

coast of Massachusetts; but Washington could do nothing to prevent such outrages as developed from this British raid, which involved the burning of Bedford and Fair Haven in southeastern Massachusetts and the forced requisition of sheep and cattle on Martha's Vineyard.

This was followed by a succession of land maneuvers on the part of Sir Henry Clinton's New York forces. One or two transfers of men appeared to threaten serious consequences; other marches seemed designed to tease the Americans and keep them uneasy. Washington shifted some of his troops to deal with anything that might be involved in the landing on September 24 of strong British reinforcements at Powles Hook, but force without vigilance was vain. On the night of September 27/28, Col. George Baylor and the troopers of his small regiment were surprised at Old Tappan and were destroyed as a fighting force. A simultaneous demonstration at Dobbs Ferry necessitated a general alert, dictated the opening of Field Headquarters at Fishkill, and gave Washington an uncomfortable two weeks before the Redcoats withdrew. Washington had to face an organized protest by no less than 213 officers who felt that Congress was denying them a decent life and was stingy to the men who had led regiments that had been disbanded or consolidated. Attempted adjustment of disputed seniority in the artillery led to violent protests by two of the best-known artillerists of the Army, Lieut. Col. Eleazer Oswald, who resigned, and Col. John Lamb of New York, who fumed but stuck to his guns.

Other soreness and hearthburning was connected either with the old bickering over rank and seniority or with the peculiarities of ambitious men. Mifflin had tendered his resignation; Charles Scott, a useful Brigadier, was talking of retirement. Lafayette created a sensation and made himself ridiculous by sending a challenge to the Earl of Carlisle, head of the British Peace Commissioners who still lingered vainly in America. The Marquis accompanied his theatrical gesture with a request for a furlough in order that he might return to France and survey the opportunities of service there and in Canada. Congress poured on the unction of formal thanks and yielded to his persistent application for the reward and compensation of his aides. Kalb was irritatingly maladroit in asking promotion for French officers; Thaddeus Kosciuszko was anxious to serve with Gates, was jealous of Duportail's control and was retained with difficulty in his assignment at West Point. Count Pulaski several times showed himself defiantly undisciplined, but because he was stationed in or near Philadelphia, his behavior exasperated the Delegates more than it troubled Washington.

Everything locked together in one bewildering puzzle of personnel, equipment, supplies, finance and resources in the early autumn of 1778. British ship-movements were as baffling as ever. Gates interpreted rumors to forecast an attack on Boston, an offensive that seemed improbable to Washington. Various observers thought the enemy was preparing to attempt the subjugation of South Carolina. President Laurens shared this view and doubtless sponsored in Congress the election of Benjamin Lincoln to succeed Robert Howe in command of the Southern Department. Virginia and North Carolina were called upon to supply militia reinforcements. Washington's own estimate of Clinton's plans shifted with events,

but when intelligence was received in mid-October of contemplated or actual embarkation of as many as five or six thousand troops in New York, he concluded that some of these regiments were bound for the West Indies and some for South Carolina. At the same time, he conceded something to the fears of New England and increased Gates's force by three brigades, and then on October 23 he ordered McDougall eastward. Gates was authorized, at discretion, to proceed to Hartford but not to go farther until it was certain the British were bound for Massachusetts. A week passed without news. Then Washington learned of a resolution of the Delegates in Philadelphia that directed him "to order Major General Gates forthwith to repair to Boston." This made no real difference, but the action of Congress aroused the jealousy of Sullivan, offended the pride of Heath, and stirred antagonism between the more belligerent of Gates's supporters and Washington's. In this temporary, half-concealed renewal of strife, the recuperated Conway had a hand—perhaps his last disservice to America—by again presenting Gates as the persecuted savior of the country. The victor of Saratoga was left idle and isolated when the "scare" of an invasion of New England died away quickly.

Washington awaited disclosure of British plans and returned to sharpening dull tools by working the treadle of the old grindstone of disciplinary routine. Other duties of the autumn tried both his heart and his judgment. Because of the shortage of flour in New England, the "convention Troops" of Burgoyne's army were sent to Charlottesville, Virginia; numerous proposals for action against hostile Indians were canvassed and rejected or deferred; preparation was begun for a large raid into Canada but laid aside as impracticable in winter. Scarcely had this scheme been abandoned when Washington received on November 4 the text of a detailed plan for a joint French and American invasion of Canada in 1779. This had been considered by Congress, which had voted to send a copy of the plan to Benjamin Franklin and another to Washington with instructions to communicate it to Lafayette. It was not wise, Washington reasoned, to disclose to a citizen of any other country the considerations that might be decisive in passing judgment on the undertaking. Although Lafayette spoke of the project as if it had originated with him, Washington thought it might have emanated from the court of France and he examined it most carefully. His conclusion was that France and America jointly would not have sufficient strength for the conquest of Canada in 1779.

The nearer puzzle of British strategy continued to irritate and baffle the American commander. He had to confess: "I am every day more and more at a loss." Knox complained: "we cannot draw a conclusion of what will be done by what [the British] ought to do, for they often act directly against their own interest." Washington had thought Clinton and Howe might have been waiting on the result of the Peace Commissioners' efforts but when the failure of that venture was manifest, the armed forces of King George still nodded by their campfires or looked vacantly from port-holes. In disgust Washington wrote of his adversaries: "They are indecisive and foolish."

Still another puzzle now was added to the mystery: D'Estaing left



a rain that did not relent for a second. Washington's Continentals had learned to defy the worst northeasters that swept in from the North Atlantic, but this time they were caught with forty rounds of ammunition in their cartridge boxes. The better containers turned the rain; the others proved worthless against a long-continued, searching deluge. Before the day ended, Washington was told that tens of thousands of rounds had been ruined and that many regiments could not fire a shot. It was the first time in his experience as Commander-in-Chief that "the whole safety of the Army," as Washington later wrote the Board of War, depended in action on the "goodness" of a simple and familiar accouterment. There was no immediate hope of drying any of this ammunition, because the rain continued all night and most of the next day. Washington's men had no shelter and little food; no less than one thousand of them were barefooted. Opposite the dripping, woebegone American columns the British, moreover, maneuvered as if they intended to envelop both flanks and gained such definite superiority of position that on the nineteenth, though the day was lovely and the wind from the northwest, Washington again decided to recross the Schuylkill by way of Parker's Ford. He left on the British side of the stream the Brigade of Smallwood and the Division of Wayne, who then were separated but were to make common cause in harassing the enemy's flank and rear and especially in trying to cut off the British baggage.

On the evening of September 26 Wayne encamped his small Division near Paoli, about twelve miles from Philadelphia. During the night three British regiments made a skillful approach, attacked furiously and, in a short time, scattered the division. Wayne lost at least 150 killed, captured or wounded.

The disaster to Wayne cost the Army experienced troops and accelerated the disappearance of militia who, as always, quickly yielded to fear. Washington felt that he must be wary of every move of the British. In the eyes of Nathaniel Greene, the Commander-in-Chief seemed to be drifting back into the hesitation of mind that had plagued him before the fall of Fort Mifflin. A newcomer, Gen. Johann Kalb—the Baron de Kalb—he styled himself—wrote:

Washington is the most amiable, kind-hearted and upright of men; but as a General he is too slow, too indolent and far too weak; besides, he has a tinge of vanity in his composition, and overestimates himself. In my opinion, whatever success he may have will be owing to good luck and to the blunders of his adversaries, rather than to his abilities. I may even say that he does not know how to improve upon the grossest blunders of the enemy. He has not yet overcome his old prejudice against the French.

The concern of Kalb and Greene doubtless was shared by other ranking officers not quite so self-confident, but actually at this time Washington was almost as hopeful as he was cautious and apparently of doubtful mind. He believed that time would bring him reinforcements with which to meet the British, even if the enemy occupied Philadelphia. He successfully resisted an effort of Congress to take troops from him and use them in the construction of defences on Delaware River. He sought to hasten the 2500



men called from Putnam and to draw to him other contingents. Until reinforcements assembled Washington could do no more than keep vigilant, render difficult the British passage of the nearby watercourses and repair, as far as time permitted, the manifest weaknesses of his command.

The worst and most pressing of these was in the light horse. Washington had hoped that Joseph Reed would accept the command of the mounted arm, for which he had shown aptitude; but after Reed had declined in June, Washington deferred action. He gradually became convinced that if the cavalry were brought together and employed as a unit they might prove a powerful instrument. This decision had been due, in considerable measure, to the persistence of Count Casimir de Pulaski, a Polish officer who had come to Headquarters with letters from the American Commissioners in France. When Pulaski described how he had used cavalry in a Polish uprising, the American commander had concluded that the leadership of the American troopers might make that officer "extremely useful." A letter to that effect had been written Congress in August. Pulaski most unwisely had imperiously sought rank subordinate only to that of Washington and of Lafayette. This had created a prejudice against him, but September 15 Congress created the post of "Commander of the Horse," with rank of Brigadier, and elected Pulaski to it. If Pulaski succeeded in winning the support of the cavalry colonels, the light horse might strike many a stout blow to aid the infantry when—or did Washington have to say "if"—the footmen could find shoes for bad roads and clothing for wintry bivouacs.

That dark contingency was deepened almost immediately. The danger to Philadelphia had compelled the removal to magazines in less exposed towns all stores not immediately required in the city. Ten days after the Battle of the Brandywine the Americans concluded not only that Howe had heard of this transfer but also that he knew the particular value of supplies deposited in Reading. A march begun on the twenty-first seemed to be directed straight at that new base. Washington shifted his right in the same direction, whereupon the British reversed their march, slipped back down the river and on September 26, unopposed, moved into Philadelphia with the easy air of proprietorship. The American commander had been outmaneuvered so easily that the sole immediate question became that of where he should place and how he should employ his troops now that he had lost the largest American city in a manner more humiliating, if possible, than that of his forced abandonment of New York.

As he waited about six miles north of Parker's Ford on the Schuylkill for reinforcements, Washington and his senior officers had an astonishing experience: they found that British capture of the city meant little compared with what they had feared in the autumn of 1776 the fall of Philadelphia would involve. Now that the calamity had fallen, it was manifest that the course of the campaign had lessened the importance of Philadelphia. The British found there virtually no public property of value. The city was a shell. To some it might be a symbol, but it no longer contained the living organism of independence. Washington's soldiers had come to regard the fall of Philadelphia as inevitable and they did not permit it to dampen a spirit that was rising again now that tired men were rested. A weightier



most galling part of which was put on his shoulders by men who wished to leave the Army.

No particular regret was recorded when Joseph Spencer resigned the Rhode Island command and his commission as Major General, but as neither Putnam nor Heath was acceptable in his stead, Washington had to send Sullivan and with no guarantee that Congress would elect an additional officer of divisional rank. At the time the command in Rhode Island was being discussed, it was apparent that a change would be necessary in New York also. On March 16, McDougall was named to relieve Putnam whose standing as a commander was alleged to have been destroyed by indolence, ignorance and patent incompetence. Among field and company officers the "rash of resignation" had become a disease that menaced and might prove mortal. It was especially severe in the cavalry and in the Virginia regiments but was so nearly pandemic that Washington estimated the number of resignations at more than two hundred within eight months.

The Count Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette became problems. Pulaski spoke no English, did not understand Americans and soon found himself in so much difficulty that he resigned the general command of the cavalry and successfully solicited permission to organize an independent corps, in which he was authorized by Congress to enlist deserters if Washington approved. Washington had no intention of allowing this. The Commander-in-Chief consequently was surprised and provoked to learn, a little later, that Pulaski had been recruiting among prisoners of war. It was in part because of Pulaski's mishandling that Washington saw little prospect of having the cavalry take the field in the spring, though there was reason to hope for good performance by young Harry Lee who was promoted to Major and entrusted with recruiting and directing independently two companies of light dragoons. Lafayette was a problem of a different sort. He was able, diligent, appreciative and almost embarrassingly affectionate. At the same time he was ambitious and so insistent on the avoidance of any impairment of what he considered a high reputation that after the failure of the irruption into Canada, he had to be nursed and coddled by Congress and by Washington.

When all the whims and frailties and derelictions of malcontents were added to the doubts of the campaign, Washington still found hope for America in the performance of two men that spring, one a newcomer and the other an old lieutenant with a changed assignment. On February 23 an attractive German soldier had come to Valley Forge with letters from President Laurens, who introduced him as "Baron Steuben" and explained that Congress had voted its thanks for the gentleman's tender of service as a volunteer and had directed him to report to Washington. Washington's questions elicited the admission that Friedrich von Steuben, who said he had been a Lieutenant General in the service of Frederick the Great, was interested in the training of troops and would be glad to receive the rank and pay of a Major General, though he did not desire the command of a division.

The apparent candor, the asserted rank and the delightful personality of Steuben prompted Washington to approve a temporary arrangement

which soon created confidence in the character, equipment and zeal of the Prussian. Within little more than a fortnight, Washington detached one hundred men as a supplementary Headquarters Guard and assigned them to Steuben for training. By the end of another week Washington was writing of Steuben as a "gentleman of high military rank, profound knowledge and great experience in his profession," who was to be "at the head" of a "department of inspection." Washington announced that Steuben "[had] obligingly undertaken to exercise the office of Inspector General" and, until the pleasure of Congress was known, was to be obeyed and respected in that position. Congress soon approved and made him a Major General.

While Steuben was introducing uniform and expeditionary maneuver, Washington saw that better equipment and transportation would be made available to the Army through the skillful, industrious and military approach of Greene to his new duties as Quartermaster General. Hampered as Greene was by the resignation of Mifflin's deputy, he proceeded to employ to advantage the business experience of able new assistants and devote his energies to what he knew to be a task of great complexity.

Training under Steuben and the improvement of the quartermaster service by Greene soon could be left to the men in charge. Sound methods were solving a few of the difficulties that had baffled Washington's previous attempts. An arrangement by which hides were bartered for shoes worked out surprisingly well and, by the end of April, supplied footgear for most of those in painful need. Nakedness was not yet covered. The Clothier General was regarded by some officers as arbitrary and inefficient and was increasingly unpopular. As for provisions, Washington was able on March 1 to thank the Army for the patience it had shown during the days of shortage, which Commissary officers appeared to have overcome. Congress now was nervously concerned over the failure of the Commissary and no longer was disposed to defend the system disastrously adopted in 1777. Wadsworth was prevailed upon to become head of the purchasing division under amended regulations. Soon the word from optimistic officers was, "we fare much better than heretofore," though it was undeniable that life in the camp still was meager, uncertain and dirty.

A little later in the spring, evidence of jealousy of the Army on the part of a certain element in Congress led Washington to protest:

... without arrogance or the smallest deviation from truth it may be said that no history, now extant, can furnish an instance of an Army's suffering such uncommon hardships as ours have done, and bearing them with the same patience and fortitude. To see men without clothes to cover their nakedness, without blankets to lay on, without shoes, by which their marches might be traced by the blood from their feet, and almost as often without provisions as with; marching through frost and snow, and at Christmas taking up their winter quarters within a day's march of the enemy, without a house or hut to cover them till they could be built, and submitting to it without a murmur, is a mark of patience and obedience which in my opinion can scarce be paralleled.

Perhaps it was not unnatural that some Delegates felt the jealousy of which Washington sought to make them ashamed by recounting the