

BATTLE OF CONCORD

“Some future historian will relate with pleasure, and the latest posterity will read with wonder and admiration, how three hundred intrepid rural sons of freedom drove before them more than five times their number of regular, well-appointed troops, and forced them to take shelter behind their own bulwarks.” — *Article entitled “The Rural Heroes; or the Battle of Concord,”* Boston Newspaper for May, 1775.

AT length came the 19th of April, 1775, a day destined to live in the annals of Concord and the world, as long as freemen exist. The preceding winter had been one of great mildness.¹ The spring vegetation was uncommonly forward. Fruit trees were in blossom, winter grain had grown several inches out of the ground, and other indications equally propitious were observed on that memorable day. And on the morning of the 19th the weather was as delightful, as if Providence intended thus to mark with peculiar favor the commencement of a series of glorious events, which happily resulted in the establishment of an independent republic. The exclamation of Adams on that morning, “O what an ever glorious morning is this!” was doubtless true, whether applied to the weather or the occasion.

At this time there were stationed in Boston ten large regiments of British troops, of seven companies each, the 4th, or King’s own regiment, 5th, 10th, 23d, or Royal Welch Fusileers, 38th, 43d, 47th, 57th, and 59th, and a battalion of marines of six companies. A detachment of 800 of these troops, consisting of grenadiers, light infantry, and marines, had been taken off duty on Saturday the 15th under pretence of learning a new exercise; and about 10 o’clock on Tuesday evening, the 18th, embarked from Boston, under command of Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Smith, of the 10th regiment, and Major John Pitcairn, commander of the marines; and landed at Lechmere Point [Lechmere Point was in Cambridge]. After having received a day’s provisions and thirty-six rounds of cartridges; they began their march about 12 o’clock, in silence and under cover of night, towards Concord. The object of this expedition was to destroy the military stores deposited here, and to apprehend Messrs. Hancock, Adams, Barrett, and other distinguished patriots, who had become obnoxious to the British government. To facilitate the accomplishment of their object, officers were despatched during the day and evening of the 18th, to intercept any messengers who might be sent by the friends of liberty, and thus to prevent the discovery of their approach. Happily for the provincials it could not be concealed. The first movement of the British troops in Boston was known; and no sooner known, than messengers were immediately despatched towards their intended destination. Paul Revere left Charlestown about 11 o’clock, passed through Medford, awoke the captain of the minute company there, and alarmed almost every family on his way to Lexington. Nearly at the same time William Dawes set out for the same destination and passed through Roxbury. Having arrived at the Rev. Mr. Clark’s in Lexington, Revere found Hancock and Adams, who had tarried there on their way from Concord, after the adjournment of the Provincial Congress, to whom he related what he knew of the intended expedition. They also received similar intelligence from the committee of safety then in session at West Cambridge. After he had stayed there a short time, Dawes arrived and both proceeded together towards Concord. They had not travelled far before they were overtaken by Dr. Samuel Prescott of Concord, who had spent the evening at Lexington, at the house of Mr. Mulliken, to whose daughter he was paying his addresses; and having been alarmed, was hastening his return home. All rode on together, spreading the alarm at every house. When they arrived near Mr. Hartwell’s tavern in the lower bounds of Lincoln, they were attacked by four British officers, who belonged to the scouting party sent out the preceding evening, and Revere and Dawes were taken. Prescott was also attacked, and had the reins of his bridle cut; but fortunately succeeded in making his escape by jumping his horse over the wall; and, taking a circuitous route through Lincoln, he proceeded with all possible expedition to Concord. Elijah Saunderson, Solomon Brown and Jonathan

1. In a journal kept by the Rev. Thomas Smith at Falmouth, Maine, where the weather is colder than here, are the following entries; “January 23, 1775, very moderate weather; 27th, a summer day; 28th, wonderful weather. February 7th, there has been no snow and but little rain since the 29th of December; wonderful weather, we saw two robins; 11th, warm day; 18th, cold; 20th snow, incomparable sledding; 21st, a summer day; 23d, a great snow-storm. March 7th, the frost seems out of the ground in the streets; 15th, we have wonderful moderate weather; 28th, it has been a wonder of a winter; so moderate and unfreezing.”



Loring of Lexington, who had been sent out to watch the movement of the British officers, and several others passing on the road, were taken prisoners a short time before 10 o'clock by another party. After detaining them till 2 o'clock, and asking many questions about the magazines at Concord, whether any guards were posted there, and whether the bridges were up, they conducted them back to Lexington, where they were released. Hancock and Adams, having remained at the Rev. Mr. Clark's, around whose house a guard had been placed, after consultation now proceeded towards Woburn.

Between 12 and 1 o'clock the same night, information was brought from the Hon. Joseph Warren, that the king's troops were marching to Lexington, and soon after the militia were alarmed and ordered to assemble. An express was sent to Cambridge, and returned between three and four o'clock, without obtaining any intelligence of the movements of the enemy, upon which the militia were dismissed for a short time. The commanding officer, however, thought best soon to call them together again, "not," says the Rev. Mr. Clark, "with the design of opposing so superior a force, much less commencing hostilities; but only with a view to determine what to do, when and where to meet, and to dismiss and disperse."

"Accordingly, about half an hour after four o'clock, alarm guns were fired, and the drums beat to arms; and the militia were collecting together. — Some, to the number of fifty or sixty, or possibly more, were on the parade, others were coming towards it. — In the mean time the troops, having thus stolen a march upon us, and to prevent any intelligence of their approach, having seized and held prisoners several persons, whom they met un-armed upon the road, seemed to come determined for murder and bloodshed; and that whether provoked to it or not! When within about half a quarter of a mile of the meeting-house, they halted, and command was given to prime and load; which being done, they marched on till they came up to the east end of said meeting-house, in sight of our militia (collecting as aforesaid) who were about twelve or thirteen rods distant. Immediately on their appearing so suddenly, and so nigh, Captain Parker, who commanded the militia company, ordered the men to disperse and take care of themselves and not to fire. Upon this our men dispersed; but many of them not so speedily, as they might have done, not having the most distant idea of such brutal barbarity and more than savage cruelty, from the troops of a British king, as they immediately experienced. For no sooner did they come in sight of our company, but one of them, supposed to be an officer of rank, was heard to say to the troops, 'Damn them; we will have them!' Upon which the troops shouted aloud, huzza'd, and rushed furiously towards our men. About the same time, three officers (supposed to be Colonel Smith, Major Pitcairn and another officer) advanced on horseback to the front of the body, and coming within five or six rods of the militia, one of them cried out, 'Ye villains, ye rebels, disperse; damn you, disperse!' or words to this effect. One of them said, 'Lay down your arms; damn you, why don't you lay down your arms!' The second of these officers, about this time fired a pistol towards the militia as they were dispersing. The foremost, who was within a few yards of our men, brandishing his sword, and then pointing towards them, with a loud voice, said to the troops, 'Fire! by God, fire!' which was instantly followed by a discharge of arms from the said troops, succeeded by a very heavy and close fire upon our party dispersing, so long as any of them were within reach. Eight were left dead upon the ground; ten were wounded."²

The British troops then passed on without molestation to Concord, six miles further. In the meantime Prescott had arrived there; and the guard, the committee of safety, the military officers, and principal citizens had been alarmed. The church bell rung a little before three o'clock. Major John Buttrick requested Mr. Reuben Brown to proceed towards Lexington, obtain what information he could, and return. Another messenger was sent to Watertown on the same errand. Mr. Brown arrived at Lexington just before the British troops fired on the devoted Lexington militia, and immediately returned to Concord, without waiting to ascertain what effect their firing had produced. On his arrival Major Buttrick inquired if they fired bullets. "I do not know, but think it probable," was the answer. It was supposed at that time, that they fired nothing but powder, merely to intimidate the people, though various reports were circulated of a different character. The provincials were unwilling to be the aggressors, and could not then believe the mother country was in earnest, and intended to murder the inhabitants of her colonies. The object was conceived to be, to destroy the public stores. The

2. "Plain and faithful Narrative of Facts," by the Rev. Jonas Clark, minister of Lexington, published as an appendix to his Sermon, preached at the anniversary of these events in 1776 — See APPENDIX.



people, however, wished to be prepared in any event. Mr. Brown proceeded by the direction of Colonel Barrett to Hopkinton to alarm the people in that direction. Other messengers were sent at the same time to other towns with the intelligence; and the alarm spread like electric fire from a thousand sources, and produced a shock that roused all to action.

The committee of safety in Concord had been engaged the preceding day, according to the directions of the provincial committee, in removing some of the military stores to the adjoining towns, and immediately gave directions for removing and securing such as yet remained. This occupied the attention of Colonel Barrett and a large number of citizens a considerable portion of the morning. Four cannon were carried to Stow, six to the outer parts of the town, and some others covered with hay, straw, manure, etc. Loads of stores of various kinds were carried to Acton, and other towns, and many others were concealed in private buildings and in the woods. The utmost activity prevailed in preparing for the approaching crisis.

The road from Lexington to Concord enters the town from the southeast along the side of a hill, which commences on the right about a mile below the village, rising abruptly from thirty to fifty feet above the road, and terminating at the northeasterly part of the public square. The top is plain land, commanding a pleasant view of the village and vicinity. Here, in the rear of Reuben Brown's, stood the pole on which the flag of liberty was first unfurled. The meeting-house stood in its present situation; the court-house was near the county-house, now occupied by the jailer; Captain Timothy Wheeler's store-house was near Mr. Stow's. There was no house between Elisha Tolman's and Abel B. Heywood's. The main branch of the Concord river flows sluggishly in a serpentine direction on the westerly and northerly side of the village about half a mile from the principal houses. This river was then passed by two bridges, one by Deacon Cyrus Hosmer's, called the "old South Bridge," the other near the Rev. Dr. Ripley's, called the North Bridge, about a half a mile from the meeting-house. The river, which before ran easterly, turns at this place and runs northerly. The road, just beyond Dr. Ripley's, turned nearly at right angles, and passing over the bridge went parallel with the river over wet ground below the house then owned by Captain David Brown and by Humphrey Hunt's, to Colonel Barrett's, who lived about two miles from town. This road was entered by another, about thirty rods above the bridge nearly at right angles, leading from the high lands at Colonel Jonas Buttrick's, also about fifty rods direct from the bridge, on which the main body of the provincial militia paraded. This bridge was taken up in 1793 and two others, one above and the other below the old site, were erected.

Guards were stationed at the north and south bridges, below Dr. Heywood's, and in the centre of the village. Jonathan Farrar was then commander of the guard. In case of an alarm, it was agreed to meet at Wright's Tavern, now Deacon Jarvis's. A part of the company under Captain Brown paraded about break of day; and being uncertain whether the enemy was coming, they were dismissed, to be called together by the beat of drum. Soon afterward the minute-men and militia, who had assembled, paraded on the common; and after furnishing themselves with ammunition at the court-house, marched down below the village in view of the Lexington road. About the same time a part of the minute company from Lincoln, who had been alarmed by Dr. Prescott, came into town and paraded in like manner. The number of armed men, who had now assembled, was about one hundred. The morning had advanced to about seven o'clock; and the British army were soon seen approaching the town on the Lexington road. The sun shone with peculiar splendor. The glittering arms of eight hundred soldiers, "the flower of the British army," were full in view. It was a novel, imposing, alarming sight. What was to be done? At first it was thought best that they should face the enemy, as few as they were, and abide the consequences. Of this opinion, among others, was the Rev. William Emerson, the clergyman of the town, who had turned out amongst the first in the morning to animate and encourage his people by his counsel and patriotic example. "Let us stand our ground," said he; "if we die, let us die here!" Eleazer Brooks of Lincoln was then on the hill. "Let us go and meet them," said one to him. "No," he answered, "it will not do for *us* to begin the war." They did not then know what had happened at Lexington. Their number was, however, very small in comparison with the enemy, and it was concluded best to retire a short distance, and wait for reinforcements. They consequently marched to the northern declivity of the burying-ground hill, near the present site of the court-house. They did not, however, leave their station till the British light infantry had arrived within a few rods' distance.

Major Buttrick went to one of the companies then under command of Lieutenant Joseph



Hosmer, the other officers not then being at their posts, and requested him to act as adjutant. He remonstrated by telling him "his company would be left alone if he did." "It must be so then," said Buttrick; "you must go." He accordingly left his company and officiated as adjutant the remaining part of the morning. About the same time Colonel James Barrett, who was commander of the regiment of militia, and who had been almost incessantly engaged that morning in securing the stores, rode up. Individuals were frequently arriving, bringing different reports. Some exaggerated the number of British troops; some said that they had, and others that they had not killed some Lexington militia men. It was difficult to obtain correct information. Under these circumstances, he ordered the men there paraded, being about one hundred and fifty, to march over the north bridge, near the present residence of Colonel Jonas Buttrick, and there wait for reinforcements. "This shows," says Murray, "that they did not intend to begin hostilities at this time, otherwise they would have disputed the ground with the light infantry."

In the mean time the British troops entered the town. The six companies of light infantry were ordered to enter on the hill, and disperse the minute men whom they had seen paraded there. The grenadiers came up the main road, and halted on the common. Unfortunately for the people's cause, the British officers had already been made somewhat acquainted, through their spies, and the tories, with the topography of the town, and the situation of many of the military stores. On their arrival they examined as well as they could, by the help of spyglasses from a post of observation on the burying-ground hill, the appearance of the town, condition of the provincials, etc. It was found that the provincials were assembling, and that no time was to be lost. The first object of the British was to gain possession of the north and south bridges to prevent any militia from entering over them. Accordingly, while Colonel Smith remained in the centre of the town, he detached six companies of light infantry, under command of Captain Lawrence Parsons of his own regiment, to take possession of the north bridge, and proceed thence to places where stores were deposited. Ensign D'Berniere, already mentioned, was ordered to direct his way. It is also intimated that tories were active in guiding the regulars. Captain Beeman of Petersham was one. On their arrival there, three companies under command of Captain Lawrie of the 43d regiment were left to protect the bridge; one of those, commanded by Lieutenant Edward Thornton Gould, paraded at the bridge, the other, of the 4th and 10th regiments, fell back in the rear towards the hill. Captain Parsons with three companies proceeded to Colonel Barrett's to destroy the stores there deposited. At the same time Captain Munday Pole of the 10th regiment was ordered to take possession of the south bridge, and destroy such public property as he could find in that direction. The grenadiers and marines, under Smith and Pitcairn, remained in the centre of the town, where all means in their power were used to accomplish the destruction of military stores.

By the great exertions of the provincials the principal part of the public stores had been secreted, and many others were protected by the innocent artifice of individuals. In the centre of the town the grenadiers broke open about sixty barrels of flour, nearly one half of which was afterwards saved; knocked off the trunnions of three iron twenty-four pound cannon, and burnt sixteen new carriage-wheels, and a few barrels of wooden trenchers and spoons. The liberty-pole on the hill was cut down, and suffered the same fate. About five hundred pounds of balls were thrown into the mill pond and into wells. "The shrewd and successful address of Captain Timothy Wheeler on this occasion deserves notice. He had the charge of a large quantity of provincial flour, which, together with some casks of his own, was stored in his barn. A British officer demanding entrance, he readily took his key and gave him admission. The officer expressed his pleasure at the discovery; but Captain Wheeler with much affected simplicity, said to him, putting his hand on a barrel; 'This is my flour. I am a miller, Sir. Yonder stands my mill. I get my living by it. In the winter I grind a great deal of grain, and get it ready for market in the spring. This,' pointing to one barrel, 'is the flour of wheat; this,' pointing to another, 'is the flour of corn; this is the flour of rye; this,' putting his hand on his own casks, 'is *my* flour; this is *my* wheat; this is *my* rye; this is mine.' 'Well,' said the officer, 'we do not injure private property'; and withdrew leaving this important depository untouched."³

Captain Ephraim Jones kept the tavern now owned by Hartwell Bigelow, and had the care of the jail near by. Henry Gardner, Esq., the province treasurer, had boarded with him during the session of the Congress, and had left in his custody a chest containing some money and other

3. Holmes's Annals, vol. ii. page 326.



important articles. Captain Jones was taken by the British, and placed under guard of five men with their bayonets fixed and pointing towards him. After being thus detained a short time he was released to furnish refreshment at his bar. In the mean time, they entered his house in search of public stores, and went to the chamber where Mr. Gardner's chest was deposited. Being about to enter, Hannah Barns, who lived in the family, remonstrated, telling them it was her apartment, and contained her property. After considerable parleying, they left her and the chamber unmolested.

The court-house was set on fire, but was extinguished by Mrs. Martha Moulton, a near resident, assisted by a servant of Dr. Minott. They remonstrated, saying to the British, "The top of the house is filled with powder and if you do not put the fire out, you will all be killed." On this they lent their aid. They seized and abused several unarmed inhabitants who remained in the village.

The party at the south bridge entered several adjacent houses, where at their request, milk, potatoes, meat, and other refreshments, as a breakfast, were provided. They entered the house of Ephraim Wood, Esq., and endeavored to take him prisoner. He was town clerk and a distinguished patriot. Being actively engaged in directing the important events of the day, and assisting in removing the stores, he was not at home and escaped detection. At Mr. Amos Wood's they paid a guinea apiece to each of the female attendants to compensate them for their trouble. They searched the house; and an officer observing one room fastened, significantly inquired of Mrs. Wood, "whether there were not some females locked up there?" By her evasive answer he was led to believe it was so, and immediately said, "I forbid any one entering this room!" — and a room filled with military stores was thus fortunately preserved. This party remained here till they heard the firing at the north bridge, when they recrossed the river, took up the planks of the bridge to render it impassable, and hastened to join the main body in the middle of the town.

After Colonel Barrett had ordered the militia to march over the bridge, he rode home to give some directions respecting the stores at his house. He set out on his return to the militia companies just before the party of British troops arrived. They said to Mrs. Barrett, "Our orders are to search your house and your brother's from top to bottom." Leave was granted. The soldiers here, as at other places in town, requested and were provided with refreshments. One of the sergeants asked for spirit, but it was refused; and the commanding officer forbid it, as it might render him unfit for duty, saying, "We shall have bloody work to day, — we have killed men at Lexington." The officers offered to pay Mrs. Barrett, but she refused, saying, "We are commanded to feed our enemies." They then threw some money into her lap. Hesitating some time, she accepted it with the remark, — "This is the price of blood." They assured her of good treatment, but said they must execute their orders. Mrs. Barret had concealed some musket-balls, cartridges, flints, etc., in casks in the garret and had put over them a quantity of feathers, which prevented discovery. They however took fifty dollars in money from one of the rooms. On seeing Stephen, a son of Colonel Barrett, the officer demanded his name. Being answered "Barrett," they called him a rebel, and taking hold of him, said, "You must go to Boston with us, and be sent to England for your trial." Upon Mrs. Barrett saying, "He is my son and not the master of the house," they released him. They collected some gun-carriages in order to burn them; but before they executed their intention the firing at the bridge was heard, and they immediately retreated.

While the British were thus engaged, our citizens and part of our military men, having secured what articles of public property they could, were assembling under arms. Beside the minute-men and militia of Concord, the military companies from the adjoining towns began to assemble; and the number increased to about two hundred and fifty or three hundred.

There were at this time in the vicinity, under rather imperfect organization, a regiment of militia, and a regiment of minute-men. The officers of the militia were James Barrett, colonel; Ezekiel How of Sudbury, lieutenant-colonel; Nathan Barrett and George Minot of Concord, Joseph Robbins of Acton, John Moore of Bedford, Samuel Farrar of Lincoln, and Moses Stone and Aaron Haynes of Sudbury, captains. The officers of the minute-men were Abijah Pierce of Lincoln, colonel; Thomas Nixon of Framingham, lieutenant-colonel; John Buttrick of Concord, major; Jacob Miller of Holliston, 2d major; Thomas Hurd of East Sudbury, adjutant; David Brown, and Charles Miles of Concord, Isaac Davis of Acton, William Smith of Lincoln, Jonathan Wilson of Bedford, John Nixon of Sudbury, captains. There were two small



companies of horse, one in Concord, and one in Sudbury; but they were out among the foot companies at this time. Joseph Hosmer, David Wheeler, Francis Wheeler, and James Russell of Concord; John Hayward, Simon Hunt, and John Heald of Acton; Samuel Hoar of Lincoln; Moses Abbott of Bedford; and Jonathan Rice, David Moore, Asahel Wheeler, and Jabez Puffer of Sudbury, were lieutenants. All these, however, were not present at the engagement at the North Bridge.⁴ The officers of the minute companies had no commissions. Their authority was derived solely from the suffrages of their companies. Nor were any of the companies formed in regular order. John Robinson of Westford, a Lieutenant-Colonel in a regiment of minutemen under Colonel William Prescott, and other men of distinction had already assembled. The hostile acts and formidable array of the enemy, and the burning of the articles they had collected in the village, led them to anticipate a general destruction.

Joseph Hosmer, acting as adjutant, formed the soldiers as they arrived singly or in squads, on the field westerly of Colonel Jonas Buttrick's present residence; the minute companies on the right and the militia on the left, facing the town. He then, observing an unusual smoke arising from the centre of the town, went to the officers and citizens in consultation on the high ground nearby, and inquired earnestly, "Will you let them burn the town down?" They then, with those exciting scenes before them deliberately with noble patriotism and firmness "resolved to march into the middle of the town to defend their homes, or die in the attempt;" and at the same time they resolved not to fire unless first fired upon. "They acted upon principle and in the fear of God."⁵

Colonel Barrett immediately gave orders to march by wheeling from the right. Major Buttrick requested Lieutenant-Colonel Robinson to accompany him, and led them in double file to the scene of action. When they came to the road leading from Captain Brown's to the bridge, a part of the Acton minute company under Captain Davis passed by in front, marched towards the bridge a short distance, and halted. Being in files of two abreast, the Concord minute company, under Captain Brown, being before at the head, marched up the north side, till they came equally in front. The precise position, however, of each company cannot now be fully ascertained. This road was subject to inundations, and a wall was built with large stones on the upper side, in which posts were placed, connected together at their tops with poles to aid foot-passengers in passing over in times of high water.

The British, observing their motions, immediately formed on the east side of the river, and soon began to take up the planks of the bridge. Against this Major Buttrick remonstrated in an elevated tone, and ordered a quicker step of his soldiers. The British desisted. At that moment two or three guns were fired in quick succession into the river, which the provincials considered as alarm-guns and not aimed at them. They had arrived within ten or fifteen rods of the bridge, when a single gun was fired by a British soldier, the ball from which passing under Colonel Robinson's arm slightly wounded the side of Luther Blanchard, a fifer in the Acton company, and Jonas Brown, one of the Concord minute men. This gun was instantly followed by a volley by which Captain Isaac Davis and Abner Hosmer, both belonging to Acton, were killed, a ball passing through the body of the former and another through the head of the latter. On seeing this, Major Buttrick instantly leaped from the ground, and partly turning to his men, exclaimed, "Fire, fellow-soldiers, for God's sake, fire"; discharging his own gun almost in the same instant. His order was instantly obeyed; and a general discharge from the whole line of the provincial ranks took place. Firing on both sides continued a few minutes. Three British soldiers were killed; and Lieutenants Sunderland, Kelley and Gould, a sergeant, and four privates were wounded. The British immediately retreated about half way to the meeting-house, and were met by two companies of grenadiers, who had been drawn thither by "the noise of battle."

Two of the soldiers killed at the bridge were left on the ground, where they were afterwards

4. It has been customary in giving notice of deceased revolutionary soldiers who met the British at any time on that day, or marched to meet them, to say they were present at the North Bridge. This in many instances is doubtless incorrect. Scarcely any, except those from Concord and the towns immediately adjoining, were or *could be* present, though troops came with celerity and bravery from a greater distance, and were in the engagement on the retreat. Two companies from Sudbury, under How, Nixon and Haynes, came to Concord; and having received orders from a person stationed at the entrance of the town for the purpose of a guide, to proceed to the north instead of the south bridge, arrived near Colonel Barrett's just before the British soldiers retreated. They halted in sight, and Colonel How observed, "If any blood has been shed, not one of the rascals shall escape;" and disguising himself rode on to ascertain the truth. Before proceeding far, the firing began at the bridge, and the Sudbury companies pursued the retreating British.

5. "History of the Fight at Concord," by the Rev. Dr. Ripley.



buried by Zachariah Brown and Thomas Davis, Jun., and the spot deserves to be marked by an ever enduring monument, as the place where the first British blood was spilt, — where the life of the first British soldier was taken, in a contest which resulted in a revolution the most mighty in its consequences in the annals of mankind.

Most of the provincials pursued them across the bridge, though a few returned to Buttrick's with their dead.⁶ About one hundred and fifty went immediately across the Great Field to intercept the enemy on their retreat at Merriam's corner. From this time through the day, little or no military order was preserved. Every man chose his own time and mode of attack.

It was between 10 and 11 o'clock when the firing at the bridge took place; and a short time after Captain Parsons and his party returned unmolested from Colonel Barrett's. They might have been attacked and taken, had the party that went across the Great Fields remained, and had strict military order preserved it; but it was probably feared, that, if this had been done, the grenadiers would have burnt the village, or committed some other act of retaliation, which it would have been impossible for the number of Americans then assembled to prevent. War, too, at this time was not declared. Though some may suppose the provincials here made a mistake, and neglected the advantages they possessed, yet no one who views all the circumstances correctly, will hesitate to consider this, as one of the most fortunate events, or be dissatisfied with what the provincials did on that memorable day.

By this time the provincials had considerably increased, and were constantly arriving from the neighboring towns. The British had but partially accomplished the objects of their expedition; the quantity of public stores destroyed being very small in comparison with what remained untouched. They observed, however, with no little anxiety and astonishment, the celerity with which the provincials were assembling, and the determined resolution with which they were opposed. Hitherto their superior numbers had given them an advantage over such companies as had assembled; but they now began to feel that they were in danger, and resolved, from necessity, on an immediate retreat. They collected together their scattered parties, and made some hasty provision for the wounded.

Several were taken into Dr. Minott's (now [1835] the Middlesex Hotel), where their wounds were dressed. One of the officers left his gold watch, which was discovered after he had gone out, by an old black servant. She, with honest simplicity called out, "Hollo, sir, you have left your watch," and restored it without fee or reward. At Wright's tavern, Pitcairn called for a glass of brandy, and stirred it up with his bloody finger, remarking, "He hoped he should stir the damned yankee blood so before night."⁷ One of the wounded died and was buried where Mr. Keyes's house stands. A chaise was taken from Reuben Brown,⁸ and another from John Beaton, which were furnished with bedding, pillaged as were many other articles from the neighboring houses, in which they placed some of their wounded; and began a hasty retreat a little before 12 o'clock. Several were left behind. About the same time they fired at Mr. Abel Prescott,⁹ whom they saw returning from an excursion to alarm the neighboring towns; but though slightly wounded in his side, he secreted himself in Mrs. Heywood's house and escaped.

The designs of the enemy were now fully developed; and the indignation of the provincials was highly excited. Many of them were determined to be revenged for the wanton cruelties which had been committed. They had followed the retreating party between the bridge and the village, and fired single-handed from the high ground, or from behind such shelter as came in their way; and thus began a mode of warfare which cost many a one his life.

The king's troops retreated in the same order as they entered town, the infantry on the hill and the grenadiers in the road, but with flanking parties more numerous and farther from the main body. On arriving at Merriam's Corner they were attacked by the provincials who had

6. Luther Blanchard went to Mrs. Barrett's, who, after examining his wound, mournfully remarked, "A little more and you'd be killed." "Yes," said Blanchard, "and a little more and 't wouldn't have touched me;" — and immediately joined the pursuers.

7. Major Pitcairn was killed at the battle of Bunker Hill, June 17th.

8. Lieutenant Joseph Hayward, who had been in the French War, took these two chaises in Cambridge, and brought them to Concord, having killed a man in each. A little before, observing a gun pointed out of the window of a house by a British soldier, he seized it, and in attempting to enter the house found it fastened. He burst open the door, attacked and killed by himself two of the enemy in the room, and took a third prisoner. One of their guns is still owned by his son, from whom I received this anecdote.

9. He was the brother of Samuel Prescott, who brought the intelligence from Lexington in the morning. Samuel Prescott was taken prisoner on board a privateer afterwards, and carried to Halifax, where he died in jail. Abel Prescott died of the dysentery in Concord, September 3, 1775, aged 25.



proceeded across the Great Fields, in conjunction with a company from Reading, under the command of the late Governor Brooks. Several of the British were killed, and several wounded; among the latter was Ensign Lester. None of the provincials were injured. From this time the road was literally lined with provincials, whose accurate aim generally produced the desired effect. Guns were fired from every house, barn, wall or covert. After they had waylaid the enemy and fired upon them from one position, they fell back from the road, ran forward, and came up again to perform a similar manoeuvre. The Sudbury company attacked them near Hardy's hill on the south; and below the Brooks tavern, on the old road north of the school-house, a severe battle was fought. Some were killed in the woods, and others in or near Mr. Hartwell's barn, close by. It was here that Captain Jonathan Wilson of Bedford, Nathaniel Wyman of Billerica, and Daniel Thompson of Woburn were killed. Eight of the British, who fell here and were left on the ground, were buried in the Lincoln burying-ground the next day, one of whom, from his dress, was supposed to have been an officer. Several were killed near where Viles's tavern now [1835] is; and at Fisk's hill, a little below, Lieutenant-Colonel Smith was wounded in his leg, in a severe engagement. At the house at the bottom of this hill a rencontre between James Hayward of Acton and a British soldier took place. Hayward, on going round the house for a draught of water, perceived his antagonist coming through the house on the same errand. The Briton drew up his gun, remarking, it is said, "You are a dead man"; "And so are you," answered Hayward. Both fired and both fell; the former dead and the latter mortally wounded. He died the next day. All the way the enemy were compelled to pass through ranks of men they had injured, and who were armed and eager to avenge the blood of their slaughtered fellow citizens.

An express was sent from Lexington in the morning to General Gage to inform him of what had happened there; and about 9 o'clock a brigade of about 1100 men marched out under the command of the Right Honorable Hugh Earl Percy,¹⁰ a brigadier-general; consisting of the marines, the Welch Fusiliers, the 4th, 47th, and 38th regiments, and two field-pieces. This reinforcement arrived at Lexington about 2 o'clock, placed the field-pieces on the high ground below Monroe's tavern, and checked for about half an hour the eager pursuit of the provincials. During this time they burnt the house, barn, and other out-buildings of Deacon Joseph Loring, the house, barn and shop of Mrs. Lydia Mulliken, and the house and shop of Mr. Joshua Bond. By the aid of this reinforcement they were able to effect their retreat to Charlestown, though not without sustaining continual losses on the way. They arrived about 7 o'clock, having, during a day unusually hot for the season, marched upwards of 36 miles, and endured almost incredible suffering. All the provisions they had had were obtained by purchase or plunder from the people; their provision-wagons having been taken by the Americans. Some of them "were so much exhausted with fatigue, that they were obliged to lie down on the ground, their tongues hanging out of their mouths like dogs after the chase."¹¹ Our militia and minute-men pursued them to Charlestown Neck, many of whom remained there during the night; others returned home. The damage to private property by fire, robbery and destruction, was estimated at £274 16s. 7d. in Concord; £1761 1s. 5d. in Lexington; and £1202 8s. 7d. in Cambridge.¹²

Of the provincials 49 were killed, 36 wounded, and 5 missing. Captain Charles Miles, Captain Nathan Barrett, Jonas Brown, and Abel Prescott, jr., of Concord, were wounded. Captain Isaac Davis, Abner Hosmer, and James Hayward, of Acton, were killed, and Luther Blanchard wounded. Captain Jonathan Wilson, of Bedford, was killed, and Job Lane wounded.

Of the British, 73 were killed; 172 wounded, and 26 missing; among whom were 18 officers, 10 sergeants, 2 drummers, and 240 rank and file. Among the wounded were Lieutenant Colonels Francis Smith and Benjamin Bernard. Lieutenant Edward Hall was wounded at the north bridge and taken prisoner on the retreat. He died the next day, and his remains were delivered up to General Gage. Lieutenant Edward Thornton Gould was also wounded at the

10. "Providence, May 10, 1777. On Monday, General Percy, the hero of Lexington (weary of the American war, *though covered with laurels*, sailed from Newport for England in a ship mounting 14 *guns only*. The command has devolved on General Prescott." — *Boston Gazette*. [This was not Colonel William Prescott of the Bunker Hill fight but a British general stationed at Newport, Rhode Island.]

11. Holmes's *Annals*, vol. ii. page 206.

12. Files of the Provincial Congress. Another paper in the Secretary's office, dated 1782, gives the amount of loss to Lexington £2576 2s. 1d., currency; — real estate £615 10s., and personal £1960 12s. 1d. And the Selectmen say in this paper, "As it is almost eight years since the 19th of April, 1775, some considerable part of the loss and damage sustained by the town cannot be ascertained at this time."



bridge, and taken prisoner on the retreat. He was confined and treated with kindness at Medford till May 28th, when he was exchanged for Josiah Breed, of Lynn. He had a fortune of £1900 per annum, and is said to have offered £2000 for his ransom. Lieutenant Isaac Potter, of the marines, was taken prisoner, and confined some time at Reuben Brown's. Colonel Barrett was directed, April 22d, to give him liberty to walk round the house, but to keep a constant guard of three men, day and night, to prevent his being insulted or making his escape. Eight of the wounded received medical attendance from Dr. Cuming, at the house then standing near Captain Stacy's. One of them, John Bateman, died and was buried on the hill, and none of them were known to return to the British. Samuel Lee was taken prisoner early in the morning, between Lexington and Concord, and afterwards lived in Concord till his death. He always stated that he was the first prisoner taken on that day. Fourteen prisoners were confined in the jail in Concord during the year, and a number of others were permitted to go out to work. Fifteen were ordered to Worcester, April 26th. Sergeant Cooper, one of the party who went to Colonel Barrett's, married a woman who lived with Dr. Cuming.

Such is an imperfect sketch of the occurrences of the 19th of April, 1775, "the greatest of that age." "Concord," says the late President Dwight, "will be long remembered as having been, partially, the scene of the first military action in the revolutionary war, and the object of an expedition, the first in that chain of events, which terminated in the separation of the British colonies from their mother country. A traveller on this spot, particularly an American traveller, will insensibly call to his mind an event of this magnitude, and cannot fail of being deeply affected by a comparison of so small a beginning with so mighty an issue. In other circumstances, the expedition to Concord, and the interest which ensued, would have been merely little tales of wonder and of woe, chiefly recited by the parents of the neighbourhood to their circles at the fireside; commanding a momentary attention of childhood; and calling forth the tear of sorrow from the eyes of those who were intimately connected to the sufferers. Now the same events preface the history of a nation and the beginning of an empire, and are themes of disquisition and astonishment to the civilized world. From the plains of Concord will henceforth be dated a change in human affairs, an alteration in the balance of human power, and a new direction to the course of human improvement. Man, from the events which have occurred here, will, in some respects, assume a new character, and experience, in some respects, a new destiny."

TO CONTINUE READING:

CHAPTER VIII. — State of Feeling on the 20th of April. — Tories. — College removed to Concord. — Committees of Correspondence. — Proceedings in Relation to the Monopoly Acts. — Revolutionary Soldiers. — Table of Different Campaigns. — Public pecuniary Sacrifices. — Taxes. — Constitution Adopted.

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