

The Bunker Hill Celebration.

(Continued from Page 555.)

In the opinion of General Burgoyne, General Howe's "arrangements were soldier-like and perfect," but the conduct of the battle does not in a military point deserve such high commendation. It was clearly an error on the part of General Howe to divide his forces and make two points of attack instead of one, and an equal error to move up and deploy his columns to fire, in which his troops were at obvious disadvantage from their want of protection, instead of making an assault without firing. He had failed also to recognize the weak point in the line between the breastwork and the rail fence, easier to carry than any other point, and if carried more certain to involve the whole American force. He had sluggishly permitted the erection of the formidable fieldwork of the rail fence, the whole of which had been constructed without any interference subsequent to his arrival on the peninsula, nor when constructed does it seem to have occurred to him that by a floating battery or gunboat stationed in the Mystic River, both of which were within his control, it could have been enfiladed and the force there dislodged at once.

As the British are seen to advance, the orders are renewed along the whole American line in a hundred different forms not to fire until the enemy are within ten or twelve rods and then to wait for the word; to use their skill as marksmen, and to make every shot tell. For although those at the entrenchments and rail fence act without immediate concert, the scarcity of powder and the fact that they are without bayonets and can rely only upon their bullets is known to all. It had been intended to cover the movement of the British by a discharge of artillery, but the balls were, by some mistake of the ordnance officer, found too large for the guns, and afterwards, when loaded with grape, it was found impossible to draw them through the mire ground, so that they afforded, in the first assault, no substantial assistance. The forces of Pigot moved slowly forward impeded by the heavy knapsacks they had been encumbered with, and by the fences which divided the fields, and continued to fire as they thus advanced. As they got within gunshot, although their fire had done but little damage, our men could not entirely restrain their impatience but, as some fired, Prescott, sternly rebuking the disorder, appealed to their confidence in him, and some of his officers, springing upon the parapet, kicked up the guns that rested upon it that they might be sure to wait. This efficient remonstrance had its effect, and the enemy were within ten or twelve rods of the eastern front of the breastworks when the voice of Prescott uttered the words, for which every ear was listening, and the stream of fire broke from his line, which, by its terrible carnage, checked at once the advance. The attacking lines were old troops, and well led; it was sternly returned, but they did not rush on, in a few moments, wavering and struggling under a fire which was murderous, while their own did little execution, Pigot orders his men to fall back. In the mean time General Howe, after unsuccessfully endeavoring with a column of light infantry to turn the extreme left of our line of the Mystic, advanced with the grenadiers directly in front of the rail fence, and somewhat annoyed by the artillery between the breastwork and the rail fence, which here, directed by Putnam, did its best service, as he approached within

eighty or one hundred yards, and deployed his forces into line. As at the redoubt, in eagerness, some of our men fired, when the officers threatened to cut down the first man who disobeyed, and thus rebuked, they restrained themselves until the prescribed distance is reached when their fire is delivered with such telling effect that; broken and disarranged, the attacking force, altho that directly in front and that upon the banks of the river, recoils before it, while many of the British officers have felt the deadly result of the superiority which the Americans possess as marksmen.

Some minutes, perhaps fifteen, now intervene before the second assault, which are moments of enthusiastic joy in the American lines. All see that they are led by men capable of directing them, that they have rudely hurled back the first onset, and that they are not contending against those who are invincible. As they have seen their enemy turn, some of them at the rail fence in their eagerness have sprung over it to pursue, but have been restrained by the wisdom of their officers. At the redoubt, Prescott, certain that the enemy will soon reform and again attack, while he commends the men for their courage and congratulates them for their success, urges them to wait again for his order before they fire. Putnam hastens from the lines, his object being to forward reinforcements and to arrange, if possible, a new line of defence at Bunker Hill, properly so called, where all was in confusion, the men who had reached there being for the most part entirely disorganized.

The horror of the bloody field is now heightened by the burning of the prosperous town of Charlestown. This had been threatened as early as April 21st, by General Gage, if the American forces occupied the town, and the patriotic inhabitants had informed General Ward that they desired him to conduct his military operations without regard to it. Complaining of the annoyance which the sharpshooters posted along its edges gave to his troops upon the extreme left, General Howe has requested that it be fired, which is done by the cannon from Copp's Hill. [The second assault was beaten back as the first, but with even more slaughter, and we proceed to the orator's description of the third assault and the preparations therefor.]

Discipline, which at such moments will always tell, in perhaps half an hour has done its work among the British troops, and no longer self confident, but realizing the terrible work before them the men are throwing off knapsacks for a final and desperate assault. Some have remonstrated, but Sir William, less attractive than his brother, General Lord Howe, less able than his brother, Admiral Lord Howe, who now bears the family title, is a stern soldier, and in personal courage and determination in no way unworthy of the martial race to which he belongs. He feels that his own reputation and that of the soldiers he commands is ruined forever if they sustain defeat at the hands of a band of half armed rustics. Victory itself will now be attended with mortification enough after such severe repulses and such terrible losses. From the other side of the river General Clinton has seen the discomfiture, and, bringing some reinforcements, comes to aid him in rallying his men. Howe has seen, too, what Clinton has observed, the error of the former disposition of his force, and that the weak point of the American line is between the breastwork and the rail fence. Towards this and against the redoubt and breastwork he now arranges his next attack. Cannon are brought to bear so as to rake the inside of the breastwork,

and making a demonstration only against the rail fence that may check any movement upon the flank of his troops, he divides them into three columns. The two at the left are commanded respectively by Clinton and Pigot, while the right he leads in person. They are to assault together, Clinton upon the left, at the southeastern angle, and Pigot upon the eastern front of the redoubt, while Howe's own force is to carry the breastwork and, striking between it and the rail fence, bar the way of retreat. Against this formidable array no other preparation could be made by Prescott than to place at the angles of his redoubt the few bayonets at his disposal and to direct that no man should fire until the enemy were within twenty yards.

The fire of the British artillery, now rendered effective, sweeps inside of the breastwork, and no longer tenable, its defenders crowd within the redoubt. Again the voice of Prescott is heard, as the attacking columns approach and are now only twenty yards distant, giving the order to fire. So telling and deadly is the discharge that the front ranks are almost prostrated by it, but as the fire slackens the British columns which have wavered for an instant move steadily on without returning it. Almost simultaneously, upon the three points which are exposed to the assault the enemy reach the little earthwork which so much brave blood has been spent to hold and to gain, and while they are now so near that its sides already cover them, its commander determined to maintain it to the last extremity, orders those of his men who have no bayonets to retire to the rear and fire upon the enemy as they mount the parapet. Those who first ascend are shot down as they scale the works. . . . In a few moments, however, the redoubt is half filled by the storming columns, and although a fierce conflict ensues, it is too unequal for hope, and shows only the courage which animates the men who, without bayonets, use the butts of their muskets in the fierce effort to stay the now successful assault. As the enemy are closing about the redoubt, if the force is to be extricated from capture the word to retreat must be given, and reluctantly the brave lips which have spoken only the words of cheer and encouragement utter it at last. Already some are so involved with the enemy that they bew their way through them to join Prescott, and he himself is again and again struck at by the bayonet, of which his clothes afterwards give full proof, but defends himself with his sword—the use of it he undertakes. As our forces leave the redoubt by the entrance on the northern side, they come between the two columns which have turned the breastwork and the southeastern angle of the redoubt. These are, however, too much exhausted to use the bayonet effectually, and all are so mingled together that, for a few moments, the British cannot fire, but as they extricate themselves the British reform and deliver a heavy fire upon them as they retreat. In the meantime the attack has been renewed upon the rail fence, but its defenders know well that if they would save their countrymen at the redoubt, they must hold it resolutely for a few moments longer, and they defend it nobly, resisting every attempt to turn the flank. They see soon that Prescott has left the hill, that the entrenchments are in the hands of the enemy at last, and their own work gallantly done, they retreat in better order than could have been expected of troops who had so little organization and who looked for the first time on a battle field. Upon the crest of Bunker Hill (properly so called,) General Putnam with the con-