



The Volunteer Review

AND MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE.

A Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Military and Naval Forces of the Dominion of Canada

VOL. III.

OTTAWA, CANADA, MONDAY, DECEMBER 20, 1869.

No. 51.

THE REVOLT OF THE British American Colonies, 1764-84.

CHAPTER XXXI.

The operations of the expedition to Georgia, consisting of 3,500 men, was rapid. Since Parker's and Clinton's failure at Charleston in 1776 a contest had been carried on between the colonists in East Florida and Georgia, a number of people in the former Province being loyalists a sort of independent war was waged on both sides, in which the defendants were always successful, and the alternate incursions and retreats were marked by useless devastation. From one of these raids the United States troops, commanded by Major-General Robert How, had just returned and lay encamped at Savannah, the capital of Georgia, at the time the British expedition arrived from New York. This town is on the south side of the river of the same name, about fifteen miles from the sea, the intervening country being low and marshy, intersected with creeks and difficult of access; the first practicable landing place was twelve miles up the river, and on the 28th December, 1778, the fleet proceeded up stream—owing to the difficulty of navigating the river it was the 29th before the troops were disembarked, and the advance moved rapidly across a narrow causeway through a rice swamp to some high ground in front, on which a picket of the enemy's troops were posted, but they were dislodged and driven into the woods. The United States troops were drawn up across the main road leading to Savannah, and about half a mile from it. Their right rested on a thick woody swamp, and was covered by the buildings of a plantation filled with riflemen; the left was covered by the rice swamps on the river, the town and fort in the rear. One piece of artillery was on the right, another on the left, and two on the main road in their centre. The artillery completely enfiladed the road which was a causeway through a swamp, and was crossed

by a marshy rivulet running along the front of the position the bridge over which had been burnt down. As Gen. How expected to be attacked on his left flank where all his attention had been concentrated, but Lieut.-Col. Campbell having ascertained that there was a path leading through the swamp on the right by which that flank could be turned and the rear of the position gained, determined to attempt it, manœuvring at the same time as if it was his intention to attack the left, and while the enemy's attention was directed thereat the light infantry gained the right flank and rear without opposition. The British artillery, which had been concealed behind the eminence on which they were posted, were run forward and opened a brisk fire at once on the centre of the enemy's line, at the same time the British column was sent forward at the rear on the causeway and the light infantry having charged the right flank and dispersed the troops of which it was composed, capturing their artillery, the whole line gave way and fled in confusion through the town of Savannah, leaving all their artillery, 38 officers and 415 men prisoners with the town and fort in possession of the victors who gained 48 pieces of artillery, 23 mortars, 817 stand of small arms, 1 stand of colors, besides miscellaneous stores, ammunition, etc. three ships, three brigantines, two sloops, two schooners, and two sloops burned. In ten days from this the United States troops were driven into South Carolina, the river secured for fifty miles up, and the people came in and renewed their allegiance, but the incredible folly was committed of organizing them into rifle companies for the purpose of acting against their late friends.

In the midst of those exciting transactions the hostilities on the western borders of the revolted Colonies claim attention. The Indian tribes, pressed on by a lawless frontier population, kept in dread of severe punishment since 1763 by the power of Great Britain, released from all fear by the contest now raging around them, and having many real and much more fanciful wrongs to avenge, enveloped the valley of the Ohio and the Susquehanna with fire and blood.

A new settlement at Wyoming on the banks of the Susquehanna, which had been forcibly seized in 1762 by settlers from Connecticut, expelled by the proprietors of Pennsylvania, again occupied the valley by force of arms, and at the opening of the rebellion had held their own in spite of law and force in a petty contest which, from the name of one of the Pennsylvania proprietors was called the Pennamite war. Evil feelings and much personal injury arising out of this transaction, intensified by party hatred, in which the loyalist, already known as a *Tory*, was persecuted and driven from his home and property by so called Whigs, whose patriotism was stimulated by the certainty of plunder, led to an attack on a series of settlements at Wyoming by a combined force of refugees, Senecas, or Delaware, Indians, under Col. Reuben Butler, when a pitched battle was fought, resulting in the defeat and almost utter annihilation of the settlers, who were commanded by a Col. Zebulon Butler, a near relation of the commander on the *Tory* side.

This transaction, which would have been a glorious act if victory had declared for the United States' partisans, was magnified into a massacre of a peaceful and unoffending population, in which Joseph Brant the "Thyanendaga," King, Sachem, or principal Chief of the Mohawk Indians, with Butler and his *Tory* refugees figured as demons incarnate, incited by Sir John Johnson and the British Government. Moreover, the aid of the poet was invoked to consecrate a lie, and "Gertrude of Wyoming," a tragic and pathetic pastoral, stands unrivalled as an elaborate fiction. The writer would have been more likely to lose his *wool* at the hands of Gertrude's lover than to receive sympathy, as those Connecticut Yankees were quite as expert at scalping as the Delawares, the only difference being that they lost and the latter won in this contest.

It has been asked "What is history?" A theoretical definition of what it ought to be is simple, "A narrative of facts relating to states and nations," but in the history of the British American Colonies a true statement of any transactions is unattainable ex-