STRYKER

CONTINENTAL ARMY AT THE CROSSING
OF THE DELAWARE RIVER ON CHRISTMAS
1776
The Continental Army

At the

Crossing of the Delaware River

On Christmas Night of 1776.

BY

WILLIAM S. STRYKER.

Read October 15, 1895, at the dedication of a monument at Taylorsville, Pennsylvania, by the Bucks County Historical Society, and a memorial tablet at Washington's Crossing, New Jersey, by the New Jersey Society of the Cincinnati.

TRENTON, N. J.
1896.
What could be more cheerless than the condition of the Continental army in December, seventeen hundred and seventy-six? Christmas day was approaching, but for them there was no holiday rejoicing. The weather was bitterly cold, and their miserable clothing, which was scarcely sufficient to protect them in autumn weather, left them exposed to the nipping frosts of early winter. At night they lay down on these hillsides, covered with snow, without so much as a blanket to shield them. In lieu of shoes, they had bound their feet with rags. Suffering with cold and hunger, marching over the frozen ground with bleeding feet, this was the fate of the patriot army which had been gathered for the purpose of resisting British tyranny in America. What then was left for these heroic men but to make one final struggle for liberty, to strike one last desperate blow—and die? The cold increased. Across the Delaware river, in the cantonment of Trenton, preparations for the Christmas revel were in progress, but on the Pennsylvania shore men grasped their flint-locks more closely in their chilled fingers and waited with stern, determined faces the next orders of their leader.

The night shadows were creeping over the woods on Jericho Hill and the road from Neeley's mill to Newtown. In the doorway of Samuel Merrick's house on that well-traveled road stood a general officer of Washington's army, listening to the distant ring of horses' hoofs on the frozen ground. A moment later General Greene's expected guests drew rein before him and he saluted his commander-in-chief. General Washington was attended by an
aide-de-camp, the gallant Colonel Baylor, and six Philadelphia troopers as a body-guard. He had ridden over from William Keith's house, on the Brownsburg road, to General Greene's quarters, to be present on this Christmas eve at a council of war to which he had called his leading commanders. A few moments after the arrival of Washington and his guard, a little group of officers was seen dismounting in the dooryard of the old stone house, and the courtly Stirling, the best-dressed man in the army; the brave and determined New Hampshire General Sullivan, and the foreign adventurer, De Fermoy, were welcomed from the doorstep by General Greene. Then, at short intervals, came the experienced soldier, St. Clair, and the equally-skilled Stephen; the devoted Virginian, Mercer; Colonel Sargent, of Massachusetts, and the sturdy mariner, Glover.

After preparing supper for General Greene and his compatriots, the Merrick family left the house to the exclusive use of the council. The meal had just been announced when Colonel Stark, tall and straight as an Indian, and Colonel Knox, the artillerist, were admitted. The Reverend Doctor Alexander McWhorter, of Newark, pronounced grace at the supper of this important gathering of American military heroes.

When the frugal repast was over and the short winter twilight had faded into darkness, the famous council began. No explanation was needed to tell these soldiers of the critical situation in which the American army was placed. Each fact which led up to their present unhappy predicament stood out before them with painful clearness. But what was to be done? The young republic was already surrounded with clouds of doubt, disaster and defeat. Some step must be taken promptly, some decisive blow struck or their longed-for liberty as a people would be lost, perhaps, forever.

The commander-in-chief laid before them his fully-matured plan, so ingenious and yet so simple that all who read can grasp its military subtlety. To make the perilous crossing of the icy Delaware
during the hours of darkness; to creep on the unwary Hessian foe in Trenton when Christmas wines and Christmas revelry had relaxed their customary vigilance and made a dull watch; to throw them into helpless confusion by the suddenness of the attack, and by striking from three sides at once—this was the plan of action upon which Washington had decided as the bold stroke to retrieve his country's fallen fortunes. The division of Colonel John Cadwalader at Bristol was to attack the cantonments of Colonel Von Donop at Mount Holly, Black Horse and Bordentown; the corps of General Ewing, of Pennsylvania, and General Dickinson, of New Jersey, were to cross at Trenton landing, take position on the south side of the Assunpink creek, and, if possible, to close up all avenues of escape or entrance of a reinforcement for the British troops in Trenton; at the same time Washington and the commanders present at the council of war, with twenty-four hundred of their best Continental soldiers, would make the direct attack on the garrison town of Trenton. Colonel Stark, who was so soon to drive his country's foes "pell-mell" through the streets of that village, "dealing death wherever he found resistance," gave the keynote to the evening's consultation when he said, immediately after Washington had concluded: "Your men have too long been accustomed to place their dependence for safety upon spades and pickaxes. If you ever expect to establish the independence of these States you must teach them to place dependence upon their firearms and courage." General Greene and General Sullivan spoke hearty words in commendation of the scheme, and Lord Stirling, that brave but gouty Jerseyman, always ready to strike a blow at British rule in America, made some enthusiastic remarks on the importance of an immediate attack. Colonel Glover gave a sincere promise as to what his men would do, which promise he carried out faithfully and successfully. "Now is the time to clip their wings," said Washington, "while they are so spread;" and the plan in all its details was approved by these zealous military leaders.
"Christmas day, at night, one hour before day, is the time fixed upon for the attack upon Trenton," General Washington wrote to his adjutant-general, Colonel Reed, at Bristol.

So the memorable council dissolved, the horses were brought to the doorway, and the little company rode away in the darkness.

In every great enterprise a crisis is sure to come; it may be slight, unseen, easily surmounted, or it may be vital, fully recognized, requiring desperate exertions and fraught with tremendous results for good or ill. Such an hour had now arrived for the Continental army. The defeat on Long Island; the evacuation of New York; the capture of Fort Washington; the surrender of Fort Lee; the retreat through the Jerseys and the near approach of the expiration of the term of service of a large part of the army—all had brought the young nation to the lowest depths of despair. In this desperate condition a blow must be struck immediately at the military power of Great Britain, or the cause of national freedom and unity in America would be irretrievably lost. The great chieftain had no idea of abandoning a cause in which he had risked his fortune, his honor and his life, and all men turned to him blindly, hoping that in some way he could change disaster and defeat into glory and victory. So, with a tranquil countenance, Washington moved about among his officers and men, inspiring them with his own undaunted spirit and high sense of patriotic duty, and impressing them with the belief that sooner or later he would bring them out of this depressing darkness into the brightness, the glory of victory and an enduring national life.

Early on Christmas morning Washington issued his orders for the march to Trenton. Every detail had been carefully studied and each brigade commander knew exactly what was expected of him and of his men. The position of each detachment on the march and in the attack was carefully given; a profound silence was enjoined and death was the penalty to be meted out to any soldier who quit the ranks. Three days' rations were cooked, and
MONUMENT AT WASHINGTON’S CROSSING, NEW JERSEY,
Erected by the New Jersey Society of the Cincinnati, October 15, 1895.

Inscription on the Monument:

"THIS TABLET
IS ERECTED BY THE SOCIETY OF THE CINCINNATI
IN THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY,
TO COMMEMORATE THE CROSSING OF THE DELAWARE RIVER BY
GENERAL WASHINGTON AND THE CONTINENTAL ARMY
ON CHRISTMAS NIGHT OF
SEVENTEEN HUNDRED AND SEVENTY-SIX."
every officer put a piece of white paper in his hat that he might readily be recognized in the gloom as an officer. The accoutrements were put in order, forty rounds of ammunition carefully packed, and the troops destined for this expedition were ordered to parade over the hill back of McKonkey's ferry.

On the 1st day of December, before leaving Brunswick for Princeton, Washington had dispatched Colonel Richard Humpton, of the Eleventh Regiment, Pennsylvania Continental Line, to gather together all the boats on the Delaware river above and below the falls at Trenton. Colonel Humpton had called to his aid such well-known and skilled rivermen as Jacob Gearhart, Daniel Bray, Uriah Slack and Thomas Jones, and, with a zealous party of farmer boys, they had collected all boats of every description in the upper waters of the Delaware and Lehigh rivers. These boats, with those used at Howell's ferry and Beatty's ferry on December 7th and 8th, to carry over the retreating army from Trenton to Bucks county, Pennsylvania, they had hidden behind the thick woods of Malta Island, and at the mouth of Knowles' creek, where they could not be seen from the New Jersey shore. Just before dark, these boats were brought down some two miles to McKonkey's ferry. There were also rafts which had been made for the transportation of the artillery, and there was the long, canoe-shaped Durham boat used especially for carrying iron ore from Oxford Furnace, in Sussex county, New Jersey, from the Durham Iron Works, in Durham township, of this county, and flour from John Van Campen's mill, at Minisink, to the market at Philadelphia. These boats were possibly named after Robert Durham, the manager of the furnace, and were about forty feet long, painted black, and had an oar adjustable at either end for steering the boat. This was the best boat for the purpose of moving troops across a swift river, as it could carry a regiment of men at every trip.

As early as two o'clock in the afternoon of Christmas day some of the regiments most remote from the ferry began to march, and
in an hour thereafter all the troops ordered for this enterprise were moving toward the place of parade over the hill. The movements of these men over the light snow which had fallen could easily be traced by the blood which dropped from the feet of those who had no shoes.

During the night of December 20th, which had been intensely cold, some of the upper branches of the river had entirely frozen over. All day Monday and Tuesday the current had been swift and nearly free from ice, but by noon on Wednesday, which was Christmas day, the water was full of floating cakes of ice, not very thick, but very troublesome to boatmen who wished to make a quick and direct crossing. The weather that night became even colder and more cheerless. Some snow and a good deal of hail and sleet fell and the darkness was almost impenetrable.

In the meantime, while the patriot soldiers plodded with dogged determination through the snow, how was it at Trenton? General Howe, the British commander-in-chief, had posted at Trenton three Hessian regiments, fifty Hessian Yagers and a few British Light Horse, in all about fourteen hundred men. Since the 14th of December they had occupied all the public buildings and were quartered in many of the private houses. They did some picket and guard duty, but the work to which they were looking forward, confident of success, was to cross the river as soon as it should be completely frozen over, take the capital city of Philadelphia, and spend the remainder of the winter there, enjoying the gay and congenial society of the loyalists in what was then the most considerable commercial center in the country. Colonel Johann Gottlieb Rall, the senior officer at the post, affected to make light of the army under Washington, calling it a lot of farmers who knew nothing about war and would surely run at the first attack of his veteran troops. On Christmas night there was a small alarm on the Pennington road outpost, but this was soon over and seemed only to make them more careless in their fancied security. They
remembered how they had kept the Christmas-tide in the Fatherland, and, although a great ocean separated them from Hesse, they proposed to have as great a frolic as the wine-cellars of the rich merchants of Trenton could afford. So even after the alarm they continued the revelry so imprudently begun. Colonel Rall himself joined a convivial party, and it was just before daylight the next morning when he reached his own quarters and his bed. General Washington knew the state of affairs in the village through his trusted spy, John Honeyman, and he was prepared to take advantage of the tempting situation.

It was just at dusk this cheerless Christmas night when Washington, with Colonel Henry Knox and the other members of his staff, came to the river bank ready to give the order for the first boat to shove off. Sitting on his chestnut-sorrel horse, he dictated a letter to Colonel Cadwalader at Bristol, telling him that, notwithstanding the discouraging accounts he had received of what might be expected from all the operations below, he was determined to cross the river and attack Trenton in the morning, as the night promised to be dark and his movements would be concealed. With more impatience than he usually permitted himself to show, he heard an aide-de-camp of General Gates say that that officer had not assumed the command at Bristol as he had desired, but had gone on to intrigue with the members of Congress at Baltimore in his own interest and contrary to the expressed wishes of his chief. He had left the post of duty, of danger and of honor.

The hour for the crossing had arrived. Close to the commander-in-chief rode his true friend, Colonel Knox, and with stentorian voice he repeated the commands of Washington. Above the noise of the crunching ice—above the calling of the boatmen, louder than the voices of the drivers of the artillery horses—the orders of Knox resounded through the darkness and the storm. His services that night cannot be overestimated.
When the boats were shoved off from the Pennsylvania shore and had reached the swift current, the jagged cakes of ice struck them repeatedly and severely, and it was with the greatest difficulty that they could be properly handled. The wind was high, and at eleven o'clock the air was filled with blinding snow. Then again, as once before, over the East river after the battle on Long Island, and as he had promised at the council of war, Colonel John Glover and his magnificent Marblehead Regiment of seafaring men, did inestimable service in guiding the army over the dark and angry river.

Several years after the war, in addressing the Legislature of Massachusetts, General Knox used these words in reference to Colonel Glover's regiment: "I wish the members of this body knew the people of Marblehead as well as I do. I could wish they had stood on the banks of the Delaware river in 1776, in that bitter night when the commander-in-chief had drawn up his little army to cross it, and had seen the powerful current bearing onward the floating masses of ice which threatened destruction to whosoever should venture upon its bosom. I wish that when this occurrence threatened to defeat the enterprise they could have heard that distinguished warrior demand 'Who will lead us on?' and seen the men of Marblehead, and Marblehead alone, stand forward to lead the army along the perilous path to unfading glories and honor in the achievements of Trenton. There, sir, were the fishermen of Marblehead at home upon land and water, alike ardent, patriotic and unflinching, whenever they unfurled the flag of the country."

The name of Captain John Blunt, a shipmaster of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, has come down the century to us as one of those who gave most efficient aid on that terrible night. The progenitors of some of the families represented here to day figured in that noble band of volunteers from both sides of the river, who gave their skill and their strength to stemming the angry stream that bitter night. Tradition gives us the names of Phillips, Slack, Muirheid, Laning, Titus, Green, Scudder, Guild, Inslee and Woolsey. All honor
to those heroes on that Christmas night of seventeen hundred and seventy-six!

It had been confidently expected that all the troops intended for this expedition, with the horses of the artillery and cavalry, the eighteen cannon and howitzers, could easily be transported over the river by midnight, and so leave the hours between twelve and five o'clock for the march to the village. But it was after three o'clock in the morning before the last man and the last gun had reached the New Jersey shore. It was then too late to strike the town in the early dawn, but General Washington was still determined to make the attack. The risk must be taken and he was fully resolved to capture the village and its Hessian garrison.

The story of the surprise, the attack and the capture has been often told and need not be repeated here. The details of the march by the river and Pennington roads is known to you all. The old clocks in Trenton struck the hour of eight as the sharp reports of the American rifles were heard north of the town and repeated near the river. Colonel Rall, not yet recovered from his midnight frolic, essayed to muster his gallant troops. They fell back before the irresistible dash of the men of General Greene’s division; they lost their cannon, and their leader fell from his horse, fatally wounded; they retreated to the apple orchard and tried to escape by the bridge and through the waters of the Assunpink creek. At this juncture, finding themselves surrounded, they surrendered, and the patriot army took possession of nearly a thousand men, as many rifles, six cannon and flags, and all the stores which the Hessians had collected.

Before nine o’clock in the morning, the day, which had opened in gloom and secret despondency, had changed to one of brightness and hope and future glory. The “crisis,” as proclaimed a week previous by Thomas Paine, the “time which tried men’s souls,” had passed to make way for glorious triumph. What mattered it then if the sleet cut their faces, the wind whistled through
their tattered regimentals, or the blood oozed from their frosted feet? Had not victory perched upon their banners? Had they not shown the veterans of European wars that they could be defeated and captured by the fire-lock in the sturdy arm of a true American? And so they minded not the nine-mile march back again to McKonkey's ferry, with their prisoners, the recrossing of the river, the upsetting of the boats and the involuntary swim in the icy waters. The next day a thousand men were unfit for duty. What mattered it?—they were hero-victors all! A river with a dangerous current had been crossed in the darkness; a British post had been captured, and the turning point in the war had been passed. Glory, eternal glory, to the twenty-four hundred young men who crossed this perilous river on that memorable Christmas night!

It is just and fitting—nay, it is a duty—to mark in loving remembrance the spots where great deeds have been enacted, or where great men have lived and died, and in this way to commemorate to future ages the magnificent heroism of the men who suffered that the nation might endure. By monuments alone can we fittingly rescue from oblivion the achievements of those who, in the hour of greatest trial, fought for personal liberty and national independence. So, to-day, in honor of the heroes who crossed the river on that wintry night, we have erected two monuments to mark the historic crossing—the one on the Pennsylvania and the other on the New Jersey shore—and we dedicate them both in the spirit of true patriotism. Let the recollection of the virtues of these soldiers and the record of their noble lives inspire us all to the latest generation, and then this great country, great in its constitution, great in its history, shall stand a monument to the ages, as long as the world endures—the home of an enlightened, a Christian, a liberty-loving people; the "land of the free."
THE BATTLE OF TRENTON.

AN ADDRESS
DELOWERED AT THE LAYING OF THE CORNER-STONE OF THE
TRENTON BATTLE MONUMENT,

DECEMBER 26TH, 1891.

PRINTED, BY
WILLIAM S. STRYKER,
President of The Trenton Battle Monument Association.

TRENTON, N. J.: 
1895.
THE BATTLE OF TRENTON.

The true patriot, Thomas Paine, on the 17th day of December, 1776, in a timely and most ingenuous treatise called "The Crisis," written for the purpose of explaining and enforcing the principles of revolution, began with this striking sentence: "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of his country; but he that stands it now deserves the thanks of man and woman."

The closing days of the year in which American independence was declared, were indeed trying times for the lover of his country; and the men who, at that time, amid terrible discouragements, still clung to the patriot cause, deserve and will receive through all the ages the thanks, the eternal gratitude, of all friends of liberty.

In the paper which I will read to you tonight I shall not give you a sketch of the battle of Trenton as you have read it in the popular histories, nor shall I give it to you with the statements concerning the fight that I have often heard related. I will try to narrate, as briefly as possible, the story as I have found it, after fifteen years of study of German records and German diaries at Hesse Cassel and Marburg, and the closest scrutiny of letters written by participants in the battle. I propose to so localize each feature of the affair that you, as Trentonians, and all others who are familiar with our city, may see the surprise of the Hessians on the very spot where each event really occurred, and that you may, in the light of to-day, tell to your children correctly the story of the great battle which took place on the streets of our old historic town.
It may be necessary to mention a few facts in connection with the condition and position of the American and British armies during the fall months of 1776. The battle of Long Island had been fought on August 27, and resulted disastrously to the patriot forces. A hasty retreat was made by General Washington across the East river to New York City. On the 16th day of November Fort Washington, held by twenty-six hundred Americans, was taken by assault and the garrison were compelled to lay down their arms between the Hessian regiments of Rall and Von Lossberg. The contrast in the situation of these German regiments on that day and their condition forty-four days thereafter was truly wonderful. A week later Fort Lee, on the west bank of the Hudson river, was abandoned because a large force under Lord Cornwallis, which had ascended the steep and rocky path at Closter dock to the top of the Palisades, had come into the rear of the fort and made it untenable. A very large amount of commissary stores, of guns, of ammunition and of camp equipage, which the Continental army could not spare without distress, here fell into the hands of the enemy. That army was then posted on the west bank of the Hackensack river. It had scarcely four thousand men fit for duty, and they were greatly in need of tents and shoes and blankets. Desertions were increasing and no recruits joined the army.

On the morning of November 23, General Washington concentrated his force at Newark, and on the 28th he left that city and began his memorable retreat through the Jerseys. That same night the British troops, well officered, well equipped and, as stated by some, twelve thousand strong, entered Newark. As the American column passed through Brunswick, battalion after battalion left the army, their term of enlistment having expired. The British army made a singular halt at Brunswick, but on December 6, General Howe, with an additional force, joined them, and they then left for Princeton. When the American army reached Trenton, weary, ragged, well-nigh disheartened, they were reinforced by a German
battalion, by three battalions of Philadelphia Associates, the Philadelphian troop of light horse, a battery of artillery and two small regiments of New Jersey militia.

During the afternoon of December 7, and up to daylight on Sunday morning, December 8, small boats were constantly crossing and recrossing the Delaware river at Trenton ferry, a short distance below what is now the Pennsylvania railroad bridge, and at Beatty’s ferry, a few yards above the present bridge at Calhoun street. In this way the entire American army reached the west bank of the river. At about eleven o’clock on the same morning a brigade of Howe’s army, which had remained, strange to say, seventeen hours at Princeton, entered this village with music and much display, and went down to the river bank, to find no boats for them to cross, and to receive a shower of grapeshot from a battery posted on the high ground opposite Beatty’s ferry. It was now too late for the skillful and powerful army of Britain to crush at one blow the apology for an army which bore arms for the young republic. Stedman, the great British historian, said it looked as if “Howe had calculated with the greatest accuracy the exact time necessary for his enemy to make his escape.” But New Jersey was now virtually in possession of the British army; and since boats could not be procured, they had only to wait for the closing of the river by ice to cross the Delaware, to annihilate our forces and to seize Philadelphia, then the capital of the nation. The condition of the State was deplorable. The great city just beyond the northern boundary of the State was under the power of Great Britain, and Philadelphia was the objective point for British attack. New Jersey became the marching-ground of two armies. The consequence was that food and forage were taken, buildings burned, valuables stolen, the inhabitants ill-treated and despoiled, while society was broken up, hostile feuds between neighbors were engendered, and the good people of New Jersey were truly in a pitiable condition.

The Howe brothers, by instructions of their government, issued
a proclamation, in which they tendered a pardon to all who would, within sixty days after November 30, renounce the cause of independence and subscribe to a declaration of their submission to the authority of Great Britain. This proclamation was scattered broadcast over New Jersey. It is said that twenty-seven hundred men accepted the proffered protection. This increased the deplorable condition of the people of this State, in that it created a faction openly in favor of peace, and ready to give any secret intelligence which could aid the enemy. But the German soldiery did not regard these protection papers, which they could not read, and they despoiled friend and foe alike. The English soldiers also did not relish the fact that the Hessians were obtaining all the spoil, and they joined heartily in plundering the citizens.

As soon as the American army had reached the Pennsylvania side of the river, they were arranged along the shore from McKoney's ferry, now Taylorsville, to Dunk's ferry, a short distance below Bristol, with detachments at Newtown and various other places in Bucks county. General Washington then sent out officers to urge upon the people of New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland and Delaware to forward troops immediately to him. His desire was strong to preserve the city of Philadelphia, and he placed Major-General Putnam in command of the city, which was full of alarm, and to some extent disaffected.

On the 11th of December the Continental Congress, a body in which the people were losing confidence, passed a resolution denouncing as false the rumor that they intended to leave Philadelphia, and requested General Washington to publish it in orders to the army. This he declined to do, and wisely; for on December 13 they made the gossip true by hurrying off to Baltimore.

All this time the King's troops made no effort to cross the river, seize the capital city of the young republic, and stifle liberty in its birthplace. At that time the city was a prize well worth the exertion. There were still no boats at hand, because Washington had
them all in his control. But Trenton was a village of wooden houses, and John Rickey's hardware store and the blacksmith shops of Joshua Newbold and Aaron Howell would have given them the nails and iron necessary to have built at least rafts for such an enterprise.

General Howe then ordered a line of winter cantonments to be immediately formed at Brunswick, Princeton, Trenton and Bordentown. The posts at Trenton and Bordentown, the most important positions nearest the American army, he garrisoned with German troops. The services of these men had been bought of Frederick II., Landgrave of Hesse Cassel; of Charles I., Duke of Brunswick; of Frederick, Prince of Waldeck, and other of the petty rulers of Germany for £7 4s. each, British money. The officers of the Hessian contingent were men of large experience, many of them men of rank in Germany, and, as it afterward proved, soldiers of good personal character. The scandalous man-traffic, which furnished these troops to Britain, enabled the princes to support the luxuries of their little courts; but it filled the land with the tears of those who had been robbed of their husbands and their sons.

In Trenton, three regiments of Hessian infantry, a small detachment of artillery, fifty Hessian yagers and twenty dragoons of the Sixteenth British Regiment were quartered—in all about fourteen hundred men. The infantry regiments were those called the grenadier regiment Rall; the fusilier regiments Von Knyphausen and Von Lossberg; and Colonel Johann Gottlieb Rall was the senior officer commanding the brigade. He opened his headquarters, December 14, in a two-story building which many of us remember—the residence then of Stacy Potts, on the ground now occupied by the rectory of Bishop O'Farrell.

Major-General James Grant was placed in charge of all the British troops in New Jersey, with headquarters at Brunswick, and the post at Princeton was commanded by Brigadier-General Alexander Leslie; the post at Bordentown by Colonel Carl Emil
Kurt von Donop, with three battalions of Hessian grenadiers and a regiment of the British line. Colonel von Donop outranked Rall, who received all his orders from von Donop.

General Howe, who was in command of all the troops of Great Britain in America, left Trenton for New York City December 13, and Lord Cornwallis accompanied him, intending to embark, with leave of absence, for a trip to England. General Howe was an indolent man, fond of pleasure, a great gambler, at times intemperate, and always loath to quit a life of ease in a city for the toils of a march and the risks of the battle-field. He was but a poor commander of an army sent to crush out rebellion in the Colonies. Lord Cornwallis was, on the contrary, one of the best, ablest and most reliable soldiers in the British army. He was bold, aggressive, courageous and sincere in his desire to do his entire duty as a soldier of the crown.

To return to the American army. Two bodies of reinforcements had been ordered to join General Washington on the west bank of the Delaware. Major-General Charles Lee, with his force, made frequent and long halts, and seemed reluctant to merge his command with the main army. On the 13th day of December he was surprised by a scouting party of thirty British dragoons, at White's tavern, near Basking Ridge, three miles from his division, and they carried off their odd-looking prisoner in dressing gown and slippers, and without a hat, to the British camp. General Lee was considered by many of the army an ideal soldier. He was well educated, of brilliant talents, great experience and skill, and his loss was, for a time, felt as a great misfortune and made matters look still more gloomy for the cause. Immediately after Lee's abduction Major-General John Sullivan assumed command, and on the 20th of December he reported with two thousand men "much out of sorts and much in want of everything." Major-General Gates had also marched with troops from the northern army, then commanded by Major-General Schuyler, and after
encountering a terrible storm in the Walpack valley the force reached the American camp on December 20, under the direct command of General Benedict Arnold.

It is evident from letters which General Washington wrote to General Gates, to Governor Trumbull and to General Heath, December 14, that he had at that time planned an attack on the British posts in New Jersey, "to clip their wings," as he said, "while they are so spread." In the diary of Christopher Marshall, the patriot Quaker, of Philadelphia, we find this entry, December 18: "News that our army intended to cross at Trenton into the Jerseys." Something had to be attempted, or, as Washington wrote to his brother, "if every nerve is not strained I think the game is pretty nearly up." He added: "You can form no idea of the perplexity of my situation; no man, I believe, ever had a greater choice of difficulties and less means to extricate himself from them." Yet he had faith in the justice of the cause, and confidence that the final outcome of the contest would bring peace and liberty and prosperity to his native land.

Some bold stroke had to be attempted in this the crisis of the fate of the new nation. The feeling of the people was one of deep despondency, and the little army must do something immediately to dispel the gloom. The soldiers still had faith in their chief; they looked to him to bring them out into the sunlight of victory. He was full of cheer to the men as he encouraged them in their suffering, and with firm countenance bade them look with confidence to a brighter day.

During the third week in December Colonel Samuel Griffin, with about six hundred militia collected in and about Philadelphia, made a demonstration against the outposts of Colonel Von Donop, near Moorestown, in Burlington county. The effect of this little affair was to draw Von Donop and his men further away from Trenton, and to fix their attention on the little party in front and
away from Rall and his command, which they should have supported if they had remained at Bordentown.

General Washington had divided his army into three separate corps. One stationed at Bristol, under Colonel John Cadwalader, included Colonel Hitchcock's brigade of the Continental line and three battalions of the Philadelphia Associators. The second corps had headquarters at Colvin's ferry, now Morrisville, and consisted of the Pennsylvania militia of the Flying Camp and the New Jersey militia under General Philemon Dickinson. This force reached from Bond's ferry, nearly opposite Bordentown, to Yardley's ferry, now Yardleyville, and was under the command of Brigadier-General James Ewing, of Pennsylvania. The third and largest corps extended from Yardley's ferry northward seven miles on the Delaware river and the contiguous region, and back some six miles from the river.

An accurate calculation, based upon the figures as given in the inspection return of December 22, 1776, shows that Washington had at that time enrolled in these three several corps about eight thousand men, or about six thousand effective troops, the number as stated by General Lord Stirling the day after the battle. These troops were ill-clad; they greatly needed stockings and shoes; few of them had blankets, and many regiments were without camp equipage.

Captain Ephraim Anderson, of the Second Battalion of Jersey Continentals, did much to furnish General Washington with information about this time, and many of the patriot farmers of old Hunterdon and Burlington counties crossed over the river to Washington's quarters and gave him facts which were important to him. But I am inclined to think from all the data which I can obtain, from a search of some interesting records, and from family tradition, that John Honeyman, of Griggstown, Somerset county, who furnished the British army with cattle and whom common rumor called the notorious Tory and spy, but the safety of whose wife and
children was covered by a written protection given by Washington himself, was the man whom General Washington relied on chiefly for most accurate information. It seems to be certain that while engaged in his trade he was captured by American scouts, carried over the river to the quarters of General Washington and held a private half-hour conversation with him. His court-martial was ordered for the morrow, and he was confined during the night, but he made an unaccountable escape before morning. It is asserted that he returned to Rall, gave him a doleful account of the American army and then left for Brunswick, so that he might not be present at the surprise of Trenton, be upbraided by the Hessians and lose his power for usefulness to the patriot cause.

Washington now prepared for a simultaneous attack upon the commands of Von Donop and of Rall. It was ordered at the council of war held on the evening of December 24, at the headquarters of General Greene, that Colonel Cadwalader should cross the river from Dunk's ferry to Burlington on Christmas night and beat up the posts of Mount Holly, Black Horse, now Columbus, and Bordentown; that General Ewing should cross at Trenton landing and take position south of Assunpink creek, so that Rall's men could not escape to Von Donop, and that General Washington, the same night, with a detachment of the main army two thousand four hundred strong, with eighteen pieces of artillery, should make a direct attack on the garrison town of Trenton.

By two o'clock on the morning of Christmas some regiments of the main army were moving toward McKonkey's ferry, and by three in the afternoon all those detailed for this service were on the march, tingeing, it is said, the light snow which had fallen with blood from their feet. Each soldier had three days' cooked rations and each carried forty rounds of ammunition. The men were placed in Durham boats, in row galleys and in every kind of craft which could be collected in the upper waters of the Delaware. For several days these boats had been hidden behind the thick
woods on Malta island and at the mouth of Knowles' creek. The river on Monday and Tuesday had been clear, but by noon of Wednesday, the 25th, was filled with moving cakes of ice and the current became swift and dangerous. As soon as it was quite dark the troops came down to the river to begin the crossing.

At this point let me say a few words about Trenton in 1776. During the Revolutionary war there were about seventy houses above the Assunpink creek and not quite thirty south of the creek. Most of these buildings were of wood, including two churches, the English and the Methodist, but the barracks and the Presbyterian church were built of stone, and Hunt's general store, the jail, now the Trenton bank, and the Friends' meeting-house were of brick. The town above the creek may be said to have been bounded by what is now Willow street, what is now Perry street and what is now Montgomery street. All outside of this area was then considered to be the suburbs of the village. Warren street was then called King street, but extended only to Front street and had no bridge over the creek. Greene street was then called Queen street, and extended over a stone bridge at the creek to the road to Bordentown. State street, then Second street, extended from what is now Willow street to what is now Montgomery street. The River road passed nearer than it does now to the homestead of the Atterbury estate; and at the place where Prospect street now commences it turned slightly on ground now the bed of the feeder, through West Hanover street, thence into what is now Willow street and ended at the corner of Front and Willow streets. Pennington road and Brunswick road entered the village as they do to-day. A lane led up to the Beakes farm, and this is now Princeton avenue. What is now Hanover street, west of Greene, was called Pinkerton's alley; east of Greene street it was called Third street. Academy street was Fourth street; but both Third and Fourth streets were but a square in length. Church alley extended from Warren to Greene street, just north of the English church.
street was not then opened. The present Fourth ward of the city was the Bloomsbury farm of Dr. William Bryant, afterward of Colonel John Cox; and the house now the residence of Mr. Edward H. Stokes is always spoken of in German records as the “Doctor House.”

The regiment Von Lossberg, with a portion of the detachment of artillery, occupied the English church, now St. Michael's, and the houses of Sheriff Micajah How, Colonel Isaac Smith, Thomas Barnes and others on King street as far down as Pinkerton's alley. Colonel Rall's own grenadier regiment had their quarters in the jail, now a part of the Trenton bank, and in the houses of William Pidgeon, Abraham G. Claypoole, at Francis Witts' Blazing Star tavern and in Henry Drake's Bull Head tavern, the post-office and other houses on Second street between King and Queen streets. The regiment Von Knyphausen occupied the Presbyterian church, the village school adjoining, on what is now State street, the houses of William and Ellet Tucker, Joseph Milner and others, on what is now Greene street, for a square above and a square below our City Hall. The barracks, a portion of which is now the Widows' and Single Women's Home, was occupied by the yagers and a considerable number of Tory refugees from Burlington and Monmouth counties. The Quaker meeting-house of Third street, now Hanover street, which is still standing, was the quarters of the British dragoons. Another part of the artillery detachment was in the Methodist church on Queen street. The parsonage of the Presbyterian church, on Third street, was used as a hospital.

Only the day before Christmas General Grant had assured Colonel Rall that he was safe; that he would undertake to keep the peace in New Jersey with a corporal's guard. Major Von Dechow, who commanded the Von Knyphausen regiment, wanted Rall to put up some intrenchments on the River road and on the high ground at the junction of the Pennington and Brunswick roads,
and offered to build them, but Rall said: "Let them come; we want no trenches; we will at them with a bayonet!"

Major Matthaus, of Rall's own regiment, urged him to keep a patrol toward Pennington and as far up as Johnson's ferry. This he refused to do; fortunately for the American cause. However, at five o'clock on the morning of the 23d, the 24th and again on the 25th, the picket guard was ordered down to Dr. William Bryant's house, near Trenton landing, with two cannon, and remained there until nine o'clock, prepared to dispute any crossing at that point. But it failed to make this early parade on the morning of December 26. The outposts at Trenton were then at the house of Richard and Arthur Howell, coopers, on the Pennington road, one Corporal and fifteen men; at the residence of General Dickinson, now part of the house still standing and owned by the Atterbury estate, on the River road, one officer and fifty yagers; at the Fox Chase tavern, kept by Mrs. Joseph Bond, on the Brunswick road, nearly opposite the head of the present Montgomery street, a Captain and seventy-five men; at the tavern formerly kept by Rensselaer Williams, on the Ferry road, near Trenton landing, one officer and thirty men; at the drawbridge over Crosswicks creek, three commissioned officers and one hundred men; and at the Assunpink bridge a Sergeant and eighteen men constituted the guard. The headquarters' guard was in the frame house still standing just north of St. Michael's church.

As was expected by General Washington, the Hessians, secure in their own prowess, entered heartily into the revelry of Christmas day. On the early morning of the 25th, Rall heard that a small detachment of Americans was wandering near Trenton and might make an attack on him. He rode around to all his guards and then returned to play a little game of checkers with his host, Stacy Potts. Just before dark an attack was made at the picket post on the Pennington road by Captain Richard C. Anderson, of the Fifth Virginia Continental Regiment. Colonel Rall sent out a
party to reinforce the post and they quickly drove off the Americans. This little unauthorized act, which annoyed Washington when he heard of it, removed all further apprehension from Rall's mind. Colonel Rall did not return to Potts' house after this attack, but stopped at the residence of the rich merchant, Abraham Hunt, and began to drink his good wine in his parlor. It was the room lately occupied as a flour and feed store by Mr. Joseph Howell, on ground now covered by the Masonic Temple. Mr. Hunt has been charged with being a Loyalist. I do not think he was. He was the postmaster of the village before and after the war; his property was never confiscated, and after the war he married the most patriotic lady in the village. His liquors were certainly under the control of Colonel Rall. May it not have been that Mr. Hunt, who was Lieutenant-Colonel of Colonel Isaac Smith's First Regiment of Hunterdon county militia, was not adverse to making his Hessian foe helpless? He certainly was, whether wittingly or not, a powerful agent of Washington.

While Rall was at his cards and wine a Tory farmer from Bucks county left a note for him at Hunt's house, in which he told him that the Americans were crossing the river to Jersey, but Rall put the note in his pocket and went on with his social pleasure.

To return to General Washington, who, with his troops, was about to cross the river. The jagged ice, floating swiftly by, struck the boats severely and they had to be handled with the greatest care. The night was, as Captain Thomas Rodney said, "As severe as I ever saw it." It was dark and cold and dismal, with mingled snow and hail after eleven o'clock; but Colonel Glover's Marblehead regiment of fishermen at last ferried the whole force over the river with all their horses and cannon. Colonel Knox, with a stentorian voice that was heard above the crackling of the ice, repeated Washington's orders on the Pennsylvania side. It was after three o'clock when the Americans reached the New Jersey shore, and the order for the expected attack was five o'clock in the
morning. This could not now be carried out. During the last hour Washington had been seated upon what had been a beehive, eagerly watching the passage of his troops. Here David Lanning, the Birmingham miller, who had left Trenton late on Christmas night, came up to Washington and gave him the latest information as to the condition of the Hessian foe. Then Captain John Mott, the grandfather of the late Major-General Mott, started out with a fusee on his shoulder to guide the troops past his own dwelling-house, now a part of the property of the lunatic asylum, to the surprise of Trenton.

The farmers of old Hunterdon county had done good service to Washington by assisting in ferrying over his soldiers, and were now ready to accompany his columns as guides. Their names, in addition to those just mentioned, were: Major Joseph Phillips, of the First Hunterdon Regiment of militia, and his Adjutant, Elias Phillips; John Muirhead, John Guild, Henry Simons, William Green, Amos Scudder, Ephraim Wolsey, Stephen Burroughs, Eden Burroughs, Joseph Inslee and Uriah Slack. The descendants of many of these active patriots are here with us to-night.

The password of the day was "Victory or Death." The wind that day was east-northeast, and the storm, at least for a part of the march, beat rather more on the left shoulders than in the faces of the patriotic army. The ground was very slippery from the sleet and snow, and their miserable want of clothing made their condition truly pitiable.

The army marched to the Bear tavern, and then about three miles further to Birmingham, through woods of hickory and oak. Here Captain Mott told General Sullivan that the priming powder in their arms was becoming damp. Sullivan's reply was, "Well, boys, we must fight them with the bayonet." When Washington heard of this he said: "Tell them to use the bayonet and penetrate the town, for the town must be taken and I am resolved to take it."
A hasty breakfast was made at Birmingham, Washington partaking of the hospitalities of Benjamin Moore. The column was then broken into two divisions—one to go by the River road, under Major-General Sullivan, and the other by the Pennington road, under Major-General Nathanael Greene. General Washington rode with Greene's column. Sullivan had with him the brigades of St. Clair, Glover and Sargent, the batteries of Neil, Hugg, Moulder and Sargent. Greene had the brigades of Stephen, Mercer, Lord Stirling and de Fermoy, Captain Morris' Philadelphia troop of light horse, and the batteries of Forrest, Bauman and Hamilton.

The column of Greene first came within sight of the alarm-house on the Pennington road. The picket guard, under command of Lieutenant Wiederhold, was in Howell's house and their guns were stacked at the door, with a sentinel in charge. The advance party of the Americans instantly charged towards the house, but the guards ran out, shouting: "Der Feind! Der Feind! Heraus! Heraus!" And giving the patriots a volley they retired. According to instructions, General Stephen charged with great spirit on the retreating outposts. The picket fell back on the reserve, which was at the house and general store of Alexander Calhoun, at the head of the street now called by his name, the road which then led to Beatty's ferry. Captain Von Altenbockum and his company of the Von Lossberg regiment formed this reserve, but they, too, gave way before the rapid dash of Stephen's troops.

It was nearly eight o'clock in the morning when General Greene's column forced the picket station on the Pennington road, and it was just three minutes afterward when General Sullivan's advance, his men having halted at the road at the head of Howell's ferry to allow General Greene's division to gain a little time on him, struck the yager picket post at "The Hermitage." Both pickets were overwhelmed, of course, by superior numbers, and the Americans rushed "pell-mell," as Colonel Knox said,
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into the town. By the rapid firing it was clear that each column vied with the other to be the first in the attack on the main body of the Hessians.

As soon as Rall's grenadiers heard the firing on the Pennington road they hurried out of their quarters on King street and formed in front of what is now the American House. The Von Lossberg regiment made their formation under the poplar trees in Church alley, on the north side of the graveyard in the rear of the English church. The Von Knyphausen regiment organized on Queen street and began to march westward along Second street.

Colonel Rall, who had in the early hours of the morning left Hunt's house, and reached his own quarters and his bed, when he heard the noise in the town, opened his window and called out to know what was the matter. He was informed by his Brigade Adjutant, Lieutenant Piel. Although he had not recovered from his carousal of the previous night, he hurriedly dressed himself and appeared on the street on horseback to assume command. Seeing his own regiment already formed a few rods down the street, he started them on a run up King street.

At this time General Washington had taken position on the high ground on the northwest corner of property now owned by Mr. John S. Chambers, just at the junction of what is now Fountain avenue and Princeton avenue. From this point he could, with his glass, overlook the whole open village and direct the fight.

Then Captain Thomas Forrest opened his battery down Queen street, while Captain Alexander Hamilton fired down King street from the very spot where the battle monument is to be erected. The Hessian cannon had been run up the street ahead of the Rall regiment to the little stone bridge which then covered what we call Petty's run, and the third shot from Hamilton's guns disabled their battery. Immediately the brigade of General Lord Stirling began to charge down King street. Captain William Washington, his Lieutenant, James Monroe, and their company of Colonel
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Weedon's regiment were on the right of Stirling's brigade. These two officers were wounded in the charge, but they took two field pieces and drove the Rall regiment off the street into the gardens between King and Queen streets, pushing them back in great confusion on the Von Lossberg regiment, which was just coming out of Church alley into what is now Greene street. Then both organizations started off together from Queen street across the fields in the direction of the place where Montgomery street now crosses the feeder. Before leaving Queen street Rall had given an order to the Adjutant of the Von Knyphausen regiment to have the regiment endeavor to reach the Assunpink bridge, but when this officer reported to Major Von Dechow he found that his regiment was being driven through Second street into the orchard.

Colonel Rall joined the Rall and Von Lossberg regiments as they were marching in a northeasterly direction and had left the town, and he ordered them to right-about and attack the village. This they promptly did. They had again reached the junction of Queen street and Church alley when they found themselves sorely pressed by Stirling's men, who fired from houses and fences on King street and the alley. Captain Forrest's guns on the upper part of the street had created havoc among the foe, and General Mercer's brigade was charging down Queen street on their broken ranks. Rall had sent his Adjutant down Queen street to see if the bridge was still open. He found that it was not, and that the Americans held the only avenue of escape. But Rall was still shouting: "All who are my grenadiers, forward!" when a bullet struck him. He fell from his horse in front of Isaac Yard's house, and was carried into the Methodist church, on the northeast corner of what is now Greene and Academy streets, while the column of the Americans pushed the remnant of the two demoralized regiments through Third and Fourth streets into the orchard.

While these charges were being made, General Stephen's and General de Fermoy's brigades, by Washington's orders, hurried
toward the Fox Chase tavern, on Brunswick road, to prevent the escape of the enemy to Maidenhead. This they succeeded in doing.

General Sullivan's division, as I have said, drove in the picket on the River road. The cry was then raised with which I began my paper, "These are the times that try men's souls," and down the road the Americans ran, pushing all before them. The whole town was now in an uproar. Colonel John Stark, afterward the hero of Bennington, swung around Alexander Chambers' house, on the northeast corner of what is now State and Willow streets, and, as Major Wilkinson wrote, "Dealt death wherever he found resistance, and broke down all opposition before him."

General Sullivan, with Colonel Glover's brigade and Neil's and Sargent's batteries, sent a party to take the people in the barracks, and then ran their headlong race around into Front street and so on to the bridge over the creek at what we call the "Assunpink Block," to prevent, if possible, the escape of the enemy. In this they were only partly successful. Colonel Glover's brigade crossed the bridge and was instantly posted on the high ground on the creek just east of the bridge. The report shows that four hundred and seventeen men, consisting of the English light horse, the picket posts at the Assunpink bridge, at Crosswicks bridge and at the Trenton landing, the artillerymen, the detachment at the yager picket post and some men of the Rall and Von Knyphausen regiments, escaped and joined Colonel Von Donop as he was making his retreat northward, or went by the Sandtown road and reported to General Leslie at Princeton. Quite a number of stragglers from the Hessian regiments tried also to reach the bridge. Many of them escaped, but some were hemmed in on Queen street, between the force of Colonel Stark, on Second street, and the American brigade, then in possession of the bridge. They surrendered in front of what is now the Taylor Opera House, and hence this is often erroneously called the place of surrender of the Hessian troops. As Sullivan's division came in front of the Presbyterian
church on Second street, a show of resistance was for a moment made, and Major Von Dechow determined there to make a stand with the veterans of the Von Knyphausen regiment. But the dauntless Stark would brook no resistance, and he charged them with relentless fury. This Hessian regiment, too, was then pushed back into the orchard.

The Rall and Von Lossberg regiments, as I have already said, had been huddled in the orchard. The three remaining field officers, Lieutenant-Colonel Scheffer and Majors Von Hanstein and Matthaus, held a brief council and determined to break through the American force and make an effort to reach Princeton. They noticed, however, the double lines of Stephen and de Fermoy on the Brunswick road, and Captain Forrest's six-gun battery was just then placed in position near the Friends' meeting-house, on Third, now Hanover street. The order to fire was about to be given, when the Hessians, seeming for the first time to realize that they were surrounded by superior numbers, lowered their standards and grounded their guns, while the officers put their hats on the points of their swords. General Lord Stirling rode forward and Lieutenant-Colonel Francis Scheffer, then the senior officer of the Hessian brigade, surrendered his sword and his command to him. This ceremony took place on the edge of the apple orchard, east of what is now Montgomery street; we may correctly say, on the two blocks north and the two blocks east of the corner on which the post-office stands.

The Von Knyphausen regiment essayed first to march down along the low ground of the creek from the orchard to the stone bridge and so to escape, but they found the bridge guarded by the Americans. They tried also to ford the creek, and in this a few succeeded. Their commander, Major Von Dechow, had been badly wounded, and had given himself up a prisoner of war. The two guns they had with them were mired in the marshy shore of the creek and could not be got out. They heard also that the other
Hessian regiments had surrendered, and they saw Lord Stirling with his brigade pushing on through the orchard toward them. Then they, too, grounded their arms near where the Montgomery street bridge crosses the creek.

The news of the surrender was taken to Washington by his aide, Colonel Baylor. A few moments afterward Major Wilkinson, St. Clair's aide, rode up, and Washington pressed the hand of the boisterous soldier with the remark: "This is a glorious day for our country, Major Wilkinson!" And truly it was a glorious day. The tide of the misfortunes of the war had now been turned and the Declaration of Independence had been made a reality by this the first brilliant stroke of victory.

Poor Rall, the brave soldier, was now carried from the Methodist church to his own quarters, wounded, dying. When he was undressed, the note of the Tory was found, and he knew then that if he had read it when it was delivered to him, and acted on it, he would not have been the victim of defeat. Generals Washington and Greene called on him during the morning and took his parole, and promised him kind treatment for his men. He died on the evening of December 27, and was buried in the Presbyterian graveyard. Lieutenant Kinney, of his regiment, wrote him an epitaph, which was never cut in marble: "Here Lies Colonel Rall; all is over with him."

The character of Colonel Rall may be summed up from German documents. He was of a generous, hospitable, kindly disposition. He was fond of the glitter and display of military life; he loved music, and every morning as he sat at his window in his quarters he enjoyed the parade of his regiment with the haut-boys playing as they performed their evolutions around the little picket fence which encircled the English church. Withal he was a brave soldier in battle and fought desperately at Long Island, White Plains and Fort Washington. He was called by his superior officers the "Hessian Lion." He had, however, a violent temper,
and this affected at times his judgment and militated against his skill in holding high commands.

The loss of the Americans was two officers and two enlisted men wounded. None were killed. The Hessians lost five officers killed and six wounded; seventeen enlisted men killed and seventy-eight wounded. Twenty-four Hessian soldiers were known to have been buried in this village. General Washington reported to Congress that nine hundred and eighteen men had been made prisoners of war. The American army also took six brass three-pounders, forty horses, one thousand stand of arms and fifteen colors. Two of these cannon were used by the Americans at the battle of Brandywine and were recaptured by the British. One of the flags was hung up in the hall of Congress and had on it the motto: "Non est pericula"—"contempt of danger"—certainly ill-suited to the vanquished Hessians. In the "Freeman's Journal" of February 11, 1777, appeared a witty doggerel:

"The man who submits without striking a blow,
May be said in a sense no danger to know,
I pray then what harm, by the humble submission
At Trenton was done to the standard of Hessian?"

A council of war was called at noon, and although General Greene and Colonel Knox urged a rapid pursuit of the foe, General Washington decided to recross the river immediately and thus secure his prisoners and the trophies of victory. The march was then taken up by the River road to McKonkey's ferry. The weary patriots stepped along the road with glad hearts, and minded not the hail and rain which they had borne for so many hours. The feelings of the Hessians can scarcely be depicted when they were compelled to leave the pleasant village and its holiday revels and tramp over the slippery roads as captives of war. More than one thousand of Washington's army were reported unfit for duty the next day.
The Hessian officers were taken to the Bucks county jail, at Newtown, December 27. On December 30 and 31 the prisoners were sent to Philadelphia, being paraded through that city for the purpose of inspiring the patriots and showing them that the war-like Hessians could be captured. Some of them joined the patriot army; many of them never took up arms again, and their descendants are now amongst the most thrifty farmers of our neighboring State. The rest were exchanged and joined the British army in Philadelphia in the spring of 1778.

The Landgrave of Hesse Cassel refused to give the three Hessian regiments new colors, and informed them that they should carry none until they had taken an equal number of standards in battle. The officers were all court-martialed for their conduct at the fight in this village, but the German War Commission, on April 15, 1782, acquitted the surviving officers from the responsibility of their capture, and placed most of the blame on the dead Rall and the dead Von Dechow.

On the morning of December 27 Washington dispatched Lieutenant-Colonel George Baylor, of his staff, to give the news to Congress, at Baltimore. Colonel Baylor was received with great delight by that body, and they presented him with a horse and equipments as a mark of their gratitude for the good news he brought them.

To many it has always seemed unfortunate that General Ewing did not succeed in crossing at Trenton landing. Of course, if he had done so before daylight and under cover of darkness, and he had not been seen until the firing began on the Pennington road, then all would have been well, and probably he would have stopped the flight of the fugitives across the Assunpink bridge. But if he had been seen, the alarm would have been sounded, the excitement would probably have sobered Rall, and with his veterans he would have whipped Ewing and his militia before breakfast. He would then have been ready to fight Washington and his men at eight
o'clock, with, perchance, a different result. I am disposed to think the failure of General Ewing to cross the river was a fortunate thing. Colonel Cadwalader also failed to cross the river at Burlington, on Christmas night, and so to aid in shaking up the cantonments in Burlington county.

I will not give you the details of the recrossing of the river by Washington on December 30 and 31; of his occupation again of Trenton; of his quarters at the house of Major John Barnes, the Loyalist, the old yellow house with its poplar trees, which many of us remember, on Greene street, just below where the "Washington Market" is now built; of his all-day fighting his advance detachments January 2, 1777, with the skilled troops on the van of the British army; of the skirmishing at Six Mile run and through Maidenhead, now Lawrenceville; of the stand made on Shabbaconk creek; of the persistent fighting down Queen street; of the stubborn opposition made by the detachments of opposing troops at the Assunpink bridge. I could also speak of the wonderful flank movement by the Quaker road; the fighting on Stony brook; the victory at Princeton; the winter campaign over, New Jersey virtually free of the insolent British foe and Washington and his army secure among the mountains of Morris county, weary, exhausted, but crowned with the laurels of a well-earned victory.

The effect of the struggle in this town upon the American people can scarcely be estimated. The British were no longer considered invincible; the fierce Hessian was no longer dreaded. Vigor was imparted to a cause that appeared almost hopeless. Recruits came to the army, the friends of liberty received new inspiration and new courage, and Congress was strengthened in its resolves of patriotic duty. Lord George Germain, the Colonial Secretary of State of King George III., voiced the opinion of the people of Great Britain on this disastrous fight when he wrote: "All our hopes were blasted by that unhappy affair at Trenton."
The monument, the corner-stone of which we have laid to-day on the very spot where the American batteries raked the streets of Trenton with deadly shot and shell, shall commemorate for all time the prowess of our ancestors, those ragged Continentals who faltered not. In silent eloquence this monumental column will teach your children's children lessons of patriotism. On these very streets, they will remember that despair was turned to hope, defeat to victory. It will call to their minds again and again the exalted character of that soldier whose patriotism was pre-eminent, whose courage was ever strong, who abounded in generosity toward his enemies, and who sought only the independence of his country and its perpetuity. And then it will remind us all how he received, a little more than one hundred years ago, and but a few steps from where we are to-night, a tribute as a statesman from the mothers, the wives and the daughters of those whom he had led out into the eternal sunlight of freedom. The memory of that beautiful ovation of song and of flowers comes across the century full of sweetness, rich in harmony; it bears to us the deep devotion of their loving hearts.