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ARNOLD'S
INVASION OF VIRGINIA.

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1781. Francis Rives Lassiter

BY FRANCIS RIVES LASSITER,
Of Petersburg, Virginia.



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ARNOLD'S INVASION OF VIRGINIA.

DURING the closing days of 1780 Thomas Jefferson, Governor of Virginia, enjoyed no sinecure. On November 25 the English general, Leslie, had terminated his forty days' occupation of the Chesapeake, in obedience to the order of Cornwallis to reënforce that general in South Carolina. The four thousand Virginian militia, who had hurriedly assembled under Muhlenberg at Portsmouth, had been marched back to Petersburg and disbanded by the Governor's order.¹ Of the one thousand so-called "regulars" that Muhlenberg had painfully collected, Steuben, who assumed military command on December 3, had sent about four hundred under Col. Greene to join the Southern army. Not, alas, until the influence of Muhlenberg, together with the appeals of Cols. Harrison² and Greene, had alone prevented a mutiny of officers and men. The remainder had been returned to Chesterfield C. H., while Steuben writes:³ "The business now before me is to get clothes for those wretches at Chesterfield. They amount to between five and six hundred; but they are so utterly naked that, except I can get some clothes for them, they will all be sick before they can be ordered to march."

The reënforcement of Greene in the Carolinas was the chief object of executive effort. The broad patriotism of Jefferson united with the military insight of Steuben in dictating this course. The conquest by Cornwallis of Georgia and the Carolinas meant the transfer of the seat of war to the soil of Virginia. It meant not only the ravages of hostile armies, but diminished power to resist. Experience elsewhere had shown a disorganized militia unwilling to leave their families unprotected on the route of the invader. It

¹ Muhlenberg's "Life of Muhlenberg."

² Charles Harrison, a brother of Benjamin Harrison, of Berkeley, the signer of the Declaration of Independence.

³ Muhlenberg, p. 220.

meant also hundreds of recruits to the king's standard from the reconquered colonies, many of whom waited only to take up arms the moment that cause seemed successful. Clinton's return of his forces already justified Lord Germaine in declaring that "the American levies in the king's service are more than the whole of the enlisted troops in the service of the Congress."⁴

As the year closes the General Assembly is in session; and if we may believe contemporary letters, Mr. Cleveland was not the first American Executive who found a legislative body "a team of wild horses on his hands." "As Christmas approaches," writes Richard Henry Lee, "so does the anxiety for getting home, and it remains a doubt whether the House can be kept together when the holidays come on."⁵

The first question was naturally how to raise the State's quota of continental troops, afterwards how to arm and equip them. The militia was the basis of our military establishment, of which the number enrolled was, according to Mr. Jefferson (writing in 1781), forty-nine thousand nine hundred and seventy-one. Individually the Virginian militiaman possessed the raw qualities of which soldiers are made; collectively, the Virginian militia was unorganized, undisciplined, poorly armed, wasteful, and in the military sense unreliable.

At this period of the struggle six years of war had somewhat tempered the spirit of military enthusiasm. Volunteering had practically ceased. Promises of pensions and bounties had long failed to bring recruits, even for short enlistments. Bounties had been increased, and imperfect laws for a so-called draft had been in operation since the session of October, 1778. Still the moderate requirements of the Federal Congress were not complied with in any of the States.

In the critical state of our affairs just indicated, repeated recommendations from Congress, from Gen. Washington,

⁴ Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy. *Germaine to Clinton*, March 7, 1781.

⁵ Bland Papers, II., 40-44.

and from Gen. Greene, finally induce the General Assembly of Virginia to more stringent action, and on December 15, 1780, Richard Henry Lee⁶ announces to Theoderick Bland in Congress the passage of an act to raise three thousand men for the war by \$12,000 bounty in hand, together with three hundred acres and an able-bodied negro at the end of the war. "If this does not answer, a draft is to take place." But as the year draws to its close, the savage is added to the civilized foe and domestic disorganization. The Cherokees in the southwest have for some time been engaging the attention of the Governors of Virginia and North Carolina. A more dangerous enemy now appears on the Ohio border. During the last days of December Mr. Jefferson is engaged in preparing that blow which, delivered by George Rogers Clarke, is to negative forever the savage claim of title to the lands of our Northwestern Territory, and banish the scalping knife and the tomahawk from the haunting dreams of settlers' wives.

On Christmas day Jefferson writes to Clarke detailed instructions for his expedition toward Detroit and the Lake Erie country. He gives him the Illinois battalion, Col. Crockett's battalion, and Maj. Slaughter's corps, while swift riders are carrying orders to the county lieutenants⁷ of Fayette, Lincoln, Jefferson, Ohio, Monongalia, Berkeley, Hampshire, Frederick, and Greenbrier.

While Jefferson and Virginia are thus preoccupied, Sir Henry Clinton at New York receives a letter from Col. Balfour in South Carolina addressed to Gen. Leslie at Portsmouth, which had hastened this latter general's departure for the South. A somewhat sensational statement⁸ in this letter as to the condition of Cornwallis's affairs determines Clinton to aim another blow at Virginia. Brig. Gen. Benedict Arnold was intrusted with this service, a fact that afterwards furnished a perhaps not unneeded spur to patriotic resistance.

⁶ Bland Papers, II., 40.

⁷ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, December 24, 1780.

⁸ Clinton to Cornwallis, December 13, 1780.

On December 11 Arnold began to embark, and by the 20th lay within Sandy Hook with about sixteen hundred men,⁹ comprising the Eightieth Regiment (Scotch or Edinburgh Royal Volunteers, Lieut. Col. Dundas), the Queen's Rangers (Lieut. Col. Simcoe), Arnold's regiment, and two provincial battalions. His transports also carried four hundred bridles and saddles to equip four troops of horse in Virginia, and a number of large cannon.¹⁰

Lieut. Col. Simcoe mentions a circumstance that I think due Arnold to repeat, that on the 20th of December Gen. Arnold issued an order, to use his own words, "against depredations in the country where the expedition was bound to, and in the most forcible terms and strongest manner called upon the officers to second his intentions and the commander in chief's orders in this respect."¹¹

Included within the general purpose of diverting the resources of Virginia from Greene's army in South Carolina, Clinton's orders to Arnold defined two specific objects.¹² Arnold was ordered either to strike at the general depot of supplies for the Southern army at Petersburg, which his chief declared he still had reason to think was considerable; or, failing that, to take and fortify a post at Portsmouth, both for the purpose of a naval station for the British fleet and for assembling the loyalist inhabitants. To collect large numbers of loyal subjects was always a favorite dream of the Home Ministry, and indeed of Clinton, though the officers in the field entertained few illusions on the subject. As Nathaniel Greene wrote in 1778, so it continued to be true: "The limits of the British government in America are their out-sentinels."¹³ It was also strongly recommended to Cornwallis¹² not to break up the post at Portsmouth if again established, the experience of the few loyalists who had declared for the king upon Leslie's arrival and been left un-

⁹ Washington to Rochambeau, January 3, 1781.

¹⁰ Scot's Magazine, 1781, p. 21.

¹¹ Simcoe's Journal, p. 159.

¹² Clinton to Cornwallis, December 13, 1780.

¹³ G. W. Greene, "Life of Maj. Gen. Nathaniel Greene." Volume II., p. 2.

protected upon his withdrawal having been somewhat discouraging to further enterprise in that direction.

It will be seen that though the stores at Petersburg escaped destruction, incalculably more exhaustive was the wasteful system of militia defense; and that the naval station finally established at Yorktown became, with no fault on Clinton's part, a cul-de-sac more fatal than the Caudine Forks.

Scarcely had Arnold begun to embark in New York harbor when Washington, ever watchful and untiring, is informed by spies of the approximate numbers and probable southward destination of the force. This news he immediately conveys both to Steuben¹⁴ and Jefferson, and on December 13, ever hopeful of French naval cooperation, writes also to Rochambeau.¹⁵

Gen. Washington was scarcely the man to cry "Wolf!" Under most circumstances, information deemed by him important enough for communication should have seemed to Mr. Jefferson sufficiently interesting for him to direct investigation, if not immediate action.

Preoccupied with other matters, as we have seen, neither Jefferson nor Steuben seems to have made any plans for obtaining information of the approach of an enemy by sea, much less any preparation for resistance upon such an arrival.

No lookout boats observed the outer waters, and the vessels of the Virginian navy, which an act¹⁶ of the current legislature required to be always patrolling the Chesapeake, seem to have been about the dockyard, for the most part unmanned and out of commission.

On the 21st the expedition of fifty vessels sailed from Sandy Hook, was dispersed by a violent gale, and reassembled on the 26th and 27th off the Capes of Virginia. On December 29 twenty-seven vessels arrived in the Chesapeake. By the 30th the fleet had assembled, lacking three transports, one armed vessel, and about four hundred troops.¹⁷

¹⁴ Washington to Steuben, December 10, 1780.

¹⁵ Washington to Rochambeau, December 13, 1780.

¹⁶ Hening's Statutes at Large, Volume X., 377.

¹⁷ Rivington's *New York Gazette* (Extraordinary), February 3, 1781.

Having captured some small merchant vessels in Hampton Roads, which facilitated the transportation of his troops, Arnold did not wait for his absent vessels. With the same impetuosity that characterized his advance on Quebec in 1775, recalling doubtless how nearly that bold dash had brought him to brilliant success, he pushed up James River against the wind and without waiting for tides. Opposite Williamsburg, Arnold debated whether he should strike that place; but the wind hauling in his favor shortly afterwards, he proceeded, and was detained for the first time at Hood's late in the afternoon of the 3d of January.

At Hood's (now called Old Fort Powhatan) a few pieces¹⁸ mounted on an uninclosed earthwork were manned by about fifty militiamen. One of the vessels of the fleet having accidentally passed the fort with the loss of one man, the place was promptly evacuated upon a demonstration against its rear by a landing party under Simcoe. Dismounting the guns that evening, the troops reëmbarked in the morning, and before noon on the 4th disembarked at Westover. A hurried council of war discussed the country reports as to the force being collected in opposition, Arnold's orders positively forbidding any operations partaking of too much risk. After calculating his chances, the bold adventurer concluded to make a single day's march toward the magazines of Richmond, as well for obtaining more perfect information as for delivering any blow he might be able to strike.

Accordingly, with less than eight hundred men, at two o'clock on the 4th, Arnold marches from Westover, protecting himself by an advance guard under Simcoe. He camps for the night at Four Mile Creek, twelve miles from Richmond, and at one o'clock on the 5th occupies the town,¹⁹

¹⁸ Rivington's *New York Gazette* (Extraordinary), February 3, 1781, says that Hood's was defended by three eighteen-pounders, one twenty-four-pounder, and one eighteen-inch howitzer. *Scot's Magazine*, 1781, says, more credibly, an eight-inch howitzer. Steuben writes to Gen. Greene, January 8, 1781, mentioning only two iron ten-pounders and a brass howitzer.

¹⁹ Richmond at this period contained less than three hundred houses: "There was hardly room for the members of the legislature and the officers of the State." "Richmond: the Capital of Virginia." (John P. Little, 1851.)

pushing forward Simcoe with his Rangers, horse and foot, and the flank companies of the Eightieth Regiment to destroy the foundry, the boring mill, the magazine, and other buildings about Westham, seven miles higher up the river.

It is unnecessary to describe the details of the advance by the Darbytown Road, nor the maneuvers between Almond Creek and Gillis Creek to flank the two hundred militia who alone had been collected for the defense of the capital. Arnold told Simcoe that they wouldn't fight, and the truth is it would have been folly to attempt it. It is sufficient to say that throughout the advance of thirty-three miles not a gun was fired, and the invader found no obstacles more serious than a few broken bridges on the country road.

Having accomplished his designs of the day before, and apprehensive of being cut off from his shipping, Arnold intended to return early in the morning of the 6th; but so wearied were many of his men by their exertions, especially in destroying five or six tons of powder at Westham, that he was forced to delay his march. During this morning (the 6th) several other buildings were destroyed by fire, and, except in consideration of the poverty of the government, an inconsiderable quantity of public and private stores, principally rum, salt, and leather. Though Richmond was a mere village at the time, it seems certain from contemporary accounts that Lossing, Sloane, and other writers have exaggerated the injury inflicted upon that place by this incursion.²⁰ Some of Arnold's soldiers, finding rum, increased his disorganization, so that when he began to retire about noon in a driving rain and over wet roads, an opportunity for a brilliant retaliatory stroke was presented, especially after darkness set in. No active hand was ready to deal the blow, and he arrived safely at Westover on the 7th, carrying with him three hundred sadly missed muskets and five brass four-pounders.

We left Mr. Jefferson on Christmas day busied with the details of Clarke's expedition to the Northwest. Early in

²⁰ *Virginia Gazette*, January 13, 1781. Jefferson to Washington, January 10, 1781. Cf. Gordon and Lossing.

the morning of Sunday, the last day of the old year, Gen. Nelson breaks in upon his excellency's well-earned rest with a letter from Mr. Jacob Wray, of Hampton—"from a private hand," as Mr. Jefferson says. No officer of government, but Mr. Jacob Wray, of Hampton, first sounds the alarm. Mr. Wray says that twenty-seven sail were in the Roads just below Willoughby Point in the morning of December 29. After hasty conference Gen. Nelson is sent off to the lower country "with full powers," Capt. Maxwell of the navy is written to, and orders given for stationing expresses to Hampton.

No other steps are taken, Mr. Wray not having been careful to state whether the sail were "friends or foes." Steuben had no illusions on this subject, and two officers sent by him down the south side of the river were not instructed to inquire as to this point.²¹ Beyond reporting Mr. Wray's letter to the General Assembly and sending to Petersburg for one hundred stand of arms, nothing is done on Monday, the 1st.

On the 2d, at ten o'clock in the morning, a letter from Nathaniel Burwell, county lieutenant of James City, confirms at last the hostile character of the fleet, and reports that they have advanced to Warrasqueake Bay (about what is now called Mulberry Point).

Arnold had then been beating against a head wind for four days in the waters of Virginia, and Mr. Jefferson writes to Nelson that Mr. Wray's intelligence "had become totally disbelieved."²²

Everything is now activity. There is no embodied force except Steuben's still naked conscripts at Chesterfield C. H. Steuben asks for four thousand militia, and Mr. Jefferson writes: "We mean to have four thousand six hundred militia in the field."²²

The assembly, who have been "kept together" through the holidays, rise on the 2d after the news has been commu-

²¹ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

²² Jefferson to Nelson, January 2, 1781.

nicated, and furnish, according to the idea of the Executive, an economical, if not a speedy, body of couriers.

Accordingly on the 2d a circular letter is delivered to the delegates addressed to the county lieutenants of Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Fluvanna, Albemarle, Amherst, Chesterfield, Powhatan, Cumberland, Dinwiddie, Amelia, Buckingham, Bedford, Halifax, Charlotte, Prince Edward, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Sussex, Southampton, and Brunswick calling for one-half of their respective militia; and to the same officers of Shenandoah, Rockingham, Augusta, and Rockbridge demanding a thousand riflemen of the mountains.

“That there may not be a moment’s delay, let them come in detached parties,” though he has to add, “bringing arms if they have them.”²³

Lieut. Reid,²⁴ at Brunswick C. H., is also ordered to bring his troop to Petersburg and a new authority is forwarded to Nelson²⁵ to call on the lower militia as he thinks proper. Of the Continentals at Chesterfield C. H., only one hundred and fifty are fit for duty. Steuben orders them to Petersburg to cover stores, at the same time ordering the stores to be removed. Though on the afternoon of the 3d the enemy are reported at Jamestown, the correspondence of that day shows only the appointment of Mr. John Brown as commissioner under the act for procuring provisions, and a letter to Col. Skillern, saying that light horse cannot be armed. “The late invasions have left us unfurnished with swords and pistols.” On the morning of the 4th Steuben, knowing that the fleet is at Westover, is satisfied that Richmond is their object. Attempting to raise a force to check their progress, he can assemble only one hundred men. These he sends under Maj. Dick with orders to fire at them from every favorable location; but, to use the General’s own words, “These orders were, however, badly executed.”²⁶

²³ Jefferson’s MS. Letter Book, Circular, January 2, 1781.

²⁴ Idem, Jefferson to Reid, January 2, 1781.

²⁵ Idem, Jefferson to Nelson, January 2, 1781.

²⁶ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

At five o'clock in the afternoon of the 4th the enemy are known to be drawn up at Westover at 2 P.M. of the same day; and hurried orders go to Henrico, Hanover, Goochland, Powhatan, and Chesterfield "for every man of your county able to bear arms"²⁷ to rendezvous at Westham.

In a similar letter of the same date to Col. Banister (at Petersburg), county lieutenant of Dinwiddie, the disorganization of the time is most plainly apparent. Col. Banister is informed that he can arm his men from certain wagons loaded with arms at Chesterfield C. H., "under orders to proceed to Powhatan C. H."

After doing what he could to remove stores²⁸ from Richmond, Petersburg, Chesterfield C. H., and Westham, Steuben ordered his battalion of one hundred and fifty Continentals to meet their naked brothers opposite Westham, and in the evening "thought it prudent" to retire to Manchester.

Col. Taylor, at Winchester, is ordered to move the prisoners of the Saratoga convention to Maryland; and the Governor, having done everything a civilian patriot could think of doing, "went to Tuckahoe and lodged."²⁹

Early on the 5th Mr. Jefferson is at Westham superintending the work of removal of arms and ammunition, which the day before he had ordered to be carried on all night. He then goes to Manchester, sees the enemy at a distance, fails to meet Steuben, whom he had expected at Chetwood's, and, mounting a fresh horse, proceeds in the afternoon to Col. Fleming's, for "quarters."²⁹ Unfortunately, he failed to meet also some three hundred militia who had reached Westham on their way down, but dispersed upon intelligence of the enemy's approach, though arms were being brought over the river for their use.³⁰

On the 6th, when so much might have been done, Mr. Jef-

²⁷ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, Circular, January 4, 1781.

²⁸ "Of their artillery, I secured myself five pieces which were mounted; the rest, . . . three brass and a number of iron pieces, fell into the enemy's hands." Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

²⁹ Jefferson's Diary, 1781.

³⁰ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

person, after going to Westham for "books and papers,"²⁹ retires to his family at Fine Creek, in Powhatan.

In the morning Steuben collects three hundred and fifty men and two pieces of artillery, prepared to dispute the passage of the river at Manchester, but the enemy retiring as they had come, he marches in the evening of the 6th to Warwick for the defense of flour and grain stored there.

Meanwhile Nelson, also with three hundred and fifty men, is at Long Bridge, on the Chickahominy.³¹

When Arnold goes into camp this night, he is between Steuben and Nelson and not twelve miles from either. His less than eight hundred men are wet, worn out, and beyond the control of their officers. Exertion, plunder, and rum have done their work on men who for nearly a month have been on shipboard.

It is true that Steuben was south of the river, but there were boats enough at Manchester. Nelson tells us also that the rain damaged his powder.

It is perhaps unfair to hope for such a feat from untrained soldiers, but at the same time it is interesting to speculate upon the crushing blow that might have been delivered on that "tempestuous night," had there been previously proper military communication, and had the execution been intrusted to such an officer as Light Horse Harry Lee, or to such as his rival, the British Tarleton.

On the 7th, while Arnold was approaching Westover and while Steuben was at Osborne's, on the James, some privateers attached to Arnold's fleet came up the Appomattox as far as Broadway and captured a number of tobacco-laden vessels. This seems to have been too much for the patience of the militia of the south side. Two companies of Col. Banister's³² militia, under the orders of Gen. Smallwood,³³ attack them so fiercely that, though the militia have only small arms,³⁴ the privateers are obliged to abandon their prizes

³¹ Nelson to Steuben, January 7, 1781.

³² Banister to Bland, January, 1781. Bland Papers.

³³ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

³⁴ Jefferson to Virginia delegates in Congress, January 18, 1781.

and proceed down the river. By the time they arrive at City Point, Gen. Smallwood has hastily mounted some ship guns,³⁴ and they escape only after being considerably shattered, losing a captain and some men.

When Arnold arrives at Westover, on the 7th, his detachment is in no condition for fresh enterprise. He remains there for three days to refresh and reestablish the troops. He is not disturbed. Nelson reconnoiters him from the hill beyond Herring Creek, but nothing of interest occurs except that on the night of the 8th Simcoe, sent out with forty horsemen to gain intelligence, deceives Nelson's videttes and dashes into his encampment at Charles City C. H. The suddenness of the attack and the darkness of the night, together with a stratagem of this bold officer, disperses the militia utterly. Some are wounded and a few captured,³⁵ while Simcoe returns with a loss of one sergeant³⁶ killed, and three men wounded.

Jefferson's diary of January 7 states that there are two thousand two hundred and fifty men in the field. Steuben's report of the following day reckons only one thousand one hundred and fifty, not counting the naked Continentals, who are sent back to Chesterfield C. H. as incompetent to take the field.

The militia now begin to come in in considerable numbers, but there are no arms to give them.³⁷ This is "rather from want of arrangement," says Steuben, "than from anything else. Those of the State were so scattered in removing them on the alarm that their officers cannot collect them again."³⁸ Gen. Nelson, however, has fifteen hundred stand, and only five hundred men.³⁹ Col. Banister⁴⁰ dwells on the

³⁵ Four killed and wounded. Seven or eight taken. Jefferson to Virginia delegates in Congress, January 18, 1781.

³⁶ This sergeant lies buried at Westover.

³⁷ On the 14th and 15th of January Jefferson suggests to Steuben and Nelson the discharge of such militia as cannot be armed "that the law for raising new levies may be enforced in the counties to which the militia shall return," and on the 29th the same subject is renewed. Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

³⁸ Steuben to Greene, January 11, 1781.

³⁹ Steuben to Washington, January 8, 1781.

⁴⁰ Banister to Bland, January, 1781.

same state of disorder, and St. George Tucker⁴¹ so late as January 21, writes of Richmond "all is confusion there still!"

On January 9 Arnold was reënforced by his delinquent vessels and four hundred troops, and on the 10th, at noon, he got under way from Westover, observed by Steuben from Coggin's Point.

It had been found impossible to repair the battery at Hood's; but Steuben, believing that the enemy would land to reconnoiter it, posted Col. Clarke in ambush with three hundred militia and thirty horse.

Arnold, on the other hand, having heard there was a party of militia at Bland's Mills, anchored at Fleur de Hundred and proposed to surprise them by a night attack. The infantry of the Queen's Rangers, Col. Robinson's Provincial Regiment, and the Eightieth under Col. Dundas were landed. The night was very dark. Almost immediately they struck a small picket sent forward as a decoy, and, following rapidly over a road hemmed in by a thick wood, Col. Robinson's regiment suddenly received a heavy fire. Though twenty men were killed and wounded, Robinson's men were not broken, and after returning the fire, charged resolutely with the bayonet. The militia dispersed immediately, but Simcoe halted, "seeing," as he says, "no probability of accomplishing the business he had been ordered upon."

Returning to Hood's, Arnold utterly dismantled the fort, and, having reëmbarked the following morning, fell down the river.

On the 11th Steuben sent three hundred infantry and two troops of horse to Cabin Point, ordered five hundred and sixty south side militia, then on their march to join him, to reënforce Gen. Nelson near Williamsburg, and halted Gen. Weedon at Hanover C. H., with directions to cover the iron works at Fredericksburg.

On the 13th Steuben marched with seven hundred militia to Cabin Point, and on the 14th Arnold landed twenty-two

⁴¹ Tucker to Banister, January 21, 1781.

miles below at Harding's Ferry,⁴² and marched to Smithfield. A detachment of three hundred infantry and fifty horse were directed to harass his rear, under the belief that the militia of the lower counties under Col. Parker would oppose him in front. Col. Parker had retired, and nothing was accomplished. On the 15th four hundred more militia who had that day joined under Gen. Lawson were sent forward for a similar purpose, but were likewise too late. Sending across Pagan Creek an advance guard on the 15th to explore the passage of the streams and disperse militia pickets, Arnold continued his march on the 16th, and on the same day was ferried over the Nansemond at Sleepy Hole by his own boats. Here he encamped that night, while Gen. Lawson, joined by Col. Parker, entered Smithfield. Simcoe was now sent forward to Portsmouth to prevent the citizens from burning that town, while Arnold reëmbarked, and landed with his whole force⁴³ at Portsmouth on the 19th.

A council of war having unanimously determined that the force at his disposal was unequal to the task of dislodging Arnold from Portsmouth, Steuben now made disposition to confine the enemy to that post.⁴⁴

Col. Parker, with the Suffolk militia, held the advance at Riddick's Mills with a small picket four miles farther in his front. Lawson, with nine hundred infantry and a troop of state horse, was posted at McMay's Mills, four miles from Smithfield, with a small detachment at Suffolk. There were pickets along the Nansemond river, and Gen. Muhlenberg, commanding the whole, lay in reserve at Cabin Point with eight hundred infantry and Armand's Legion. On the other side of the river Nelson, with one thousand infantry

⁴² Near Cobham.

⁴³ Arnold's naval force consisted of the *Charon*, forty-four guns, Commodore (Captain) Symonds, the *Amphitrite*, *Iris*, *Thames*, and *Charlestown*, frigates, the *Forrey*, twenty guns, two sloops of war, a privateer ship, and two brigs.

⁴⁴ Jefferson says there were about three thousand seven hundred militia embodied on January 18, 19. This total includes the detachment under Gen. Weeden near Fredericksburg. MS. Letter Book, 1781.

and some volunteer horse, guarded the country from Williamsburg to Newport News.

Having made these dispositions, Steuben returned to Richmond to resume his duties in supplying Greene's army, and in following him thither we shall learn something of the embarrassments of the Executive.

Mr. Jefferson can never be charged with lack of industry. His active mind ranges every department of affairs. Perhaps the multitude of his responsibilities injure the quality of the performance of his higher functions. Certainly in no well-ordered government would such details be expected from the chief magistrate. His voluminous correspondence ranges from a pressing search for "pack thread" and "one good blacksmith (a white man)" to diplomatic correspondence with the French Minister, Congress, the Commander in Chief, and state and foreign governments.

Intelligence is always difficult for him to obtain. On the 15th he has not been able to locate the enemy for four days,⁴⁵ and remembering the good offices of Mr. Jacob Wray,⁴⁶ he writes to him again, urging him to use the line of expresses from Hampton, somewhat naïvely adding that two days were lost in the late incursion, "which would have added so much to the collection of militia in this quarter as to have rendered doubtful at least whether the enemy could have got here."

Nobody more than Jefferson appreciated the paramount importance of holding up the hands of Greene in the Carolinas. Yet he could not bring himself to execute the draft law in those counties whose militia was in the field. He writes to Steuben urging the release of all militia not actually needed on the ground that "if this incursion should much longer postpone the execution of the late law for raising new levies, it will be among its worst effects."⁴⁷

He not only has in charge the preparation of plans⁴⁸ for rebuilding the foundry, etc., at Westham, but finds it necessa-

⁴⁵ Jefferson to Nelson, January 15, 1781.

⁴⁶ Jefferson to Jacob Wray, January 15, 1781.

⁴⁷ Jefferson to Steuben, January 13, 14, 1781.

⁴⁸ Jefferson to Senf, January 13, 1781.

ry to make an appeal to "gentlemen of public spirit"⁴⁹ to send their mechanics to labor on the work.

He is engaged in a controversy with Gov. Lee,⁵⁰ of Maryland, as to which State shall support the prisoners of the Saratoga Convention, and as to the disposition of the specific quotas of Virginia under the Continental requisition of November 1, 1780, which he elaborately discusses. At the same time he writes to the Continental quartermaster that he has "sent to Fredericksburg for camp kettles."⁵¹

On the 16th of January Jefferson gives direction for the building of certain portable flat-bottomed boats that Washington had suggested to him on November 8 for the use of the Virginia Army of Observation in crossing the numerous streams of Virginia. This delay is attributable to the fact that Mr. Jefferson differed with Gen. Washington as to the military utility of these craft, and not to procrastination.⁵²

The militia are always giving trouble. As late as February 2 only one-third of the counties had made any returns at all,⁵³ though the proper execution of the draft law was dependent on an accurate statement from each county.

There is also a bitter controversy with the enemy as to the status of individuals capable of being paroled, which brings forth a proclamation from the Governor dated January 19, and a letter to Nelson dated January 25 directing that General to hang an equal number of British prisoners, should the enemy hang individuals who had broken the paroles declared by the proclamation to be ineffective.

Finally, there is not a dollar, even of paper money, left in the treasury, and on January 23 the Legislature is summoned to convene on the first day of March.

With the establishment of Arnold at Portsmouth the campaign in Virginia may be properly said to have opened. Whatever military objects may have been accomplished by

⁴⁹ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, January 15, 1781.

⁵⁰ Jefferson to Lee, January 15, 1781.

⁵¹ Jefferson to Carrington, January 16, 1781.

⁵² Jefferson to Maxwell, January 16, 1781.

⁵³ Jefferson to Col. John Syme, February 2, 1781.

the raid to Richmond, there had hitherto been no combatants. The small body of British marched as they would, through an unprepared and defenseless people. Resistance now began to take definite form. The struggle waxed in interest, gradually drawing in all the principal characters on both sides and culminating at Yorktown.

The Virginians essayed two objects: to confine and capture Arnold and to detain Cornwallis in the Carolinas, thus playing into the hands of the British strategists, whose sole aim in sending Arnold was to divert the force of Virginia from being directed upon Cornwallis. Without military equipment and dependent upon shifting militia, they failed in both. Later, when both sides had been largely reënforced, success came with naval superiority, as must always happen when Virginia is the battle ground.

However interesting to the local historian, it is unnecessary to describe in detail the movements about Portsmouth during the two months succeeding the occupation of that town. Muhlenberg, on the north, and Gregory, with the North Carolina militia on the south, constantly sought to limit the enemy to their works. Besides fortifying the post and foraging the surrounding country, Arnold kept ever in mind the main object of his expedition: to aid the operations of Cornwallis by engaging the resources of Virginia within her own borders.⁵⁴ In this he was so successful that not a single Continental or militiaman left the State until the end of February,⁵⁵ while the resources of the State, the temper of the inhabitants, and military stores of all kinds, destined for the main army, were consumed or wasted by changing bodies of militia. As Richard Henry Lee⁵⁶ wrote to Bland, "thus the enemy may destroy the concert by playing interludes." With a coolness due doubtless to acquaintance with the militia system, Arnold planned, with a detachment of five hundred men, to enter by Currituck Inlet and sweep the North Carolina Sounds from the Chowan to the Neuse, de-

⁵⁴ For effects of Arnold's raid see Germain to Clinton, March 7, 1781.

⁵⁵ Kapp's "Life of Steuben," p. 402.

⁵⁶ Bland Papers, II., 58.

stroying the shipping and distracting the militia of that State, and, with the assistance of a frigate at Ocracoke Inlet, to cut off the thin stream of foreign supplies that still filtered into Virginia by way of the Blackwater and South Quay.⁵⁷ Later he actually detached five hundred men to pass up James River⁵⁸ and operate in favor of Cornwallis, erroneously supposed to have already crossed the Dan.

The American plans of offensive action ranged in importance from Mr. Jefferson's scheme of secret abduction to the elaborate combination of Gen. Washington, involving all the elements of the Yorktown strategy, but failing where the later plan succeeded—in the coöperation of the French fleet.

Early in January a certain Captain Joel, a seafaring man, disclosed to Mr. Jefferson the brilliant idea of destroying Arnold's fleet with a fire ship. After some debate his offer was accepted, his vessel was equipped and appropriately named "The Dragon." Fortunately for Mr. Jefferson's credit in naval warfare, as no diversion or assistance by land or sea seems to have been planned in aid of the "Dragon," this scheme was abandoned in February, "its purpose being supposed to be known by the enemy," as Mr. Jefferson says in one of his letters.⁵⁹

To us who for four generations have intuitively understood Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot to be terms synonymous with unspeakable baseness, small change of focus is necessary to comprehend our forefathers' contempt for the historic character. Mr. Jefferson's well-known letter of January 31 to Gen. Muhlenberg,⁶⁰ outlining a plan and offering 5,000 guineas for his abduction, does, however, throw a curious light upon contemporary passion. That a philosophic statesman such as Jefferson should have taken such measures for the punishment of a crime elevates the criminal to almost Satanic proportions, while detracting from the dignity of the Mag-

⁵⁷ Arnold to Clinton, February 13, 1781.

⁵⁸ Arnold to Clinton, March 8, 1781.

⁵⁹ Jefferson to Nelson, January 16 and February 13, 1781.

⁶⁰ Muhlenberg's "Muhlenberg," p. —.

istracy and of Justice. The seizure of Arnold, whose obnoxious presence had stimulated patriotic endeavor, could have had no beneficial effect upon the military situation, but such means of forcing him to face outraged justice must in future generations have tempered with sympathy instinctive horror of his crime. More blighting than sentence of court-martial, more salutary than physical execution is the fatidic judgment that left Arnold unwhipped of human justice, but "pilloried in eternal shame." To the writer of romance we leave the details of the execution and failure of this plot, more suited to his domain than to military science or sound policy.

Turning from these abortive efforts, we find the campaign begins to assume the regularity of military superintendence. The entire forty-six hundred militia that Jefferson had ordered on January 2 were never under arms at the same time. Nevertheless the force under Muhlenberg and the detachment with Clarke prevented recruiting the Continental line in the greater portion of the State, as the new law for that purpose was suspended by the Governor in all of the counties that had militia in the field. Unable, therefore, to reënforce Greene and incompetent to attack Arnold, both Executive and citizens saw the resources of the State being consumed without advancing any object, while Cornwallis's approach forboded complete subjugation.

In this distressful situation the popular mind turned to Washington, to Congress, to our allies, to every quarter whence succor might be hoped for. The absence of active operations at the North and the vigor of the British generals at the South caused discontented comparisons to be drawn. Men murmured that "half of the burthen of opposition" rested on Virginia and North Carolina.

On February 10 Jefferson wrote to Greene⁶¹ that "we must be aided by your Northern brethren," and added, "I trust you concur with us in crying aloud to Congress on this head." On the 12th he hinted very strongly to the President of Congress and to Washington that, in his opinion, the main

⁶¹Jefferson to Greene, February 10, 1781. MS. Letter Book.

army could alone prevent the loss of State after State in the South.⁶² Other influences were also at work, and unfortunately a plan of relief took shape without consultation with Washington.

It is probable that Richard Henry Lee first set on foot the measure which followed. The design has been attributed to Jefferson, but without authority from his extant letters. As Washington⁶³ afterwards pointed out, the expedition never had but one possibility of success. Its inception was peculiarly unfortunate, in wasted effort, in disappointing hopes aroused in Virginia, and in fatally delaying the execution of a more comprehensive plan.

On January 26 Lee wrote to Bland in Congress urging him to strain every nerve for naval aid. He describes Arnold's force, and estimates that with the assistance of one ship of the line and two frigates, "the militia now in arms are strong enough to smother these invaders in a moment."⁶⁴

Congress urged the project upon the French Minister, who laid it before Des Touches, then commanding the French fleet in Rhode Island. Des Touches, longing to break the monotony of his inaction, received the suggestion at a time when Arbuthnot's fleet had been shattered by a storm (January 22), and on February 9 detached M. Le Gardeur de Tilly with the force indicated in Lee's letter. Meantime Rochambeau reported to Washington the measures on foot against Arnold and added: "Nous avons beau jeu sur lui dans ce moment ci."⁶⁵

A favorable wind brought De Tilly to Lynhaven Bay⁶⁶ on the 13th. He arrived unannounced. No preparation had been made by friend or foe. Indeed, Arnold had detached Simcoe with four hundred men as far as Northwest Landing, and Jefferson did not hear of his arrival until two days

⁶² Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

⁶³ Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 411.

⁶⁴ Bland Papers, II., 58.

⁶⁵ Rochambeau's MS. Letter Book, p. 221 (February 3, 1781), Library of Congress.

⁶⁶ Arnold to Clinton, February 25, 1781.

afterwards.⁶⁷ Col. Dabney, commanding the lower posts, erroneously reported the arrival of the whole French fleet to Nelson, who, under this impression, so late as the 16th, wrote to Steuben: "Now is our time; not a moment ought to be lost." As soon as the news was received Steuben sent an aid-de-camp to the French commander, and issued orders for active coöperation against Portsmouth.

On the 16th Jefferson wrote to Capt. Maxwell, of the navy, directing certain vessels to be prepared to coöperate with the French fleet, and on the same day, to Maj. Claiborne to impress boats for passing militia across James River, a need which Washington had foreseen early in November of the preceding year. On the next day one-fourth⁶⁸ of the militia of Loudoun, Fairfax, Prince William, and Fauquier are ordered to Williamsburg to take the places of eight hundred riflemen who have been detached under Lawson to reënforce Gen. Greene.

Steuben ordered Gregory's North Carolina militia to hold themselves in readiness on the eastern side of the Dismal Swamp, and expresses were established to keep in touch with him. Nelson was ordered to prepare to cross the river, and Weedon, with eight hundred militia from about Fredericksburg, to occupy the posts so vacated. Steuben's biographer says that "eight eighteen pounders and two mortars were got in readiness," but, as Muhlenberg writes on the 24th that he has only two brass six pounders, and as only half so many eighteen pounders were even hoped for a month later, so great forwardness in the ordnance department is impossible. On the 18th Muhlenberg⁶⁹ advanced within sight of the enemy's lines, cut off a small picket, and defied Arnold to leave his works. He could not storm the works with only three hundred bayonets among his two thousand militia, nor could he attack by regular approaches with two brass six pounders.⁷⁰ Accordingly he retired sixteen miles, and camped at

⁶⁷ Jefferson to Washington, February 17, 1781.

⁶⁸ Amounting to 1,090 men. Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, Feb, 22, 1781.

⁶⁹ Muhlenburg to Steuben, February 19, 1781.

⁷⁰ Muhlenburg to Greene, February 24, 1781.

Shoulder's Hill, and on the following day De Tilly sailed for Newport.

The folly of De Tilly's expedition was the natural fruit of a civilian's plan intrusted to the indiscriminating ardor of impatient naval Frenchmen. The French admiral was informed of the location of Arnold, and that, by the chart, the draft of his own ships would not permit of his approach within range of the British anchorage. Knowing that the British fleet would refit before a blockade could be successful, and with no plan prearranged with the land forces, it was useless to bring the sixty-four gun *L'Eveille* to Sewell's Point, or to ground the *Surveillante* farther up the Elizabeth river. It was natural that the Virginian Executive and general officers should have striven even against military probabilities to coöperate with their long-wished-for ally. But general and clamorous discontent was the inevitable result of fruitless expense to the State and inconvenience to the citizen-militia. It seems to be a fact, however, that upon news of its arrival Mr. Jefferson correctly estimated the value of the expedition.⁷¹

The capture of the *Romulus*, of forty-four guns, surprised in Hampton Roads, eight other small prizes, and some dispatches indicating the proposed permanence of the post at Portsmouth, were the only fruits of De Tilly's expedition. On the other hand, the British commander, informed of the movement on the 18th, and regarding the squadron only as an *avante garde*, prepared to reënforce Arnold with two thousand troops as soon as the admiral should be able to locate the main fleet.⁷²

Meantime, occupied with his own more immediate plans, and oppressed by the poverty of his resources, Washington's mind slowly but methodically grasped the situation in Virginia, and determined to take a hand there, the more willingly, as it is said, in the hope of capturing the traitor commanding in the Old Dominion.

On February 7, before receiving Rochambeau's letter of

⁷¹ Jefferson to Washington, February 17, 1781.

⁷² Clinton to Arnold, February 18 and March 1, 1781.

the 3d, he wrote to that general: "If M. Des Touches has acquired a superiority which puts him in a position to act, your excellency sees as I do that this (Arnold's) detachment is an object of attention."⁷³ On the 15th,⁷⁴ still unaware that De Tilly had set off half cocked, he discussed the plan submitted by Rochambeau, and pointed out that "unless the ships sent by M. Des Touches should happen upon Arnold whilst he was embarked and moving from one point to another, they would have little prospect of success." Believing that he might count upon the whole French fleet, he announced the detachment of one thousand two hundred light infantry to proceed by the Head of Elk to coöperate at Portsmouth.

When this letter was received it was too late to follow the advice given, though Des Touches,⁷⁵ somewhat vaguely, promised to hold the remainder of his fleet in readiness to protect the flying squadron. When De Tilly returned, on the 24th, the French commanders finally realized Washington's sense of the importance of the operation against Arnold, and immediately began preparations according to his original plan. Of land forces Rochambeau⁷⁶ provided one thousand two hundred and twenty men under Baron de Viomenil, with four twelve pounders, four four pounders, and four mortars. Though Des Touches was aware that the *America*, reported lost in the storm of January 22, had returned, that the *Bedford* had been remasted, and that haste was of the essence of the enterprise, two full weeks were consumed in preparations for sea, a commentary on French seamanship and on the protection Des Touches would have been able to afford his squadron three weeks earlier.⁷⁷ Even after the fleet was reported ready, with a wind "favorable to them and as adverse to the enemy as Heaven could fur-

⁷³ Rochambeau's MS. Letter Book, p. 225.

⁷⁴ Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 411.

⁷⁵ Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 424.

⁷⁶ Rochambeau's MS. Letter Book, February 25, 1781.

⁷⁷ If refitting the *Romulus* caused the delay, her capture may be added to the evil results of De Tilly's expedition.

nish," a delay of twenty-four hours settled the fate of the coöperation.

Meantime letters from Jefferson⁷⁸ and Greene⁷⁹ excited more and more keenly the interest of Washington. By letters of the 22d to Des Touches,⁸⁰ and of the 26th to Rochambeau,⁸¹ he enforced the gravity of the southern situation, and on March 2, after receiving intelligence of Cornwallis's threatened passage of the Dan, he set out to Newport to emphasize in person the urgency of the affair.

On February 20 Lafayette received his instructions, and, at Peekskill, took command of the detachment destined for Virginia. He set out immediately by way of Pompton, Morristown, and Trenton, at which place he took water passage down the Delaware. At Morristown he was joined by the New Hampshire line, making his force one thousand two hundred men in all.⁸² So energetic were his movements that on March 3 the detachment reached the head of Elk three days in advance of Washington's calculation.

Lafayette's instructions⁸³ show that Washington had already been informed of De Tilly's expedition, but trusted that his subsequent recommendations would be accepted, at least to the extent of full naval coöperation.

Nevertheless, after learning that Des Touches's departure was dependent upon, and to be arranged for after, De Tilly's return, he foresaw the probability of British anticipation in the Chesapeake, and on February 27 ordered Lafayette "on

⁷⁸ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 12, 1781. .

⁷⁹ Dated "On the Dan River;" Greene's Greene, III., 175.

⁸⁰ Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 424.

⁸¹ Rochambeau's MS. Letter Book.

⁸² The detachment was designated light infantry, and was divided into three regiments, as follows: First Regiment, Col. Vose, eight companies, Massachusetts line; Second Regiment, Lieut. Col. Gimat, two companies, Massachusetts line, five companies, Connecticut line, and one company, Rhode Island line; Third Regiment, Lieut. Col. Barber, five companies, New Jersey line, two companies, New Hampshire line, and one company of Gen. Hagen's Regiment. At Philadelphia a battery under Col. Ebenezer Stevens was added. Journal of Lieut. Ebenezer Wild. Proc. Mass. Hist. Soc., October and November, 1890.

⁸³ Dated Windsor, February 20, 1781.

no account to leave the Elk river until it is ascertained beyond a doubt that our friends are below.”⁸⁴ Impatient to be in at the death, and dreading lest his countrymen on board the fleet should reap all the glory at Portsmouth, Lafayette disregarded the letter of this injunction. On the 9th, having at length secured transportation, he ventured to set out for Annapolis escorted by several small armed vessels. Here he left the detachment, and, accompanied by the Count de Charlus, son of the Minister of Marine, he proceeded down the bay in a small boat to enforce his demand for a more secure escort, and to superintend the preparations about Portsmouth.

This was the next to the last act in the original plan of cooperation. Two days after his landing at Yorktown on the 14th, Arbuthnot overtook the French fleet off Cape Henlopen, and Des Touches returned to Newport after an engagement commonly referred to as a drawn battle, but which totally destroyed the hopes and plans of the allied commanders.

Mr. Jefferson received the first news that came to Virginia of the intended reënforcement from the North. Washington's letter of February 21⁸⁵ reached him seven days later, and forthwith new measures were set on foot for concerted action. In order to appreciate the embarrassments that followed it will be desirable to examine briefly the military resources and military organization of the State, and the demands that had previously been made upon both. Losses by previous hostile incursions, and contributions of equipments to the Continental line will not be regarded, though Mr. Jefferson attributed his present distress largely to the latter. Writing to Gen. Gates, on February 17, 1781, he said: “I have been knocking at the door of Congress for aids of all kinds, but especially of arms, ever since the middle of summer. The Speaker, Harrison, is gone to be heard on that subject. Justice, indeed, requires that we should be aided powerfully. Yet if they would repay us the arms we have

⁸⁴ Sparks's Writings of Washington, VII., 440.

⁸⁵ Jefferson's Correspondence. Randolph, I., 212.

lent them, we should give the enemy trouble, though abandoned to ourselves.⁸⁶ It will be understood that Virginia had borne her proportion of the six years' warfare. Occasion for surprise will be found, not in the fact that her resources were low, but in that her government had not learned to use and husband them better. Unsatisfactory as was the process of recruiting the Continental line, even more difficult was the work of equipping and arming all classes of men for the field. Virginia was practically dependent upon the Northern States and foreign countries for all kinds of manufactured articles.⁸⁷ Lack of clothing unfitted the recruits for service almost as much as lack of arms. Cloth, shoes, hats, and cartouche boxes had to be wrung from the scanty resources of Congress until the arrival of the supply which Franklin received from France in March. Uniforms⁸⁸ were of course out of the question, and a regimental coat was so unknown in the upper counties that the appearance of a lieutenant and his detail, equipped with some martial pretensions, spread the news that the British were coming, and caused a temporary flight of the legislature from Staunton.⁸⁹ Though lead, saltpeter, and sulphur were abundantly found within the limits of Virginia, powder and ball were always wanting, and the workmen at the lead mines finally contrived to cut off the whole supply by losing the vein.⁹⁰ Immediately after the Richmond Convention of 1775, manufactories of powder, cannon, and small arms were put in operation at Westham.⁹¹ Simcoe says the foundry was a very complete one, but its destruction, during his January raid,

⁸⁶ Jefferson's Correspondence. Randolph, I., 210.

⁸⁷ On February 21 Mr. Jefferson wrote to Col. Davies, in charge of the recruits at Chesterfield C. H., that he had on hand a large supply of deer skins, but nobody to dress them. These he was willing to supply if Davies had anybody who could make them into breeches.

⁸⁸ No uniform was prescribed for the Continental army until the General Orders of October 2, 1779.

⁸⁹ Narrative of My Life. Francis T. Brooke, Richmond, 1849.

⁹⁰ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

⁹¹ Richmond, the Capital of Virginia: Its History. John P. Little, Richmond, 1851, p. 26.

left Greene's army, as well as Virginia, dependent upon the gun factory⁹² and the iron works of Mr. Hunter, both at Fredericksburg. Whatever may have been the capacity of these shops, it is safe to say that during this winter and spring the enemy captured in magazines many more muskets than their total output.⁹³ It is very possible to criticise the dispositions that led to these losses, and difficult to overestimate the task of replacing them. Even when arms could be purchased, transportation by water was barred by the British war ships and privateers, and overland, wagons were to be procured only by impressment.⁹⁴ As an instance of these difficulties and dangers the chief supply of arms (1,100 stand) received by Virginia during 1781 was sent out from Nantes the preceding year in the ship *Committee*. The vessel was captured by an English privateer, recaptured by an American privateer, brought into Providence, R. I., and one-half of the cargo of two thousand two hundred muskets adjudged to the captor. At least a year elapsed between the purchase and the receipt. Efforts were first made to forward them by land, then by the French naval expeditions of February and March. Finally they were forwarded overland, and as wagons were not to be hired they were impressed. The arms were not available until June, 1781.

Beside the ill-equipped regiments with Greene⁹⁵ she had no Continentals in the field. A return of the so-called State Establishment, dated February 6, shows:⁹⁶

First State Regiment, 192 noncommissioned officers and privates.

Second State Regiment, 30 noncommissioned officers and privates.

State Garrison Regiment, 176 noncommissioned officers and privates.

State Artillery Regiment, no more than will form one company (serving with Greene).

About two hundred of these had been ordered to join

⁹² The gun factory was conducted by Col. Dick. *Journal of the Council*, 1781, February 7.

⁹³ See losses at Richmond, Petersburg, Point of Fork, Charlottesville, etc.

⁹⁴ Luzerne to Des Touches, January 2, 1781, and Letter of Samuel Nightingale, dated Providence, December 6, 1780. *Bland Papers*, II., 30 and 39. Jefferson to Washington, May 28, 1781. *Correspondence*, I., 222.

⁹⁵ Under Col. Greene and Col. Hawes.

⁹⁶ *Journal of Council*, p. 33.

Clarke's expedition to the Northwest, on account of the refusal of the militia of Berkeley and Frederick to accompany that officer. The remainder formed a scarecrow battalion guarding the prisoners of war.

Though the act for recruiting this State's quota of troops to serve in the Continental army⁹⁷ had been repeatedly amended, and debated by the assembly for a full month, its provisions were so lacking in vigor and directness as practically to defeat its declared purpose. No draft could take place under sixty days, and in many cases at least ninety days must have expired before the eighteen months recruit could reach the rendezvous. It was so vicious in its bounty system that a recruiting officer declared it would "produce two deserters for one soldier."⁹⁸ Though its theoretical basis was a complete return of the State militia, several weeks after its passage Mr. Jefferson, in a circular letter to the county lieutenants, observes that "notwithstanding the requisition I made you six months ago for a return of your militia, you have not been pleased to comply with it."⁹⁹ He constantly repeats this demand until the end of February, 1780.¹⁰⁰ The substitute system, and the criminal provisions of law that required the arrest, trial, conviction, and sentence of delinquent militiamen and others, to serve a term in the line, utterly destroyed its morale and brought the honorable calling of the soldier into disfavor. Great numbers of people were tired of war, and their sentiments added to the inherent futility of the act. The back counties would have none of it, and "Augusta and Rockbridge have prevented it by force."¹⁰¹ Children and dwarfs, according to Steuben, were forwarded to the rendezvous, and on March 5 the Governor laid before the General Assembly a letter from that general declining to receive certain recruits as totally unfit for serv-

⁹⁷ 10 Hening, 326. Introduced by Mr. Starke, November 27, 1780. Passed December 28, 1780. Journal of the House of Delegates, 1780.

⁹⁸ Davies to Steuben, March 10. Steuben's MS. Papers, Vol. VI.

⁹⁹ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, January 19, 1781.

¹⁰⁰ Jefferson to Steuben, January 19, 1781.

¹⁰¹ Davies to Steuben, May 24. Steuben's MS. Papers, Vol. VIII.

ice.¹⁰² Finally, at the middle of May, only one hundred and fifty recruits were provided with arms,¹⁰³ and by the end of that month five hundred and fifty in all of the three thousand required by the Act had been collected.¹⁰⁴

It is true that the execution of the Act for recruiting was suspended by the executive in those Counties whose militia had been called into service—a tenderness for the people that evinces the responsiveness of a democratic government rather than appreciation of the military crisis. Yet not more than one-twelfth of the militia were ever in the field, while little more than one-sixth of the Continental quota was being recruited. Mr. Jefferson correctly regarded this interruption of recruiting as among the worst consequences of Arnold's invasion, but the proportion above indicated between the militia in service and the deficiency in the quota tends to confirm the preceding reflections upon the system.

It must be borne in mind that none of the Virginia Continental line recruited during 1781 were ever available for service outside of the State until active operations in Virginia had ceased with the capitulation of Yorktown. The regiment of Col. Greene, dispatched in December, 1780, and a detachment of four hundred men under Lieut. Col. Campbell that left Chesterfield C. H. on February 25 following, both recruited during the preceding year, were the only reënforcements that Steuben found it possible to forward to the southern army, though the original object of his command in Virginia had been the organization of her Continental quota in support of Gen. Greene.¹⁰⁵

Returning now to the demands upon the Virginia militia, a brief summary of events will enable us to resume the continuous narrative of the campaign where it was interrupted on the first arrival of Lafayette in Virginia.

Forbearing further reference to the detachment under George Rogers Clarke (as only indirectly connected with

¹⁰² Jefferson to the Speaker of the House of Delegates. MS. Letter Book.

¹⁰³ Steuben to Greene, May 15. Greene MS. Papers.

¹⁰⁴ Steuben to Lafayette, May 20. Steuben's MS. Papers, Vol. VIII.

¹⁰⁵ Kapps's Steuben, pp. 402, 403.

the purpose of this paper), we left Gen. Muhlenberg and about three thousand seven hundred militia endeavoring to restrain Arnold at Portsmouth. There was also a small detachment serving with Gen. Greene, but their three months' term of enlistment expiring with the end of January, notwithstanding the critical situation of affairs in that quarter, they even refuse to escort the Cowpens prisoners to a place of safety, and force Gen. Stevens to march them homeward as rapidly as possible in order to save their arms from being dispersed.¹⁰⁶ Retiring with a mere handful of men, before Cornwallis's rapid advance, Greene crossed the Dan river on February 14. The news of his helpless situation was exaggerated by reports that Cornwallis had also crossed that river with five thousand men and was in march toward Petersburg.¹⁰⁷ Jefferson issues orders with promptness, and the militia respond with more alacrity than common. Upon the first news he proposes to send reënforcements of two thousand seven hundred and sixty-four men.¹⁰⁸ On the 15th Col. C. Lynch is requested to raise volunteers in Bedford.¹⁰⁸ On the same day circular letters to the county lieutenants of Washington, Montgomery, and Botetourt call for five hundred riflemen, and Pittsylvania and Henry are required to furnish four hundred and eighty militiamen—"the latter will want arms."¹⁰⁸ The four hundred regulars at Chesterfield C. H. received definite orders to march, and eight hundred riflemen from Rockbridge, Augusta, Rockingham, and Shenandoah, already embodied under Muhlenberg, are designed to proceed under Lawson, "if they can be induced to go willingly."¹⁰⁸ On the 17th Jefferson sends Greene full powers to call militia into service, and advises the Charlotte militia, under Col. T. Read, to support that general. The very interesting situation at Portsmouth, and the detachment of the riflemen caused Steuben to recommend a further re-

¹⁰⁶ Girardin, *History of Virginia* (Burk's, Vol. IV.), and Stevens's letters of January 24 and February 8, pp. 477-479. They were disbanded at Pittsylvania C. H.

¹⁰⁷ Arnold to Clinton, February 25, 1781. *Clinton-Cornwallis Controversy*.

¹⁰⁸ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

enforcement to Muhlenburg, which, as has been already stated, was ordered from Loudon, Fairfax, Prince William, and Fauquier.¹⁰⁹ On the 18th Cornwallis is reported to have reached Boyd's Ferry, and Lunenburg, Amelia, Powhatan, Cumberland, and Brunswick are ordered to send to that point all the men they can arm, while Dinwiddie and Chesterfield are to embody and wait further orders at Watkins's mill.¹⁰⁸ On the same day the prisoner troops of convention¹¹⁰ are ordered up the valley, "keeping below the Blue Ridge," and Maj. McGill directed to proceed to Greene's headquarters and by means of a line of expresses from thence to Richmond keep the Executive informed of the movements of both armies, and the calls to be made on Virginia.¹¹¹

The first reports from the militia were very flattering. The spirit of opposition among the people, stimulated by the public prints,¹¹² was universal, and the number embodied was said to be limited only by the supply of arms.¹¹³ The North Carolina militia were also rallying under Gens. Eaton and Butler. The retirement of Cornwallis to Hillsborough was generally regarded as due to a wholesome fear of their prowess. It is difficult to say precisely what was the total strength of the Virginian militia under Stevens and Lawson at the battle of Guildford. Five days before the battle Greene had between eight and nine hundred, only thirty of whom were Carolinians, and he wrote to Jefferson that, though near five thousand have been in motion for the past few weeks, they came and went so irregularly that he could make no calculation on the strength of his army.¹¹⁴ Of the two thousand seven hundred and fifty-three militia officially reported as

¹⁰⁹ Amounting to 1,090 men. Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 22, 1781, ante p. 23.

¹¹⁰ Col Wood, commanding the guard, is informed on the 21st: "The meeting of the Assembly on Thursday sennight is relied on to furnish us with money, of which we have not at present one shilling."

¹¹¹ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, 1781.

¹¹² "If our countrymen turn out with spirit, the capture of Lord Cornwallis's army is inevitable as fate, and will close the scene of the southern war." *Virginia Gazette*, February 17, 1781.

¹¹³ Jefferson to Washington, February 26. MS. Letter Book, 1781.

¹¹⁴ Greene to Jefferson, May 10. Greene MSS. quoted by Girardin, p. 482.

present at Guilford (March 15), it is probable that considerably more than one-half were Virginians.¹¹⁵ Their enthusiasm, however, was short-lived. On March 19 Jefferson wrote:¹¹⁶ "I find that we have deceived ourselves not a little by counting on the whole numbers of militia which have been in motion as if they had all remained with Gen. Greene, when in fact they seem only to have visited and quitted him." Greene hastened to report the fact, and to represent the necessity of fresh support. The defection was doubly unfortunate, as every energy was being called into play to coöperate with the French and Lafayette about Portsmouth. Steuben advised the detachment of two thousand men from Muhlenberg's command, and ably defended his plan,¹¹⁷ but upon the arrival of Phillips with a British reënforcement he was overruled by the Council.¹¹⁸ Such a counter stroke was in accordance with the Napoleonic maxim and the practice of Robert Lee, and if conducted by an officer such as Stonewall Jackson would have infallibly drawn the British forces in Virginia to the Carolinas. On March 29 two thousand two hundred and fifty-three militia from practically the same counties as on the former call were ordered to the southward, but Mr. Jefferson writes to Greene that the new militia cannot reach him before the former retire.¹¹⁹ Thus the resources of the State are dissipated, both Greene and Steuben are

¹¹⁵ Girardin (Burk, IV., 482) gives the following estimate of the Virginian militia at the battle of Guildford: From Muhlenberg's command (Lawson), 500; from Pittsylvania and Henry (Stevens), ?; from Montgomery and Bottetourt (Preston), 300; from Washington County (Campbell), 60; from Bedford County (Lynch), 300. Total, 1,160 plus Stevens's Brigade. Jefferson (MS. Letter Book, 1781, March 8), from reports of McGill and others, gives the following estimate of the Virginian militia at the battle of Guildford: From Muhlenberg's command (Lawson), 1,000 (stated to be probably exaggerated); from Pittsylvania and Henry (Stevens), 700 (only 480 were called); from Montgomery and Bottetourt (Preston), 400; from Washington County (Campbell), 600; from Bedford County (Lynch), 300. Total, 3,000.

¹¹⁶ Jefferson to President of Congress and Gen. Washington, MS. Letter Book, 1781.

¹¹⁷ Kapps's Steuben, p. 415.

¹¹⁸ MS. Journal of the Council, 1781, p. 101.

¹¹⁹ Jefferson to Greene, MS. Letter Book, March 29 and April 1, 1781.

crippled, and several hundred more patriots retire upon the budding laurels of a two months' enlistment.

Meanwhile the rigors of a winter campaign, more trying to the undisciplined soldier¹²⁰ than the fury of a pitched battle, is telling upon the militia called out in January to oppose Arnold. Badly clothed, ill-fed, without tents, and with scantiest provision for the sick, desertion becomes rife, and the utmost exertions of government are required to keep a force in the field. From beyond the Dismal Swamp, about the middle of February, Mr. Loyall reported that four hundred militia of Princess Anne and Norfolk embodied at Northwest Bridge were so dispirited from lack of communication with the main army as to contemplate laying down their arms.¹²¹ This temper is not confined to Princess Anne and Norfolk, whose situation, among many loyalists and peculiarly exposed to the activity of the partisan Simcoe, was more distressing than that of their compatriots. On February 24 Jefferson writes to Steuben that the nakedness of the militia at Williamsburg has almost produced a mutiny, and adds: "You will judge from the temper of these militia how little prospect there is of your availing yourself of their aid on the south side of the river, should you require it."¹²² Inability to coerce, forces upon the executive the pernicious device of calling upon the neighboring militia for temporary service. Accordingly on the 24th the county lieutenants of James City, York, Warwick, Elizabeth City, and City of Williamsburg are directed to take the places of the recalcitrants until the arrival of the musters from the Potomac counties, called out the preceding week.¹²³ During all of the last week in February both Arnold and the Virginians continue to be uncertain as to what may be expected from the French squad-

¹²⁰ "In battle the ardor of youth often appears to shame the cool indifference of the old soldier; but when the strife is between the malice of fortune and fortitude, between human endurance and accumulating hardships, the veteran becomes truly formidable, when the young soldier resigns himself to despair." Napier's *Peninsular War*, Book I., pp. 89, 90.

¹²¹ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 17, 1781.

¹²² Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 24, 1781.

¹²³ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 24, 1781.

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ron of De Tilly. On the 21st Jefferson, believing that the fleet is on a temporary cruise, directs Nelson to continue the preparations against Portsmouth,¹²⁴ and on the 26th reports to Washington that Mühlenberg has closed up around Portsmouth, because the French fleet has relieved him of the apprehension that Arnold's shipping might take him in the rear by way of the Nansemond river.¹²⁵ Mr. Jefferson received on February 28 the news of the detachment of Lafayette from the main army to Virginia. During the remainder of the campaign, though interrupted by the confirmation of Des Touches's failure, and diverted by the incursions of Phillips and Cornwallis, practically the whole strength of Virginia was devoted to coöperation in the general plan laid down by Washington in his instructions to Lafayette dated at New Windsor February 20. Though the accomplishment of this plan was delayed for six months, and the scene shifted from Portsmouth to Yorktown, the postponement of fruition led, through means originally un hoped for, and through the disappointment of other and equally cherished plans, to the result that the forces of Arnold, Phillips, Leslie, and Cornwallis were finally ensnared in the trap that had originally been laid for Arnold alone.¹²⁶ The arrival of the British reënforcements under Phillips, the junction of the forces of that general with Cornwallis in the face of Lafayette at Petersburg, the successful marches and countermarches of that young officer toward and from the head waters of the James, the coöperative movements of the French land and naval forces, and the culmination of the campaign at Yorktown in the following October, furnish material for separate chapters in the history of a memorable year.

¹²⁴ Jefferson's MS, Letter Book, February 21, 1781.

¹²⁵ Jefferson's MS. Letter Book, February 26, 1781.

¹²⁶ It is of course known that Arnold was superseded by the arrival of Maj. Gen. Phillips in the Chesapeake, March 26, 1781. By letter of March 24, Clinton had directed Phillips to send Arnold to New York, "if you should not have particular occasion for his services." This letter was received by Cornwallis May 20, after the death of Phillips, and on May 26 Cornwallis writes Clinton that he has "consented to the request of Brig. Gen. Arnold to go to New York."

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