

An Historical Sketch

OF THE
64TH (SECOND STAFFORDSHIRE) REGIMENT
AND OF THE
CAMPAIGNS THROUGH WHICH THEY PASSED
(with illustrations added by the editor)

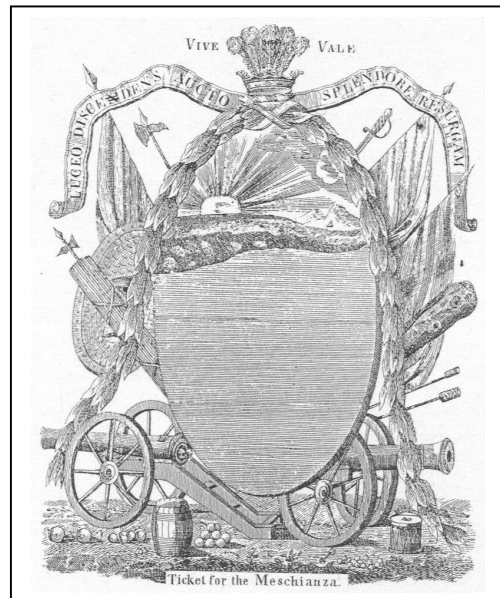


BY MAJOR H. G. PURDON

Part V.

Before the end of 1777 Sir William Howe had asked to be relieved of his command, and in February, 1778. Lord George Germaine informed him that his resignation had been accepted, and that Sir Henry Clinton would succeed him. The Army had become much attached to Sir William, who was an indulgent commander, with easy ways, and of a genial disposition, and their regret at his forthcoming departure was so genuine that they decided to give him a farewell entertainment, such as had never been seen in the New World. Twenty-two field officers of means formed themselves into a committee, and with the aid of several officers who were artistically inclined, including Captain Andre - whose afterfate was so tragic - arranged a romantic festival called the "Meschianza," an Italian word meaning a "medley". This wonderful display came off on the 18th May at four o'clock in the afternoon. First there was a grand procession of boats on the Delaware, formed in three divisions, a galley and ten flat boats in each, containing a brilliant company. In the centre was the Hussar galley, having on board Admiral Lord Howe and Sir William Howe, Sir Henry Clinton, and the ladies of the party.

Three boats, with bands of music in each, led the procession, which passed along a line of vessels dressed in bunting. The whole company then landed at the old fort, when salutes were fired: they then passed between files of Grenadiers to an enclosure 150 yards square, lined by the King's troops, where a tournament took place. Here an English and American Queen of Beauty sat on opposite sides of the ground, each attended by six damsels dressed in the Turkish fashion. Six knights, with their esquires, then appeared, dressed in crimson and white silk, on grey steeds, who asserted that the ladies of the "Blended Rose" excelled all others in wit and beauty. These knights were challenged by six others of the "Burning Mountain," arrayed in black and orange, and mounted on coal-black horses, who upheld the claims of the ladies of their choice. Lances were shivered and pistols fired, until the Marshal proclaimed that the ladies were satisfied with the devotion and valour of their respective champions. After this exhibition the whole company passed through two triumphal arches, one erected in honour of Lord



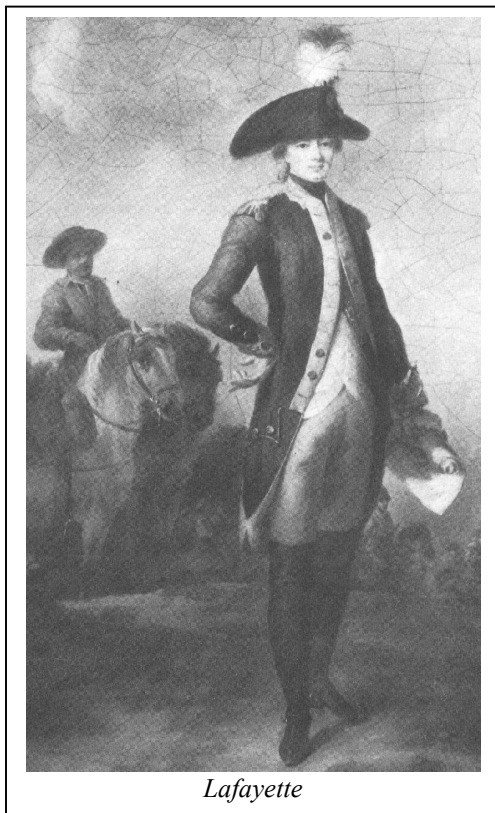


Howe, the other in honour of Sir William Howe. Between these arches an avenue 300 yards long was formed, in which all the Colours of the Army were placed, and lined with the King's troops. A brilliantly decorated ballroom was then entered, containing eighty or ninety large mirrors which reflected walls of blue and gold, where refreshments were served. Dancing followed until 10:30 o'clock, when a wonderful display of fireworks was witnessed from the windows; fountains spouting fire, illuminations, and transparencies, &c. At twelve midnight a supper of 1,021 dishes was served in a magnificent apartment built for the occasion, and lit by 1,200 wax candles, the attendants being negroes attired in Oriental dress, with silver collars and bracelets. After supper the guests returned to the ballroom until four o'clock, when the entertainment, which had lasted just twelve hours, ended.

Lieutenant Wynyard, of the 64th Regiment, was one of the Knights of the "Burning Mountain," and Lieutenant Boscawen, of the Guards, was his esquire; the device on his shield was a bay leaf, and his motto the word "Unchanged." This romantic entertainment caused much talk at the time, and did not escape severe satire, both in private circles and from the Press.

On the very day of the "Mischianza", Washington sent the young Marquis de Lafayette, with 2,100 men and five guns, to Baron Hill, within two miles of the British outposts on Chestnut Hill, to act as a corps of observation.

When this became known, General Howe formed a plan to capture this detachment, and very nearly succeeded. Three columns, commanded respectively by Generals Clinton, Grey, and Grant, moved out on the night of the 19th May to encircle the Marquis, but the latter, on becoming aware of his situation in the morning, by great adroitness extricated his force just in time from its almost hopeless situation. On the 24th May Sir William Howe embarked for England, and Sir Henry Clinton assumed command. Previous to this orders had been received for the Army to evacuate Philadelphia, and retire to New York. Indeed, Philadelphia had been of little use to the British except as a winter quarter, and the place was so closely watched by Washington's patrols and partisans that it was necessary to send strong detachments into the country to protect such as were willing to bring in provisions. In the meantime, great changes had taken place in the American Army at Valley Forge; Washington, by extraordinary exertions, had obtained supplies and

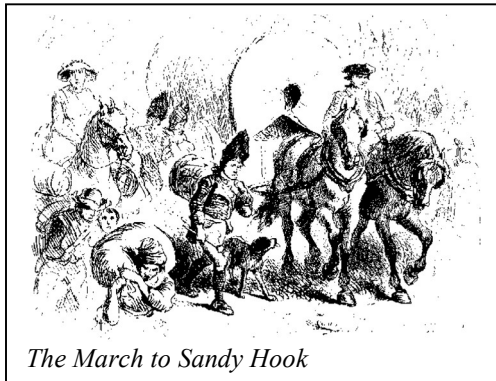


clothing for his starving and half-naked Army, which was thoroughly reorganized. He had obtained the services of Baron Steuben, a very competent officer, who had served on the staff of Frederick the Great of Prussia, and to him he entrusted the drilling and discipline of the troops, which were taught to manoeuvre with exactness. April and May soon refilled the ranks, and by June Washington had 16,000 men or more ready to take the field. Sir Henry Clinton, as soon as he had taken over command, commenced loading his heavy baggage on board the transports; his sick and wounded were put on board the fleet, while other vessels were crowded with numbers of unfortunate

Loyalists who could not be left behind. On the 18th June Lord Howe, with the fleet and his great convoy destined for New York, weighed anchor, and dropped down the river. Brigadier-General Leslie, with the fifth Brigade, consisting of the 7th, 26th, and 63rd Regiments, which had been sent from New York to the Delaware before the end of 1777, had been stationed on the Jersey side of the river; the 55th, 33rd and 16th Regiments were sent over in June to Cope's Ferry Camp, and these corps, under Leslie, formed a guard for the stores, and a portion of the artillery collected at the latter place.

At six o'clock on the evening of the 17th June, the remainder of the troops were put under-arms, and marched to the rear of the several redoubts, where they remained all night. A little after daybreak on the 18th they were ferried across the Delaware, all being over by nine o'clock; and the whole Army, numbering nearly 17,000 men and 46 guns, with a great train of wagons, commenced their march for Haddonfield, five miles distant, which was the first stage on their journey to New York. Throughout the march the fourth Brigade formed part of the First Division, under Lord Cornwallis, which brought up the rear of the Army; the Second Division formed the escort of the immense train under Lieut.-General Knyphausen. At the next halting point (Evesham) it rained in torrents for fourteen hours, soaking the baggage and spoiling the ammunition and supplies. This downpour was succeeded by a long spell of terribly hot weather, such as the oldest inhabitant never remembered. Many of the foot soldiers, burthened with their heavy accoutrements, and wearing their thick woolen clothing, died of sunstroke, and it is stated that every third Hessian was left by the wayside. The American partisans presently broke down the bridges and blocked the roads, while the country people abandoned their homes, cut the ropes of the wells, and those able to bear arms commenced a guerilla warfare on the British as they pursued their toilsome march.

Early on Saturday, the 20th June, the Army advanced to Hollymount, where they encamped until Monday, and marched on that day to the Black Horse Tavern. At five o'clock on the morning of the 23rd, Brigadier-General Leslie, with the Yagers and the fifth Brigade, took the Bordenstown road, and Clinton, with the Grenadiers and Light Infantry, followed by three brigades, advanced to Crosswicks. When Leslie approached Bordenstown, he was informed that the place was occupied by Dickenson's Militia, who had destroyed the bridge over the Creek, which prevented his crossing. Clinton also met with obstructions, but the enemy, who had removed the planks from the bridge at Crosswicks, retired after a skirmish, and the structure was soon repaired. On the 24th Leslie



The March to Sandy Hook

rejoined the main body, and the Army advanced to Allenstown. Clinton's intention was to reach New York by the route through Allenstown, New Brunswick, and Perth Amboy. The first part of the march was protected on the west by the broad waters of the Delaware, but with his immense train, which on a single road covered nearly twelve miles, he only reached Allenstown, some 40 miles from Philadelphia, on the 24th June. Washington, who had heard of Clinton's departure from Philadelphia a few hours after he left, started the same afternoon with six brigades on a wide flanking march in order to intercept him. He crossed the Delaware at Coryell's Ferry, 15 miles above Trenton, on the 22nd June, and advanced to the

neighbourhood of Princeton, while General Gates was instructed to take post behind the Rariton River, near New Brunswick, in order to oppose any advance of the British in that direction. At Allenstown, Clinton received intelligence that Washington had crossed the Delaware and was coming down on the flank of his long column from the direction of Princeton. Finding the road to New Brunswick thus barred, he turned to the right at Allenstown, in order to gain Sandy Hook, and there embark on board the fleet.

