

The Highland forts, Clinton, Montgomery, and Constitution, situated among the mountains and forming their main defence, were no better garrisoned, and George Clinton, who had the command of them, and who was in a manner the champion of the Highlands, was absent from his post, attending the State Legislature at Kingston (Esopus), in Ulster County, in his capacity of governor.

There were patriot eyes in New York to watch the course of events, and patriot boats on the river to act as swift messengers. On the 29th of September Putnam writes to his coadjutor the governor: "I have received intelligence on which I can fully depend, that the enemy had received a re-enforcement at New York last Thursday, of about three thousand British and foreign troops; that General Clinton has called in guides who belong about Croton River; has ordered hard bread to be baked; that the troops are called from Paulus Hook to King's Bridge, and the whole troops are now under marching orders. I think it highly probable the designs of the enemy are against the posts of the Highlands, or of some part of the counties of Westchester or Dutchess." Under these circumstances he begged a re-enforcement of the militia to enable him to maintain his post, and intimated a wish for the personal assistance and counsel of the governor. In a postscript, he adds: "The ships are drawn up in the river, and I believe nothing prevents them from paying us an immediate visit, but a contrary wind."

On receiving this letter the governor forthwith hastened to his post in the Highlands, with such militia force as he could collect. We have heretofore spoken of his Highland citadel Fort Montgomery, and of the obstructions of chain, boom, and chevaux-de-frise between it and the opposite promontory of Anthony's Nose, with which it had been hoped to barricade the Hudson. The chain had repeatedly given way under the pressure of the tide, but the obstructions were still considered efficient, and were protected by the guns of the fort, and of two frigates and two armed galleys anchored above.

Fort Clinton had subsequently been erected within rifle shot of Fort Montgomery, to occupy ground which commanded it. A deep ravine and stream called Peploep's Kill, intervened between the two forts, across which there was a bridge. The governor had his head-quarters in Fort Montgomery, which was the northern and largest fort, but its works were unfinished. His brother James had charge of Fort Clinton, which was complete. The whole force to garrison the associate forts did not exceed six hundred men, chiefly militia, but they had the vet-