

LIFE
OF
ISRAEL PUTNAM;

BY
OLIVER W B. PEABODY.

LIFE

OF

ISRAEL PUTNAM

BY

WILLIAM D. TRADOFF

ISRAEL PUTNAM.

CHAPTER I.

His Birth and Education. — Becomes a practical Farmer. — Singular Adventure in killing a Wolf. — Enters the Army as Captain of a Company of Rangers. — Engages in the War against the French and Indians on the Canada Frontiers.

OUR history, from its beginning until a comparatively recent time, gives us abundant instances of men, in whom the deficiencies of education have been supplied by natural resource and energy. Thrown into novel situations, where instruction and experience would sometimes have availed them little, they have yet accomplished all that any exigency could require. Some of them were called to lay the foundations of civil institutions in the wilderness; some to subdue a fierce and unrelenting savage foe; some to encounter the hostility of other nations, as well as of that which they regarded as their own. Privation and suffering, in

every form in which they commonly exhaust the frame and overcome the spirit, were to attend them often by the fireside, and always in the engagements of life. These evils, if evils they were which led to immortality, were encountered with manly and heroic firmness; and it must needs be, that the personal history of men, exhibiting the vigor and flexibility of character required by the circumstances in which they were thus placed, should be full of freshness and diversity. Without pretending to claim for General Putnam the very highest rank among such individuals, we may yet venture to assign him an honorable place. His biography has been already written by a friend and fellow-soldier, who gathered from his own lips a portion of his history;* and we shall freely avail ourselves of the materials, which have been thus collected, in connexion with such as have been gained from other sources, in attempting to present a sketch of the life of one, who stands forward as a prominent example of some of the most striking traits of the genuine American character.

ISRAEL PUTNAM was born at Salem, in Massachusetts, on the 7th day of January, 1718. His grandfather with two brothers emigrated from the

*"An Essay on the Life of Major-General Israel Putnam; addressed to the State Society of the Cincinnati in Connecticut. By DAVID HUMPHREYS."

South of England, and was one of the earliest settlers of that ancient town. His father was a farmer, and the son was destined to the same pursuit, for which no great extent of education was then believed to be required. The arts of reading, writing, and a tolerable proficiency in arithmetic, were the only attainments to be acquired in the common schools; and the higher institutions, or "the schools of the prophets," as they were called, were appropriated to the candidates for the liberal professions. We should be slow to censure our ancestors for this, before we ascertain how far the state of the fact is altered at the present day; for their efforts in the cause of education, considering their circumstances and condition, have not yet been excelled by any of their sons.

It is plain, then, that the literary advantages of young Putnam could not be very great; and, such as they were, it is not likely that this species of improvement was uppermost in his mind. His constitution of body was firm and vigorous; and he early displayed that insensibility to danger, which was so strikingly exhibited in his subsequent career. It was the custom of the young men of that day to pursue athletic exercises, of which running, leaping, wrestling, and pitching the bar were the favorite ones, and were regarded as the surest tests of strength and skill; and in these

manly sports, which have fallen of late into almost entire neglect, young Putnam was surpassed by none of his competitors. But the research of his biographers has redeemed from oblivion scarcely a single incident in the youthful history of one, then quite unknown to fame ; and the exploits of childhood are rarely of sufficient moment to compensate for the labor of inquiry. There is one, however, characteristic enough to deserve a passing notice. On Putnam's first visit to Boston, he was treated by a boy of the metropolis with the sort of courtesy, with which rustic boys are not unfrequently welcomed. His antagonist was twice as old and large as himself ; but he requited the attention with a sound beating, to the entire satisfaction of a numerous body of spectators.

In the twenty-first year of his age, Mr. Putnam was united in marriage to the daughter of Mr. John Pope, of Salem. After her death, which occurred in 1764, he married a Mrs. Gardiner, who died in 1777. About the time of his first marriage he removed to Pomfret in Connecticut, where he purchased a tract of land, and entered upon the occupation of a farmer. At first he met with some of the discouragements, which are apt to render the life of a settler a school of no gentle discipline ; but in the course of a few years he became an enterprising and successful cultivator, and was rewarded by a fair measure of prosper-

ity. In this quiet retreat he remained till the opening of the Seven Years' War presented him with a broader field of action.

It would be quite unpardonable, in writing the life of Putnam, to omit to notice his victory over the she-wolf, at Pomfret; the story of which is familiarly known to every schoolboy in the country, and is very minutely detailed by his principal biographer. This renowned animal had for some years been the scourge and terror of the farmers, whose pursuit of her had been altogether fruitless; though they had succeeded in destroying her young, whom she brought in winter with her from the forest, to bring up in her own arts of marauding. In an evil hour for her own safety, she made an onset upon Putnam's farm-yard. Seventy of his sheep and goats were killed, and many others wounded, in the course of a single night; and it was determined to resort to decisive measures. Several of the farmers, among whom was Putnam, accordingly entered into an offensive alliance against the common enemy; the condition of the compact being, that the pursuit should only cease with the destruction of the foe.

Fortunately her track was easily recognised, a portion of one of her feet having been lost by an accidental intimacy with a trap. Her pursuers were thus enabled to trace her course to Connecticut River, and thence back again to Pomfret,

where she took refuge in a cavern, near the residence of Putnam. The place was selected with great judgment to withstand a siege; as very few persons beside Putnam himself could have been persuaded to reconnoitre the position of its inmate. It is entered by an aperture about two feet square, on the side of a huge ledge of rock. The pathway descends fifteen feet obliquely from the entrance, then pursues a horizontal direction for ten feet, and thence ascends gradually about fifteen feet to its extremity; being in no part wider than three feet, nor high enough to permit a man to stand upright. The access to the interior is rendered very difficult in winter, by the accumulation of ice and snow.

No time was lost by the confederates in devising various methods of attack. A competent force of dogs was collected, with such munitions as were thought suited to this novel warfare. But the hounds that entered the cave retired in great disgust, and could not be prevailed on to repeat the experiment; the smoke of blazing straw was ineffectual; and the fumes of burning brimstone, which were expected to prove quite irresistible, wasted their sweetness in vain. This system of annoyance was continued through the day, until a late hour in the evening, when Putnam, weary of the unsuccessful efforts, endeavored to persuade his negro servant to go into the cave; a propo-

sition which was declined; and his master, after somewhat unreasonably reproaching him with cowardice, resolved, against the earnest remonstrance of his neighbors, to undertake the enterprise himself.

He first procured some birch bark, to light his way and intimidate the wolf by its flame; then threw aside his coat and vest; and, causing a rope to be secured to his legs, by which he might be drawn out at a concerted signal, set fire to his torch and groped his way into the cavern. At the extremity he saw the wolf, who welcomed her unexpected visitor with an ominous growl. His examination being now completed, he gave the appointed signal; and his companions, supposing from the sounds within that the case must be an urgent one, drew him out so precipitately, that his clothes were torn to rags, and his body sorely lacerated.

He now provided himself with a musket, and bearing it in one hand and a lighted torch in the other, proceeded a second time upon his perilous adventure till he drew near the wolf. Just as she was on the point of springing, he took deliberate aim and fired; then, stunned by the explosion and almost suffocated by the smoke, he was again drawn out as before. After a brief interval, he entered the cavern for the third time, applied his torch to the wolf's nose to satisfy himself that her

repose was not affected, and, seizing her by the ears, was drawn forth with his prize, to the infinite satisfaction of the party.

This story is not without value, as an illustration of its hero's character. The life of a New England farmer is not usually very fruitful of adventure; nor is there any other incident on record relating to Putnam before the time, when he exchanged his occupation for a less pacific one. One may readily conjecture, that the tranquil pursuits of agriculture could hardly satisfy the ambition of a spirit like his, always most at home in the midst of perilous adventures; and that he must have exulted in the opportunities of acquiring fame and honors, which were afforded by the opening of the great French war, in 1754.

The causes of this eventful struggle belong too closely to the province of history to be required to be stated here. There was a general disposition among the people to prepare for some decisive measures in the following spring. It was with this view, that the memorable plan of the union of the Colonies was projected and matured; but as this, from various causes, proved ineffectual, the arrangements for the campaign were not completed until the arrival of General Braddock in this country, early in 1755. A convention of the several governors was held at his suggestion early in that year, by which it was resolved that three indepen

dent expeditions should be undertaken. The first was destined against Fort Duquesne, and was conducted by General Braddock in person; the second, at the head of which was Governor Shirley, against Forts Niagara and Frontenac; and the reduction of Crown Point was the object of the third, which was composed wholly of colonial troops, under the command of Sir William Johnson. A body of troops was to be levied in Connecticut to serve in this last expedition, and the command of one of the companies composing it was bestowed on Mr. Putnam. His personal popularity rendered it easy for him to obtain the best recruits, and the regiment with which he was connected joined the army, near Crown Point, at the beginning of the campaign.

Throughout the war, very important services were rendered by the various corps, distinguished by the name of Rangers. They acted independently of the line of the army, and were employed in executing many perilous duties; reconnoitring the positions of the enemy, serving in the capacity of guides, surprising detached parties, and obtaining prisoners, in order to gain intelligence, by force or stratagem. Among the other offices they were expected to perform, were those of destroying the houses, barns, barracks, and bateaux of the French, killing their cattle, and way-laying their convoys of provisions. They ren-

dered the most valuable aid as scouting parties to watch the movements of the enemy, of which no accurate intelligence could be procured but with the greatest hazard, the country being full of wandering and hostile Indians.

It is obvious, that a mode of life like this required the utmost prudence, sagacity, and alertness, and must have afforded abundant opportunities for wild and difficult adventure. In the Journals * of Major Rogers, the celebrated New

*The first part of this work, which purports to contain an account of the "several excursions made by the author under the generals who commanded upon the continent of North America during the late war," was printed in London in 1765. It presents rather copious sketches of the personal services of the writer, though with less reference to the general operations of the several campaigns, than the reader at this day could desire; but it is by no means destitute of interest; and a work can hardly be regarded as a fair subject of criticism, which was written "not with science and leisure, but in deserts, on rocks and mountains, amidst the hurries, disorders, and noise of war, and under that depression of spirits, which is the natural consequence of exhausting fatigue." Very few notices are to be found in it, at any length, of the prominent individuals, who acted in concert with Major Rogers; the name of Putnam is rarely mentioned, and never with any comment indicating that the least importance was attached by the author to his services. The trifling incident of the preservation of his life by Putnam, is not once alluded to.

A work, published in 1831, in Concord, New Hamp-

Hampshire partisan, are preserved the regulations drawn up by himself for the government of the Rangers under his command; and one needs only read them to be convinced; that it was a service in which only the bold and resolute could be expected to engage. We are not informed whether the corps of Putnam were known from the outset as Rangers; it is very probable that they were so; as they were employed almost exclusively in that capacity, and appear to have been soon distinguished by that name. No service could have been better suited to the character and taste of Putnam.

The campaign of 1755, though distinguished by the stain upon the British arms at Braddock's overthrow, and the victory of the Provincials over Dieskau near Lake George, was not a long one, and afforded less than usual scope for the exertions of the Rangers. A similarity in some respects of

shire, and entitled "Reminiscences of the French War," purports to contain among other matter, this Journal of Rogers; but the editor, without apprizing his readers of the fact, has mutilated the original in a very remarkable manner. Hardly a single sentence is unaltered, and it is quite curious to compare a page of Rogers' own composition with one which has undergone the scalping-knife of the New Hampshire editor. We doubt whether the proceeding is to be justified under any circumstances; but it becomes unpardonable when it is attempted without the slightest intimation to the reader,

character and disposition produced an intimacy between Putnam and Rogers ; and they frequently acted in concert to reconnoitre the positions of the enemy, surprise their advanced pickets, and obtain intelligence of their purposes and movements.

In one of their excursions, it was the fortune of Putnam to preserve the life of Rogers. Both these officers had been detached with a party of light troops from Fort Edward, to ascertain the state of the fortifications at Crown Point. To approach them with their whole force would have made it difficult to guard against discovery, while the number of straggling Indians in the neighborhood rendered it scarcely less dangerous to advance without support. They, however, left their men concealed behind a willow thicket, and went themselves sufficiently near the works to procure the information they desired. It was now about the hour of sunrise, when the soldiers began to issue in such numbers from the fort, that the partisans found no opportunity to rejoin their men without detection. In the course of an hour or two, a soldier came directly to the spot where Rogers lay concealed at a little distance from Putnam, and, on discovering him, called for aid to an adjacent guard, attempting at the same time to seize Rogers's fusee with one hand, and to stab him with a dirk which he held in the other. Putnam perceived the imminent danger of his associate,

and, being unwilling to alarm the enemy by firing, ran up, and struck the Frenchman dead before him with a single blow from his fusee. The outcry of the soldier had already alarmed the guard; but the partisans succeeded in rejoining their troop, and in returning without loss to their encampment.

By the terms of their enlistment, the colonial troops were engaged to serve only during the campaign; but the commission of Captain Putnam was renewed, and he entered again on duty in the spring of 1756. The general military operations of this year were less fortunate than those of the preceding one. The advantage of many expensive and laborious preparations was wholly lost by the inaction of the British generals. Oswego, an important fortress, was captured by the French, and no attempt was made to dispossess them of their outpost at Ticonderoga. A very different result would probably have been exhibited, had the operations of the army been conducted by Provincial officers, who were thoroughly conversant with the country, and the foe with whom they would have had to deal; points, of which the British generals appear to have been profoundly ignorant. It is a relief to turn from the detail of their misconduct, to the personal adventures of the more deserving officers, who acted under them.

Captain Putnam was directed to reconnoitre

the position of the enemy at the Ovens, near Ticonderoga. He was accompanied in this enterprise by Lieutenant Robert Durkee, a gallant officer, who afterwards encountered the severest fate, under which humanity can ever be called to suffer.* The two partisans proceeded on their way, until they came near the enemy. It was the custom of the British and Provincial troops to set fires by night in a circle round their camp. The French, on the contrary, more wisely placed them in the centre, so that their sentinels were screened from observation by the darkness.

Putnam and Durkee were unfortunately not aware of this usage, and were creeping slowly on their hands and knees, in order to approach the fires, when they were confounded at finding themselves in the midst of the camp of the enemy, by whom they were discovered and fired upon. Durkee received a bullet in his thigh; but there was no time to be lost, and they began an expeditious retreat. Putnam led the way, and in a few minutes fell head foremost into a clay-pit, followed by Durkee, who had kept closely at his heels. Supposing his companion in the pit to be one of

* He was an officer in the revolution. At the battle of Wyoming, in 1778, he was wounded and made prisoner by the Indians; by whom he was burned at the stake, and treated during his expiring moments with the most savage cruelty.

the pursuers, Putnam had raised his arm to stab him, when he recognised Durkee's voice. Both then rushed from their retreat, in the midst of a shower of random bullets, and threw themselves behind a log, where they spent the remainder of the night. On examining his canteen, Putnam found it pierced with balls, and its contents entirely gone; and next morning at day-light, he discovered that his blanket was sorely rent by fourteen bullet-holes.

On another occasion, a convoy of baggage and provisions was intercepted by six hundred of the enemy at Halfway Brook, between Fort Edward and Lake George. The plunderers retreated with their booty, having experienced little interruption from the troops, by which the convoy was escorted. When the news of this disaster was received at the camp, Captains Putnam and Rogers were ordered in pursuit. They were directed to take with them one hundred men in boats, furnished with two wall-pieces, and the same number of blunderbusses. With these they were to proceed for a certain distance down Lake George, and thence over land to the Narrows, to cut off the enemy's retreat.

Shortly after they had reached the designated spot, they saw from their place of concealment the French batteaux, laden with the plunder of the convoy, sailing into the Narrows, entirely unsuspecting of danger. They await in silence the

approach of the batteaux ; at the critical moment, they pour upon them a close and most destructive fire ; many of the boatmen fall, and several of the batteaux are sunk. A strong wind sweeps the remainder with great rapidity through the passage into South Bay, or the destruction would have been complete. They carry to Ticonderoga the news of their disaster, and a detachment is instantly sent to intercept the Provincials ; who, anticipating such a movement, have in the mean time hurried to their boats, which they reach before the close of day.

Next morning they set sail, and, at Sabbath-day Point, meet the detachment of the French, consisting of three hundred men, advancing in boats with the expectation of an easy victory. Not a musket is discharged until they come within pistol shot ; then the enemy are thrown at once into confusion by the artillery, aided by a close fire of musketry. The carnage becomes dreadful ; of twenty Indians in one of the canoes, fifteen are killed, and very many are seen to fall overboard from others ; while, on the side of the Provincials, only one is killed and two others are wounded. No farther attempt is made to obstruct the retreat of the Provincials, who return in safety to the camp.

Late in the same season, General Webb, who commanded at Fort Edward, sent out Captain

Putnam to procure a prisoner; the usual and very compendious method of learning on the best authority the motions of the enemy. He concealed his men near the highway leading from Ticonderoga to the Ovens; but these valiant gentlemen thought fit to ascribe his caution to the influence of fear, and, as there was no enemy in sight, were with much difficulty induced to remain under shelter. Presently an Indian passed by, and at a little distance behind him a Frenchman; and Putnam, calling on his men to follow, sprang to seize upon the latter, overtook him and ordered him to surrender. His men were now convinced of the advantage of concealment, and disregarded his order; and, as Putnam was the only person in view, his intended captive preferred to run the hazard of resisting him. Putnam levelled his piece, but it missed fire, and he retreated followed by the Frenchman, in the direction where his men were posted; but the other, falling on this unexpected ambuscade, changed his course without delay, and effected his escape. The men, whose conduct had been thus discreditable, were dismissed with disgrace; and Putnam soon accomplished his object with other aid. The incident is worthy of relation, only as it shows the nature of the tasks imposed upon an active partisan, and the hazard to be encountered in performing them.

The character and services of Putnam had now become generally known; he was found to unite with a total insensibility to danger, a caution and sagacity, which gave him the command of his resources at the moment when they were most required. Nor could any service be better adapted to the exhibition of these qualities, than that in which he was engaged; though it was unfortunately in a sphere too limited, to secure for him a place in history. He was endeared to the soldiers by the cheerfulness with which he shared their perils and privations, and the gallantry, which suffered none to go where he did not himself lead the way; to his superior officers, by the energy and promptness with which he executed their commands; and he began to rise in the esteem of the public generally, as one who was destined to become distinguished in a broader field of action.

CHAPTER II.

Raised to the Rank of Major. — Various Adventures in the War. — Capture of Fort William Henry. — Putnam stationed near Fort Edward. — Encounters the Enemy at South Bay. — Expedition against Ticonderoga. — Death of Lord Howe.

IN 1757, the legislature of Connecticut conferred on Putnam the commission of a major. The Earl of Loudoun, one of the most incompetent British generals who had commanded in the colonies, was then at the head of the military forces in this country. He had arrived at Albany in the summer of the preceding year; but the capture of Oswego by the French had induced him to suspend offensive operations, and to think only of guarding against further loss. By the next spring, the generous efforts of the colonists enabled him to take the field with a numerous and effective force; and it was expected, not without reason, that he should open the campaign in the direction of Canada with some decisive blow. But the people were not yet fully acquainted with the character of their military chief. About midsummer, they were somewhat surprised to learn that he had

sailed for Halifax with six thousand of his troops. It was his intention there to join a reinforcement of five thousand men, who had lately arrived from England under the command of Lord Howe, and to attempt the reduction of Louisburg in Cape Breton; but, learning that the garrison of that place had been augmented by an armament from France, he returned to New York and reposed upon his laurels.

While the British commander was prosecuting his voyage of discovery, the condition of Fort William Henry, then a frontier post, was such as to invite the assault of the enemy. This ill-fated fortress, the name of which still awakens melancholy recollections, was situated at the southwestern extremity of Lake George. It was a structure of no great strength, on a small eminence, which rose gradually from the waters of the lake. Its garrison at this time consisted of about three thousand men; and, as an additional security, General Webb was stationed about fifteen miles distant at Fort Edward, with a force considerably larger.

The Marquis de Montcalm, the French commander, having collected about eight or nine thousand men, including a large body of Indians, appeared before Fort William Henry on the third of August, with a summons to surrender. In his letter to the commanding officer of the garrison, he urged the capitulation by considerations of human-

ity, declaring that his power to restrain the Indians would be lost, after the blood of any of them should be shed. No written answer was given to the summons; a verbal reply was returned by the bearer, that the fort would be defended to the east extremity.

Another sad illustration was yet to be afforded of the incapacity of generals, and a still more melancholy one of the atrocities of savage warfare. Just before the siege began, General Webb, accompanied by Major Putnam and two hundred men, went to Fort William Henry, to ascertain the state of its defences. While the General was thus engaged, Major Putnam offered to go with five men to Northwest Bay, sending back the boats to prevent detection, and obtain accurate information respecting the situation of the French at Ticonderoga.

This proposition was rejected as too hazardous. He was, however, permitted to undertake the enterprise, with eighteen volunteers. They immediately embarked in three whale-boats, and set forward on their expedition. Before they arrived at Northwest Bay, a large body of the enemy was discovered on an island. Leaving two of his boats, as if for the purpose of fishing, Putnam returned with the remaining one to communicate what he had seen. The general, whose valor was his east shining accomplishment, seeing the Major

make for the land with his force thus reduced, despatched a skiff to him with orders to come to the shore alone.

With some difficulty, he obtained permission to return in quest of his companions, and to make additional discoveries. He found his men in the place where he had left them, and immediately after encountered a large number of boats in motion on the lake, from the foremost of which he was enabled to escape only by the superior fleetness of his own. There was no longer any room for doubt, that this armament was destined against Fort William Henry; and Putnam so informed the General, who ordered him to preserve strict silence on the subject, and to exact an oath of secrecy from his men.

In vain he endeavored to urge the necessity of meeting the enemy on the shore. "What do you think we should do here?" was the discreet reply. Next morning, the general returned with his escort to Fort Edward, and detached a reinforcement to Fort William Henry. In twenty-four hours afterwards, the fortress was invested by the enemy.

During six days was it defended against a far superior force, provided with artillery. Express after express was in the mean time sent to Fort Edward for relief; but, though the force of Webb had been increased by the addition of Johnson's

troops and the militia, he made not the slightest effort to avert its fate. Once, indeed, he yielded to the solicitations of Sir William Johnson, and permitted those, who would volunteer in the service, to march for its relief. The privilege was eagerly embraced by the Provincials, including Putnam's Rangers; but scarcely had they begun their march, when the general's heart failed him, and they were ordered back. They returned with tears of indignation and sorrow.

General Webb believed his duty sufficiently discharged when he wrote to Colonel Munroe, the commander of the fort, advising him to surrender; and it is a striking example of the danger of pusillanimity, that the indecision of this strangely inefficient personage was the direct cause of the subsequent disaster. When Putnam was a prisoner in Canada, he was assured by Montcalm himself, that the movement of the Provincials from Fort Edward had been reported to him by his Indian scouts, who represented them to be as numerous as the leaves upon the trees; that the operations of the siege were suspended, and preparations for retreat were immediately made, when the news of their return encouraged him to persevere with greater vigor.

All expectations of relief were now at an end; two of the largest guns of the fort had burst, and further resistance must be obviously unavailing;

articles of capitulation were therefore signed, by which protection against the Indians was pledged to the garrison, and they were to be permitted to march forth with the honors of war.

The event which followed, and which was long known throughout the continent as the Massacre of Fort William Henry, can hardly be recited now without a thrill of horror. The troops began their march from the fortress. Just as the rear-guard issued from the gates, the whole body of the Indians fell upon them with the utmost fury, slaughtering them in cold blood. Great numbers were killed, and others were taken prisoners. No efforts were made by the French to put an end to these atrocities; no protection, demanded alike by honor and humanity, was given, until only a miserable remnant of the garrison was left.

Early the next day, Putnam, who had been sent out with his Rangers to watch the movements of the enemy, reached the scene of carnage, just as the rear-guard of the French were embarking on the lake. The barracks were still burning, and hundreds of human bodies lay half-consumed among the ruins. Those of more than one hundred women were scattered around, torn and mutilated in a manner which no language is adequate to tell. One may conceive with what feelings the generous and warm-hearted soldier must have looked upon a scene like this. As we read the dark and bloody

tale, we almost pardon the stern vengeance with which our fathers strove to crush so merciless a foe ; but what a picture does it give of modern civilization, that the most enlightened nations hesitated not to employ these demons as the instruments of war ?

General Lyman soon after this took the command at Fort Edward, and labored to strengthen its defences. With this view he employed a party of one hundred and fifty men to procure timber in its neighborhood, and stationed Captain Little at the head of a morass, about a hundred rods eastward from the fort, to cover them. This post was connected with the fort by a tongue of land, on one side of which was a creek, and the morass extended on the other. One morning at day-break, a sentinel saw what he imagined to be birds, flying swiftly from the morass over his head ; but he was enlightened as to the true genus of these feathered messengers, when he saw an arrow quivering in a tree, just by him. A body of savages had concealed themselves in the morass in the hope of surprising the party, and had resorted to this noiseless method of despatching the sentinel.

The alarm was instantly given ; the laborers fled towards the fort, and were furiously attacked by the Indians ; but their progress was arrested by the close and seasonable fire of Little's party,

which enabled such of the fugitives as were not wounded to reach the fort in safety. The situation of the small band, pressed as they were by an overwhelming force, became very precarious; but the commander of the fort, instead of sending a detachment to their aid, ordered all the outposts to be called in and the gates to be closed.

Putnam was stationed with his Rangers on an island, near the fort, where intelligence soon reached him of the peril of Little and his party. Without the hesitation of an instant, they dashed into the water, and waded as rapidly as they could to the scene of action. On their way they passed so near the fort, that General Lyman called to them from the parapet, and ordered them peremptorily to return; but Putnam made a brief apology, and, without waiting to ascertain whether it was satisfactory, hurried on with his men.

In a few minutes they were at the side of the little band of regulars, who gallantly maintained their ground; then, at the command of Putnam, they rushed with loud huzzas upon the savages directly into the morass. The charge was completely successful; the Indians fled in every direction, and were pursued with great slaughter until night-fall. Colonel Humphreys remarks, that all is not right in the military system, when the orders of superior officers are disregarded with impunity, and intimates that Putnam should have been sub-

jected to the discipline of a court-martial. Nothing of the kind, however, appears to have been attempted; the general was probably content with the result, and cared not that his own conduct should be contrasted with that of those, who served him contrary to his will.

In the winter of this year, the barracks adjacent to the northwestern bastion of Fort Edward accidentally took fire. Within twelve feet of them stood the magazine, containing three hundred barrels of powder. By the orders of Colonel Haviland, who then commanded at this post, some heavy pieces of artillery were brought to bear upon the barracks, to batter them to the ground, but without success. Putnam reached the fort from his station on the island, while the flames were spreading fiercely in the direction of the magazine, and took his post on the roof of the barrack, as nearly as possible to the blaze. A line of soldiers was formed through a postern to the river, from which water was conveyed to Putnam, who threw it on the fire, standing all the while so near it, that his mittens were burned from his hands. He was supplied with another pair soaked in water, and kept his post.

Colonel Haviland, considering his situation to be too dangerous, urged him to descend; but he replied that a suspension of his efforts would be fatal, and entreated to be suffered to remain; and

the colonel, encouraged by his intrepidity, gave orders that nothing more should be removed from the fort, exclaiming, that if they must perish, all should be blown up together. The barracks began to totter; Putnam came down and took his station between them and the magazine; the external planks of this building were consumed, and there remained only a partition of timber between the powder and the flames; still he refused to quit his post, and continued pouring on the water until the fire was happily subdued.

He had contended with the flames for an hour and a half; his face, his hands, and almost his whole body were blistered; and, in removing the mittens from his hands, the skin was torn off with them. Several weeks elapsed, before he recovered from the effects of the exposure; but he was rewarded by the earnest thanks of his commander, and by the consciousness that, but for him, the fortress must have been in ruins.

A brighter day began to dawn upon the British arms in every quarter of the country, but the neighborhood of Lake George and Lake Champlain. There, the same fortunes which had hitherto attended them underwent no immediate change. The popular voice had overborne the royal will, and had compelled George the Second to receive Mr. Pitt as his prime minister. The name of this great man is more closely associated with

commanding energy of character, than any other in the history of England; it made, as, in the eloquent language of Burke, it kept the name of his country respectable in every other on the globe. Nowhere was that name held in greater respect, and nowhere did it inspire more confidence, than in America.

He assumed the direction of affairs in the summer of 1757; and his attention was at once directed to the conduct of the war in this country. The colonies, justly appreciating his vigor and talent, renewed their generous but exhausting efforts to recruit the army for the next campaign; and the extent of their exertions can only be understood, when it is considered that fifteen thousand men were supplied by Connecticut, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire, at a time when the resources of all were hardly equal to those of any one of them now.

Three expeditions were proposed to be undertaken; Louisburg was the destination of the first, Fort Duquesne of the second, and Crown Point and Ticonderoga of the third. The results of the two first are sufficiently well known; the course of our narrative will lead us into some detail respecting the last. Not even the ability of Pitt could immediately turn the current of adverse fortune, which had been flowing with so little interruption in the region, where the scene of our story has thus far been laid.

General Abercromby, who now assumed the chief command in this department, ordered Major Putnam to proceed with fifty men to South Bay in Lake George, in order to watch the motions of the enemy, and intercept their straggling parties. The detachment marched to Wood Creek, near the point where it flows into South Bay ; there, in obedience to Putnam's directions, they constructed a parapet of stone, thirty feet in length, on a cliff that overhangs the water ; securing it from observation by young pines, so disposed that they appeared to have grown upon the spot. Fifteen of the soldiers, who became unfit for duty, were sent back from this station to the camp.

Late in the evening of the fourth day since he occupied the post, Major Putnam was informed that a large number of canoes, filled with men, were slowly entering the mouth of the creek. All the sentinels were called in, and each man was stationed at the point where his fire would be most effective, receiving positive orders from Putnam to reserve it, until he should give the word. The moon was at the full, and every movement of the enemy was perfectly in view. The most advanced canoes had passed the parapet, when a soldier accidentally struck his firelock against a stone. Alarm ed at the sound, those in the foremost canoes ceased to advance, and the whole were crowded in a body at the very base of the temporary forti-

fication. The leaders consulted together, and apparently resolved to return into the Bay.

Just as they were changing their course, Putnam gave the word to fire, and it was obeyed with terrible effect; hardly a shot failed to find its victim, amidst the dense mass of the enemy beneath, whose fire was wasted on an invisible foe. The carnage had continued for some time, when the enemy, perceiving from the fire that the number of their assailants must be small, detached a party to land below in order to surround them; but the movement had been watched by Putnam, and the party was repulsed by twelve men, under the command of Lieutenant Durkee. During the whole night were the enemy exposed to the murderous fire from the parapet. At day-break, Putnam learned that a detachment had effected a landing at some distance below; his ammunition also began to fail, and he gave the order to retreat.

It was afterwards ascertained, that the enemy consisted of a corps of five hundred men, commanded by the well-known partisan Molang; and that more than half their number perished on that fatal night. Two only of Putnam's little band were wounded; they were ordered to the camp under the escort of two other soldiers, but were pursued and overtaken by the Indians. Finding their own fate inevitable, they persuaded their escort to leave them, and quietly awaited the

approach of the foe. One of them, a provincial, whose thigh had been broken by a bullet, killed three of the savages by a single discharge of his musket. He was instantly put to death; but the other, an Indian, was made prisoner, and related these circumstances afterwards to Putnam, who encountered him in Canada.

While the party were effecting their retreat, they were fired on by an unexpected enemy. Putnam, who was never disconcerted, ordered his men to charge, when the leader of the other party, recognising his voice, cried out that they were friends. Friends or foes, replied Putnam, they deserved to perish for doing so little execution with so fair a shot; only one man had been wounded by the fire. Soon after, they were met by a corps detached to cover their retreat, and regained the fort on the following day.

The expedition against Ticonderoga, which has been already mentioned, was led by General Abercromby in person. His force consisted of sixteen thousand men, amply provided with artillery and military stores. On the morning of the 5th of July, 1758, they were embarked in batteaux, and began to descend Lake George, the whole array presenting a brilliant and imposing spectacle. They reached Sabbath-day Point at evening. Here they halted for a few hours, and then resumed their voyage, Lord Howe leading the van.

An officer, who had been sent to ascertain whether the proposed landing-place was unobstructed, returned at day-break with the information, that it was in possession of the enemy. Another place of landing was selected, and the troops were disembarked at mid-day on the 6th of July. Rogers advanced with his Rangers and drove the enemy before him, and the columns of the army began their march. Lord Howe led the centre, and Putnam was at his side. Some musketry was heard upon the left. "What means this firing?" said Lord Howe. "I know not, but with your Lordship's leave will ascertain," replied Putnam. He went, accompanied, in opposition to his earnest remonstrances, by Lord Howe with one hundred of the van. The firing proceeded from a portion of the advanced guard of the enemy, who had lost their way in the woods, while retreating before Rogers. They were soon encountered; and, at their first discharge, Lord Howe fell.

No heavier loss could well have been sustained. This young nobleman was in the prime of manhood, of fine address, full of amiable qualities, and eminent for manly virtue; his military fame was already high, and presented the most brilliant promise for the future. Never was a British officer so much endeared to the Provincial troops, or enjoyed more of the general esteem and confidence. He was regretted equally for what

he was, and what he was expected to become, but the man, over whom the tears of a people are shed, cannot be said to have descended immaturity to the tomb.

His death was avenged by his troops, who charged the enemy, and drove them from the field. Having accomplished this, they were returning to the lines, when they were fired upon, on the supposition that they were of the French army. Several men were killed; nor was the danger averted, until Putnam ran through the midst of the fire, explained the mistake, and thus secured his men from farther injury. He remained himself upon the field until evening, attending to the wounded French, and providing them with such alleviations as he had it in his power to bestow.*

“The fall of Lord Howe,” says Rogers in his Journal, “appeared to produce an almost general consternation and languor.” Certain it is, that from that hour the enterprise wholly ceased to prosper. No progress was made during the next

* Colonel Humphreys assures us, in his *Life of Putnam*, that Major Rogers was sent next morning to bring off the wounded prisoners; “but, finding the wounded unable to help themselves, in order to save trouble, he despatched every one of them to the world of spirits.” We have no means of contradicting or confirming a story, which every reader would be glad to believe unfounded

day; but the principal engineer was sent forward to examine the defences of Ticonderoga; he reported in favor of hazarding an attack without waiting to bring up the artillery, and the preparations were immediately made. This fortress stood on a peninsula in Lake Champlain, very near the shore; and the French lines, which were defended by two redoubts and strong *abatis*, extended across the neck of the peninsula.

The garrison at this time consisted of six thousand men; three thousand more, who had been detached to the Mohawk river, were hourly expected to return. On the morning of the 8th of July, the British troops advanced to the attack over a tract swept by the deadly fire of a sheltered enemy; and were shot down by hundreds as they rushed forward to the *abatis*, and vainly labored to remove this fatal obstacle. Three times in the course of four hours, did they assault the works with unyielding resolution; but their gallantry was wholly unavailing, and their officers at last put an end to this wanton sacrifice of life, and ordered them to retire.

About two thousand of the assailants perished in this rash attack, during the whole progress of which General Abercromby remained in safety two miles from the scene of action. Not a single piece of artillery was ordered up, and the assault was made precisely in the spot where the lines were best

defended. Even at the moment of their retreat, the English force was more than twice as great as that of the garrison; the fortress might still have been reduced by a well-conducted siege; but all further operations were at once abandoned. Major Putnam, who had been employed throughout the action in bringing up the provincial regiments, rendered great service in securing the retreat; and, by the evening of the next day, the whole army had regained their camp at the south end of Lake George. The annals of even this war give no example of a more unfortunate or ill-conducted enterprise.

CHAPTER III.

Perilous Descent of the Rapids at Fort Miller. — Battle with the Indians. — Putnam taken Prisoner and treated with great Cruelty. — Sent to Ticonderoga, and thence to Montreal. — Exchanged, and returns to the Army. — Colonel Schuyler. — Putnam is commissioned Lieutenant-Colonel. — Serves under General Amherst. — Takes part in the Expedition against Havana. — Engaged in an Enterprise against the Western Indians. — Retires from the Army after Ten Years' Service.

ONE day in the course of this summer, while Major Putnam was lying in a batteau with five men on the east side of the Hudson, near the Rapids by Fort Miller, he was suddenly warned from the opposite shore that the Indians were upon him. His batteau was at the head of the Rapids; to remain or cross the river would be inevitably fatal. Before the batteau could be put in motion, the Indians opened their fire from the bank; one man, who, being at a little distance from the rest, had been of necessity left behind, was instantly seized by them, and killed.

Without a moment's hesitation Putnam seized

the helm, and steered his batteau directly down the river; there was scarcely even a chance for escape; the current was broken into whirlpools and eddies, as it rushed furiously over shelves and among projecting rocks. Without any aid from his companions, who were aghast at the danger, he guided his boat, as it shot down, in the course which seemed least threatening, avoiding the rocks and stemming the eddies. Sometimes it was turned fairly round, again it sped onward with the fleetness of a dart; till, in a few minutes, it was gliding quietly over the smooth stream below.

“On witnessing this spectacle,” says Colonel Humphreys, “it is asserted that these rude sons of nature were affected with the same sort of superstitious veneration which the Europeans, in the dark ages, entertained for some of their most valourous companions. They deemed the man invulnerable, whom their balls on his pushing from the shore could not touch; and whom they had seen steering in safety down the Rapids that had never before been passed. They conceived it would be an affront against the Great Spirit to kill this favored mortal with powder and ball, if they should ever see and know him again.” It will be seen, however, that some of the race were not inclined to push these religious scruples so far, as to deny themselves the satisfaction of subjecting him to th ordeal of fire.

In the month of August, Major Putnam was deserted by the fortune which had hitherto attended him, and encountered some of the most remarkable of those perils, which give a character of romance to his personal history. A corps of five hundred men, under the command of Major Rogers and himself, was detached to watch the enemy in the neighborhood of Ticonderoga. When the party reached South Bay, it was separated into two divisions, which were stationed at a considerable distance from each other; but, being discovered by the enemy, it was deemed expedient to reunite them, and to return without delay to head-quarters at Fort Edward.

They were arranged for this purpose in three divisions. Rogers headed the right, Putnam the left, and the central one was led by Captain Dalzell. At the close of the first day's march, they halted on the borders of Clear River. Early the next morning, Major Rogers, with a strange disregard of those precautions to which the Rangers were so often indebted for security, amused himself by a trial of skill with a British officer, in firing at a mark; and this signal act of imprudence was followed by the loss of many lives.

Molang, the French partisan, had been sent out with five hundred men to intercept the party, and was at this moment lying scarce a mile from their encampment. The sound of the firing guided him

at once to their position ; and he posted his men in ambush along the outskirts of the forest, near the paths through which they were to pass. Soon after sunrise the Americans resumed their march through a thicket of shrubs and brushwood, over land from which the timber had been partially cleared some years before ; and, owing to the difficulty of forcing their way through these obstructions, they moved in close columns, Putnam leading the way, Dalzell being stationed in the centre, and Rogers in the rear. Just as they had traversed the thicket and were about to penetrate the forest, they were furiously attacked by the French and savages.

The assault, however unexpected, was sustained with gallantry and coolness ; Putnam ordered his men to halt, returned the fire, and called upon Dalzell and Rogers to support him. Dalzell came immediately up ; but Rogers, instead of advancing to the aid of his associates, stationed his men between the combatants and Wood Creek, in order, as he affirmed, to guard against an attack in the rear ; or, as was suspected by others, to relieve himself from the necessity of making one in an opposite direction. The action began to assume a desperate character. Putnam was determined to maintain his ground ; his soldiers, as occasion required, fought in ranks in the open spaces of the forest, or fired from behind the shelter of the trees.

But his own fusee chanced to miss fire, while he held its muzzle against the breast of an athletic savage; thus defenceless, he was compelled to surrender; and his antagonist, having bound him securely to a tree, returned to the battle.

Captain Dalzell, who now commanded, maintained the fight with signal intrepidity; but the Provincials were compelled to retreat for a little distance, closely followed by the savages, exulting in their fancied triumph, and rushing forward with shouts of victory. The Provincials rallied and drove them back beyond their former position, and the battle here grew warmer than before. The tree to which Putnam was secured was thus brought midway between the combatants, in the centre of the hottest fire of both; and he stood, wholly unable to move his body, or even to incline his head, in the midst of a shower of balls, of which many lodged in the tree above him, and several passed through the sleeves and skirts of his coat.

In this position, than which it would be difficult for the imagination to conceive one more appalling, he remained for more than an hour; each of the parties meanwhile giving ground several times in succession, but not so far as to place him beyond the field of contest. Once, when the Provincials had retired a little and the savages were near him, a young Indian amused himself by throwing his

tomahawk at the tree, apparently to ascertain how nearly he could cast it to the body of the prisoner, without striking him; and the weapon more than once lodged in the tree, within a hair's breadth of the mark. When this barbarian grew weary of his sport, a French subaltern drew near, and levelled his musket at Putnam's breast. Fortunately it missed fire. It was in vain that the latter claimed the treatment due to him as a prisoner of war. The Frenchman, instead of desisting, pushed him violently with his musket, and after dealing him a severe blow upon the cheek with the but-end of his piece, left him to his fate.

After a long and gallant contest, the Provincials remained in possession of the field; the enemy were routed with the loss of ninety of their number, and retired, taking with them their prisoner, who was destined to undergo still greater suffering.

When the Indians had retreated to a considerable distance from the field of the battle, they deprived Major Putnam of his coat, vest, stockings, and shoes, bound his hands tightly together, and piled the packs of a number of the wounded on his back. In this wretched condition, exhausted by fatigue, and severely suffering from the injuries he had received, he was forced to march for many miles through a mountainous and rugged tract; until the party, overcome with weariness, at length halted to rest themselves. Meantime, the tight-

ness of the cords around his wrists had caused his hands to swell, and made them exquisitely painful; the blood was flowing from his torn and naked feet; the weight of his burden became intolerable to his exhausted frame; and he entreated the savages to loose his hands or to release him from his sufferings by death.

A French officer interposed, removed the ligatures, and relieved him of a portion of his burden; the Indian, who had made him captive and who had remained behind to attend to the wounded, also came up, provided him with moccasins, and expressed much indignation at the treatment which he had received; but soon went back, without taking measures to secure him against its repetition.

A spot for the evening's encampment was selected, and the Indians, taking with them Major Putnam, went thither in advance of the rest of the party. On the way he experienced fresh outrages, and was deeply wounded on the cheek by a blow from a tomahawk. He had been thus far spared for a darker purpose; it had been resolved that he should perish at the stake, with all those refinements of torture, by which the savages know how to enhance the bitterness of death. The depths of the forest were chosen as the scene of sacrifice. The victim was bound entirely naked to a tree; large piles of fuel were laid in a circle around him; and, while these fearful preparations

were in progress, they were rendered more appalling by the wild songs and exultation of the Indians.

When all was ready and their victim was awaiting the hour of death with the fortitude which never failed him, the fire was set to the fuel about him ; but a sudden shower extinguished the flames. After repeated efforts, the blaze began to rise from every portion of the circle. Putnam's hands were closely bound, but he was still able to move his body ; and his convulsive writhing to avoid the flame gave infinite diversion to his tormentors, who accompanied their orgies with songs and dances, and their usual terrific expressions of delight.

All hope of relief was now at an end, and nature was beginning to yield to the excess of suffering, when a French officer rushed through the throng, dashed aside the blazing brands, and cut the cords of the prisoner. A savage, touched by some sudden impulse of humanity, had hurried to inform Molang of the proceedings of his fellows, and it was this brave partisan himself, who had thus, at the last extremity, redeemed from the most horrible of deaths a gallant foe. After sternly reprimanding the Indians for their cruelty, he took Putnam under his protection, until he could restore him to his savage master.

The kindness of this master (for so the Indian

who captured Putnam was considered) bore some resemblance to the tender mercies of the wicked. He appeared to feel for the sufferings of his prisoner; and, finding him unable to eat the hard bread set before him, in consequence of the injury inflicted by the Frenchman, moistened it with water for his relief. Apprehensive, however, that Putnam might take advantage of the darkness to escape, he removed his moccasins, and bound them to his wrists; then placed him on the ground upon his back, and, extending his arms as far asunder as possible, secured them to two young trees. His legs were next secured in the same ingenious manner. Several long and slender poles were next cut, and laid, together with bushes, transversely across Putnam's body; on the extremities of these lay several Indians, in such a manner that the slightest effort to escape must awaken them.

Having completed this singular cage, the Indians were content with the provision they had made for his safe-keeping; and in this particularly inconvenient prison Putnam spent the dreary night that followed his release from death. He was accustomed to relate, that, even while thus reposing, he could not refrain from smiling as he thought of the odd subject for the canvass which was presented by the group, of which he constituted the most prominent figure; but his merriment was probably of short duration.

Next morning he was released from durance and provided with a blanket; some bear's meat was given him to allay his hunger, and he was permitted to resume his march without a burden. Some vexation was occasionally shown by the savages, by menacing signs and gestures, on account of the loss of their expected entertainment; but they were no longer suffered to molest him, and he reached Ticonderoga the same night, without experiencing farther violence. On his arrival there, he was placed in the custody of a French guard.

After having been examined by Montcalm, Major Putnam was transferred to Montreal. He was conducted thither by a French officer, from whom he received a courtesy and kindness which were the more welcome, from the indignities he had so lately suffered. Several American prisoners were in that city at the time; among the number was Colonel Peter Schuyler. When he heard of the arrival of Putnam, Colonel Schuyler hastened to ascertain the place of his abode. The Provincial Major had been suffered to remain without a coat, vest, or stockings; the remnant of his clothing was miserably tattered, and his body exhibited serious marks of the violence he had endured. Colonel Schuyler, when he came into his presence, was so affected by the sight, that he could hardly, in the language of Humphreys, "contain his speech within limits consistent with

the prudence of a prisoner, and the meekness of a Christian.”

He immediately supplied his countryman with all that his necessities required ; and, after securing to him, by the most active intercession, the treatment to which his rank entitled him, found means to render him a more important service. The capture of Frontenac by the British occasioned an exchange of prisoners, of which Putnam reaped the benefit by a stratagem of Colonel Schuyler. There were several officers among the prisoners, whose claim to be exchanged was superior to his ; and Schuyler, fearing that the opportunity might be lost if the character of the prisoner should be known, prevailed upon the Governor to permit him to name an officer to be included in the cartel. He then assured his Excellency, that he should name an old Provincial major, who was of no service there or elsewhere, but was very anxious to return to his wife and family, in preference to the young men, who had no families to care for.

There is another instance of the beneficence of Colonel Schuyler, not wholly unconnected with the object of this narrative. Mrs. Howe, the story of whose captivity by the Indians is familiar to American readers, was an inmate of his family in Montreal, at the time of which we speak. The first husband of this lady had been murdered by the Indians, several years before. Mr. Howe, the

second, met with a similar fate at Fort Dummer, in 1756; and his wife, with seven children, was carried into captivity. They wandered for many months, exposed to the extremity of hardship and privation. Her two daughters were destined by the Indians to become the wives of two young warriors; but this scheme was defeated by the address of their mother, who prevailed upon the French commander to procure them admission into a convent at Montreal. The sons, five in number, were distributed among various Indian tribes. She was herself ransomed from the Indians by an old French officer, from whose rude importunities, as well as those of his son, she found it difficult to escape.

She had heard of Colonel Schuyler, and found means to acquaint him with her story. With his usual generosity he immediately paid the price of her ransom, and thought his work of charity imperfectly accomplished, until all her sons were restored to her. It became necessary for him to return home before the other prisoners were ready for the journey; and he recommended Mrs. Howe and her family to the charge of Major Putnam, with whom she returned in safety to her friends; both having experienced a larger measure of suffering, than humanity is often called to undergo.

In 1759, a plan was formed for the entire expulsion of the French from their possessions on this continent. Three powerful armies were to

enter Canada by different routes; General Wolfe was appointed to conduct an expedition up the St. Lawrence against Quebec; General Amherst, after reducing Ticonderoga and Crown Point, was to join him under the walls of that city; and a third army was destined against Fort Niagara. General Prideaux, the commander of the last, after reducing that fortress, was to attack Montreal, and, if successful, was to unite himself with the grand army at Quebec. This vast scheme was only partially accomplished before the close of the campaign.

The name and victory of Wolfe are familiar in the mouths of all as household words. Amherst succeeded in the reduction of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, but at so late a period as to prevent him from advancing into Canada; the fortress of Niagara was also taken by Prideaux, but it was not thought prudent to hazard an attack on Montreal. Such was the general condition of affairs at the close of 1759. Putnam, who had been raised to the rank of lieutenant-colonel, accompanied the army of Amherst, and was employed during the latter part of the season in strengthening the defences of Crown Point; but we have no means of giving any particular detail of his operations.

The next season, that of 1760, witnessed the termination of the war in this portion of America. Montreal was the only important post remaining

in possession of the French, whose whole force was concentrated in its neighborhood. General Amherst, the British commander-in-chief, had employed the winter in preparations to unite his forces under the walls of that city. With this view, General Murray was to advance upon it by water from Quebec; Colonel Haviland was to proceed thither from Crown Point by the way of Lake Champlain; while Amherst himself, at the head of an army of ten thousand men, was to enter the St. Lawrence by the way of Lake Ontario, and descend it to Montreal.

In falling down the river, the progress of the troops was arrested by two armed vessels near the mouth of the Oswegatchie, in a position which effectually prevented the British from attacking the fort of the same name in the vicinity. Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam's activity and resources were called into requisition to remove the obstacle; and he undertook, with one thousand men, in fifty batteaux, to carry the vessels by boarding. Having made his preparations, he took his station in the van, with a chosen crew, and provided with the somewhat odd munitions of a beetle and wedges; with these he intended to secure the rudders of the vessels, so that they might be prevented from bringing their broadsides to bear. At the appointed signal, the batteaux were put in motion, Putnam having quite unnecessarily assured

his men, that he should show them the way up the vessels' sides. But the object was effected in a less sanguinary way; at the moment of attack, the crew of one of the vessels compelled its captain to strike, and the other was run on shore.

The fort of Oswegatchie was situated on an island, and was defended by *abatis*, overhanging the water, and apparently quite inaccessible. Putnam again devised a method of attack, for which he was indebted to no mortal engineer. With the permission of General Amherst, he caused a number of boats to be prepared, with musket-proof fascines along the sides, forming a complete shelter from the fire of the enemy; and a broad plank, twenty feet in length, was so attached to the bows of each, that it could be elevated or depressed at pleasure. It was his intention to force the boats directly against the *abatis*; when the planks, till then upright, were to be lowered, so as to form a species of bridge over the projecting stakes, and thus enable the assailants to scale them; the attention of the enemy was meanwhile to be distracted by simultaneous attacks upon various portions of the works. The signal had been given, and the boats were moving in order to the attack, when the sight of their strange enginery discomposed the nerves of the besieged, who surrendered without a blow.

Putnam was highly complimented for his inge-

nity and courage by the general-in-chief; and it is in no small degree to be attributed to him, that the armies of Amherst and Murray, approaching Montreal from opposite directions, arrived on the same day beneath its walls. Colonel Haviland came in immediately after, when the conquest of Canada became complete, by the capitulation of the French.

It deserves to be mentioned that Putnam met once more with his savage master, at an Indian village in the neighborhood of Montreal, and was welcomed by him with much hospitality. The change of circumstances had given him an opportunity, which he did not neglect, of requiting the attentions of the Indian, whose kindness, though not of the most delicate kind, had been quite beyond the usual standard of his race.

In the spring of 1762, war having been declared by Great Britain against Spain, a powerful armament was prepared at Portsmouth for the reduction of Havana. A body of four thousand regulars was ordered from New York to join the expedition on the coast of Cuba, and a large Provincial force, under its own officers, coöperated in the enterprise. The regiment from Connecticut was under the command of General Lyman; but, as he was called to the command of the whole Provincial force, the charge of it devolved on Lieutenant-Colonel Putnam.

The fleet arrived in safety on the coast of Cuba ; but a violent storm arose before the troops were landed, and one of the transports, in which was Putnam with five hundred men, was thrown upon a dangerous reef. No aid could be afforded by the other ships, which with difficulty rode out the gale ; but rafts were prepared of masts and spars, secured together with cordage, by means of which every individual reached the shore in safety. Having fortified his camp, Putnam remained for several days until the storm subsided ; his troops were then reëmbarked in the convoy, and joined the armament before Havana. Their seasonable arrival gave fresh courage to the English, who had landed several weeks before, and had already lost half their number by privation, disease, and the sword. Their efforts were at length successful, but the success was very dearly purchased ; the troops sunk by hundreds beneath the influence of the burning climate ; scarcely any of the American soldiers, and a feeble remnant of the officers, returned to their own country.

The hostilities of the Western Indians were not terminated by the treaty of Paris in 1763 ; and a new expedition was undertaken against them in the course of the next year, to which Connecticut contributed four hundred men. This corps was under the command of Putnam, who now for the first time received the commission of a colonel

Among his companions in the expedition was the Indian chief, of whom he had been formerly the captive. Little opportunity, however, was afforded for brilliant services; the savages were overawed, and next year concluded a treaty with the English.

A single incident occurred, which requires to be mentioned here. Before the Provincials reached Detroit, it had been invested by the Indians. Among its defenders was Captain Dalzell, the old associate and friend of Putnam. He had been detached by General Amherst to raise the siege, and found means to gain admission to the fortress; but, reluctant to disobey the orders of his commander, made a desperate sally against a formidable force. His troops were surrounded, and attempted to retreat. They had gained a temporary shelter, when he saw one of his sergeants without, desperately wounded, and exposed to capture by the enemy; his men were ordered to bring him in, but they declined the undertaking, as too hazardous; Captain Dalzell then went forth alone, declaring that he would never leave his comrade at the mercy of the savages. As he was raising the wounded man from the ground, the fire of the enemy was poured in, and they fell together. No nobler death ever ended the triumphs of the brave!

Colonel Putnam had now been engaged in the military service for about ten years; and no man

quitted it with greater honor. A larger measure of hardship and danger than had fallen to his lot, is rarely crowded into the compass of a single life. All this had been encountered, and all his duties been discharged with a chivalrous bravery and fulness of resource, which commanded universal admiration. Military education, except such as was the result of his experience, he had absolutely none; his early instruction was very defective, and, had it been otherwise, could have done little towards qualifying him for the life which he had chosen; but he had a calm good sense, a ready ingenuity, unbounded energy and self-possession in the midst of danger, which had made him fully equal to all the stations he was called to fill.

Personal bravery is perhaps the cheapest of the military virtues; but there was something cool, daring, and unostentatious in that of Putnam, which attracted equally the wonder of the cultivated and the rude. In the words recorded by a personal friend upon his monument, he had always "dared to lead, where any dared to follow." His disposition was full of the frankness of the soldier, united with a kindness and generosity, not always found in union with the sterner qualities demanded by the life of camps; an extended intercourse with others had refined the asperities of his manners, without impairing the simplicity of his genuine New England character.

He carried with him into private life the esteem and confidence of all. Throughout the country, there prevailed a strong feeling of respect for his services and military talent; and he was regarded as not the least able proficient in that seminary of no gentle discipline, the Seven Years' War. As there was now no call for the display of his ability as a soldier, he returned to his plough; and his fellow citizens took pleasure in offering such testimonies of esteem to it was in their power to give, by electing him to fill the higher municipal offices, and to represent them in the **General Assembly of the State.**

CHAPTER IV.

Colonel Putnam opposes the Stamp Act. — Goes to Mississippi River to select Lands. — His Intimacy with the British Officers in Boston. — Hastens to the Army on hearing of the Battle of Lexington. — Made a Brigadier-General of the Connecticut Troops. — Battle of Bunker's Hill.

THE great drama of the Revolution had already opened. In 1764, the British Parliament resolved that it would be proper to impose certain stamp duties, with a view to raise a revenue in America; and next year the fatal scheme was consummated by the passage of the Stamp Act. The ties, which bound the colonies to the mother country, were nearly severed, and a flame began to ascend, which could be extinguished only with blood.

From the outset, Putnam's heart and hand were devoted to the cause of freedom; and he brought to its support that manly energy and firmness, which never failed him in the hour of danger. He was among the foremost to compel the stamp-masters, appointed in Connecticut, to relinquish their odious office; and, when this was accomplished, became one of a committee appointed to confer with the

governor of the colony upon the subject. He was asked by Governor Fitch what he, as chief executive magistrate, was to do, if the stamped paper should be sent him by the orders of the King? "Lock it up," replied Putnam, "and give us the key; then, if you think proper, to screen yourself from responsibility, prohibit us from entering the room where it is deposited; we will send it safely back." "But should I refuse you admission?" "In five minutes your house will be levelled with the dust."

Colonel Humphreys remarks, that the report of this conversation was believed to be one reason why the stamped paper was never sent to Connecticut. The repeal of the obnoxious act, in 1766, having somewhat tranquillized the popular feeling, Colonel Putnam returned once more to his agricultural labors. They were interrupted by two accidents, by one of which he was deprived of a portion of the thumb of his right hand, while the other was attended by a compound fracture of the thigh, which made him slightly lame for the remainder of his life.

General Lyman, whose name has been already mentioned, had been deputed by the surviving officers and soldiers of the expedition to Havana, to receive in England the portion of their prize-money, remaining due. He also acted as the agent of a company, who were solicitous to procure a

grant of land upon the Mississippi. After a delay of some years, the application for the grant was successful; and, in 1770, General Lyman, accompanied by Colonel Putnam and two or three other persons, went from Connecticut up the Mississippi to explore the tract. Putnam placed some laborers on his portion, but did not himself remain or derive any permanent advantage from the undertaking. General Lyman revisited Connecticut with the rest of the party, but soon returned to Natchez, where he formed a settlement, and remained until his death.

In the interval between this period and the beginning of hostilities, Colonel Putnam had occasion frequently to visit Boston. He was familiarly known to General Gage, Lord Percy, and the other principal British officers, and often conversed with them on the subject of the controversy. Whenever he was questioned as to the part which he proposed to take, his answer was that he should be found on his country's side, and stand ready to abide the issue. It was intimated to him, that one acquainted as he was with the military power of Great Britain, could hardly think it unequal to the conquest of a country unprovided with any regular forces, magazines, or ships of war; and his reply to this suggestion is full of sense and judgment. If the united forces of Great Britain and the colonies had required six years to conquer

another detachment of the same troops, together with three companies of Gerrish's regiment, at Chelsea. General Ward had with him five companies of artillery, and General Thomas three or four. The British army in Boston, at the close of the month of May, consisted of ten thousand men.

Perhaps there was no officer in the American army, eminent as many of them certainly were, who enjoyed more of the public confidence than General Putnam. Several of them had become distinguished in the old French war, and there were some, whose capacity to conduct large military operations was perhaps superior to his; but there was no one of greater promptness and energy in action, or who had acquired a higher reputation for adventurous bravery.

In the course of the month of May, it was determined to remove the cattle from the islands in Boston harbor, in order to cut off the supplies of the enemy, who were blockaded in the town. For this purpose, three or four hundred men were detached, and succeeded in removing them from Hog Island and Noddle's Island. A skirmish was thus occasioned, in which several of the marines, who had been stationed to guard them, were killed. The Americans were fired on by the British vessels in the harbor, and a reinforcement of three hundred men, with two pieces of artillery, was ordered to support them. One of the armed

vessels, a schooner, which lay near the shore, was set on fire by the artillery, and destroyed; and a second was towed beyond the range of the shot by the boats of the fleet. The affair was not of much importance, except as it served to inspire confidence in the troops, who found that they could encounter the enemy with success. On this occasion, General Warren accompanied Putnam as a volunteer.

The spirit of the Americans was high, and they were impatient to be led into action; but their disorganized and unprovided state rendered such a step very hazardous. Many of the officers and men, who had been accustomed only to the irregular service of rangers, could not appreciate the necessity of long and thorough discipline; and the general voice of the people called for some decisive measures.

General Putnam was himself desirous, that the advantage of this spirit should not be lost by inaction; and he urged the necessity, not of hazarding a general engagement, but of some partial action in which the Americans, under cover of intrenchments, might cause the enemy to feel their skill as marksmen; it being a favorite maxim with him, that, if the militia could find protection for their legs, they were quite indifferent to the welfare of the rest of their persons. The same opinion was maintained by Colonel Prescott and other veteran

officers, and the subject was considered with much earnestness in the council of war.

General Ward and General Warren, on the other hand, were apprehensive that the issue of an action could not fail to prove disastrous; the supply of ammunition was very limited; and they feared that it must terminate in a general engagement, in which the Americans would be defeated. But the bolder counsel at length prevailed. The Committee of Safety had received information, that it was the intention of the British to occupy the heights of Dorchester and Charlestown; and the necessity of anticipating them in at least a portion of this scheme was obvious to all. The committee therefore recommended to the council of war, to take possession of Bunker's Hill without delay. The heights of Charlestown had already been examined by Putnam and other officers, and the advantage of the position fully ascertained.

For the information of those who are unacquainted with the place, it may be proper to remark, that the peninsula of Charlestown is somewhat more than a mile in length from east to west, and eleven hundred yards across from north to south; washed on the north by Mystic River, and on the south by Charles River, which approach within about one hundred yards of each other at the Neck of the peninsula. The eastern part is separated from Boston by a narrow channel.

From the Neck rises Bunker's Hill, to the height of a little more than one hundred feet, terminating in a tongue of land, which extends for a considerable distance along the shore of Mystic River, about twenty feet above the water. The summit of Breed's Hill, which is about sixty feet in height, rises in a southeasterly direction from Bunker's Hill, towards Boston; between this and the tongue of land, on the north, is a slough, and the village of Charlestown lay on the south, on the declivity and at the base. Morton's Point is the northeastern extremity of the peninsula, and the hill of the same name, thirty-five feet high, rises near it.

The detachment, intended for the expedition, consisting of about one thousand men, under the immediate command of Colonel Prescott, were assembled on Cambridge Common at an early hour on the evening of the 16th of June, where prayers were offered by the President of Harvard College. General Putnam accompanied the detachment. They moved at nightfall through Cambridge and across the Neck of the peninsula, Colonel Prescott, dressed in his calico frock, leading the way. A question now arose respecting the height, which was intended to be fortified. Bunker's Hill had been designated for the purpose by the Committee, while Breed's Hill appeared better suited to the object of the expedition; but it is probable, that the former name was

usually applied indiscriminately to both the heights. So much time was consumed by the discussion, that it was nearly midnight before it was concluded to erect the principal work on Breed's Hill, and a subsidiary one on Bunker's Hill for the protection of the rear, and as a rallying-point in the event of their being driven from the other.

A redoubt, about eight rods square, was accordingly laid out on the summit of Breed's Hill, with a breastwork, extending from its northeastern angle down the northern declivity to the slough. Before the action, the American line was extended to the left across the tongue of land to Mystic River. This was done by General Putnam, who ordered Captain Knowlton, just as the enemy were landing, to take post with some Connecticut troops behind a rail fence, running in the direction already mentioned, about two hundred yards in the rear of the breastwork; and an imperfect intrenchment was made by disposing other fences in a parallel line and throwing some newly-mown grass between.

While the men were engaged in their labors on the breastwork and redoubt, General Putnam returned to Cambridge to procure a reinforcement; but the report of a sudden cannonade induced him to repair without hesitation to his post. The operations of the detachment were unknown to the British until daylight, when a heavy fire was opened on them by the ships and batteries. At

the suggestion of some of his officers, who were anxious that the men should be relieved, Colonel Prescott convened a council of war; expressing at the same time his aversion to the proposition, and insisting, that, as they had endured the labor, they were entitled to the honor of the victory.

Putnam again returned to Cambridge for provisions and a reinforcement, and equally without effect. Colonel Prescott now called another council of war, still refusing to ask to be relieved; but he consented to apply to General Ward for the aid which had been twice asked in vain. Movements had already been observed among the British troops in Boston, indicating their design to prepare for an attack. By eleven o'clock, General Ward had issued his orders to the troops of Colonels Stark and Reed at Medford, to proceed to the scene of action; but, before this fact could be ascertained, all possible preparation had been made to repel the enemy.

Putnam had withdrawn a detachment from the redoubt to throw up the contemplated work on Bunker's Hill, a position by which Breed's Hill was completely commanded; and he resolved to make another effort, before the preparations of the enemy could be completed, to procure an additional force from Cambridge. He repaired thither for the third time across the Neck, which was now swept by the fire of a man-of-war and

floating batteries ; but, learning there what orders had been issued, he hastened back to Charlestown.

The expected reinforcement at length arrived ; and Putnam, reserving a portion of them to aid in the construction of the work on Bunker's Hill, ordered Stark and Reed to join the Connecticut troops at the rail fence with the residue. Colonel Prescott had on his part been indefatigable in his preparations, and all were anxiously awaiting the approach of the enemy.

Never was the fearful spectacle of battle presented to the eye, under circumstances more striking, or of deeper interest. Every movement of the troops on either side was distinctly open to the view of thousands, who watched from the neighboring roofs and spires the changes of the scene. On the one hand, the hopes of freedom depended on the issue ; on the other there was a deep solicitude to support the honor of the British name. The day was beautifully clear and cloudless.

At noon, twenty-eight barges, containing four battalions of infantry and twenty companies of light infantry and grenadiers, with six pieces of artillery, moved in perfect order across the channel, their brilliant arms flashing in the sun of June. They landed at Morton's Point, and were soon joined by a second detachment. Shortly after, a third detachment reached the shore, near the east end

of Breed's Hill. The united force consisted of about five thousand men.

A fire was now opened on the American lines by the British artillery at Morton's Hill ; and it was answered by a few pieces from the redoubt, which soon became useless and were carried to the rear. As one of the captains of artillery was retreating over Bunker's Hill, Putnam ordered him back to his post, threatening him with death if he should disobey. He returned ; but the pieces were deserted, and his men took their stations in the line.

A single horseman rode at full speed over Bunker's Hill, and encountered General Putnam. It was General Warren ; and Putnam offered to receive his orders. Warren replied, that he came only as a volunteer, and desired to know where his services would be most useful. Putnam pointed to the redoubt, remarking that he would be covered there. "I came not," said Warren, "for the purpose of security ; tell me where the onset will be most severe." "Go, then, to the redoubt," said Putnam ; "Prescott is there, and will do his duty ; if that can be defended, the day is ours." Warren rode forward to the redoubt, where he was received with loud acclamations. Again he was offered the command by Colonel Prescott, but still declined it ; observing, that he was happy to study the art of war under such an officer.

At three o'clock, the British line was formed, and the troops moved in perfect and imposing order towards the rail fence and redoubt. Putnam hastened from his post on Bunker's Hill, rode along the lines, and ordered the men to reserve their fire till the enemy were within eight rods, and then to prove their well-known skill as marksmen; the same order was enforced by Prescott, Stark, and all the veteran officers. As the British were advancing, all within those low intrenchments was silent as death. Just as the enemy were upon them, the signal was given; a close and deadly fire blazed along the lines, and the front ranks of the enemy were swept down before it. Rank followed rank, but in vain; the order was given to retreat, and a shout of victory rung through the American line.

In the mean time, reinforcements from Cambridge reached the Neck, but were reluctant to encounter the enfilading fire. When the British had retreated, Putnam hurried to the spot to bring them over, riding backward and forward several times, while the earth was thrown up by the balls around him; but few could be persuaded to follow.

The British commander had now rallied and re-organized his men; a second time he led them against the Americans, who were ordered to reserve their fire, till the enemy should be nearer

than before. Charlestown was at this time set on fire, and, as the troops were advancing, the flames ascended on their left. They hurried on, firing with the coolness and precision of a holiday review. Once more the American lines were still, until the enemy came to the appointed distance; again the fire blazed forth with the same fatal precision as before, and the ground in front of the intrenchments was covered with the dead and wounded.

Nearly a thousand of the enemy, with a vast proportion of officers, had now fallen; and the order to retreat was given for the second time. Major Small, the old friend of Putnam, was standing alone; the muskets were levelled at him, when Putnam threw them up with his sword, and he retired unhurt. But the ammunition of the Americans was at length exhausted. Colonel Prescott ordered his men to club their muskets, and hurl the stones of the parapet against the enemy should they venture on a third attack; while Putnam galloped to the rear, and labored in vain to bring up the scattered reinforcements.

The British threw aside their knapsacks, and were ordered to reserve their fire, and trust to the bayonet. They then concentrated their force on the redoubt and breastwork, where every effort was vainly made to repel them. Prescott, unprovided with bayonets and exhausted of his ammuni-

tion, at length gave the reluctant order to retreat ; and his troops moved slowly down the western declivity of the hill. It was at this moment, that the gallant Warren fell. The American left continued to repel the enemy, but finding their flank opened by the retreat of the right, were compelled in their turn to retire. Putnam indignantly urged the troops to make a stand upon Bunker's Hill. He took his station between them and the enemy, exposed to the hottest of the fire ; but the men were unable to encounter the British bayonet. The Americans continued their retreat over the Neck to Prospect and Winter Hills, where they took up their position for the night.

In presenting this sketch of a battle, so important to the cause of freedom, it was of course impossible to enter very minutely into the conduct and services of others, who shared with General Putnam the glory of the day ; and this has been rendered unnecessary by the diligent research of Colonel Swett, who has written a very interesting account of its details.

We have thus far refrained from saying any thing of the particular command allotted to Putnam on this occasion. In the work to which we have just referred, he is mentioned as having the general control and superintendence of the expedition ; and this opinion is supported by the following considerations. He was the only general

officer who was present at the battle ; and it is very improbable, that the various detachments should have been left without a commander of the whole. He appears also to have acted, throughout the battle and the previous arrangements for it, in this capacity.

Such was the purport of his own constant declarations ; and if any evidence were wanting of his personal honor, it may be found in the language of President Dwight respecting him. " His word was regarded as an ample security for any thing, for which it was pledged ; and his uprightness commanded absolute confidence." On the other hand, the orderly book of General Ward is silent on the subject of the expedition, and no orders for its conduct and command are now to be discovered. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to speak with certainty upon the question. However it may be determined, there can be no doubt, that the part taken by General Putnam was in the highest degree important and effective.

Shortly after the battle of Bunker's Hill, it was proposed to Putnam by Sir William Howe, through the medium of Major Small, to accept the commission of major-general in the British service. A large pecuniary offer was at the same time made to him. It is needless to say, that these offers were indignantly rejected.

CHAPTER V.

Putnam is appointed Major-General in the Continental Army. — Remains at Cambridge till the Evacuation of Boston. — Commands at New York. — Suggests a Mode of obstructing the Navigation of the Hudson, to prevent the Enemy's Vessels from ascending it. — Commands on Long Island. — New York evacuated. — Retreat through New Jersey. — Putnam stationed at Philadelphia, and afterwards at Princeton. — Anecdotes.

ON the 15th of June, George Washington was unanimously elected by Congress general and commander-in-chief of the American army; and Generals Ward, Lee, Schuyler, and Putnam were appointed to act as major-generals under him. He arrived at Cambridge on the 2d of July, and next day entered upon his most momentous and responsible command. He had no personal acquaintance with Putnam before this period; but he found him bold, energetic, and single-hearted, frank and generous in his disposition, and diligent and faithful in the discharge of all his duties. "You seem, General Putnam," said he, after examining a work which had been erected with great

expedition, "to have the faculty of infusing your own industrious spirit into all the workmen you employ."

In one of his letters from Cambridge, addressed to the President of Congress, he speaks of Putnam as "a most valuable man, and a fine executive officer"; and the commendation of Washington was never thoughtlessly bestowed. *These are the very words, which the reader of Putnam's history would probably consider best suited to describe his personal and military character; and they are important, also, as indicating the keen glance with which Washington penetrated the qualities of those around him.* In General Putnam's own sphere, which was that of prompt and chivalrous action, he had no superior; and it costs us nothing to admit, that, in the conduct of war upon a very extensive scale, he might be excelled by some of his fellow laborers in the cause of freedom.

During the remainder of this season, the condition of the army was such, as to render it inexpedient to venture upon hostile operations; there was little or no powder in the magazines, and the troops were in every respect so deficient and ill-provided, that General Washington, as he himself declared, was compelled to use art to conceal their situation from his own officers, as well as from the enemy. Meantime the people of the country, not knowing or unable to appreciate these diffi-

culties, were constantly expecting some decisive blow; and on the 22d of December, Congress resolved, that, if General Washington and his council should be of opinion, that a successful attack could be made upon the troops in Boston, he should make it, "notwithstanding the town and property in it might thereby be destroyed."

The harbor was frozen over by the middle of February, and Washington himself was then desirous of hazarding a general assault; but nearly all his officers were hostile to the scheme, and it was reluctantly abandoned. They recommended, however, in partial compliance with his suggestions, that preparations should be made to occupy the Heights of Dorchester; a measure, which could scarcely fail to be followed by a battle. It was determined, also, that, if a sufficient number of the enemy should march to the assault of that position, materially to reduce the garrison of Boston, a body of four thousand men, under the command of General Putnam, should land in the west part of the town, and force their way to the Neck at Roxbury, where the troops from that quarter were to join them.

The Heights of Dorchester were accordingly occupied; but the plan formed by the enemy to carry that position was defeated by a storm, and on the 17th of March, the town was evacuated. When the first intelligence of the preparations

of the British for departure was received at Cambridge, several regiments under the command of Putnam were embarked in boats, and dropped down the river. On landing at its mouth, the fact of the departure of the British was fully ascertained, and a detachment was ordered to take possession of the town. Another detachment marched in at the same time from Roxbury, and the whole were placed under the command of Putnam, who proceeded to possess himself of all the important posts.

Early in January, General Washington had been informed, that an expedition was fitting out at Boston, with the view to take possession of New York; and he ordered General Lee to repair immediately thither, with such volunteers as he could assemble on his march, and to make the best arrangements for its defence, that circumstances would admit. General Lee was also instructed to disarm all disaffected persons, and to examine the state of the fortifications on the North River, in order to secure them from the danger of surprise.

On his arrival at New York, it was determined to fortify some commanding position in the city, to erect batteries at Hell Gate for the security of the entrance of the harbor, as well as for the protection of the communication with Long Island, where a fortified camp was proposed to be estab-

lished, and to strengthen and garrison the defences of the Highlands.

It soon appeared, that the expedition already mentioned was destined farther south; and Lee was ordered from New York by Congress, on the 1st of March, to take command of the Southern department of the army. After the evacuation of Boston, General Washington, deeming the preservation of New York as of the last importance to the cause, sent on a portion of his troops to that city; and, on the 29th of March, General Putnam was ordered to assume the command at that station, and to execute the plan of defence, which had been projected by General Lee.

General Putnam, on his arrival at New York, devoted himself, with the utmost assiduity, to the charge with which he was intrusted. The British fleet had been thus far amply supplied with fresh provisions from the shore; a species of accommodation, which he forthwith made the subject of a pointed prohibition; and the good effects of this step were soon exhibited by the departure of some of the vessels from the harbor. By the middle of April, General Washington arrived with the greater portion of his army, and entered on the chief command; but the preparations for defence were still prosecuted by General Putnam. On the 21st of May, Washington, in obedience to the call of Congress, went to Philadelphia to confer

with them respecting the condition of affairs, during his absence, General Putnam was commander of the army.

The judgment of Washington had easily foreseen, that New York and the Hudson would be the first objects of the attention of the enemy. Early in July, General Howe, who had sailed for Halifax after evacuating Boston, returned and landed with his army at Staten Island; where he was soon joined by a powerful armament from England, under the command of Lord Howe, his brother. Before the arrival of the squadron, General Washington, under the direction of Congress, had instructed General Putnam to prepare fire-rafts and gondolas to prevent the ships from entering the New York Bay or Narrows; and he was also charged with the supervision of various other schemes, designed for a similar object.

The plan of destroying the British fleet by means of fire-ships, had been suggested to Congress by a Mr. Anderson. General Putnam himself projected a novel species of *chevaux-de-frise* to obstruct the channel. Two ships, about seventy feet distant from each other, connected by the sterns with large pieces of timber, were ordered to be sunk with their bows towards the shore. But neither of these plans was ultimately successful; the *chevaux-de-frise* were broken by the ships of war, and an attempt made with the fire-ships to

destroy the vessels, that had passed up the river, was followed only by the burning of a single tender.

Another experiment was made, under the eye of General Putnam, with a singular machine, which was invented by David Bushnell, of Connecticut. It was a boat, so constructed as to be capable of being propelled at any depth below the surface of the water, and of being elevated or depressed at pleasure; to this was attached a magazine of powder, designed to be secured by a screw to the bottom of a ship; when the magazine should be disengaged from the boat, certain machinery was to be set in motion, which would cause it to explode at any time desired. The whole was to be managed by a single person, stationed in the boat. Mr. Bushnell, the inventor, was too feeble to undertake its management himself, but had taught the secret to his brother, who chanced to be ill at the time when the British fleet arrived.

His place was supplied by a sergeant of the army, who was instructed to manage the machine as well as time and circumstances would permit. Late in the evening he set forth upon his expedition, and sailed directly underneath the *Eagle* man-of-war, the flag ship of the British admiral; but the screw, with which he was to penetrate the copper sheathing, struck some iron plates, near the rudder; the tide was strong, and the inexperience of the

sergeant prevented him from applying the proper remedy to remove the difficulty, before the day began to dawn. He therefore abandoned the magazine to its fate, and reached the shore, where General Putnam was anxiously awaiting the issue of the enterprise. A prodigious explosion followed at some distance from the ship, to the infinite consternation and perplexity of all who were unacquainted with the secret; but various circumstances occurred to prevent a repetition of the experiment.

As the safety of New York essentially depended on the possession of Long Island, a body of troops was early stationed on the peninsula of Brooklyn, where a camp had been marked out and fortified. This was expected to be, as it proved, the first object of the enemy's attack. The works had been erected under the supervision of General Greene, who alone possessed a thorough knowledge of the posts and of the routes by which the British would probably approach; but he was unfortunately taken ill, and the command devolved on General Sullivan. The British army landed on the island on the 22d of August, and it became certain that an engagement must soon take place. On the 23d, General Putnam was ordered with reinforcements to take the command at Brooklyn; but the time intervening between his appointment and the battle was too short to

the troops were withdrawn to New York, by General Washington himself, with so great celerity and skill, that nearly all the artillery and stores were saved. The movement was undiscovered by the enemy, until half an hour after the works had been evacuated, though the noise of their spades and pickaxes was distinctly heard within the American lines.

It was now obvious, that the city of New York must be sooner or later abandoned; but the principal officers of the army were solicitous to retain possession of it, as long as might be in their power. The army was arranged in three divisions; one of which, under General Putnam, was stationed in the city, another at Kingsbridge, and the third occupied an intermediate position, so that it could be readily brought to the support of either.

On the 12th of September, a council of war came to the resolution to evacuate the city, and the events of the few succeeding days demonstrated, that this measure was quite indispensable. Three days after, some British ships ascended the North River as high as Bloomingdale, while Sir Henry Clinton, with four thousand men, landed on the eastern shore of the island, at Kipp's Bay. Their landing was covered by the fire of five ships of war. The new levies stationed to defend the works at this position fled, without waiting for the enemy; and two brigades of Putnam's division,

which had been ordered to support them, imitated their example; breaking at the approach of about sixty of the British, and flying without firing a single shot. General Washington met them in their flight, and vainly used every possible effort to rally them; he was left alone within eighty yards of the enemy; but he refused to fly, and was rescued only by the care of some of his attendants, who seized his horse's bridle, and turned him from the field. Orders were immediately given to secure the Heights of Haerlem; and they were at once occupied by the fugitives and the other troops in the vicinity.

The main road leading from the city to Kingsbridge was in possession of the enemy, and General Putnam resolved to secure the retreat of his division by the route of Bloomingdale. The manner in which it was effected will be best described in the words of an eyewitness.

“Having myself,” says Colonel Humphreys, “been a volunteer in his division, and acting adjutant to the last regiment that left the city, I had frequent opportunities, that day, of beholding him (Putnam), for the purpose of issuing orders and encouraging the troops, flying, on his horse covered with foam, wherever his presence was most necessary. Without his extraordinary exertions, the guards must have been inevitably lost; and it is probable the entire corps would have been cut in pieces.

“When we were not far from Bloomingdale, an aid-de-camp came from him at full speed, to inform that a column of British infantry was descending upon our right. Our rear was soon fired upon, and the colonel of our regiment, whose order was just communicated for the front to file off to the left, was killed upon the spot. With no other loss we joined the army, after dark, upon the Heights of Haerlem. Before our brigades came in, we were given up for lost by all our friends. So critical indeed was our situation, and so narrow the gap by which we had escaped, that, the instant we had passed, the enemy closed it by extending their line from river to river.”

The enemy's shipping having passed up the North River, notwithstanding the obstructions, the American army was withdrawn from the island of New York to the neighborhood of the White Plains. On the 28th of October, the British forces advanced in order of battle, and a brigade of Hessians was detached to dislodge a corps of about sixteen hundred militia from Chatterton's Hill, where they were stationed to cover the right flank of the army. After a sharp encounter, the Hessians remained in possession of the hill. Major-General Putnam, who had been ordered to support the militia, met them in full retreat, and it was then too late to attempt to retake the post; but no attack was made upon the camp of Washington, who

withdrew, on the night of the 1st of November, to the heights in the rear of his first camp.

A few days after, General Putnam was sent across the Hudson, to provide against a descent of the enemy upon New Jersey; and on the 13th, General Washington passed the river with about five thousand men, and took post at Hackinsac. And, when Fort Washington and Fort Lee had fallen, began the retreat of the "phantom of an army," as it was emphatically called by Hamilton, through New Jersey; when Washington was compelled to face a powerful army with scarce three thousand men; unprovided with all that makes a soldier's life endurable, and this too in the depth of winter, and abandoned by General Lee, to whom the command on the east bank of the Hudson had unfortunately been confided.

There was no darker period in the history of the Revolution; scarcely any spirit, but that of Washington, was unshaken by the accumulated weight of difficulty and disaster; nor could he, without deep emotion, witness the suffering, which he had no power to relieve.

Throughout this season of peril, until the army had crossed the Delaware, General Putnam was at his commander's side; and it may be well imagined, that he would have been one of the last to intermit his efforts in the almost hopeless cause.

The passage of the Delaware was effected on the 8th of December; it became now all-important to prevent the enemy from occupying Philadelphia, and General Putnam was ordered to make immediate provision for its fortification. Congress had already resolved that it should be defended to the last extremity.

At this time an incident occurred, which strikingly illustrates the foresight and sagacity of Washington. A report had been circulated, that Congress was about to separate; and on the 11th of December it was resolved by that Assembly, that the commander-in-chief "be desired to contradict this scandalous suggestion of the enemy, this Congress having a better opinion of the spirit and vigor of the army, and of the good people of these States, than to suppose it can be necessary to disperse; nor will they adjourn from the city of Philadelphia in the present state of affairs, until the last necessity shall direct it." This resolution was forwarded on the same day to Washington, who was at once convinced that its publication would be attended with evil consequences, and took upon himself the responsibility of suppressing it in the next day's orders.

In a letter addressed on the 12th to the President of Congress he says; "I am persuaded, if the subject is taken up and reconsidered, that Congress will concur with me in sentiment. I doubt

not, but there are some, who have propagated the report; but what if they have? Their remaining in or leaving Philadelphia must be governed by circumstances and events. If their departure should become necessary, it will be right; on the other hand, if there should not be a necessity for it, they will remain, and their continuance will show the report to be the production of calumny and falsehood. In a word, Sir, I conceive it a matter, that may be as well disregarded; and that the removal or staying of Congress, depending entirely on events, should not have been the subject of a resolve."

Well was it for Congress, that their resolution was suppressed by Washington; for, on the self-same day on which he wrote, that body adjourned to meet again in Baltimore on the 20th of December. It appears, that General Putnam, who had entered on the command, and General Mifflin, his predecessor in the station, had been summoned by Congress to a conference; and it was in consequence of their judicious suggestions, that the resolve for an adjournment was adopted.*

"Upon the salvation of Philadelphia," was the earnest language of Washington, "our cause almost depends;" and his selection of General Putnam to command it at this crisis denotes the confi-

* See *Writings of Washington*, Sparks's edition, Vol. IV. p. 210.

dence reposed by the commander-in-chief in his energy and skill. Nor were his expectations disappointed; General Putnam entered on his duties with his usual diligence, forwarded with all his power the construction of the fortifications, and labored with untiring zeal to reconcile contending factions, and to animate the citizens to efforts for their own defence.

While he was thus employed, General Washington was preparing to attack the enemy at Trenton. It was a part of his original plan to call Putnam to coöperate in the enterprise, with the troops at Philadelphia and a corps of the Pennsylvania militia; but he was induced to change this plan by an apprehension of an insurrection among the Royalists within the city. General Putnam had therefore no share in the victory at Trenton, nor in that of Princeton, by which it was succeeded.

So great was the effect of these enterprises on the enemy, that Washington began to entertain the hope of driving them beyond the limits of New Jersey. On the 5th of January, 1777, he ordered General Putnam to march with the troops under his command to Crosswick, a few miles southeast of Trenton, using the utmost precaution to guard against surprise, and laboring to create an impression that his force was twice as great as it actually was. The object of the commander-in-chief was

partially accomplished by the concentration of the British forces at New Brunswick and Amboy; and General Putnam was soon after ordered to take post at Princeton, where he passed the remainder of the winter. This position was scarcely fifteen miles distant from the enemy's camp at New Brunswick; but the troops of Putnam at no time exceeded a few hundred, and were once fewer in number than the miles of frontier he was expected to guard.

Captain Macpherson, a Scotch officer of the seventeenth British regiment, had received in the battle of Princeton a severe wound, which was thought likely to prove fatal. When General Putnam reached that place, he found that it had been deemed inexpedient to provide medical aid and other comforts for one who was likely to require them for so short a period; but by his orders the captain was attended with the utmost care, and at length recovered. He was warm in the expression of his gratitude; and one day, when Putnam, in reply to his inquiries, had assured him that he was a Yankee, averred that he had not believed it possible for any human being but a Scotchman to be so kind and generous.

Indeed, the benevolence of the general was one day put to a somewhat delicate test. The patient, when his recovery was considered doubtful, solicited that a friend in the British army at New

Brunswick might be permitted to come and aid him in the preparation of his will. Full sorely perplexed was General Putnam, by his desire on the one hand to gratify the wishes of his prisoner, and a natural reluctance on the other, to permit the enemy to spy out the nakedness of his camp. His good nature at length prevailed, but not at the expense of his discretion; and a flag of truce was despatched, with orders not to return with the captain's friend until after dark.

By the time of his arrival, lights were displayed in all the apartments of the College Hall, and in all the vacant houses in the town; and the army, which then consisted of fifty effective men, were marched about with remarkable celerity, sometimes in close column, and sometimes in detachments, with unusual pomp and circumstance, around the quarters of the captain. It was subsequently ascertained, as we are assured by Colonel Humphreys, that the force of Putnam was computed by the framer of the will, on his return to the British camp, to consist, on the lowest estimate, of five thousand men.

During his command at Princeton, General Putnam was employed, with activity and much success, in affording protection to the persons in his neighborhood, who remained faithful to the American cause. They were exposed to great danger, from the violent incursions of the Loyalists;

and constant vigilance was required, in order to guard against the depredations of the latter. Through the whole winter there raged a war of skirmishes. On the 17th of February, Colonel Nielson, with a party of one hundred and fifty militia, was sent by General Putnam to surprise a small corps of Loyalists who were fortifying themselves at Lawrence's Neck. They were of the corps of Cortlandt Skinner, of New Jersey, a brigadier-general of Provincials in the British service. We know not how to relate the result of this affair more briefly than it is given in the following extract from a letter addressed by Putnam to the Council of Safety of Pennsylvania, on the day after it occurred.

"Yesterday evening, Colonel Nielson, with a hundred and fifty men, at Lawrence's Neck, attacked sixty men of Cortlandt Skinner's brigade, commanded by the enemy's renowned land pilot, Richard Stockton, and took the whole prisoners; among them the major, a captain, and three subalterns, with seventy stand of arms. Fifty of the Bedford Pennsylvania riflemen behaved like veterans."

On another occasion, he detached Major Smith with a few riflemen, against a foraging party of the enemy, and followed him with the rest of his forces; but, before he came up, the party had been captured by the riflemen. These, and other

similar incidents, may appear individually as of little moment; but before the close of the winter, General Putnam had thus taken nearly a thousand prisoners, and had accomplished the more important object of keeping the disaffected in continual awe.

CHAPTER VI.

Putnam commands in the Highlands. — Operations during the Campaign. — The British ascend the Hudson. — General Putnam superintends the Construction of the Fortifications at West Point. — His perilous Adventure at Horseneck. — Retires from the Army in Consequence of a Paralytic Attack. — His Death. — His military and personal Character.

IN the month of May, 1777, General Putnam was ordered by Washington to assume the chief command of the army of the Highlands, on Hudson's River; and was particularly charged with the execution of a plan, devised by Knox and Greene, to obstruct the passage of the enemy's ships in the river. Much uncertainty rested at this time on the ultimate purposes of the British generals, Burgoyne and Howe; and it became necessary for the Americans, with forces quite inadequate to the purpose, to prepare for the defence of the three important points of Ticonderoga, Philadelphia, and the Highlands.

Sometimes there was reason to believe that Burgoyne and Howe intended to unite their forces on the Hudson River; at others, that the troops

of the former would be transported by water for the purpose of reinforcing General Howe, without advancing from Canada; and, for a considerable period, the destination of the force of Howe himself, who sailed with the British fleet from New York towards the close of July, was wrapped in equal mystery. As circumstances appeared to favor either of these suppositions, the American forces at different stations, including the greater part of that of Putnam, were detached in different directions. All that remained for him to do was to stand ready to execute the orders of Washington, and to transmit such intelligence of the enemy's movements as came into his possession; and he attended to these objects with the activity and vigilance required by the exigency.

On the 3d of August, Sir Henry Clinton, who commanded the British force in the city of New York, sent up a flag of truce to General Putnam at Peekskill. Edmund Palmer, a lieutenant of a Tory regiment, had been detected in the American camp, and it was the purpose of Clinton to claim him as an officer in the British service. The following was the reply sent back by Putnam.

"Head Quarters, 7th August, 1777.

"Edmund Palmer, an officer in the enemy's service, was taken as a spy lurking within our lines; he has been tried as a spy, condemned as a

spy, and shall be executed as a spy, and the flag is ordered to depart immediately.

“ISRAEL PUTNAM.

“P. S. He has been accordingly executed.”

A few weeks afterwards, Sir Henry Clinton availed himself of the opportunity afforded by the absence of the main American army, to make an incursion into the interior of New Jersey. On the 12th of September, with a force consisting of about two thousand men, in four divisions, he proceeded to ravage the country, with little opposition. When General Putnam received intelligence of this movement, he sent General McDougall across the Hudson with fifteen hundred men; but they were too late to overtake the enemy, who returned on the 16th to New York, with considerable booty.

General Putnam himself now devised a plan for attacking the enemy at the four different points of Staten Island, Long Island, Paulus Hook, and the Island of New York, at the same time. He had been encouraged to expect the aid of large bodies of militia from Connecticut, and hoped to derive similar assistance from New Jersey and New York; and thus supported, he entertained no doubt of his ability to succeed in the enterprise.

On the 23d of September, however, he received an urgent letter from Washington, which compelled him to abandon his design. Affairs were assuming

a critical aspect in the neighborhood of Philadelphia; and twenty-five hundred men were summoned to the main army from the force of Putnam, who was instructed to call in the militia to supply their place. For this purpose he made instant requisition on the governors of Connecticut and New York; but, as no hostile demonstrations appeared, and the militia were impatient of detention at the time of harvest, he discharged such portions of them as had not spontaneously deserted him.

His force now consisted of about fifteen hundred men, stationed at Peekskill, on the east side of the Hudson. The defences of this river had employed much of the attention of General Washington, who relied upon them to arrest the progress of the enemy. Fort Independence was the lowest on the eastern side, just above Peekskill; four or five miles higher, on the opposite bank, were Forts Clinton and Montgomery, and about two miles above, on an island near the eastern shore, was Fort Constitution.

Forts Clinton and Montgomery, which may be considered as one, were regarded as the strongest; and various obstructions, defended by two frigates and a galley, were thrown across the river at their base. The garrison consisted of about six hundred men, under the command of Governor Clinton, of New York. Partly with the view of destroying

some military stores collected in the neighborhood, and partly to make a diversion in favor of General Burgoyne, an expedition against these fortresses was undertaken by Sir Henry Clinton.

On the 5th of October, he landed at Verplanck's Point, just below Peekskill, on the east bank of the Hudson, with about three thousand men; and General Putnam retired on their approach to the high grounds in his rear. The next morning, under cover of a fog, a portion of the British crossed the river to Stony Point, and marched unobserved through the mountains in the direction of Forts Montgomery and Clinton. Governor Clinton, at ten o'clock, received the intelligence of their approach, and sent for reinforcements to Putnam, who, believing that Fort Independence was the real object of the enemy, was engaged, as well as the state of the atmosphere would permit, in reconnoitring their position. The express, sent by Clinton, failed to reach him.*

* This failure is attributed by Chief Justice Marshall to the absence of General Putnam for the purpose of reconnoitring, when the messenger arrived. Colonel Humphreys, who was upon the spot, says, that the letter of Clinton miscarried through the treachery of the messenger; that Putnam, astonished at hearing nothing from the enemy, rode to reconnoitre them, and that he (Colonel Humphreys) being alone at head-quarters when the firing began, urged Colonel Wylls, the senior officer in camp, to send all the men not on duty to Fort Montgomery; which was immediately done, but unhappily too late

At five o'clock in the afternoon, both of the forts were assaulted at the same time by the British. They were resolutely defended until dark, when they were entered by the enemy at various points, and a portion of the garrison made prisoners. The greater number, from their familiar knowledge of the mountain passes, and under cover of the night, effected their escape. No intimation of the assault was received at the camp, until it was made known by the firing on the west bank of the river; a reinforcement of five hundred men was then despatched, but, before they could cross the river, the forts were in possession of the enemy.

In consequence of this disaster, Forts Independence and Constitution were evacuated; General Putnam was compelled to retire to Fishkill; the entire command of the river was lost, and the way was thrown open to Sir Henry Clinton to ascend it. In the course of a week, the arrival of the militia having increased the force of Putnam to six thousand men, he retook Peekskill and the mountain passes, and employed the main body of his troops in watching the progress of the British up the river. While on his march with this design, he received intelligence of the capitulation of Burgoyne, and five thousand men were sent to his aid from the northern army; but, before they arrived, the British had returned to New York.

When the fact of the surrender of Burgoyne had been ascertained by Washington, but before he was aware of the return of Clinton to New York, he suggested to General Putnam the expediency of uniting his forces with those of Gates, to gain, if possible, the rear of the British, and take possession of the city. This was on the 25th of October, several days after the convention of Saratoga, of which Washington had not yet been informed by Gates.

Five days afterwards, when the commander-in-chief had been apprized of the return of the British to New York, Colonel Hamilton, one of his aids-de-camp, in obedience to the decision of a council of war, was despatched by him to Putnam, to direct him to send forward the brigade he had received from the northern army. Having done this, Hamilton proceeded to the camp of Gates, to instruct him to detach a large portion of his force to the vicinity of Philadelphia. The British force in Philadelphia and its neighborhood amounted to ten thousand men; while that of Washington, the militia included, whose stay was very uncertain, did not much exceed that number.

On his return from Albany, Hamilton addressed a letter to General Putnam, expressing his surprise and regret that the orders of the commander-in-chief had not been complied with. This letter was forwarded to Washington by Putnam, with a

complaint that the reflections of Hamilton were illiberal and unjust ; that he was unconscious of having omitted any portion of his duty ; but that, without explicit orders from Washington, he could not think of remaining at his post, and sending his troops away ; the effect of which would certainly be the reinforcement of Howe's army from New York. The course of Hamilton having been in conformity with the orders of Washington, was fully approved by him, and he expressed dissatisfaction at the delay of General Putnam in complying with his orders.

This is the only instance, in which the conduct of General Putnam gave occasion to the censure of his commander ; and it is probably to be attributed to a disposition, which he had long cherished, to attempt a descent upon New York, and a too high estimate of the importance of such an enterprise.

After the departure of the troops, General Putnam moved down the Hudson with a part of his remaining force. When General Dickinson made a descent upon Staten Island, he ordered two brigades to march upon Kingsbridge, in order to divert the attention of the enemy ; but their purpose had been penetrated, and the British withdrew at their approach.

He now took post at New Rochelle, and arranged a plan for attacking the forts at Satauket

and Huntington, on Long Island; but both were in the mean time evacuated.

This was followed by another enterprise, on a more extensive scale; the object of which was to destroy the materials collected on Long Island for barracks in New York, together with the ships sent thither to obtain wood from Newport, to attack a regiment stationed about eight miles eastward from Jamaica, and to capture or destroy the public stores. The execution of this scheme was intrusted to General Parsons and Colonel Webb; the former of whom succeeded in taking a few prisoners, and in destroying a sloop, together with a large quantity of boards and timber; but the other portions of the enterprise were unsuccessful.

About the middle of December, General Putnam, in obedience to the orders of Washington, returned with his troops to the Highlands, where he spent the winter; a winter, which was passed by Washington in his dreary encampment at Valley Forge; in the course of which he wrote, (and a darker picture of suffering could not easily be drawn,) that he had "no less than two thousand eight hundred and ninety-eight men in camp unfit for duty, because they were barefoot and otherwise naked." Nor was the situation of Putnam in any respect more enviable; his troops

bore their full share of suffering and privation.*

General Washington had never lost sight of the defences of the Hudson; and, on the 25th of January, he urged on General Putnam the necessity of placing them on a respectable footing before the spring. All the old works had been demolished by the British. Early in January the several positions had been examined by Putnam, in company with Governor Clinton and others; all of whom, with the exception of Radière, a French engineer, agreed in selecting West Point, as the best position for a fortress. Colonel Humphreys claims for General Putnam the merit of this selection. However this may be, there can be no doubt that he is entitled to a large portion of the credit, particularly as it was made in opposition to the remonstrances of the engineer, who enjoyed the confidence of Congress and of Washington. Their judgment was confirmed by that of the committee of the Assembly and Council of New York, among whom was Governor Clinton, and the ground was broken in the month of January,

* On the 13th of February, 1778, General Putnam wrote to Washington as follows: "Dubois' regiment is unfit to be ordered on duty, there being not one blanket in the regiment. Very few have either a shoe or a shirt, and most of them have neither stockings, breeches, nor overalls."

by a brigade despatched by Putnam for the purpose.

Congress had directed that an inquiry should be made into the causes of the loss of Forts Clinton and Montgomery; and General Putnam, who had on the 12th of February returned to Connecticut on a visit to his family, was of course required to attend, as the commander of the army of the Highlands at the time of the disaster; but the report of the court, constituted for this purpose, attached no blame to any officer. He was, however, superseded in his command; and the circumstances attending this change demand some notice.

In a letter addressed to him by Washington on the 16th of March, we find the following passage; "General McDougall is to take the command of the army of the Highlands. My reason for making this change is owing to the prejudices of the people, which, whether well or ill grounded, must be indulged; and I should think myself wanting in justice to the public and candor towards you, were I to continue you in a command, after I have been almost in direct terms informed, that the people of New York will not render the necessary support and assistance, while you remain at the head of that department."

The complaints to which Washington refers were very general, and had probably their origin

chiefly in the ill success of Putnam's efforts to prevent the incursions of the enemy, and the loss and inconvenience, which were thus occasioned. General Schuyler's history, however, is sufficient to show, that such prejudices are not always well founded in proportion to their violence; though in this instance it was necessary for the commander-in-chief to yield to them, without deciding the question of their justness.

Among the charges urged against him, was that of exercising too much lenity in his treatment of the Tories, and of too great facility in allowing intercourse with the enemy. His situation was certainly a difficult one; his disposition inclined him to alleviate as much as possible the evils resulting both from the civil war which was raging in that quarter, and the contest with the foreign enemy; nor is it certain that a different course would have relieved him from all imputation.

Colonel Humphreys has given us an explanation of these circumstances, which is entitled to much consideration, as proceeding from one, who had every opportunity to ascertain the truth. He declares, that General Putnam became the object of this prejudice in consequence of his humanity, in showing all the indulgence he could, consistently with duty. "He had conceived," adds this writer, "an unconquerable aversion to many of the persons who were intrusted with the disposa-

of Tory property, because he believed them to have been guilty of speculation, and other infamous practices. But, although the enmity between him and the sequestrators was acrimonious as mutual, yet he lived in habits of amity with the most respected characters in public departments, as well as in private life." It is difficult at this time to determine the precise weight which should be attached to the charge on one hand, and the vindication on the other; it is sufficient to say, that the former imputed to him no improper design, nor affected in any way the purity of his character.

After the termination of the inquiry, already mentioned, General Putnam was ordered to Connecticut, to hasten the march of the new levies from that quarter. He returned to the camp shortly after the battle of Monmouth, and took the command of the right wing of the army; but no important operation occurred before the retirement of the troops into their winter-quarters, the arrangement for which was made early in November. General Putnam, with three brigades, composed of the Connecticut and New Hampshire troops, and two other regiments, was then stationed at Danbury, in Connecticut.

In the course of the winter, a spirit of insubordination arose among a portion of these troops, which, but for the vigor and promptness of their

commander, might have been attended by the most serious results. - The General Assembly of Connecticut was in session at Hartford; and a plan was matured by the brigades belonging to that colony, of marching thither to demand redress of the grievances under which they labored. One of them was already under arms, when the intelligence of their proceedings was brought to General Putnam. He rode instantly to their cantonment, and addressed them with his usual energy, in an appeal which went directly to a soldier's heart; when he concluded, he ordered them to march to their regimental parades and lodge their arms; and the command was instantly obeyed.

In the course of the winter, General Putnam was one day visiting his outposts at West Greenwich, when Governor Tryon, with a corps of fifteen hundred men, was on his march against it. Putnam had with him only one hundred and fifty men, with two pieces of artillery; with these he took his station on the brow of a steep declivity near the meeting-house. The road turned to the north, just before it reached the edge of the steep; after proceeding in this direction for a considerable distance, it inclined to the south, rendering the descent gradual and tolerably safe. As the British advanced, they were received with a sharp fire from the artillery; but, perceiving the dragoons about to charge, Putnam ordered his men to retire

to a swamp, inaccessible to cavalry, while he himself forced his horse directly down the precipice. His pursuers, who were close upon him, paused with astonishment as they reached the edge, and saw him accomplish his perilous descent; and before they could gain the valley by the road, he was far beyond their reach.

The declivity, from this circumstance, has since generally borne the name of Putnam's Hill. He continued his route to Stamford, where he found some militia, with whom, added to his former band, he pursued Tryon on his retreat; and, notwithstanding the inferiority of his force, succeeded in taking about fifty prisoners.

The military career of General Putnam terminated with the campaign of 1779, during which he commanded the Maryland line, stationed near West Point, but was engaged in no important operations. His time was principally occupied in superintending the erection of the new defences of that commanding post. There he remained until the army retired to their winter-quarters at Morristown, when he returned with his family on a visit to Brooklyn, in Connecticut, the place to which his residence had been transferred. As he was journeying towards Hartford on his way back to Morristown, his progress was arrested by an attack of paralysis, by which the use of his limbs on one side was temporarily lost. For a

season, he was reluctant to admit the real character of his disease, and resorted to very active exertion for relief; but the complaint refused to yield to the influences of such a remedy, and he was doomed to pass the remainder of his life in a state of comparative inaction.

In closing the recital of the military services of General Putnam, it would be unjust to his memory to omit a portion of a letter addressed to him by General Washington, in 1783, after the conclusion of the treaty of peace. "I can assure you, that, among the many worthy and meritorious officers, with whom I have had the happiness to be connected in service through the course of this war, and from whose cheerful assistance and advice I have received much support and confidence in the various and trying vicissitudes of a complicated contest, the name of Putnam is not forgotten; nor will be but with that stroke of time, which shall obliterate from my mind the remembrance of all those toils and fatigues, through which we have struggled for the preservation and establishment of the rights, liberties, and independence of our country."

General Putnam survived the close of the war about seven years; a period of repose, strongly contrasted with the animation and vicissitude which had marked his early and maturer life; presenting little incident for his biographer to record, yet forming an appropriate termination of a busy and

adventurous career. His age and bodily infirmities disqualified him for any public occupation, but did not impair his ability to enjoy the tranquil pleasures, that constitute the solace of declining years. He was enabled to take the moderate exercise, which the preservation of his measure of health required; and the vigor of his mind remained unbroken to the last. Fortunately, his early agricultural labors had provided him with a competency, and shielded him from the embarrassment and sorrow, which darkened the old age of many of his brethren of the army of the Revolution; and thus, in the retirement of his family, enjoying the regard of those around him, and the grateful respect of his countrymen, his life gradually wore away. On the 17th of May, 1790, he was suddenly attacked by an inflammatory disease, and foresaw that his end was nigh; the consolations of religion sustained him in his closing hours, and, two days afterwards, he died with resignation and in peace. His remains were borne by his fellow-citizens to the grave with the martial honors due to the memory of a brave and patriotic soldier, and a feeling eulogy was delivered by a neighbor and personal friend.

It only remains for us to say a few words respecting the military and personal character of one, whose history we have thus attempted to delineate. His qualities as a soldier are already

apparent to the reader. Under all circumstances, however critical, he was perfectly fearless and self-possessed, and full of the most active energy and resource at the time when they were most urgently required. No man could surpass him in the fiery charge, of which the success depends so much upon the leader; in this respect he reminds the reader of Murat, the gallant marshal of Napoleon; nor would the general feeling deny him the proud title, by which another of those marshals was distinguished, that of the bravest of the brave. At the same time, as has been already intimated, he was somewhat less successful in the more extended operations, which require the combined action of large and separate masses of men. Yet, when it is remembered, that, wholly without military education and with scarcely any other, and simply by the force of his own energy and talent, he rose through all the gradations of the service to the station of first major-general in the army of the United States, till he stood second in rank to Washington alone, no better evidence could be given or required of his capacity and conduct as a soldier. Nor should it be forgotten, that his humanity was always as conspicuous as his bravery; his treatment of the sick and wounded was such as to attract the warm attachment of his own soldiers, and to extort the gratitude of the enemy. He is certainly entitled to the praise of disinterested,

ardent, and successful efforts in the cause of his country; and he will be long remembered among those who served her faithfully and well, at a season when she wanted either the ability or the inclination to reward their toils and sacrifices.

But the military reputation of General Putnam, high as it was, concealed no dark traits of personal character beneath its shadow. In all the domestic relations, the surest tests of habitual virtue, he was most exemplary; and his excellence in this respect deserves the more notice, as the stern discipline and wild adventure, in which so much of his life was spent, were more favorable to the growth of severer qualities. His disposition was frank, generous, and kind; in his intercourse with others, he was open, just, sincere, and unsuspecting; liberal in his hospitality, and of ready benevolence wherever there was occasion for his charity. Those who knew him best were the most forward to express their admiration of his excellence. The late President Dwight, who was his friend, but very unlikely to sacrifice the claims of truth to those of personal regard, has in his writings more than once expressed the sentiment, which he has embodied in the inscription on General Putnam's monument; that he was "a man, whose generosity was singular, whose honesty was proverbial; who raised himself to universal esteem, and offices of eminent distinction, by personal worth and a

useful life." Such is the language of others who have borne witness to his private virtues; and what more needs to be added, than that his moral excellence flowed from a religious fountain, and that the character of a man of worth was adorned and dignified in him by the higher qualities of a Christian?