

28. But Lord Percy must not delay. Ten miles lie between him and safety, and many hours of day remain before darkness will lend its friendly aid. Short time for rest. Beat off the fierce and persistent attacks! Speed away while yet unsurrounded! A British army must never suffer the humiliation of defeat and capture by a horde of rebel Yankees. So through the afternoon the red-coats marched quickly, sullenly, dejectedly, fighting desperately for very life. The day closed as they neared the river, and under the starlight they embarked, finding safety and rest at last—not quite yet, for as the last boat left the shore a rifle blazed out, and one more victim was sent to atone for the wanton murder on Lexington Common.

29. The eventful day ended with a loss on the part of the British of two hundred and seventy-three, while the aggregate loss of the patriots was one hundred and five. Without discipline, and with the most reckless exposure to danger, they had inflicted a loss nearly three times as great as they had sustained.

30. The news of Lexington spread, everywhere producing wild excitement. The notes of warlike preparation were heard throughout the land. With deliberate purpose General Gage had sown the dragon's teeth, and there literally sprung up a bountiful crop of armed men. Every village and every farm-house helped to swell the number. The remotest hamlet furnished its contingent. In distant Connecticut, gallant old General Putnam heard the news while plowing. Prompt as when he dragged the wolf from its den, he unyoked his oxen, left his plow in the furrow, and, leaping to his saddle, galloped to the fray. Fiery Ethan Allen, at the head of his Green Mountain Boys, was eager to march, but paused to execute that marvelous enterprise which secured for the patriot cause

the formidable fortresses of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, with all their military stores. Day by day the multitude increased, until thirty thousand men were encamped around Boston, from Charlestown Neck to Dorchester.

31. From the evening of the Lexington fight General Gage was shut up in Boston. The patriots kept a strict guard on every road, and no parties were permitted to pass out or provisions to pass in. All supplies for the town came by sea. The officers chafed under the enforced inactivity. They would be done with the ignoble work of defense behind fortifications. They longed for an opportunity to regain the prestige lost on that fatal nineteenth of April. But General Gage was too wise a commander to risk the safety of his army, so he held the impatience of his officers in check and awaited events.

32. The patriot leaders were equally impatient. The enthusiasm of the moment must be turned to good account. The men were all unused to living in camps, and were peculiarly exposed to camp diseases and camp vices. Discipline had not yet counteracted the demoralizing tendencies of army life. The different divisions of the army were ranged under favorite local leaders, and while there was some show of order there was little or no concert of action. It was now the middle of June. Two months had elapsed since Lord Percy was driven back into Boston. All means to lure General Gage from the town had failed, and an aggressive movement was devised. It was resolved to take a new position threatening the town and the shipping in the port. The place selected was the highland on the Charlestown peninsula known as Bunker Hill, and the time fixed upon for the enterprise the night of June 16th.

33. Eight hundred men armed with shovels and picks

assembled at six o'clock. The movement was known to be a perilous one, and every man felt that he took his life in his hand. President Langdon, of Harvard College, offered prayer with the ancient Puritan fervor. Colonel Prescott took command of the military operations and Colonel Gridley conducted the engineering. In early evening they set out. The march was in profound silence. With suppressed breathing and stealthy tread they made their way—an army of ghosts entering the land of shadows. But the grim faces of the officers and the clinched hands of the men showed more than ghostly purpose. About midnight the march ceased. Clear in the starlight they could see British ship and camp, and could hear the sentinel proclaim, "All is well." A redoubt eight rods square was laid out, and these eight hundred husbandmen bent their seasoned muscles to the work. The embankment grew up in the darkness, and at day-break its six feet of height amply protected the workers within.

34. In the American camp all was excitement and expectation. Supporting parties were organized, supplies hurried up, and means for re-enforcement and retreat provided. It was now that the fatal weakness of the patriot organization was made manifest. Different leaders had notions inconsistent with each other, and divided councils led to indecisive action. The brunt of the coming engagement was left to one tenth of the patriot forces. Scarred veterans scented the battle from afar, and hastened to the front to share the danger and the glory. With no command, officers were content to act as volunteers and handle muskets. Putnam, with military foresight, took charge of the line of communication, and with true farmer instinct he converted two rail-fences and a field of new-mown hay into a line of serviceable

breastworks reaching across Charlestown Neck into the country.

35. At day-break the astonished Britons gazed upon this vision of the night. A moment's pause, then instantaneous, rapid action. That nocturnal growth threatened their very lives. Those audacious and insolent rebels must be swept from existence. Without orders the Boston battery at Copp's Hill opened upon the redoubt as soon as it was discovered. Ships in the bay poured in furious broadsides. The cannonade awoke Boston from her slumbers. Citizens half dressed rushed into the streets. Every roof and steeple that commanded a view of the scene was soon crowded with anxious spectators, who remained there during the livelong day. Patriot and royalist mingled, and fierce passions and wordy wars accompanied the progress of the conflict outside. Exultation at patriot success was often too great to be suppressed, and wild cheers sounded from the house-tops and echoed through the streets.

36. So passed the forenoon. The little band on the hill, protected by the earth-works, worked on with speed and safety. The hurtling masses of iron aimed at their destruction either buried themselves in the yielding earth or passed overhead without injury. One man only paid with his life the penalty of his curiosity in looking over the breastworks. An early luncheon was served and then work again. But even iron muscles have their limit of endurance, and the earth-walls grew less rapidly as the day wore on, until at high noon work altogether ceased.

37. But what of the enemy! By this time they are aware of the uselessness of their cannonade. Other and stronger measures must be taken, and that on the instant. The military renown gained on so many battle-fields must not be lost in a conflict with rude peasants—the

best point of vantage in a general war must not be lost to the king. Every sentiment of ambition and loyalty urged to action. A ship dropped down the river and took position to command Charlestown Neck. But the rail-fence and the new-mown hay resisted the shock, and the American line remained unturned. Rough old Putnam's foresight became an important factor in the day's conflict.

38. Suddenly the drum's loud beat and the shrill scream of the fife startled all hearts into a fiercer life. The notes, with no tremor of fear, rang out sonorous, triumphant. For centuries such notes had led Britons to victory, and to-day British soldiers will do or die. Four thousand grenadiers, under Lord Howe, march down to the shore with the quick, elastic tread of soldiers upon a holiday excursion. In that resolute front and precision of movement there was little to raise the spirits or inspire hope in the hearts of the thousands of patriotic observers who were watching the movements with feverish anxiety. In perfect order they embark, and in perfect order they land upon the Charlestown shore. In their advance toward the silent redoubt no line wavered and no step faltered, though every man was aware of the fearful peril before him.

39. Within the little earth-work all was activity and expectation. Pomeroy, Stark, Putnam came to help—not to dictate. At the last moment General Warren, from the State Committee of Safety, unable to conceal his anxiety, came and took his place in the ranks. These officers all outranked Colonel Prescott, but neither of them would take the command from the officer who had proved himself capable and worthy of it. Shovels and picks gave place to rifles and muskets, and, as experienced eyes glanced along the death-dealing tubes, grave smiles

lit up rugged faces at the thought of the welcome the enemy would soon receive. "Be steady! Be firm!" is the parting injunction of Putnam, as he takes his way to his command at the rail-fence. "We must conquer or die," is the sentiment of Warren, as he grasps the musket of a common soldier, showing to the last that noble patriotism which makes his name so dear to all who love their country. "Keep cool. Wait until you see the color of their eyes! Aim at their red coats. Pick off their commanders!" are the fiery last commands of Prescott, as the scarlet column moved up the hill. Each soldier is in place, each eye unflinchingly is fixed on the enemy, and each right hand is pressed upon the musket, ready for the supreme moment.

40. The batteries, which had been covering the advancing columns, ceased as they neared the summit. An ominous silence succeeded the tumult of the preceding hours. No sound is heard but the short, quick words of command in the British ranks, and the steady tread of the marching files. The space had diminished to a few rods, and still a grave-like silence wrapped the redoubt. At the last moment had the hearts of the patriots failed? Did the near approach of the red-coats deprive them of their courage? "By the double-quick, forward march!" rang out from the British lines. A sudden rush, and one deafening volley! Was it lightning from heaven that struck down every man in their first rank? Was it the earthquake's shock that left those long lines of dead heaped like grass before the mower's scythe? The rear ranks, paralyzed by the terrible disaster, held their ground, but no human courage could withstand the fire that blazed fierce and merciless from the redoubt. A moment's pause, and then a wild, headlong flight to the sheltering boats on the shore.

41. As shouts of triumph went up from thousands of sympathizing hearts, the contending forces were in a state of intense activity. Within the breastworks Prescott, cool, deliberate, masterful, watched every detail and directed every action. Warren, Stark, and Pomeroy put soul into every movement. Putnam defended his own line, and sent the good news outward to cheer the thousands who had taken no part in the contest, and to urge immediate re-enforcements. In the British quarters new officers took the place of those who lay stretched on the hill-side; the men were rallied and reformed; new regiments came over from Boston, and again four thousand men breasted the hill and marched up to the breastworks with colors flying and drums beating. This time they were permitted to come within the reach of friendly greeting, when again a solid sheet of flame leaped forth from the breastworks, again covering the earth with the dead. The rear columns for a few moments stood fast, but nothing could withstand that hail of shot aimed to take life, and again they fled to the shore.

42. The day was wearing on. It was now five o'clock. If the Americans can hold on until the friendly darkness sets in, they may retain possession of Charlestown and force the British to evacuate Boston. General Ward was at Cambridge, trying in vain to secure order in time for action. General Knox ranged up and down the lines, frantically urging the men to follow him to the fray. Putnam, blazing with excitement and fully comprehending the danger, was everywhere animating and urging on the fresh troops. Now he sent almost frantic appeals for powder; now he implored the men in reserve to move at once, and now he rallied his own men to repel the attack upon his own lines. A considerable force was at last rallied to march, but upon reaching Charlestown

Neck the firing from the British ships was so deadly that they dared not venture to cross. In the redoubt was the courage of despair. The powder had given out, and for many of the muskets only a single cartridge remained to meet the coming charge. But all remained firm while the sun slowly sunk in the west.

43. After their second repulse, the force under Lord Howe, cowed and demoralized, refuse to again advance into the jaws of death. The idea is gaining ground that the rebel position is impregnable, and that a wise policy demands that no more blood shall be shed in a vain endeavor to reduce it. The impetuous Sir Henry Clinton refuses to take this view of the situation, and his counsels are heeded. Every military resource at the command of General Gage is now brought into requisition. All the ships in the harbor are ordered to direct their fire upon the fort and the line of communication. New batteries are erected by competent engineers to sweep through the outer breastworks and render them untenable. The reserve forces are ordered up, and every available man is in the ranks. The charge must now be made on every side and the little band of eight hundred literally crushed by numbers. All this and the final charge must be made within the few hours of remaining daylight, or British power is forever at an end in America.

44. At last all preparation ends and the time for action arrives. Shot from the new batteries drive the defenders with severe loss within their interior defenses. The advance of the swarming enemies is met with a feeble, scattering fire in place of the volleyed death of the previous charges. Showers of stones and blows from clubbed muskets greet those who first mount the ramparts; but nothing could resist the last desperate bayonet charge of the British. The defenders of the fort slowly and sul-

lenly retired before the overwhelming numbers of their adversaries. At the last moment Major Pitcairn meets his death, and thus expiates as far as possible his bloody orders at Lexington. At nearly the same moment General Warren, in the very rear of the retreating troops, is shot, sealing with his life his devotion to his country. That the retreating Americans were not annihilated was due to the rail-fence of General Putnam, and to his skill in holding the enemy in check while the flying fugitives found safety in the country.

45. The battle of Bunker Hill is ended. The cross of St. George flies over Prescott's redoubt. Four hundred and fifty patriots and fifteen hundred Britons are killed, wounded, and missing. Eighty-nine British officers—numbers unprecedented—sleep in the dust. Patriot courage and endurance are found to equal patriot enthusiasm. Technically the battle is lost; morally it is won. Where Warren fell a nation is born. The Fourth of July records the fact—Yorktown attests the record. A nation is born—from the Pilgrims inheriting love of freedom, from stout Roger Williams toleration—a nation charged with the sacred mission of organizing human rights upon the basis of human liberty.

THE END.

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