CHAPTER III – BUNKER HILL

VOLUMES and volumes have been written on the causes of the American War of Independence, though really it ought to be called the First Civil War in America. They deal at enormous length with Taxation without Representation, Taxation No Tyranny, the Stamp Act, clergy dues paid in tobacco, the Molasses Act, Tea (Hysons and Congoes), Olive Branches unacknowledged and left to wither in a Whitehall pigeonhole, blundering Ministers, Sons (and Daughters) of Liberty, Writs of Assistance, the Bunch of Grapes, drawbacks on china earthenware, clandestine running of goods, the stupidity of Lord North, [1] the general cussedness of the British Government and the pig-headedness of Farmer George. [2] It is pleasant to see that a more lenient view of this sovereign is now being taken in the United States. I read not long ago in an American weekly paper that he was now regarded "not so much as a tyrant as a snuffy old German who liked train-oil in his salad." There is one point in this question which, though of great interest, is not much stressed in, at all events, the English history books, and that is England's lack of appreciation of American courage. This is very well brought out in a speech made in the House of Commons, March 27, 1775, by David Hartley. [3] It is as follows:

"Everything is asserted about America to serve the present turn without the least regard for truth. I would have these matters fairly sifted out. To begin with the late war: the Americans turned the success of the war, at both ends of the line. General Monkton took Beausejour in Nova Scotia with 1,500 provincial troops and about 200 regulars. Sir William Johnson in the other part of America changed the face of the war to success, with a provincial army which took Baron Dieskau prisoner. . . . Nor did they stint their services to North America: they followed the British arms out of their continent to the Havannah and Martinique, after the complete conquest of America. And so had they done in the preceding war. They were not grudging of their exertions—they were at the Siege of

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[1] That easy-going nobleman. In February, 1775, Lord Hillsborough said that North, who had called on him, "talked about Almack's and the Pantheon, but not one word of America," though Hillsborough had begged him even with tears to resign.

[2] Farmer, because when he "opened the Session" on January 19, 1770, he began with: "It is with much concern that I find myself obliged to open the session of Parliament with acquainting you that the distemper among the horned cattle has lately broken out in this kingdom." America was kept for a casual mention in the last paragraph. George III and North were very like each other in face and figure. Contemporary scandal said there was an obvious reason for this.

[3] Son of the philosopher, David Hartley, whom Coleridge admired so much that he named his son Hartley after him. He helped Benjamin Franklin with the negotiations which led to the Treaty of Peace of September 3, 1783.

Carthagena [1] —yet what was Carthagena to them, but as members of the common cause, of the glory of this country! In that way too, Sir, they took Louisburg [2] from the French, single-handed, without any European assistance; as mettled an enterprise as any in our history! an everlasting memorial of the zeal, courage and perseverance of the troops of New England. The men themselves dragged the cannon over a morass which had always been thought impassable, and they carried the shot upon their backs . . . Whenever Great Britain has declared war they have taken their part. They were engaged in King William's wars and Queen Anne's, even in their infancy. They conquered Nova Scotia, which, from that time, has always belonged to Great Britain. They have been engaged in more than one expedition to Canada, ever foremost to partake of honour and danger with the mother country. Well, Sir, what have we done for them? Have we conquered the country for them from the Indians? Have we cleared it? Have we drained it? Have we made it habitable? What have we done for them? I believe precisely nothing at all, but just keeping watch and ward over their trade, that they should receive nothing but from ourselves, and at our own price. . . . In all the wars which have been common to us and them, they have taken their full share. But in all their own dangers, in all the difficulties belonging separately to their situation, in all the Indian wars which did not immediately concern us, we left them to themselves to struggle their way through."

My apology for quoting this long speech is that it is a heavy indictment of the stupidity of those who like Lord Sandwich [3] (who gave his name to the arid curse of Railway Refreshment Saloons), thought that the Americans would not fight, or if they did, would run away. Burgoyne himself is not guiltless in this respect. But probably in his days, at

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[1] Washington's half-brother Lawrence served there and became a friend of the Admiral, Vernon. Hence Mount Vernon. Massachusetts sent five hundred men on this expedition. Barely fifty returned.

[2] In *1745.* The expedition was engineered by Governor Shirley, of Massachusetts. It sailed from Boston, consisting of four thousand men, more than three-quarters of whom were provided by Massachusetts alone. 1'he news of this brilliant exploit was a tonic to England, and England wanted a tonic. For it arrived just after Prince Charlie landed in Scotland, and not long after Fontenoy. Sir Charles Lucas calls this Capture of Louisburg "perhaps the most brilliant feat of arms ever achieved by British Colonists." *(The Empire at War.* Vol. L)

[3] Better known as Jemmy Twitcher. He had been a boon companion of John Wilkes, and when Wilkes got into trouble over the "Essay on Woman" denounced him in the House of Lords. When, just after this, Macheath in a performance of *The Beggar's Opera* came to the line "That Jemmy Twitcher should peach, I own, surprises me," there was a roar of laughter, and Sandwich never lost this nickname. An epigram of the day said that he was

Too infamous to have a friend,
Too bad for bad men to commend.

The best thing that can be said for him is that he had a trenchant style. Mr. Eden, later Lord Auckland, ratted and joined William Pitt. He sent Sandwich a letter, trying to justify himself. Sandwich wrote back:
"Sir, your letter is before me, and it will presently be behind me. I remain, Sir, your most humble servant, Sandwich."
He is chiefly remembered now from the fact that his mistress, Miss Ray (whom he kept in his official residence), was murdered as she left the theater by a clergyman who was in love with her, and who took this singular method of showing his affection.

Westminster, they did not teach modern history any more than they do nowadays in most English schools.

To revert to the causes of the war, in that uncanny way in which a woman will go straight to the point, brushing aside all the clouds of prejudice and passion, Miss Kate Hotblack in her *Chatham's Colonial Policy* has put the case in a nutshell. After the peace of 1763 the colonies were exhausted; "all they wanted," says she, "was a little wholesome neglect." Beckford, now forgotten save for the fact that he was the father of the author of that queer romance Vathek, said much the same in the House of Commons in 1767. "Do like the best of physicians and heal the disease by doing nothing." The Dean of Gloucester went further. He wanted to give up the Colonies for the singular reason that "the Swiss Cantons have no colonies, but are a most flourishing state." Deans will be deans.

But, instead of being left alone, the Colonies were worried and badgered and bullied like naughty children. Briefly, Farmer George thought that they wanted chastisement, and North knew that he would lose his job if he did not agree with George. It is to be feared that in these days England was a bully. Though the nation was crippled with debt (£l48,000,000), too many people were prosperous. There were too many nabobs.[1] We drank too much, even of the innocuous cup of tea. [2] We had too many *nouveaux riches,* we gambled heavily at Almack's, White's (blameless name!), and even at the still more innocuous-sounding Cocoa Tree Club. An observer of the day said, "If gallantry was the characteristic of Charles the Second's reign and religion of his father's, politics of Queen Anne's and chivalry in times of yore, gaming is undoubtedly the predominant feature of the present." (Earl of Carlisle's Manuscripts.) We would bet (John Burgoyne in particular) on anything: whether old Lord Methusalem, just married to young Miss Susan Simper, would have issue within a year (twenty guineas to one against, eagerly snatched at by those who knew Miss Susan), and one thousand guineas a side as to who was likely to be victorious in the first engagement in North America.

Where the Colonies were concerned the nation as a whole was guilty of more than what James Russell Lowell was to call later "a certain condescension." Franklin said, "Every man in England seems to consider himself as a piece of a Sovereign over America; seems to jostle himself

[1] An indignant American said of George III: "He carried an offensive war into the East Indies and deprived many thousands of those innocent people of their lives and properties, that he might snuff the Spices of the East and repose his sluggard limbs on the sofa of a nabob." *(Brusher's Journal.)*

[2] In 1664 the East India Company gave the King, as a curiosity, two Pounds of tea. In 1762 the Company sold four million pounds of it. What we drank of Jamaica Rum and Mother Geneva (gin) it would be too tantalizing to estimate.

into the throne with the King and talks of *our subjects in the colonies."* There were, of course, many who sympathized with the Colonies. Admiral Keppel said in so many words that "he would not draw his sword against them." Howe told his Nottingham constituents, the year before he went out, that he would not hesitate to refuse if invited to lead English troops against the Colonies and, when appointed to a command, asked if it was a proposal or an order. The Earl of Effingham threw up his commission, with the words, "I cannot without reproach from my own conscience consent to bear arms against my fellow-subjects in America in what, to my discernment, is not a clear cause," and that very keen young soldier Ralph Abercromby, destined to fall at the head of his troops fighting against the French in Egypt, thanked his stars that his regiment was not sent to fight against the Americans. The famous Jeffrey Amherst refused to serve, though George III had personally tried to persuade him to go out with the chief command. But Amherst's refusal was probably due, not so much to sympathy with the Americans as to his wife's arguments and a feeling that he would not be allowed sufficient troops for what he realized was a very difficult task. Lord Pitt, Chatham's heir, aide-de-camp to Carleton, Governor of the Canadas, was ordered by his father to resign his commission. It is unusual to send in your papers when hostilities are imminent, so Carleton, very kindly, sent him home with despatches and thus Lord Pitt "saved his face," as the Chinese say. Lastly, to come to less important people, a Member of Parliament, James Wilson, who was also a Captain of Marines, sent in 1776 to Lord George Germain a memorial to lay before His Majesty, "requesting leave to lay down his commission, as he cannot, he says, consistently with his own conscience, serve in the present dispute against the Americans." For this he has been called a conscientious objector. Which is unfair, for most conscientious objectors have a conscientious objection not so much to fighting as to being killed.

There was practical sympathy also. The Constitutional Society, Cornhill, raised one hundred pounds "for the relief of the widows and orphans MURDERED by the KING'S troops at or near Lexington and Concord in the Province of Massachusetts."*

Burgoyne took the part of the stern parent; he reminds one rather of Mr.

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*Horne Tooke, then plain John Home, whose work this was, got into trouble over it, was fined two hundred pounds and sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. Tooke wrote a curious work called *The Diversions of Purley,* dealing with etymology. The present-day diversions of Purley—.that charming suburb—are, I believe, Golf and Beer. And then more Beer.

Barlow, regarding Massachusetts and Virginia as though they were young Masters Sandford and Merton. In April, 1774, when voting against the repeal of the tea-duty, he said, "I look upon America as our child, which we have already spoilt by too much indulgence." The Parliamentary Annalist adds in brackets in the middle of the General's speech: "(The House here seemed very noisy, and did not attend, being tired with the debate, thinking that the general belonged rather to the heavy than the light horse.)" I wish Mr. Hansard would interpolate remarks like this. Lord Chesterfield was wiser than Burgoyne. "For my part, I never saw a forward child mended by whipping; and I would not have the Mother Country become a stepmother." I think really Burgoyne was too keen a soldier to lose a chance of a fight. Ministers seem to have been dubious if he would accept an appointment for Boston. Mr. Jenkinson (later Lord Liverpool), leaving the House of Commons in his company, "wished I was in that country (America) with a look and emphasis that conveyed more than accidental conversation." It was all very mysterious and furtive, and even when Lord Barrington finally told him of the King's commands he began with "common chit-chat observations upon the late American debate."

For one reason only, Burgoyne was most reluctant to leave England, and that was on account of his wife. About her he wrote in a manner which, though tinged with pomposity, is affecting.

"To separate for a length of time, perhaps for ever, from the tenderest, the faithfullest, the most amiable companion and friend that ever man was blessed with—a wife in whom during four-and-twenty years I never could find a momentary act of blame! The narrow circumstances, perhaps the distressed state in which she might find herself at my death, added severely to my anxieties. To supply the requisites of her rank, to reward the virtues of her character, I could only bequeath her a legacy of my imprudence. Men of the world in general are too callously composed to conceive what I endured. My intimates, even those of most sensibility, acquainted with the levities, the inattentions, and dissipations of my common course of life, might have wanted faith in my sincerity; I therefore concealed my heart from all; and I even suffered my dearest Charlotte herself—not, I hope, to doubt that I felt—but rather to be ignorant how much I felt, than expatiate on a subject that could be so afflicting to her in the tender and delicate state of her mind and health."

The rest of this document, is, in places, significant. He had an interview with Lord North, who "listened to me attentively and answered

me with politeness," but was "very cautious of committing himself in any engagement further than to lay all I had said before the King." As a matter of fact, Burgoyne was obviously burning to go to North America, and was pulling strings and canvassing everybody who, he thought, could help. He saw Lord George Germain and found him "communicative and friendly."

He also saw a humbler individual, Mr. John Pownall, who really deserves a little space as a typical civil servant of *1775.* He was a brother of "Governor Pownall," or "that fribble," as a stern New England Puritan called him. The Governor was one of the many who were supposed to be Junius. [1] John was not a "fribble": he was Secretary in Lord Dartmouth's office, which looked after the Colonies and also the American War, and he was serious and a trifle pompous. There is a good deal about him in the Diary and Letters of Thomas Hutchinson, "Captain-General and Governor-in-Chief of His Late Majesty's Province of Masachusetts Bay in North America," the predecessor of Gage. Hutchinson was not popular in North America during the war, and in more modern times Bancroft, the historian, talked of his "fawning treachery." Still, his Diary is full of queer things: thus he notes on August 11, 1760, "Mr. Otis stopped at my house and after salutations desired to see me in private; tho' in the morning about 8 or 9 he smelt strong of rum." He also has a note "in Boston the dried French white haricot beans are much in demand, stewed soft with meat and eaten as a Sunday dish between the services." [2] He was also courageous: when he returned to England and had the famous interview with George III, the King said, "I see they threatened to pitch and feather you." Hutchinson interrupted with "Tarr and feather, may it please your majesty," and Dartmouth, who was present, corroborated him, casually alluding to the Boston "Committee for Tarring and Feathering." In 1774-75 Hutchinson was constantly going to Pownall's office in Whitehall, which was once the Duke of Monmouth's bedchamber, to get the latest news from Boston. At various times he finds "Mr. P." thunderstruck with American news, exceedingly anxious, "unsteddy" (not early rum I hope) **;** one day all fire and another depressed and in despair. "Mr. P. tho't some extraordinary measures should be taken." And occasionally Mr. P., very unlike modern War Office clerks,

[1] It seems pretty certain that Sir Philip Francis was the real Simon Pure. He was a clerk in the War Office and, in the character of Junius, Pleasantly alluded to his official chief as "Bloody Barrington." Barrington got Francis nominated to the India Council at six thousand pounds a year--and Junius stopped fulminating. How times change! If a clerk in the War Office were, nowadays, to allude to his chief as "bloody," he would not, however Junius-like, get six thousand pounds a year but (and rightly) the Order of the Boot, the proud motto of which Is "You're Fired."

[2] When was Boston first called the Baked Bean Town?

would be seen, like Brer Tarrypin, "lowngin' " about in office hours [1] and also, no doubt, "sufferin'," for his health was indifferent. One entry about him is typical. He and Lord Pitt (fresh back from Canada with despatches from Carleton) were attacked by a highwayman on Blackheath. Being armed they got out of the coach and "Mr. Pownall burnt priming, but the pistol did not go off." I do not suppose that anything he ever undertook "went off" with any success and I am sure that he himself never "got off." He is constantly cropping up in the Dartmouth Manuscripts. We find him "indisposed," "laid up with a fever," "awakened by an express from Liverpoole" and going to Margate to recuperate. Anon he is "oppressed with infirmity" and tries Bath for a change. And on another occasion, writing to a fellow clerk on leave, he says *(horresco referens!),* "I have done nothing but play truant since you left." But he was very polite and must have had ingratiating if slightly pompous manners. "He conversed with Hey about the Quebec Act: Hey preferred his (Pownall's) plan to his own, but he (Pownall) thinks Hey's is best." And he uses two delightful phrases: on one occasion, writing to his chief, Lord Dartmouth, he actually alludes to the Office as "Our Shop," and when he retired he called the pension given him "a Cup of Comfort."

Burgoyne, first and foremost a man of the world, obviously had the greatest contempt for poor Mr. Pownall. He writes of him: "He entered into a long, formal, and sometimes unintelligible discussion of American affairs. He talked to me as I imagined he might be accustomed to do with men really inferior to him in information, or whom he supposed to be so. Gentlemen in trade and other situations in life, which set them at a distance from great men in office, or even from the subalterns and apes of official greatness, diffident of their own judgment, and believing men in power to be better informed because they ought to be so, are generally patient hearers, and hence a secretary is very apt to contract an air of supercilious or ministerial importance. He was guarded—mysterious—obscure I acquired by the conversation (as I thought) some lights into his character, but none into American affairs."

Burgoyne also saw Pownall's chief, Lord Dartmouth, who was extremely affable but showed "a great deal of caution in committing an opinion upon nice subjects." He also mentions, which is interesting, that Howe was very reluctant to go to Boston, partly because of the "obligations his family owed to the Bostonians, who had raised a monument to

[1] Lord Shelburne, afterward first Marquis of Lansdowne, who knew it well, called it "a very idle Office."

the late Lord Howe," [1] and partly because of the low opinion he held of the Commander-in-Chief (Gage) as a soldier. In which low opinion he was entirely justified.

Burgoyne again approached Lord George Germain, who "expressed his wonder that the major-generals were not called before the Cabinet, or by some other method consulted upon a plan of measures." He also thought that something might be done by Cabinet dinners, for "he had often observed that the surest means of collecting matter from professional men, especially if they were modest men '(here Burgoyne must have bowed)', were to employ convivial hours for that purpose." [2] So a "convivial hour" was appointed; a dinner took place at Lord Dartmouth's, at which all the Cabinet were present and in addition General Harvey, our friend Governor Hutchenson and (of course) Mr. Secretary Pownall. "We talked," writes Burgoyne, "of every subject but America." Probably, as was always the case at Sir Robert Walpole's table, they "talked bawdy, for in that all men can join": on this occasion, all, I think, except Mr. Pownall. Even at bawdy talk I am sure he would have been most cryptic. I can fancy him gallantly starting a verse,

"I spied a maiden bathing in a pool,"

and then, when everybody's attention was arrested and their eyes bulging out with anticipation of something "warm," adding in his best official manner,

"She said she found the water wet and cool."

(Snorts of derision from the soldiers present.)
Burgoyne in his blunt way said that "he and his Colleagues were totally in the dark upon all the plans of Government upon the campaign" and that he supposed that he had been selected for some other purpose than "to see that the soldiers boiled their kettles regularly." Even this did not move Lord North: like Mr. Pownall, he remained "mysterious and obscure."

(The Government was equally vague and shadowy when preparing for a possible peace as when preparing for war. The Earl of Carlisle was

[1] Brigadier- General Lord Howe, who was killed at Ticonderoga. The monument in question is in Westminster Abbey. Pitt (Chatham) called him "a character of ancient times; a complete model of military virtue," and Wolfe said of him, "He is the noblest Englishman that has appeared in my time, and the best soldier in the army." This, as we shall see, can not be said of William Howe

[2] In 1758, when it was decided to send Wolfe on the expedition Which resulted in the capture of Quebec, a "convivial hour," that is to 8ay a private dinner at White's, was chosen to tell him of his appointment.

one of the Commissioners sent to America early in 1778, with "conciliatory bills." Before sailing they met at Lord North's, Germain, the attorney-General and the Solicitor General and others being present. Lord Carlisle writes, "Little passed of any real importance, and I confess I came away by no means satisfied with the conversation, and not a little shocked at the slovenly manner with which an affair so serious in its nature had been dismissed." He adds that some were sulky, others childish, and all in a hurry. (Earl of Carlisle's Manuscripts.) Some of the "bills" were burned under a gallows in Rhode Island.)

Burgoyne's love for Charlotte—which was sneered at by Horace Walpole, who had no great affection for anybody except the gentleman who later became Lord Orford—is very evident from a letter which he wrote and left with a friend to be delivered to the King in case of his death in North America. This was written at Portsmouth, April 18, *1775,* just before he sailed. It begins very like Mr. Tupman's historical letter to Mr. Pickwick, after Jingle had bolted with Rachel:

"Sire,

"Whenever this letter shall be delivered to your Majesty, the writer of it will be no more. It may therefore be esteemed an address from beyond the grave, and under that idea I am persuaded your Majesty will consider with indulgence both the matter and the expression.

"My purpose, Sire, is to recommend to your royal protection Lady Charlotte Burgoyne, who at my death will have to combat the severest calamities of life,—a weak frame of body, very narrow circumstances, and a heart replete with those agonies which follow the loss of an object it has long held most dear. What will be her consolation? Wretched state, when poverty is disregarded only because it is the least poignant of our sensations, and the pains of distemper are alleviated by the hopes that they send to our dissolution.

"The first comfort upon which my mind rests in regard to that dear woman, in a crisis so trying, is a knowledge of her piety; the next, a confidence in your Majesty's compassion and generosity. . . .

"Your Majesty, acquainted with the value of female excellence, will hear without impatience a husband's praises. I protest, with the sincerity of a man who meditates death while he writes, and calls God to witness to his testimony, that in the great duties of life, I do not know that Lady Charlotte ever committed a fault, except that, if a fault it can be

called, of love and generosity which directed her choice to me without consulting her family—even that is now cancelled in their eyes—upon a review of our happiness during a course of twenty-four years, no moment of which has been embittered, except by sickness or separation.

"My heart tells me, Sire, that I am not presumptuous in this application. I received your Majesty's commands for America with regret, the first sensation of that nature I ever experienced in a call for service, but I have not less a sense of duty; I have scorned to propose terms to my obedience, or to take advantage of the crisis of receiving your royal orders to prefer a petition for the provision of my family.

"I rely on your Majesty's heart to accept with in'dulgence this humble mark of my respect, and I take confidence to assure your Majesty that, whatever may be my fate in my ensuing trials, I shall be found to my last moment

"Your Majesty's
"Zealous soldier
"And most faithful subject
"J. BURGOYNE."

The occasion for the delivery of this somewhat highfalutin letter did not arise; Lady Charlotte predeceased Burgoyne, dying in 1776. Hutchinson in his *Diary* for July 22, 1775, writes, "Before dinner walked in Kensington Gardens, where we met General Burgoyne's lady in great anxiety for news from America." Since that day I think many a soldier's lady must, from time to time, have paced Kensington Gardens in great anxiety for news from—well, pretty well every quarter of the globe, except, happily, save during that most unnecessary War of 1812, the United States.

Hutchinson also has a note about Burgoyne himself before he left for Boston. "He seems more anxious how to conduct affairs in case Martial Law should be declared in force, than how to withstand all the force the Americans can bring against him. He spoke freely of the present state of Administration; the want of one vigorous direction; the indecision in all the Councils; the aptness to procrastination; and though he expected to sail in eight days, doubted whether any Instructions had been prepared and rather feared he should go without any." Burgoyne seems to have suggested to Hutchinson that he was the Big Noise of the party about to sail on the *Cerberus,* but in the House of Commons he spoke rather plaintively of his "inferior station," adding, "The utmost merit I shall be able to claim in this expedition will probably be that of an attentive, an assiduous, circumscribed obedience." It is painful to read that he also

mentions casually that "the licentious prints of the times had alluded to Lord North as a 'sanguinary minister.' " What language!

The three generals who sailed in the *Cerberus*[1] left with the town laughing over a witticism. "Our Generals may terrify the enemy, they certainly terrify me," and were greeted in Boston with another:

Behold the *Cerberus* the Atlantic plough.
Her precious cargo, Burgoyne, Clinton, Howe.
Bow, wow, wow!

All three of them were taken off, later on, in a delightful American drama published early in 1776. This was *The Fall of British Tyranny:* the chief characters were Lord Hypocrite (Dartmouth), Lord Poltroon (Sandwich), Judas (Hutchinson), Lord Boston (Gage), Elbow Room, [2] (Howe), Mr. Caper (Burgoyne), and Admiral Tombstone (Graves). Admiral Tombstone talks of Bunker Hill with a sailorlike freedom: "Many powdered beaux, *petits maîtres,* fops, fribbles, skip-jackets, macaronis, jackpuddings, noblemen's bastards and whores' Sons fell that day."

"Mr. Caper's" reputation as a man of pleasure had preceded him: the *Pennsylvania Packet* said severely, "Should the boasting General Burgoyne ridicule the simplicity of our American Cincinnatus (Putnam) and be asked at the same time where his master's orders found *him* when he was commanded to repair to Boston, the answer would most probably be 'in a gambling-house or brothel.' "

The first thing Burgoyne did—he ought to have had a fountain-pen, for he could not refrain from writing— was to draw up for Gage, who hated doing anything, a proclamation, a terribly pompous proclamation, [3] to the Bostonians.

With the possible exception of that tearful peer, Mr. Belloc's Lord Lundy, who was told by an indignant relative to "go out and govern New South Wales," there can have been few public men sent in a high position to a colony less competent than General Gage. Charles Lee, writing to Burke in December, 1774, said: "It is somewhat strange, but it is true,

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[1] There was a young naval lieutenant on board, "Jem" Burney, brother of the celebrated Fanny, and, later, a friend of Charles Lamb.

[2] A name which recalls that delightful book by Max Adeler, a book Which I read with joy as a schoolboy and can still read with the greatest of pleasure.

[3] people say there is more attention paid to style than to policy." BrigadierGefleral J. Robertson. (Dartmouth MSS.)

that this gentleman should reside so many years in America, and yet be as ignorant of the dispositions of the people of America as he is of those in the moon; indeed, he took all possible means of shutting up the avenues of truth. At New York he never conversed, as I can find, with any but place and contract hunters, the staff officers and his own family; and when he was sent to Boston with express orders to inform himself of the cause of the disturbances, he applied to the very men, and those only, from whom these disturbances were said to flow. He shut himself up immediately in Castle William with Bernard, Hutchinson and Sewell; under their inspection, and according to their dictates, after three days' labour, he put the finishing hand to a narrative of the state of a province, by which the Ministry were to regulate their conduct. . . . Had he condescended to listen to the representations of the town at large, these pernicious measures had, perhaps, never been adopted." Gage reported that the "phrenzy," as he called it, was dying down, and Dartmouth complained that he allowed the Boston town guards and militia to drill in Faneuil Hall.

To be perfectly fair to Gage, he had one great admirer, and that was a Major Donkin, author of *Military Collections and Remarks,* published at New York in 1777. He says that the General was "endued with every talent that constitutes a great captain, excels in the art of thinking, reasoning and writing well ; [1] See his letters to Trumbull, Randolph and Washington. They are as capital pieces as any of antiquity. He has also the art of commanding to please all! for if he could not dispense favours to everyone, his refusal was accompanied with the language of the graces." Donkin's book is, bibliographically, of great interest. Page 190 deals with "bows." And I believe there are very few, if any, copies in existence in which a passage of this page has not been cut out. And no wonder. For this Major, who ought to have been ashamed of himself, actually proposed that arrows should be infected with smallpox and used against the Americans. Washington in a letter of December 10, 1775, wrote, "The information I received that the enemy intended spreading the smallpox amongst us, I could not suppose them capable of. I must now give some credit to it, as it has made its appearance on several of those who last came out of Boston." Surely the explanation is that as Boston was full of smallpox, anybody who left the town, or stayed in it, was likely to develop it.

Burgoyne wrote a long letter to Lord North (June 14, 1775*).* He is

[1] Burgoyne was his pen. It should also be mentioned that Donkin served under Gage, so may have been prejudiced in his favor.

in too humble a station to do anything good in "the military line." He therefore suggests that he should be given a kind of roving commission, not as a soldier but as an M. P., to try to bring the "rebels" to a better frame of mind. "Not charged with any direct proposal from Government, nor authorised to treat with them in a publick character, I have not less zeal in my capacity as a member of Parliament, a friend of human nature, and a sincere well-wisher to the united interests of the two countries, to forward as far as in me lies, the great work of reconciliation upon enlarged, solid, honourable grounds. This sort of language would not commit Government in anything." The real truth was that he did not like playing a minor rôle at Boston, but wanted to get into the limelight and return home with—perhaps—large laurels as a diplomatist.

Lord North rejected this proposal, but in a very flattering way. Writing from Bushy Park on July thirtyfirst, [1] he said:

"His Majesty fears that your plan cannot be carried into execution. If taken, you would be a valuable hostage. We cannot send you [2] much above 2,000 men more in the course of this campaign, but in the spring you will have 20,000 regulars or more in the two armies. We are all perfectly sensible of the importance and difficulty of the contest, and mean to exert every nerve to put a safe and honourable end to it. Our wish is not to impose upon our fellow-subjects in America any terms inconsistent with the most perfect liberty. I cannot help thinking that many of the principal persons in North America will, with the calmness of the winter, be disposed to bring forward a reconciliation. Now they are too angry, too suspicious and too much under the guidance of factious leaders."

Had Burgoyne got into trouble at home over his letter of July ninth [3] to Charles Lee, this letter of North's, though of a subsequent date, would have been rather useful to him.

At the same time that he wrote to North, Burgoyne wrote to General Harvey, [4] Adjutant—General at the Horse Guards, a soldier's letter, in which he severely criticized the Higher Command in Boston, particularly

[1] Marquis of Abergavenny's MSS.
[2] This "you" is flattering.
[3] See page 51.
[4] A rough and tough old soldier, given to profanation and becoming "much heated"; he once reproached two officers who had served in North America, "How often have I heard you American Colonels boast that with four battalions you would march through America; and now you think Gage with 3,000 men and 40 pieces of cannon mayn't venture out of Boston I"

the Quartermaster-General and the Adjutant-General, and not sparing Gage himself, whom he described as "unequal to his present station." He also censures the authorities at home. Gage had been promised forty thousand pounds, and had only received ten thousand pounds. "Where," asks Burgoyne with shrewd common sense, "does the money lie and who receives the interest?" The furtive Pownall also gets a smack. The three Generals had been promised five hundred pounds apiece "equipage money," and Pownall said that orders had been transmitted to General Gage to that effect. No such orders had reached Boston, and the indignant Burgoyne says, "I acquit North and Dartmouth of the dirtiness of office but is it not fit that at a proper time and in a proper place the subalterns of office should hear of this treatment ?"

I am sure Mr. Pownall was much too honest—and too stupid—to have regarded this "equipage money" as a rake-off. But it is rather a coincidence that John Wilkes brought the quaint and unpleasant charge against his brother, "Governor" Pownall, "of passing inferior oats" and falsifying his military accounts when Comptroller of the Commissariat in 1763. But it is only fair to add that the Governor was honorably acquitted. Besides, Wilkes was always stirring up dirty water, washing dirty linen and bringing dirty accusations. He actually, in his *Essay on Woman,* brings most unpleasant charges against what was called in those days The Fair Sex, or sometimes simply The Sex. There is little doubt this "equipage money" found its way into the capacious pockets of that champion place-seeker, Richard Rigby, Paymaster General to the Forces at the time. When he died it was said of him that he left "near half a million of public money." Had he not been such a terrific boozer— he drank brandy as if it were small beer—he would probably have left more. When present in the House of Commons he always wore a purple suit, but it was not so purple as his face. He was always, says the Parliamentary historian, "extremely violent against America."

We now come to that historic battle, Bunker Hill, or Breed's Hill (originally known as Breed's Pasture), fought on a hot summer's day, June 17, 1775. According to Howe's letter of June 12, 1775, to Lord Howe (Dartmouth Manuscripts), the original British plan was to occupy and fortify Dorchester Neck and then, if found practicable, to attack the post of Roxbury and so secure Boston from attack on that side. Then to march to "Charles Town height and either attack the Rebels at Cambridge or perhaps, if the Country admits of it, endeavour to turn that post." The Americans got wind of this. Some say that Warren went over "in a small boat with muffled oars" and got and brought back information of the British designs. How did they become known? Well, Gage's wife had

been, before her marriage, Miss Margaret Kemble (or Kembal) of New Jersey, and was related to the Van Cortlands of New York. Her sympathies were, not unnaturally, with her kindred. General Harvey had told Hutchinson that she had said "she hoped her husband would never be the instrument of sacrificing the lives of her countrymen," but the cautious General added that "he did not chuse to be quoted for it." It is significant that on the evening of April eighteenth General Gage told Lord Percy that he intended to send that night a detachment to seize the stores at Concord, that he had appointed an officer to command it, but had not yet told him his destination. "He meant it to be a secret expedition, and begged of Lord Percy to keep it a profound secret." Percy was told, shortly afterward, as a piece of news by some idlers on Boston Common, where the troops were going. He at once acquainted Gage with this. "The General said that his confidence had been betrayed, for that he had communicated his designs to *one person only* besides his lordship." I think General Gage—it is difficult not to allude to him as General Greengage—probably began this confidence with "Between you and me and the bed-post, my dear Peggy." (But for full details of this, see that most interesting book by Mr. Allen French called *The Day of Concord and Lexington.)* Mrs. Gage went to England in August, 1775, in a transport pleasantly called *The Charming Nancy.*

In any case, Boston was full of American agents and sympathizers, of whom Paul Revere, famous for his ride, is best remembered, and Gage was anticipated. On the night of June sixteenth, the Americans under Prescott passed over Bunker Hill and fortified Breed's Hill, and by daybreak were well dug in. As they worked during the night at the trenches they could hear the marine sentinels on the British men-of-war crying "All's Well," which from a British point of view it most emphatically was not. At daybreak Gage realized to his astonishment that Putnam and Prescott commanded Boston. Gage, looking at the hill through his spy-glass, said to Counselor Willard, "Who is that officer commanding?" The Counselor recognized his brother-in-law, Colonel Prescott. "Will he fight?" continued Gage. "Yes, Sir, depend upon it, to the last drop of blood in him, but I cannot answer for his men."

At Colenso, in the Boer War, where the British made a frontal attack, which did not succeed, the United States Military Attaché [1] asked, with horse sense, "if there was not a way round." There certainly was a way round for Gage. He could have landed his troops near the Charlestown Neck causeway, in Prescott's rear, and, aided by the guns of the fleet,

[1] Captain S. L. H. Slocum of the Eighth Cavalry

have completely cut off the American force. [1] But a way round was undignified, neither British, nor frank, nor manly. Circumlocutions are all very well in a despatch, but "fetching a compass" in the field was (unfortunately) not the British way. So Gage decided on a frontal attack. As a keen young officer there present, Charles Stuart, son of Lord Bute (the Jack Boot of anecdotal history) put it in writing to his father: "In fact, you will see by the survey that the attack was made in the strongest place, the enemy, taking advantage of an imprudence, fought the ground inch by inch in a spot well calculated for defence by nature and assisted by all the artifice of a shrewd, artful, cunning people. The Rebels fought with a resolution that dependence on their breastworks and palings almost heightened to a frenzy." Both sides were spoiling for a fight, and they bad it. The English troops, though it was a blazing summer's day, were "encumbered with blankets and knapsacks and three days' provisions, [2] although they were near home." They made three frontal attacks, climbing through "grass reaching to their knees," led by Howe, who, when the first and second had failed, said to his officers, "To be forced to give up Boston would, gentlemen, be very disagreeable to us all." To his men he said, "I shall not desire one of you to go a step further than where I go myself at your head." Until the Civil War it was by far the hottest fight in America: in Stark's picturesque phrase, "the dead lay as thick as sheep in a fold." Pitcairn, who led the marines, was, it is said, shot, his son close by him, by a negro, Peter Salem, once a slave, who fought throughout the war. The casualties among the British officers were very great: they were picked off and the American troops obeyed to the letter the orders, "Aim at the handsome waistcoats"; "Pick off the Commanders"; "Wait until you can see the whites of their eyes." [3] One marksman, or sniper, to use the modern word, as soon as he had fired one musket was handed another, and is stated to have killed or wounded at least twenty British officers.

There is a very curious note in the Round Manuscripts bearing on this point. Thomas Falconer, the scholar, writing to Charles Gray, M. P. for Colchester, after saying, "The best account I have seen of Bunker Hill was written by a lady in Boston to another lady at this place (Chester)"—is this account, I wonder, in the United States?—goes on: "How far the Bostonians can justify taking aim at Officers with rifled muskets I am not

[1] General Ward thought that Gage would do this.

[2] A contemporary writer, Stedman, says that each British soldier carried at least one hundred and twenty-five pounds. The blankets and Provisions rather suggest that an easy victory with a triumphant march to Cambridge, was anticipated.

[3] This last order is attributed to Putnam, or "Old Put," as he was affectionately called.

a military jurisprudent enough to determine. It seems to be contrary to justice and will not intimidate us I hope." Whenever any new weapon of war, from gunpowder to gas, has been invented the same complaint has ~ gone up, all very much to the same effect as:

It was great pity, so it was
That villainous saltpetre should be digg'd
Out of the bowels of the harmless earth
Which many a good tall fellow had destroyed
So cowardly.

But good Mr. Falconer knew more about Strabo and the geography of the ancient world than he did about military matters. He continues: "The Bostonians have all the barbarity which false zeal can inspire, mixed with the low cunning of a poor, commercial people." He is more sensible when he mentions "that heterogeneous substance General Lee, who has been fomenting disturbances on the other side: this man would be dangerous could he agree with any party, but he cannot submit long to any superior and consequently is at present rejected."

On the American side, three names stand out: Prescott, Putnam [1] and Warren. Prescott had a narrow escape. He said later, "The first man who fell [2] in the Battle of Bunker Hill was killed by a cannon-ball which struck his head. He was so near to me that my clothes were besmeared with his blood and brains which I wiped off in some degree with a handful of fresh earth." Warren, who earlier had expressed a wish: "I hope to die up to my knees in blood" was shot through the head. Nor must one forget Gridley, the Chief Engineer, who had made a name many years before at the Siege of Louisburg; Stark, that fine fighter with a fighter's name, and the gallant Pomeroy, a name which to an Englishman suggests cider, cockles and cream, and other delicacies dear to Bill Brewer, Jan Steuer, Peter Gurney, Peter Davy and the rest of them. Seth Pomeroy, seventy years old, had declined a commission as brigadier-general and found his way to the redoubt to fight in the ranks. He was well known, and "a loud huzza welcomed him to the post of danger." I should also like to mention Colonel Garrish, because, like many an officer in most armies of that day, he was "very corpulent." But on both sides at Bunker Hill almost all the officers were "stout fellows," and I need not explain that the word stout means, firstly, "brave, doughty,

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[1] His family came from Aston Abbots, that pleasant place near Ayles. bury in Bucks, one of the most British of British counties.

[2] Stated to be "a young man of Billerica called Pollard."

resolute." My old friend General Heath, [1] said, "Perhaps there never was a better fought battle than this," and, substituting harder for better, I think we will all, on both sides of the Atlantic, agree that he is not far from right. It made Putnam, I like the British Army in Flanders, swear terribly. In later years he is said to have, metaphorically, worn a white sheet for this before the congregation of the church of which he was a member. The Americans ultimately retired because their powder was exhausted. A spy in their lines reported later to Gage, "If you will believe me, Mr. Pidgeon, the Commissary-General then, now declares that we had not one half-lb of powder left that night the bunker hill was taken and had you pursued the Camp must have been broken up—this they confess." He ends, rather like Miss Squeers, "Excuse my incorrect manner of writing, for I am in a tremor."

Bunker Hill was a curious battle in some respects. Both sides were put to odd shifts. On the American side the men had guns of every possible calibre and had to hammer the balls served out to them into shape. On the British side "most of the cannon-balls were found to be too large for the pieces." Such mishaps are not infrequent in war. In the Dardanelles, where the maps were few and indifferent, a British Yeomanry Regiment received a large case of maps. This was opened with great joy, but it proved to contain a number of beautifully-executed, large scale maps of—the country round Cromer, where the yeomen had been undergoing training, just a year before. I doubt if there was ever such astonishment at the opening of anything since an amazed monarch was confronted with, not what he expected, pigeon-pies but four-and-twenty melodious blackbirds.

Gage did not receive bouquets for Bunker Hill. He does not appear to have foreseen anything. It did not occur to him that you can not make an omelet without breaking eggs and that a battle is necessarily attended by casualties. An eye-witness wrote: "It is impossible to describe the horror that on every side presented itself— wounded and dead officers in every street; the town (Boston), which is larger than New York, almost uninhabited to appearance, bells tolling, wounded soldiers lying in their tents and crying for assistance to remove some men who had just expired. So little precaution did General Gage take to provide for the wounded by making hospitals, that they remained in this deplorable situation for three

[1] I devoted a few pages to this very engaging old gentleman in my previous book, *Warrior: in Undress.* We shall hear more about him later.

days; the wounded officers obliged to pay the most exorbitant price for lodgings, when near 30,000 houses belonging to proclaimed Rebels were uninhabited." Both sides claimed a victory, but a London wit put it extremely well when he said, "We certainly are victorious, but if we have eight more such victories there will be nobody left to bring the news of them." John Wilkes, too, put it well in the House of Commons: "What have we conquered? Bunker's Hill with the loss of 1,200 men. Are we to pay as dearly for the rest of America ?" And Barré said that it "smacked more of defeat than victory." The loss on both sides was very heavy. We admitted that it was a more bloody battle than either Minden or Fontenoy. Ninety-two British officers were killed and wounded, "a melancholy disproportion," Burgoyne calls it, "to the numbers killed and wounded of the private soldiers." It ruined Howe's nerve, he never displayed any great energy thereafter.

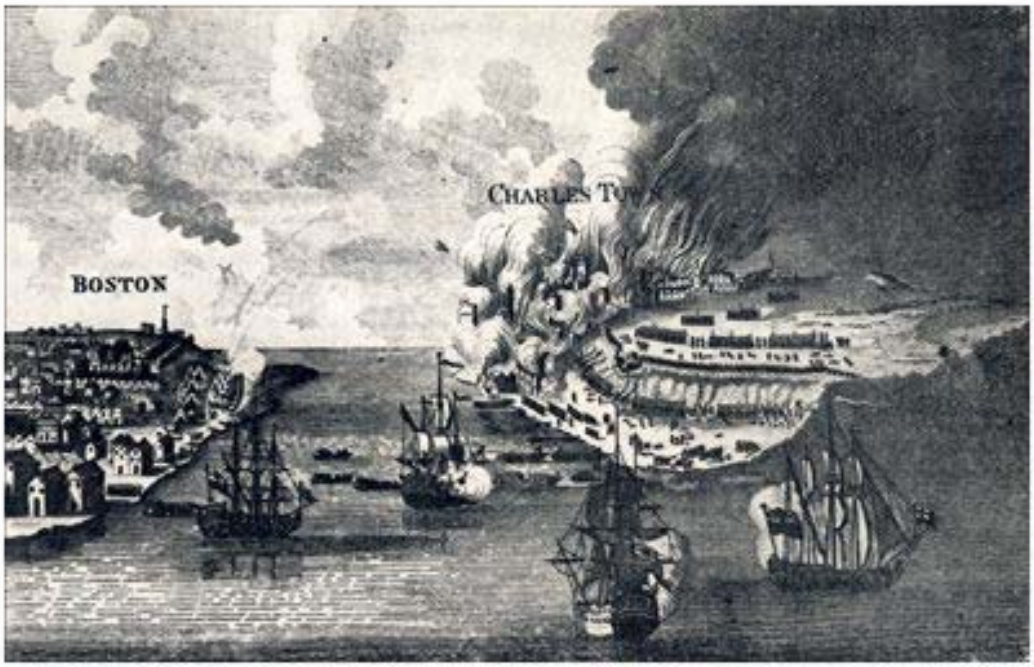
Most of his energy had always been devoted to pleasure. A German officer who served under him in America said, "Sir William liked enjoying himself, so much so that he sometimes forgot his duties as a commander. He always had in his *entourage* an excellent *chef,* and often also a mistress." He liked to have a good time, and he liked his friends to share it. A Major Wemyss, a contemporary, bears him out: "He had a dislike to business, a propensity to pleasure, and was also addicted to private conviviality." But, whatever his faults, and we shall see more of them later, one must never forget his gallantry at Bunker Hill. An Englishman, Nicholas Cresswell, in North America at the time, went so far as to call Howe "the great Chucclehead." Cresswell, by the way, wrote a journal which is full of curious information. For example, when in New York he jots down: "Sunday May 18th 1777. In the forenoon went to St. Paul's Church and heard a Military Sermon by the Reverend Mr. O'Brien. This is a very neat Church and some of the handsomest and best-dressed ladies [1] I have ever seen in America. I believe most of them are Whores." I wonder if this very neat Church still stands.

The Duke of Wellington once said: "A battle is very like a ball." Those whom he met in the field, if they were honest might often have agreed with him, substituting for "ball" the old-fashioned word "rout." What the Duke meant was that nobody could possibly see the

[1] But in this respect Boston then ran New York close, as I dare-say it still does. An English officer writing from the former town in 1774, paid it rather a left-handed compliment: "The women are very handsome, but, like old Mother Eve, very frail; the camp has been as well supplied in that way since we have been on Boston Common, as if our tents were pitched on Blackheath." But I must be careful, for did not a grand jury find a true bill against Gage "for slandering the town of Boston"?

whole battle-field, but only his own particular little bit of it. This was not Burgoyne's case at Bunker Hill; although he played only a very minor part in it he had, as it were, a seat in the stalls and the whole scene was unfurled before him. He wrote two very interesting letters about it, one to Lord Rochefort and one to Lord Stanley. But this is a long chapter, the bottle of port is now empty, so I think I will now begin a fresh bottle and a' fresh chapter.

(Here followeth the sound as of a cork being drawn.)



"View of the attack on Bunker's Hill with the burning of Charles Town, June 17, 1775"
Engraved for Bernard's "New Complete & Authentic History of England"

