

force must have numbered 7000. The Americans regarded it as inconceivable that the British would make a stand. They took as granted, that, when their first line drew near, the redcoats would disappear among the pine trees behind them. So on they marched, assured of an easy victory, with waving banners, bouncingly keeping step to fife and drum, laughing and shouting, confident they were about to see the men who composed the thin red line that confronted them, to use their own phrase, skoot for cover. As soon as the Americans came within range they began firing, shouting derisive cries to their opponents, who stood silent and stock-still, firing not a shot. Not till the advancing enemy neared the edge of the ravine did Morrison give the word, when a volley rolled forth. More effective was the small six-pounder at the head of his line. The Americans came to a halt. They did not expect this. They began firing by platoons across the shallow ravine, which they did not attempt to cross, the British steadily replying, until the American commander, General Boyd, to end an indecisive long-range duel, ordered his subordinate, Gen. Covington, to take a regiment and turn the British left. The Americans wheeled northward, crossed the ravine, and bore down on the end of Morrison's line, who met the attack by changing the formation of the 89th, so arranging the files that they faced north instead of east. This difficult movement of echelon was effected under fire, yet done as steadily as if on parade. As the Americans advanced, the 89th poured into their ranks a steady fire while the little cannon raked them. Boyd's order was that Covington should charge, but this withering shower of bullets stopped his advance. His men swung backward, firing as fast as muskets could be loaded. Covington fell mortally wounded, so did his successor, and the third who assumed command fared likewise. It was a contest between discipline and numbers, between skill and inexperience. The combatants were of the same stock, and equal in natural courage, but few of the Americans had been under fire until that hour. With fit officers they would have charged as their general ordered. Boyd saw how critical the situation was and hurriedly sent reinforcements, and they were needed, for the rank-and-file were wavering and many were slinking away. For half an hour the fighting went on and during that time the Americans suffered their severest loss. When their firing slackened Morrison felt