

English army at Boston was secretly despatched to destroy the patriots supplies at Concord and Lexington. The expedition numbered about eight hundred men, consisting of the grenadiers and light infantry under Lieutenant-colonel Smith. They crossed to East Cambridge, and thence through swamps and unfrequented paths they took up their march to Lexington. Gage had thought to take everything by surprise, but a band of patriots nightly patrolled the streets, and of course discovered the intention of the English. Messengers were at once sent post haste to arouse the minute men, and to inform them of the army's advance. Paul Revere, immortalized in America by Longfellow's Poem was one of the number. What a knight errant was he. The sparks that flew from his horses iron shod feet as he galloped over the roads, crying out for all to be up and doing, enkindled the fire of patriotism.

A hurry of hoofs in a village street,
A shape in the moonlight, a bulk in the dark,
And beneath from the pebbles, in passing,
A spark
Struck out by a steed flying fearless and fleet,
That was all: And yet through the gloom
and the light,
The fate of a nation was riding that night;
And the sparks struck out by that steed
in his flight,
Kindled the land into flame with its heat."

These intrepid couriers spread the news far and wide that the army was advancing, and every farmer seized his gun and powder horn, and with a long, lingering farewell to his family, departed, perhaps never to return, to the place where his company was to meet.

Colonel Smith was soon apprised of the fact that his march had been discovered by the vigilant patriots. Signal guns were heard and fires seen, and bells were ringing. Fearing that he would be attacked, he sent back for reinforcements, and then proceeded as quickly as possible toward Lexington.

Major Pitcairn was leading the van of the army, and just as the last shadows of darkness were fleeing before the rising sun, the foremost ranks of the enemy were seen advancing quickly and silently. "The alarm guns were fired and the drums beat, not a call to village husbandmen only, but a reveille to humanity." About seventy of the minute-men gathered and were paraded in front of the meeting house.

Often had these men gathered on the common to swear that their life's blood was at the service of their country; to swear that they would combat their oppressors for their birthright of liberty. "The ground on which they trod was the altar of freedom, and they were to furnish its victims."

The advance party with Pitcairn in front came on at the double quick, closely followed by the grenadiers. When about five rods from the villagers, Pitcairn cried out "Disperse ye villians, ye rebels, disperse; lay down your arms; why don't you lay down your arms and disperse? The patriots did not stir, they were now Americans too brave to flee. At this, Pitcairn ordered his men to fire. A few random shots followed this command, and then a close, heavy volley of musketry.

Parker the leader of the patriots saw at once that, owing to the disparity of numbers, his few men