men at work, and forts were built, and earth-works thrown up. These works were made of the stalks of corn, or maize, which the men took from a field near at hand. The roots of the stalks, with the earth on them, were placed on the face of the works, in the same way that sods of grass, and logs of wood were used. The tops were turned in, and loose earth thrown on them so that they were held in place, and made a good shield from the fire of small-arms.

The next day, when Howe saw how much had been done by our troops to add to their strength, he made a change in his plans. His own men were in a sad plight, and not fit to cope with the well-fed troops that kept them at bay. The nights were cold, the Fall rains set in, and not a few of the red-coats were ill. Their chiefs knew how to fight in straight lines, but were not so shrewd and so quick to make use of what lay at hand as our chiefs were. So he broke up his camp, and in a few days the whole force of red-coats fell back from White Plains.

But the strife was kept up at the North, and the foes were at work on sea and on land from New York to Al-ba-ny. Our troops met with ill-luck, and Wash-ing-ton was filled with grief.

Fort Wash-ing-ton was in the hands of the foe; Fort Lee was of no use; and the next move of the red-coats was to cross the Hud-son, north of Fort Lee, and make their way through New Jer-sey. By that means they could shut in all our troops 'twixt the Hud-son and the Hack-en-sack.

Wash-ing-ton at once sent off his men to save the bridge at Hack-en-sack. No time was to be lost. They left the camp with all haste, but ere they could reach the Hack-en-sack the van-guard of the foe was close at their heels. It was thought that a fight would take place, but Corn-wal-lis turned back and some of his troops slept that night in the tents that our men had left.

These were dark days. Wash-ing-ton led his troops through New Jer-sey, hard pressed by Corn-wal-lis, whose van-guard came in-to New-ark just as Wash-ing-ton's rear-guard had left it. His whole camp were in flight. He staid a few days at New Bruns-wick, in hopes that fresh troops would be sent to his aid, but none came, though his needs were so great. The men who, as he thought, would seize their guns and join his ranks, fled from their homes and sought a safe place as soon as they heard that the red-coats were near.

[Illustration: CROSSING THE DELAWARE.--P. 78.]



On De-cem-ber 2, Wash-ing-ton was at Tren-ton, where he made but a brief halt. Then he crossed the Del-a-ware, and left New Jer-sey in the hands of the foe. If he and his men once got to Phil-a-del-phi-a, they would find troops there with whose aid they might hope to turn back the red-coats so close on their track.

Gen-er-al Lee, who was at the heels of the foe, was at Mor-ris-town, De-cem-ber 11, where his troops had been forced to halt for two days for want of shoes. He was a man who loved his ease, and to lie late in bed.

One day as he sat at a desk with pen in hand, one of his aides named Wil-kin-son, who was with him, looked down the lane that led from the house to the main road and saw a band of red-coats on horse-back.

He cried out to Lee "Here are the red-coats!"

"Where?" said Lee.

"Round the house!"

"Where is the guard?" said Lee with an oath. "Where is the guard? Why don't they fire?"

The guards had not thought it worth while to keep watch, when their chief was so much at his ease, so they had stacked their arms and sat down on the south side of a house to sun them-selves. As the horse-men

came up they gave chase to the guards who fled for their lives, and left Lee and his aide to do the best that they could.

The red-coats drew near the house where Lee was, and swore that they would set fire to it if the Gen-er-al showed fight. So he was forced to yield, and was brought out in great haste--for they wished to make sure of their prize--and placed on Wil-kin-son's horse which stood at the door. He was but half-drest, had no hat on his head, and wore low shoes, and a loose rough coat. In this style he had to ride to New Bruns-wick, where the King's troops at sight of him set off their big guns, for their joy was great.

The loss of Lee was thought at the time to be a great blow to our cause, as it was hoped that he would do much to bring the war to an end, and to lead the troops out of their sore straits.

In the mean-time Wash-ing-ton was on his way to cross the Del-a-ware. There was snow on the ground, and the march of the troops could be traced by the blood-spots from the feet of those whose shoes were worn out.

The red-coats were in force at Tren-ton, in charge of a man, named Rahl, who had done brave work for King George at White Plains and Fort Wash-ing-ton.

Wash-ing-ton's plan was to add to his force, and, as soon as he could, cross the Del-a-ware and strive to wrest Tren-ton from the hands of

the foe. He and his force were to cross the stream nine miles north of the town; Gen-er-al Ew-ing was to cross with his troops a mile south of the town; and Gen-er-al Put-nam to leave at a point south of Bur-ling-ton.

It was a bold scheme, full of risk to all who took part in it, yet there was naught to be done but to push on, and hope for the best.