

Bay; this line was protected by an abattis and flanked by strong redoubts, with other contrivances for defence. As soon as the British troops landed the outposts occupied by the United States troops about Gravesend bay were abandoned, the defenders setting houses and granaries on fire; 5,000 men under General Putman were detached from the camp at Brookland and ordered to occupy the heights before described and which stretched from the head of the Narrows to a point above Wallabout bay. Half a mile south of the intrenched lines a road branched off to the East which ran through the village of Bedford to the town of Jamaica, while nearly midway on the road between the Ferry and Gravesend was the village of Flatbush. From a point on the Narrows, known as Denice's Ferry, a road led along the west shore of the island, joining the main road nearer the lines than where the Jamaica road branched off; a road from Gravesend joined this western road at the foot of the heights, which were at that time heavily wooded.

Those heights were occupied by General Putman's troops, whose left wing rested on the Jamaica road and was under the command of Gen. Sullivan, while the right rested on the point at which the ridge touched the coast at a point called Gillon Hook, and it was under the command of the notorious Alex. Stirling, whose claim to the Earldom of Stirling had been completely set aside by the House of Lords, and whose audacity as an imposter forms such an amusing page of history.

The object of the occupation of the heights was to defend the defiles leading through them, and from the description it will be seen that Flatbush was opposite the centre of Gen. Putman's position. The Hessian's, under Gen. de Heister, was pushed forward to Flatbush, and by frequent skirmishes with the United States troops concentrated their attention on the movements in front, thus neglecting the flanks. Taking advantage of this Sir H. Clinton with Sir W. Erskine, carefully reconnoitred their position and found it could be turned without any difficulty on the left flank. On the night of the 26th of August the right wing of the British forces commanded by Gen. Clinton and accompanied by the Commander-in-Chief marched from its camp at Gravesend and crossing the country struck the Jamaica road at the very point where it emerged from the defiles. The United States troops having neglected to occupy or defend them, and at 9 o'clock in the morning the British troops occupied Bedford. An attack on the left of the enemy's position was at once made, was feebly resisted and ended in their precipitate retreat in confusion, into their lines on the Peninsula where Gen. Howe would have had no difficulty in following them and thus securing a most decisive victory. He already held all the communications of the United States troops except that leading from their centre to the milldam, and he

was between the centre of their position and that point. By occupying the works or simply moving on this road nothing remained to the enemy but capitulation and that at discretion. As soon as the firing at Bedford was heard at Flatbush a column of Hessians, under de Heister attacked the centre, and after a smart engagement drove it into the woods with the loss of three pieces of artillery. On the right a column led by Gen. Grant fell in at midnight with the advanced guard stationed where the road from Denice's Ferry crossed the hills. They at once retired to a stronger position and opened a furious cannonade, which was continued on both sides till the news of the rout of the left and centre reached their General when they retreated in disorder, and being apprehensive that they could not regain their lines by the road from the Narrows, attempted to do so by crossing the swamp at the milldam where several of them were drowned. Every man of this division would have been either killed or taken prisoner if Gen. Grant had attempted a pursuit, but he was the same officer through whose blunders over 1,000 men were sacrificed at Forbe's attack on Fort du Quesne, it was useless to expect energy or ability in any operation under his control. The United States troops lost 2,000 men in killed, wounded and prisoners, with six pieces of artillery. The British loss was 300 in killed, wounded and missing. Generals Sullivan, Udell, and Lord Sterling of the United States service were taken prisoners.

It was with difficulty that the British troops could be restrained from attacking the enemy's lines, but Sir William Howe says "as it was apparent the lines must become ours at a cheap rate by regular approaches I would not risk the loss that might have been sustained in the assault, and ordered them back to a hollow away out of the reach of the musketry."

On the evening of the 27th the British troops encamped in front of the enemy's lines, and on the 28th broke ground about 600 yards from one of the redoubts. The position of the United States troops being untenable from the first they evacuated the lines on the evening of the 29th and made good their retreat to New York.

History does not furnish an instance of a similar description to this—a defeated and disorganized army of scarce 9,000 men driven into the corner of an island with an arm of the sea a mile wide in their rear, occupying a space of scarcely ten miles, with a victorious force of 20,000 soldiers encamped not half a mile from their lines in front, allowed to effect their retreat without the loss of a man, and also to carry away all their field artillery, ammunition, provisions, cattle, horses and equipage. To cover the supineness, neglect of duty, or worse fault in this case it was asserted that some most wonderful natural phenomena occurred to assist the movement and favor the United States troops.

First—The wind, which was contrary, sud-

denly shifted at 11 o'clock on the night of the 29th.

Second—A thick fog overhung Long Island, which prevented the British troops from discovering the operations of the enemy, while on the side of New York the atmosphere was perfectly clear. They had to cross a channel a mile wide in open boats; of course these boats made several trips during the night, and yet although Sir William Howe had early intelligence he did not order a pursuit till the English pickets were only in time to fire on the last detachment of the rear-guard which had already moved too far away to be damaged.

Amongst other instances of Sir W. Howe's want of military knowledge is the fact that not a vessel of the numerous fleet lying about Staten Island was employed to interrupt the communications between Long Island and New York. A single 44-gun frigate anchored at Red Hook would have compelled the surrender of the United States army, crushed the resistance of that incipient power and compelled the people to receive such conditions as rebellious subjects out to expect.

The apologists for Gen. Howe's actions try to find plausible reasons for his conduct on this occasion as if a soldier had anything to do with sentiment or politics in the discharge of his duty. He was simply an incapable blundering, stupid man who frittered away his time by lazy indulgence and disgraced his country's cause by indecision and stupidity.

About this time a reinforcement arrived under Sir George Collins, after a very long passage. The mysteries of the Gulf stream had not been explored nor its secrets rendered available for purposes of industrial utility, and steam was not even in its infancy.

After due consideration Sir W. Howe took measures to cut off all communication between New York and the sea, which was easily effected, and the feat could have been accomplished in less time if the fleet had been employed, while nothing but sheer stupidity prevented the occupation of New York the day after the fight at Brookland before that event took place Sir W. Howe was to figure as the negotiator with rather less credit than he gained as a soldier.

Gen. Sullivan, who had been taken prisoner, was paroled and despatched to Philadelphia with overtures to Congress expressing Lord Howe's wish to enter into conference with the moderate members of that body, not as representatives of independent States but as men of influence in the various Colonies for the purpose of settling preliminaries for the accommodation of differences between the two countries. The Congress, in reply, refused, as below their dignity, to send any members on a private conference but they deputed Dr. Franklin, John Adams and Edward Rutledge to wait on Lord Howe at Staten Island. After a great deal of diplomatic nonsense the committee refused to treat or have anything to do with Lord