

from those localities in their immediate occupation. As a consequence the adherents of Congress were remarkably well informed and the private annals of this contest abound with acts of the most disgraceful treachery on the part of people anxious to assert their own respectability, consequently when it became necessary to annoy the British troops at New York incendiary fires were at once lighted; on the 21st September, during an equinoctial gale, about 1,100 houses were burned, and the whole city would have been destroyed if the troops had not exerted themselves.

Ample time having been afforded the United States troops to recover from their panic Gen. Howe thought it time to compel them to evacuate the whole island. Another of those stupid blunders which Howe's admirers called strategy. In fact the proper plan to follow with his splendid army and numerous fleet was to throw the former on the communications of the United States troops beyond King's Bridge and occupy the Hudson, Harlem Creek and the East River with the latter, thus shutting Washington and his troops in the island, where they would have to surrender at discretion, and separating the Eastern Provinces from the Middle and Southern. Whatever Washington's merits may be he was no General, and Howe was merely a soldier.

In order to prepare for this great operation the first thing to be done was to fortify MacGowan's hill at Bloomingdale to cover New York, and on the completion of the necessary works the whole of the British army, with the exception of four brigades, embarked on the 12th of October, and passing through Hell Gate to the Sound landed at Frogs Neck, an island in the Sound not far from Westchester. As the partisans of the United States had broken down the bridge the landing at this point was another of those errors peculiar to Gen. Howe, and the time he employed before it was remedied in thinking over it was characteristic of the man. It was not until the 18th October—six days after the error was committed—that the troops were re-embarked and taken further away to the Eastward and landed at Piles Point, placing Hutchinson's river and the Bronx between themselves and the United States troops. At the same time they might have been landed at Morris Island, from which a road led parallel to the Hudson between it and the Bronx. This latter river was parallel to and East of the Hudson from which it is distant about three or four miles. It rises on the hills about the White Plains and has a course of about 30 miles.

When the British landed at Frogs Neck Washington harrangued his officers and told them the fate of the United States must be decided on the ground which they then occupied; that they should retreat no further. But fortunately for them they had Gen. Howe's tardiness and stupidity in their favor and the advice of the only General in either

army—Lee,—he told Washington that if he remained in his present position Howe would compel him to surrender by starvation, without hazarding a battle Washington was able to appreciate this advice, and an immediate retreat was resolved on. This was effected without loss or pursuit, and a position on the heights at and about the village of White Plains taken up and entrenched.

The communication between New York and Boston and Connecticut was then by the King's Bridge over Springton Dongrole Creek, as the arm of the Hudson known as Harlem River, further down, was called. Phillips', or Dylkoman's, Bridge, about half a mile further down stream, the road passed Miles' Square, East Chester, New Rochelle, Mamaroneck and across Byam's Creek near its mouth. This was known as the Lower Road to Connecticut and Boston. From Phillips' and King's Bridge a road ran parallel to the Hudson by Weperham, Phillipsburgh, Dobbs' Ferry, Ferrytown to Croton Bridge, from thence it struck easterly through White Plains and Bedford, and was known as the Upper Connecticut road.

It will thus be seen that both roads were parallel, the lower on the coast and the upper about 25 miles inland. They were connected by two main roads, one running direct from New Rochelle to Croton Bridge, the other from Mamaroneck to White Plains. The distance from Phillips Bridge to Byam's River was about 16 miles, from Croton to Bedford about 9 miles while from New Rochelle to Croton Bridge the distance was 20 miles, and from Mamaroneck to White Plains 16 miles.

The space included between the Hudson and Byam's creek was an irregular parallelogram bounded on the South by the shores of the Sound and on the North by the Croton River; its area might be 200 square miles, and on it the question of Britain's supremacy in America was to be tested by the infant power that the blundering of her statesmen and the imbecility of her generals had called into existence.

The disembarkation at Piles point being effected the British moved on East Chester but were attacked by a corps of the enemy at an advantageous pass on the road who were obliged to retire with considerable loss after a sharp action.

By this description it will be seen that the Bronx was between the contending armies, the United States troops between it and the Hudson in a dangerous position, as the river was crossed by the road from New Rochelle to the Croton within 4 miles of the bridge and by a cross road 9 miles from New Rochelle to Philipsburg, giving to the English troops a chance of attacking and turning the left flank and piercing the centre, but rapidity of action or design was not an attribute of the general officers of the British army at that period.

On the 21st October the main body of the Royal army moved on New Rochelle, thus

occupying the line of communication with and by the coast by which the United States troops received their supplies of provisions and forage, they had extended themselves in a long line behind the Bronx unable at any point to make effective resistance but were permitted to occupy the fortified camp at White Plains on 26th October without molestation.

This position was on the left or eastern bank of the Bronx on the southern slope of those hills, amongst which that river had its source. The lines occupied the brow of a long ridge of hills in front of the upper road to Connecticut which it was intended to cover; they were hastily constructed and by no means formidable, in fact being not more than a ditch and mound without raising abatis or any covering, and necessarily insignificant from the rocky nature of the soil.

A bend of the Bronx protected their right flank, and a turning in its course enveloped the rear of the right wing. Further on the point of the hill was nearly perpendicular and rocky. The centre was the weakest point of the position. The ground sloped gradually up from the road leading from Mamaroneck, and no obstacles could be encountered from the lines which were built of sods and stones or heaps of cornstalks. The left of the position was much stronger being on the crest of a rocky hill, covered in front by Byam's Pond, a small lake sufficient to prevent an attack in force. But the strongest part of this position was the occupation of a hill to the west of the Bronx by about 4,000 men. This was within long cannon shot of the right of the position with the Bronx between, so that it was impossible to reinforce or succor it if attacked. The whole had a deep river, the Croton, in the rear.

On the 28th of October, in the morning the Royal army, in two columns, consisting of 13,000 men, marched from near Ward's house, about 10 miles above New Rochelle on the Bronx. Sir W. Howe commanded the left wing and Sir H. Clinton the right. As they approached the White Plains the right column fell in with several bodies of the enemy and drove them sharply back, creating great confusion in the enemy's camp, where a force of some 18,000 ill-trained soldiers were in a state of terrible confusion. When the British troops arrived within three-fourths of a mile of the enemy's lines they were halted and a reconnoissance made of the position. It had been determined to attack the right and centre but the extraordinary disposition of the troops west of the Bronx attracted Howe's attention and it was decided to attack and attempt to turn the right flank. A more stupid determination could not have been arrived at as two field pieces could have completely isolated these corps, while an attack in front could not have failed to pierce the centre, especially as the camp was in the utmost confusion,