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Author: Richard Frothingham

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THE

# COMMAND

IN THE

## BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL,

WITH

A REPLY TO "REMARKS ON FROTHINGHAM'S HISTORY  
OF THE BATTLE, BY S. SWETT."

BY RICHARD FROTHINGHAM, JR.,

AUTHOR OF A HISTORY OF THE SIEGE OF BOSTON.

BOSTON:

CHARLES C. LITTLE AND JAMES BROWN.

1850.





THE  
COMMAND  
IN THE  
BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL.

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The preparation of a History of Charlestown—the occupation of leisure hours—led to large collections relative to the military events which occurred in the neighborhood of Boston at the commencement of the war of the revolution; but as a full account of them did not appropriately belong to so local a publication, and as no work had been issued containing a narrative, in much detail, of these interesting events, it was thought best to prepare the volume now before the public entitled HISTORY OF THE SIEGE OF BOSTON. The old subject of the battle of Bunker Hill was so directly in my way that it could not be avoided; and as an apology for adding another to the narratives of this event, I determined to construct it, as much as possible, from contemporary materials.

In a faithful history of the battle, the question of command cannot properly be avoided. If it is not of the importance which many attach to it, still it is a curious question, about which there is much interest. It may be well, in the outset, to state clearly the matter at issue. The point is, was there a general officer detached to exercise a general command in the battle? There is great incongruity in the statements relative to this. It is stated (by Dr Whitney) that the detachment that fortified Breed's Hill was first put under the command of Gen. Putnam, that with it he took possession of this hill, and "ordered the battle from beginning to end;" or as another (Hon. John Lowell) states it, "General Putnam was detached for the purpose of fortifying it (Bunker Hill,) and Colonel Prescott was placed under his orders." On the other hand it is stated, that the orders to fortify Bunker Hill were given to Colonel Prescott, that the redoubt was raised by troops under his command, and that at no time during the whole affair did he act under, or receive an order from, a general officer. These statements are conflicting and cannot both be true. It is these rival claims as to Putnam and Prescott that constitute the delicacy and difficulty of the question.

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Whoever investigates this subject must determine the kind of evidence that will be allowed to influence, mainly, the decision. There are numerous statements of soldiers who were in the battle, which were made forty years or more after it took place; after antipathy or gratitude had biassed them against or for their old commanders; after what they had heard and had come to believe, had unconsciously become interwoven with impressions of what they saw; and at a time of life, too, when exactness as to details of what took place so long before in such a scene, could not reasonably have been expected. These relations bear, in some points, the characteristics of tradition. They mostly harmonize as to the movements of companies or regiments, but differ, irreconcilably, on points bearing on the question of command. An argument, or an array of evidence, of equal authority and of equal positiveness, may be drawn out of this large reservoir in favor of Putnam, or of Prescott, or that there was no general commander, or that there was no command at all in the action. A somewhat laborious study, and critical collation of these statements forced upon me the conviction, that they ought not to be relied upon as leading authorities, and that it was idle to expect to arrive at a satisfactory result by depending on such sources of information. Hence diligent search was made for contemporary matter. Much caution and discrimination, however, are necessary in using such material. The first rumors of events are as apt to be as inaccurate as reminiscences of those events prepared after years have elapsed. But these rumors are followed by relations more reliable, and it is material of this sort that is the most valuable for historical purposes. It was such material that was selected. There are, however, but few facts bearing on the question of command in the many contemporary documents I have examined. Yet what is gleaned from them is important. Among the documents are letters from Generals Ward and Putnam, and Col. Prescott. The facts they supply are on some points conclusive.

Still, in a volume designed to be a simple record of authentic facts, and in a narrative of the battle prepared without conscious bias for or against either Putnam or Prescott as the commander, a labored argument on the question of command seemed neither desirable nor proper; and in disposing of it, it was thought best to state concisely, yet fairly, all the evidence of a contemporary nature relative to both that was known, state the conclusion it seemed to warrant, and leave the subject with the reader. This course, right or wrong, it is proper to say, after a remark of Mr Swett in the pamphlet which has occasioned this publication, was suggested solely by reflection on the authorities; and the gentlemen to whom he alludes are hereby exonerated from all responsibility, even for a suggestion, on this subject. And the "invincible prepossession," which seems to puzzle Mr Swett, it will be indeed "useless to inquire" into because it did not exist. One great reason for treating the subject in this way was, that the reader, with facts thus before him, might make up a theory to suit himself. This plan was, accordingly, carried out. And though Mr Swett is pleased to say that I labored "throughout a large portion" of the Siege of Boston to prove a certain "insignificant abstraction," yet, if so, it was unconscious labor, and to say so is ascribing to the effort far too much design. The evidence is merely stated and left to speak for itself. The reader will find it to occupy seven pages.

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The conclusion reached is that there was no general commander, other than Gen. Ward, of the Bunker Hill battle. After quoting the evidence that bears in favor of Colonel Prescott, the following statement is made:

—"The conclusion warranted by this evidence is, that the original detachment was placed under the orders of Colonel Prescott, and that no general officer was authorised to command over him during the battle." In other words, there is not only no evidence that a general officer was detached to exercise a general command, but contemporary authorities bear decidedly against such a conclusion.

Mr Samuel Swett has published a pamphlet entitled—"Who was the Commander at Bunker Hill. With Remarks on Frothingham's History of the Battle, with an Appendix," in which he labors to overthrow this conclusion, and to establish the position that General Putnam was the authorized and general commander. Mr Swett is one of the old partizan writers on this subject. He began to write at a time (1818) when there was much excitement relative to the battle. The Analectic Magazine for February of that year had an account of it; the Port Folio for March had General Dearborn's extraordinary article, which opened up the long, bitter, and not yet closed controversy about General Putnam; Daniel Putnam's able and interesting letter soon (May) followed, marked by curious anecdote as well as by the indignant rebuke which filial duty dictated; General Dearborn (June) issued his "Vindication" with its imposing array of documents; in July, Hon. John Lowell made his thorough defence of Putnam's character, in the columns of the Centinel, and Hon. Daniel Webster, in the North American Review, contributed an invaluable article, drawing with indelible lines the characteristics of the battle, and defining, with remarkable accuracy, the positions of Putnam and Prescott; the subject had got mixed with party politics, and for six months the press had teemed with articles on one side or the other. It was, then, at an unfavorable period for healthy investigation, and after such a surfeit of the subject, that Mr Swett "from his attention to military subjects," "consented to describe the battle." He commenced his researches in July, finished them in August, and early in September was ready to favor the public with his "Historical and Topographical Sketch of the Battle of Bunker Hill." This account made up, in great part, from oral or written communications of actors in the battle, and framed with the theory that General Putnam was the commander, was regarded as of a partizan character. It was immediately criticised unfavorably in the Boston Patriot, in a series of essays which subsequently appeared in pamphlet form, in which the main object is to show that Putnam was not even in the battle. Mr Swett has continued his researches, printed two editions of his history, and several times appeared in defence of it. His statements relative to the formation of the army and the battle have found their way into most of the books. It is no injustice to the authors of subsequent excellent accounts of the battle to remark—for it is acknowledged—that as to the details they do not go behind Mr Swett's account. The narrative in the Siege of Boston does. It is based, as much as possible, on contemporary documents, and, in its details, will be found to differ in many respects from those of the same period in Mr Swett's History. A study of the conflicting evidence relating to this subject, however, ought to excite charity rather than dogmatism; and it was no purpose in preparing the Siege of Boston to make of its pages a pillory of error for a respected pioneer enquirer. Let the language relative to him to be found there, say whether much was done at the poor business of disparagement, or whether just credit was withheld. Mr Swett, however, has had possession of this field so long, that, perhaps, it is not strange he should regard facts which fearfully disturb old opinions as errors; or that a conclusion as to the commander which conflicts with a prepossession which for thirty years has proved invincible, should be contested. But the spirit, tendency and object of the "*Remarks*" are too obvious to be misapprehended.

A publication thus by one who has made the Bunker Hill battle his special study, who has written more on it than any one, and whose opinions, hence, carry with them a certain authority, seems to demand a reply. Silence, under such circumstances, might either be construed into an insult to an older inquirer, or as doing myself the injustice of admitting the correctness of his strictures. Besides, those to whom I feel so deeply indebted for criticism as gratifying as it was unlooked for, on a volume, which gradually and unexpectedly grew to the form in which it appeared, and who have thus kindly commended it to the public, have a right to expect, that, when its integrity is seriously impeached, its author should show his vindication. Still, I undertake a reply with the greatest repugnance to controversy.<sup>[A]</sup> In doing it, and doing it after all, mainly for the sake of history, what is merely personal will be set aside as of little account. It is not of so much consequence to the public how a writer carries his head, whether sometimes under his arm or always above his shoulders, as it is how he does his work. Besides, discourteous personal allusions do not strengthen a weak cause, and are sure to mar a strong one.

It is difficult to observe method in dealing with this medley of accusation. Mr Swett's zeal for his hero is so ardent, and his imagination is so brisk, that he seems to have misapprehended the simplest language; and hence, quite unintentionally it may be, he ascribes to me views I do not express, facts I do not state, and opinions I do not hold. He is merry over mistakes that have not been committed, and is indignant at charges that have not been made. Where, for instance, in the Siege of Boston, is it written that the "great battle of Bunker Hill was fought on our side by a headless mob?" Where do I say that it is difficult to assign a "motive" for this conflict? Where is adduced "the most incontrovertible argument in the world," or is it even stated, that the army at Cambridge was "itself a mob?" What "mistake of law" is made where it is said that Warren had not received his commission? What charge is made against Col. Sargent? Where is it stated or intimated that General Putnam was "a mere volunteer" in the army at Cambridge? Where is it said that "he could not possibly" command at Bunker Hill, because it was an army of allies? Where is the sentence which reads that, had he been the commander, he would have "boasted of it," or have "publicly claimed" it? Where is that "large portion" which contains the attempt to prove that "General Putnam had no right to command Col. Prescott?" These allusions, and they might be increased, are to instances where the meaning has been misstated. Mr Swett does not quote the language he comments on, and I prefer to be judged by what is written rather than by what he says is written. Besides all this, and considerable attempts at ridicule, Mr Swett makes the serious allegations that I have been "grossly regardless of known facts," and have even "manufactured" history! Though age, among its privileges, cannot claim exemption from rebuke for such injustice, yet I deeply regret the occasion which requires controversy with one, relative to whom I had felt only respect, exchanged only courtesies, and written only commendation.

Before going to the question of command, it may be well to examine some of the errors which Mr Swett alleges the HISTORY OF THE SIEGE OF BOSTON contains.

1. On page 166 it is related that "when General Warren entered the redoubt Colonel Prescott tendered him the command; but Warren replied that he had not received his commission, and should serve as a volunteer." Mr Swett remarks on this as "Frothingham's mistake in supposing that Warren told Prescott, as a reason for not assuming the command, that he had not received his commission. This is a mistake of fact and law; Warren, according to General Heath, said not one word about his commission, and his want of one did not diminish his rights of office—a point that has been settled by the Supreme Court of the United States," p. 7. Mr Swett does not quote my language, and the reader cannot find any such "mistake of *law*" as he comments on in the Siege of Boston. This "point," therefore, need not be discussed. Now for the mistake of *fact*. Mr Swett had before him, when preparing his pamphlet, President Sparks's MS. copy of Judge Prescott's memoir of the battle, and knew this was my authority for the anecdote. But what does he mean? Who would expect, after such a charge, to find on page 32 of *Mr Swett's own history*, the following account of what took place when Warren entered the redoubt:—"Prescott offered him the command; *but he had not yet received his commission*, and tendered his services to the colonel as a volunteer!" And Mr Swett says that he got this conversation from Colonel Putnam and Dr Jeffries. After three editions of his history has he concluded that he mistook those gentlemen? Does he mean to ignore his own authorities? If so, the fact must not be given up, for Judge Prescott states it as from his father, and it harmonizes with the records relative to Dr Warren's appointment, as will be seen in another place. Is this the way my narrative is to be pronounced incorrect and then ridiculed? As Mr Swett makes himself merry at what he calls my mistakes, he remarks—"He sometimes, like St. Patrick, carries his head under his arm instead of wearing it on his shoulders," p. 13. We know it is said that *St. Denis* carried his head *in his hands*, and that the Anthropophagi had heads,

"—grow beneath their shoulders,"

but it would seem that *St. Patrick's* head must have been right when he did his great work for Ireland. Letting this pass—how was Mr Swett's head located when it worked out this double "*mistake of fact and law*?"

2. Mr Swett accuses me of charging Colonel Sargent "with disobeying Gen. Putnam's order for him to go on to Bunker Hill. This injustice to the reputations of Putnam and Sargent arises from the most inconceivable misconstruction of Col. Sargent's letter to us," &c. &c, p. 11. And after considerable indignant comment—nearly two pages of it!—Mr Swett returns to the charge, and says: "These are all the facts the author has for the assertion, that Sargent disobeyed Putnam's order to go on to Bunker Hill," p. 12. Now *where* is such an "assertion" made in the Siege of Boston? The reader *cannot find it*! Mr Swett refers to a note at page 168, but without quoting it. This note occurs where, in the text, an attempt is made to give a definite idea of Gen. Putnam's service throughout the whole affair, from the laying out of the works on Breed's Hill, to his retreat to Prospect Hill. One sentence reads—"Some of the officers not under his immediate command respected his authority, while others refused to obey him." It is to sustain this remark that reference is made to the following note:—"Captain Trevett, (Mass.) for instance, applied to Gen. Putnam for orders; while Colonel Sargent, (N. Hampshire) in a letter, MS., dated Dec. 20, 1825, writes that Putnam 'sent an officer to order me on to the hill, but finding I did not attend to his order he sent a second, who I took no notice of. A third came open-mouthed, saying,'" &c. This is the note referred to, *and this is all that is stated* about Colonel Sargent. Now who but Mr Swett names *Bunker Hill*? And *what charge* is made here? Let the reader look at p. 92 of the Siege of Boston, and say whether there was any disposition to do injustice to this brave officer. No such charge was ever thought of, much less made. It is one of Mr Swett's inferences. His indignation is gratuitous.

But the "*injustice*" I have been guilty of, Mr Swett says "arises from *the most inconceivable misconstruction*" on my part of Colonel Sargent's Letter. Now to show fully the height of this "injustice" and the depth of this stupidity, it may be well to let Colonel Sargent speak for himself. He was applied to by Mr Swett for information about the battle; and, in a letter dated Dec. 20, 1825, gives his story. Mr Swett, in this pamphlet, (Appendix,) quotes from the conclusion of this letter, but does not quote from the commencement of it,—doubtless relishing its details about fighting among the islands in Boston harbor far better than its details about Putnam and Prescott, and the Bunker Hill battle. It is proper now that the latter should be printed. I put a few words in italics. Colonel Sargent writes—

"Had General Ward marched the whole of his troops then in Cambridge to Charlestown not one of the enemy would have escaped, but instead of that he only walked Hastings's front yard the whole day. He ordered Stark and Reed from Medford, and those two regiments did all that was done that day, of any consequence, although the fatigue party stood their ground better than could be expected after a hard night's labor. *In my opinion, Col. Prescott is entitled to the honor of having the command* in his calico gown. *I doubt much if General Putnam was on the ground of battle for the whole day*, and that he had no regiment that I ever heard of. I made application three times that day to be permitted to march my regiment to Charlestown, but General Ward feared my post would be attacked, and for once judged right, for a large schooner, with from five to six hundred men, attempted to gain the landing, but the wind against her and the tide turning, she returned. *About 4, P. M.*, General Ward permitted me to march my regiment with one called his own to Charlestown, but too late to do any good. *Gen. Putnam, then on Prospect Hill, sent an officer to order me on to the hill, but finding I did not attend to his order, he sent a second, who I took no notice of. A third came open-mouth, saying Gen. Putnam says the devil of hell is in you all, you will be all cut to pieces.* The words were scarcely uttered when I was left with Lieut. Col. Ward and my waiter. I had before this received a scratch from a four pound shot—the same shot took off Lt. Col. Ward's cartouche box, and knocked down a subaltern behind him. I returned to headquarters."

This, Mr Swett confesses, is the only document relating to Colonel Sargent. Now with this as authority, what right has Mr Swett, as he does in his history, to put Col. Sargent under the immediate command of Gen. Putnam? What right has he to say, as he does in his pamphlet, that "Sargent found Putnam" on the top of Prospect Hill? As I read this authority, Putnam sent successively three officers to Sargent with an order which Sargent "refused to obey," but instead of joining Putnam, on Prospect Hill, he went to headquarters. It was a case where a *New Hampshire* officer declined to acknowledge the superior authority of a *Connecticut* officer; Sargent applied directly to General Ward for orders, but would not respect the orders of Putnam. The

last point is the fact stated in the Siege of Boston. So much for the "injustice done to the reputations" of these two officers! So much for my "most inconceivable misconstruction of Col. Sargent's letter!!"

But there is more to be said about *Prospect Hill*, and here it is necessary to carry a bit of war into Africa. Mr Swett in his history (Notes p. 4) quotes from a letter by Rev. Joseph Thaxter, in which this hill is mentioned, though in the quotation it appears as "*one of the neighboring hills*"!! This letter was dated "Edgarton, June 15, 1818," and was addressed to Messrs Monroe & Francis. It will do no harm to print, for the first time, the whole extract. It reads—

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"The writer yesterday saw Thos. Cooke, Esq. In 1775 he was a member of the Provincial Congress, and one of the signers of the sword in hand money. He was on the day of the Bunker Hill fight at Cambridge. He went down to Prospect Hill and saw the whole transaction of the day. He says that all was confusion, there was no command. That he saw Gen. Putnam, who did all that man could do to get on the men to Breed's Hill; that he appeared firm and resolute, thoughtless of personal danger, and that his praise was in the mouth of every one; that at that time nor ever after did he ever hear any one speak a disreputable word against him."

Mr Swett, in his history, besides suppressing the *name* of the hill, suppressed also the significant remark, "*all was confusion, there was no command.*" And he suppresses also Mr Thaxter's own opinion in the same letter, viz:—"As to military discipline and command there was none." Neither suited his purpose! To fit his theory exactly this letter of Thaxter's must be *garbled*!

On these two letters of Sargent and Thaxter, I remark, 1. They serve to show the character of this sort of authority, and how cautiously it must be used. 2. Here two manuscripts, so long unpublished, harmonize on one point. Sargent (1825) says that about 4 P. M. Putnam was on Prospect Hill: Thaxter's letter (1818) says that Thomas Cooke went on to Prospect Hill and saw Putnam, who did all man could do to induce men to go to Breed's Hill. Now Stiles (June 23, 1775) states that towards night Putnam went away from the action "to fetch across reinforcements, and before he could return our men began to retreat." 3. Sargent says Prescott was the commander, while Thaxter and Cooke say there was no command.

3. Here as well as any where, another charge of Mr Swett may be noticed, because it serves to show how far partizan feeling has carried him. He has nearly a page of disparaging remark on the history, because the name of *this same* Rev. Joseph Thaxter is not mentioned in it, and especially in connection with the celebration of the fiftieth Jubilee (1825) of the battle, when he made the prayer. Mr Swett, after remarking that he "looked in vain to find his name," says (p. 27) that, "The author has devoted twenty-two pages to this jubilee and monument, without one syllable to spare for the patriotism, eloquence, and unction of this most interesting relic of olden time, or for the mention of any religious service whatsoever on the occasion;" and again he remarks that, though I "dwell on Webster's eloquent address," yet there is "*not the slightest notice*" of any prayer; and *finally*, his pious indignation culminates in asserting that, "The neglect of all religious services on the occasion will be considered by all those who give credit to the author's history as a serious imputation on our national character"!! Well, our national character *certainly* ought to be looked after. But 1. As to the twenty-two pages of matter. The reader will find in them accounts of the early celebrations of the battle; of the first monument on Breed's Hill; of the origin and progress of the Bunker Hill Monument Association, and the only account of much length there is existing; a history of the building of the monument; a general view of the two great celebrations of 1825 and 1843, and of the Ladies' Fair; the cost of the monument, and a minute description of it! So much for this twenty-two pages about "this jubilee and monument!" Cannot Mr Swett state a thing right? 2. "A faint outline" only is presented of the great celebration of 1825; and of this, *the whole notice* in the text of the ceremony of laying the corner stone, and of the oration, *including* where I "dwell on Webster's eloquent address to the sovereign people," and even quote his splendid words, *makes ten lines*! But it is NOT TRUE that, in them, there "is *not the slightest notice of religious services*;" for the account concludes, (p. 345)—"*When the exercises here were concluded,*" &c. One definition of "*exercise*" is "act of divine worship," and Mr Swett may look into either Webster's or Worcester's dictionary as authority! Now the "Address" had been mentioned, and "exercises" after it, *manifestly*, do not refer to wheeling regiments, but imply, in *addition* to the address, *the acts of divine worship* that, in this Christian land, are common on such occasions. Even the language itself must be perverted to sustain such libel as Mr Swett has written! And those who wring out of this account "a serious imputation of our national character," must hate this character intensely, be most inveterate word-catchers, and twist language from its obvious import. 3. It might have been better to have stated that Rev. Joseph Thaxter made the prayer, but no want of respect for the memory of this venerable veteran occasioned the "neglect." Better this omission, however, than to have been guilty of garbling and falsifying the account of the battle the patriot left behind him.

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4. The next alleged error relates to the case of Captain Callender. Mr Swett lets his pen run as follows: "If any thing could be more wonderful than the author's mistaking one hill for another, when both have been before his eyes from his birth, it would be his adducing this case as one of disobedience, or a case of any kind to disprove that Putnam was the commander," p. 12. This indeed would be wonder upon wonder—if it were only true. But that I mistook Prospect Hill for Bunker Hill is one fancy; that this case of Callender is cited to disprove that Putnam was the commander, is another fancy. *Where* is it so "adduced?" Really Mr Swett's devotion to his hero leads him into strange misapprehensions. The reader will *look in vain* for such mistakes and citations in the pages of the Siege of Boston. Once more I ask, what in the name of common sense *does* Mr Swett mean? On page 164 of the Siege *this very case* is "adduced" among the things that bear *in favor* of Putnam, and *no where* is it cited against his "claims!" *The very report* made to the provincial congress, which Mr Swett accuses me of *neglecting*, was thoroughly studied, (*and Mr Swett knew it*) and is fairly quoted, and in favor of Putnam! Indeed this report, and the evidence given on the trial of Colonel Scammans were the main authorities for stating that General Putnam *gave orders* to the reinforcements.

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But the strictures on pages 12, 13, relative to Callender, were not enough, and so Mr Swett (p. 22) adverts to this case again, and says:—"But allow the gentleman, as in regard to Callender, to manufacture his own case,



grossly regardless of all known facts." *What case* have I manufactured? What "*known facts*" have I been regardless of? The chief thing that appears to be specified in this case is this:—"The author's declaration that Callender was tried for disobedience 27th June, seems to be a poetic license. Ward orders the court martial at that time, without the slightest intention of such a charge," p. 13. Why does not Mr Swett quote my language? But 1. He alludes here, I presume, to a remark (p. 185) of the Siege, when *the question of command is not alluded to*, but where an account is given of Callender, and it reads—"Capt. Callender, for disobedience of orders and *alleged cowardice* was tried June 27th." And again I say—"Captain Callender despised the *charge of cowardice*, and determining to wipe out the *unjust stigma*," &c. Now what sort of "license" has Mr Swett taken with my "declaration"? Something more than a poet's license, I fancy! 2. Any one would suppose, from Mr Swett's words, that Ward's order for a court martial specified what the charge was. Here it is—June 27, "The general orders that a general court martial be held this day at the lines, to try Captain Callender of the train of artillery. Witnesses on both sides to be duly summoned to attend a court which is to sit at 8 o'clock A. M., Col. Little president, Capt. Mosely judge advocate." What light does this throw on the matter? And *what must be said of the character of Mr Swett's appeal to it?*

5. Mr Swett, in denying that a portion of the troops refused to obey General Putnam, writes as follows:—"Now, we say with the utmost confidence, that, any few cases of cowardice out of the question, no military despot was ever obeyed with more implicit subjection than Putnam was throughout the battle, by every one, officers and men,"—p. 10. This, coming from so thorough an investigator, from a thirty years' student of the battle, is worth examination; though, had it come from another, it might be passed over with the simple remark, that it indicated more dogmatism than knowledge. Mr Swett, however, confesses that he is leading "a forlorn hope."

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Now General Putnam had little or nothing to do with the original detachment, if the two hundred Connecticut men, after they got to the rail fence, be excepted. There is no proof that he gave an order to it throughout the whole affair, but on the contrary, this is denied in the strongest terms. But his principal service was rendered in connection with the reinforcements, which arrived at the scene of action in the afternoon. After the first attack, he rode to Bunker Hill, and to the rear of it, to urge them forward. But they hesitated. He used every effort, especially, it is stated, at Charlestown Neck and on Bunker Hill, to overcome this reluctance. He ordered, entreated, encouraged and threatened, but all in vain. "The plea was"—I quote a report made in 1775—"the artillery was gone, and they stood no chance for their lives in such circumstances, declaring they had no officers to lead them." They could not be prevailed upon to go where fighting was, and so large bodies of the troops remained out of the action. This fact is one of the most reliable, as well as most discreditable, relative to the battle. In truth, the state of things on Bunker Hill and in the rear of it, during the afternoon, was more like positive disobedience, than like "implicit subjection." However it may have been at Prescott's post there was no such efficient command in other parts of the field as is expressed in Mr Swett's language, anything he has written, or may write, to the contrary notwithstanding. There was confusion when he leaves the inference that there was order. The evidence on this point is conclusive—overwhelming.

Thus Captain Chester (1775) states:—"Those that came up as recruits were most terribly frightened, many of them, and did not march up with that true courage that their leader ought to have inspired them with." William Tudor (1775) says—"They were discouraged from advancing." Rev. John Martin (1775) says—"During the whole or most of the action Colonel Gerrish, with one thousand men was at the bottom of Bunker Hill and ought to have come up but did not." Contemporary authority as decisively connects General Putnam with the reinforcements. This is not denied. Thus Daniel Putnam, his son, states that he rode to the rear "to urge on reinforcements;" and Stiles states that he left the field to urge them on. Mr Swett, in his history, has no such "implicit subjection." He relates (p. 35) the efforts Putnam made at Charlestown Neck to induce the reinforcements that reached there to pass across; and although he "*entreated, encouraged, and threatened*," he could only get "*some of the troops*" "to venture over." Again, when Gerrish was on Bunker Hill with part of his regiment, the men disorganized and dispersed, "Putnam"—*it is Mr Swett* who writes this—"ordered them on to the lines; he entreated and threatened them, and some of the most cowardly he knocked down with his sword, but all in vain!" Once more, p. 41, he says—"Putnam rode to the rear and exhausted every art and effort to bring them on. Capt. Bailey only reached the lines." The evidence as to the confusion is equally clear. John Pitts (1775) says—"There never was more confusion and less command." In Major Gridley's sentence (1775) emphatic allusion is made to "the great confusion that attended" the transactions. Captain Chester (1775) says of things on Bunker Hill near the close of the battle—"When we arrived there was not a company in any kind of order." But why multiply testimony on this point? Mr Swett himself says, in his history, p. 50—"Great allowance must be made for those unable, and those *unwilling to go on; the men went on or off as they pleased and when they pleased!*"

15

Now with such evidence—and this is but a tithe of what may be adduced—is it not surprising that such a claim of efficient command should be set up at this late day, with nothing but bare assertion to support it? If it were so, if there were this implicit subjection, this ready obedience, the enemies of General Putnam might ask with force, what they have asked in weakness—"Why, if he was so obeyed, were not the troops at the lines? Could he not have *led* them up?" To affirm that he was *obeyed implicitly*, by officers and men, and then to be obliged to admit that *those he commanded* were not in battle raging a *stone's throw off*, is to place the brave old general in an awkward position, a position he never filled in his life time. Mr Swett's zeal here lacks discretion.

6. Another mistake seems to astonish Mr Swett "by its magnitude, nay its sublimity." He says—"According to him, the great battle of Bunker Hill was fought, on our side, by a headless mob; and, to prove this, he adduces the most incontrovertible argument in the world, were it true, that the army at Cambridge, which had been for two months collecting and organizing under the able and experienced Gen. Ward, assisted by a host of accomplished veteran officers, was itself a mob,"—p. 3. No quotation is made to sustain these remarks, and *none can be made*. Nothing to warrant it can be found in the book, and it is enough to stamp it as glaring misrepresentation. I hold no such opinion. I adduce no such argument. It may be cruel to annihilate so much

"magnitude" and "sublimity," but I must state that they have no better basis than Mr Swett's imagination.

In opposition to this "mob" theory, Mr Swett goes to the other extreme, and affirms, p. 18—"That the army at Cambridge was regularly organized and consolidated under Ward, Warren, Putnam, and other officers in regular gradation, without any distinction in regard to the colonies whence the troops came." And this is repeated on p. 21, and again on p. 29. In fact this constitutes the foundation of one of Mr Swett's "incontrovertible" proofs that Putnam was the commander. It is strange that Mr Swett should venture upon such assertions flatly in the face of the most positive evidence. He makes no attempt to disprove the facts, first brought together in the Siege of Boston, (pp. 98 to 104) relative to the action of the colonies, and which were drawn entirely from contemporary MSS. and authorities. It is not necessary to repeat them here. They show that each of the four colonies commissioned its troops, supplied them with provisions, directed their disposition, and that it was not until after the battle of Bunker Hill that the Committee of War of Connecticut ordered Generals Spencer and Putnam, while their troops were in Massachusetts, to obey General Ward as commander-in-chief, in order that there might be "a due subordination;" and also advised the colonies of Rhode Island and New Hampshire to do the same respecting their troops. That the army (June 17, 1775) was regularly organized and consolidated is not true.

16

The evidence in relation to the want of organization in the Massachusetts army is ample. This army certainly cannot be said to have been settled under officers in "*regular gradation*." I have a report made to the provincial congress of Massachusetts, dated June 15, 1775, by a committee appointed "to consider the claims and pretensions of the colonels," which goes with much particularity into many cases, and recommends several to be commissioned, which was not done, however, until after the battle. *On the 21st of June* an important committee was raised "to inquire into the reason of the present want of discipline in the Massachusetts army, and to report to this congress what *is the proper way to put said army into a proper regulation*;" and on the next day, the congress ordered the committee of safety to present lists of persons worthy to be commissioned, "*that so our army may be organized as soon as possible*." The army regularly organized and consolidated! I beg Mr Swett will make himself acquainted with the facts, from authentic sources, before he writes again.

The old soldiers gave Mr Swett, when he prepared his history, better information than he writes in his last pamphlet. On page 11 (edition of 1826) he says:—"They (the troops) were strangers to discipline and almost *to subordination*. Though nominally organized into regiments, these were deficient in numbers, many of them only skeletons, and *their respective ranks not ascertained*. Some of the troops were yet serving as minute men, and the officers in a number of regiments *were not yet commissioned*." Again, p. 14: The Americans "were unable to appreciate the necessity of discipline or to understand THE UNORGANIZED STATE OF THE ARMY IN EVERY DEPARTMENT!!" But in 1850 the same writer has it that this same army was "*regularly organized and consolidated*," and in "*regular gradation*." It really seems only necessary to adduce Mr Swett's facts to correct Mr Swett's imagination.

17

The reminiscences of the veterans go so far in this direction as to border even on injustice to the army, if they do not make it a mob. Thus, Gen. Dearborn states that "nothing like discipline had entered into the army," and Mr Thaxter, whom Mr Swett likes as an authority, writes severely on this point. He says:—"As to military discipline and command (in the battle) there was none; both officers and men acted as volunteers, each one doing that which he thought right." \* \* "At that time our army was little better than a mob, without discipline, and with little command till General Washington came, and Gates, and gave it some regularity." It would be quite easy to increase quotations of this character. But this will answer. It conveys a very incorrect idea of the army to say that it was a mob, but it is as incorrect to say that it was regularly organized and consolidated.

7. Mr Swett, p. 16, writes—"We are delighted to discover, at last, something amusing in one of the author's mistakes. He says Putnam had the command of a regiment, because he was complimented with the empty title of colonel of a particular regiment," &c. &c. And then follows nearly a page of matter in which "signing humble servant" in letters, "the king of Prussia," "the virgin Mary," "wolves heads," figure, along with surmises about my "hallucination," and my ideas about "the odd notion" of "perdition," and of "the head of the wolf Putnam slew." Here, as usual all through the pamphlet, if I am quoted at all, it is with gross injustice. But what *is* all this for? What is the *offence*? I am *really* at a loss to know what *it is*. On page 100, the action of Connecticut is stated, and that the regiments of Spencer and Putnam, and part of Parson's, were ordered to Cambridge. Will *this* be contested? On p. 168, it is stated that Putnam "was in *command of the Connecticut troops* stationed at Cambridge," and in another place are specified, the regiments and parts of regiments that were here. Will *this* be disputed? Again, I state, p. 168—"No service was more brilliant than that of *the Connecticut troops* whom he (Putnam) *was authorized to command*." Again, p. 188—"The *Connecticut forces at Cambridge were under the command of General Putnam*." Is there any thing wrong *here*? What *is* there then so *amusing*? What has drawn forth nearly a page of *such* attempt at ridicule? Is it that I name the *undoubted fact* from the records of the Connecticut assembly, that General Putnam *had a regiment*? Has Mr Swett forgotten how he *commences his own account of the battle*? His first paragraph, p. 18, reads—"The same order issued for one hundred and twenty of *Gen. Putnam's regiment*, and Capt. Gridley's company of artillery with two field pieces;" a statement, by the way, nearly all wrong: for "the same order" for Prescott's, Frye's, and Bridge's regiments to parade (see Fenno's MS. Orderly Book,) 1, did *not* embrace the Connecticut men; 2, nor Gridley's company; 3, there were *two hundred men*; and 4, they were *not* all taken from "Putnam's regiment"—four errors in less than three lines! But to return. Once more I ask, what is the *mistake* I have committed about Gen. Putnam's regiment? What is there so *amusing*? Where is the point of the ridicule?

18

Mr Swett throughout his pages has much matter rather personal, which may pass for what it is worth. He supposes how I would write on "*chemistry*" and "*astronomy*;" he compares me to a character Colman has in his "*Broad Grins*," and to a clergyman "fulminating" against the "*flaunting top-knots our foremothers wore*;" and he accuses me of mooted questions "*on a par with that of free agency or the origin of evil*." It is not,

however, necessary even to specify other such matter. He makes President Adams, Sen., and Judge Tudor, after failing "*so egregiously*" on a certain question, jump into a "*quickset hedge*," and ascribes to me a power of *following* them with my "*eyes shut*." I feel honored in being put in such society, and as yet suffer no inconvenience from the place we occupy. But one remark I protest against. On p. 10 he says we are writing on a subject technical, and "concerning which *both of us confess* we know *little or nothing*." Here I claim at least the privilege of the dying. Positively, Mr Swett has no authority to act as my confessor. And how a person, who, in 1818, stated that "from *his attention to military subjects*," he consented to describe the battle, and who since, has had a thirty years' study of it, can in 1850 "*confess*" that professionally, he knows "*little or nothing*" about it, seems "*most inconceivable*."

The errors that have been examined appear to be the most material which Mr Swett has specified, though he names others, and even grows desponding over their number. He remarks, p. 10—"We have made the supposition of the author's fundamental error being solitary; but errors, like misfortunes, never come alone. The lost traveller who wanders from the right road enters a boundless field of aberration, and at every step plunges deeper into a chaos of mistakes." The right road in this case is probably the beaten path of Mr Swett's history, and every step from it is aberration and a plunge deeper into "chaos." The reader can judge of the nature of some of these mistakes. Others are of like character. It is however, entirely inadmissible that facts resting on contemporary documents are to be proved errors by the recollection of aged people. Is it not a waste of words to refute charges based on this sort of proof? I have aimed to give a faithful relation of facts, and on this score fear no investigation and ask no quarter. But more of this in another place.

But in spite of this endeavor to state things exactly, it would be strange indeed if the "*Siege of Boston*" did not contain errors, for what book is without them? As yet none of much importance have been pointed out, though I should thank any one who will inform me of such as there are and should be glad to correct them. Two may be here acknowledged: one on page 135 where "*to a slough*," should read "*towards a slough*." I regret to have met with no particular contemporary description of the entrenchments, *and hence quoted Mr Swett's words*, and this error was copied from his History! (This quotation is acknowledged on p. 135 of *Siege of Boston* as from p. 20 of his History.) Another error is on page 164, where "*riding down the hill*" should read "*going down the hill*," an error inadvertantly made in copying for the press. *Long before* Mr Swett printed his pamphlet he *knew how these errors occurred*, and also knew *they were acknowledged and corrected* for a subsequent edition of the *Siege of Boston*. What more could be done?

19

When this is considered let the reader judge the spirit or purpose or honor that could have dictated Mr Swett's comments on these two errors. 1. Of the breastwork error, he says—"By describing it as reaching down to the slough he has represented it as longer than it was, and has marred and obscured by this mistake one of the principal features of the battle," &c., &c., p. 5. Indeed! Is this so? Let both descriptions be examined and it will be seen who, in this, has "marred and obscured" this battle the most. The *Siege* says, page 135—"A breastwork beginning a short distance from the redoubt, and on a line with its eastern side, extended about *one hundred yards* north to a slough." The distance specified was taken by measure from Page's Plan—"to a slough" was taken from Mr Swett's History! The error is mostly corrected by the limitation. Now Mr Swett's description (History, p. 20, 1823 edition) reads—"A breastwork ran in a line with it *north down to the slough*." The error here has no corrective! My breastwork runs only "*about one hundred yards north*." Mr Swett's breastwork *runs north down splash to the slough*,—marring and obscuring (*he says*,) the principal features of the memorable Bunker Hill battle! But really he is altogether too severe on his mistake! 2. On the other error Mr Swett writes—"As if purposely to declare he did not think anything relative to Putnam deserving of ordinary care or attention, he says—"This report states Callender was riding down the hill, when there is not a syllable of the kind," p. 13. Now, 1st, the words put upon me between quotation marks are not mine. This is not what I say. The statement in the *Siege*, p. 164, is—"In the report (1775) made to the Massachusetts provincial congress it is stated that on Bunker Hill he (Putnam) ordered Capt. Callender, who was riding down the hill, 'to stop and go back.'" This statement, substituting *going for riding*, is correct. The exact statement of the report is that "an officer of the train was drawing his cannon down" Bunker Hill, when General Putnam met him and ordered him "to stop and go back." "He refused, until the General threatened him with immediate death, upon which he returned up the hill again, but soon deserted his post. Another officer, who had the direction of another cannon, conducted much in the same manner." And in another place Captains Gridley and Callender are named as being the officers. Now, by comparing this report with an article on Callender in the *Centinel* (1818), it will be seen that it was Callender "*who was going down the hill*." The sentence in the *Siege* is quoted simply to show that Gen. Putnam gave orders in the battle, and is *concise*, but it was written with "*care and attention*." I fearlessly appeal to the report to sustain this remark. Let Mr Swett look at it closely, calmly, and surely he cannot again write that "there is *not a syllable of the kind there!*" As though I had manufactured the whole statement! Here, then, an inexact quotation from the *Siege*, and a false statement as to fact, are prefaced by an illiberal, unjust and even wanton remark. Let the *Siege of Boston*, I had almost written *everywhere*, answer whether its author "did not think anything" "deserving of ordinary care and attention" relative to General Putnam. While Mr Swett is dealing out such rank injustice, accusing me of "sacrificing" Putnam's character, of "*racking my fancy*" to discover objections against "his claims," and I know not what else, it is peculiarly gratifying to me to be able to show the impression which the pages of this volume, as far as they relate to Putnam, made on a candid critic. An article on the *Siege of Boston*, in the *Philadelphia Bulletin*—understood to be from the pen of WILLIAM B. REED, Esq., the accomplished author of the *Life of President Reed*—after, I fear, too favorable a notice of my labors, reads:—

20

"For one thing we especially thank Mr Frothingham—his defence of Putnam from the miserable imputations which anonymous or irresponsible writers of a late day have sought to cast on his memory. He does it thoroughly, and shows that at Bunker Hill, as on all occasions where he had a chance, the old man valiant did his duty well."

What but partizan feeling could have dictated such gross and groundless attacks on the integrity of the *Siege*

of Boston as abound on nearly every page of Mr Swett's pamphlet?

Having thus shown what some of the accusations made against the History of the Siege of Boston amount to, I might here stop. If remarks on the Battle of Bunker Hill, to which I apprehended no intelligent inquirer would object, and a fair citation of the evidence on both sides, which it would have been grave neglect to have omitted, be excepted, the whole statement relative to the question of command is given in a few lines, and seemed to be such as the authorities quoted necessarily demanded. They will do it injustice who discover in it, or fancy they discover, any disposition to make out an exclusive hero, or to fortify an "invincible prepossession." The question really seems of little practical account. General Putnam acted throughout with that bravery that marked his nature,—at the rail fence and on the brow of Bunker Hill in the heat of the action, and in the rear of these urging on the reinforcements. Gen. Warren, armed with a musket, fought in the redoubt, where he remained throughout the action; General Pomeroy, in the same way, kept at the rail fence; Colonel Prescott commanded at the original entrenchments. How much would it add to the fame of either of these patriots, were it made out clear that either exercised, or was authorized to exercise, a general command? How much would it increase the gratitude posterity owes to their memory for their gallant conduct? With such views, even the zeal and positiveness, and injustice, of Mr Swett shall not make me a partizan. I have only gone where the evidence carried me.

21

But the question of the command—a really curious historical question—had to be met, and I endeavored to account for the incongruity of the statements relative to it, and to dispose of it, in a way, which, if free from non-committalism, should also be free from dogmatism. The candid must judge whether the attempt has been successful. Mr Swett is not satisfied with the disposition, and announces his intention as follows:—"It will be our duty to enter into a thorough investigation of this subject of the command." It may be well, therefore, to follow him, and see how thorough has been his investigation, how sound is his reasoning, and how satisfactory is his conclusion. There is matter bearing on this subject in the Siege of Boston, never before printed, never before alluded to, consisting of extracts from original letters from General Ward and General Putnam; an entire and most important letter from Colonel Prescott; copious extracts from Judge William Prescott's memoir; an important document from Rev. Peter Thatcher; Rev. John Martin's statement; a fine letter from Captain John Chester, a brave and accomplished officer, who was in the battle; to say nothing of various other contemporary MS. letters and documents referred to and quoted. It is rather a question of fact than of argument. The positive language of contemporaries has, at least, as much to do with it, as considerations relative to military rank. Now, whoever professes to thoroughly investigate this subject, and does not cite these authorities fully and fairly, and consider them candidly, makes an unfortunate mistake. How does Mr Swett deal with them?

Mr Swett first notices, for he cannot be said to quote them, the authorities that bear in favor of Colonel Prescott. He does not allege that they are inaccurately presented in the Siege of Boston, but complains that they are "left unexplained," and hence that they may "mislead" readers. Now the intention was to cite these authorities, relating both to Putnam and Prescott,—*leaving out the soldiers' statements*—as concisely as possible, and let them make their own impression. It was no part of my plan to stretch them, or shorten them, or twist them, or explain them, so as to sustain a favorite theory. Such work was left for others. Mr Swett has explained some of this testimony and what is the explanation? Passing by sundry inferences that are unwarranted, and sundry statements relative to Prescott, put upon me that I never made, it will be sufficient to notice his manner of dealing with the two Thatchers', Ward's and Scammans's testimony. The admirable letter of Colonel William Prescott is not in this connection, noticed or named by him! Mr Swett will find it, copied I think correctly from the original, on pp. 395 and 396 of the Siege of Boston! Neither does he appear to have *seen* Rev. Peter Thatcher's important statement. This, also, he will find, in the same volume, pp. 385 and 386! I commend them to his attention.

22

1. Mr Swett comments on the statement of Rev. Peter Thatcher as follows:—"The report of the committee of safety says—"The commander of the party gave orders to retreat from the redoubt"; and one of the writers of the report is supposed to have called Prescott 'the commander of the provincials.' That is, Prescott commanded the *party*, the *provincials*, who raised the redoubt, and those of them who fought there under him, till he gave them orders to retreat." But, 1, as to the character of this evidence. What *supposition* is there about this authority? *Supposed* to have called Prescott the commander! I print from the original a statement made by Rev. Peter Thatcher in his own handwriting, under his own signature, relative to his own account of the battle, which is the basis of all the accounts; and I state that the sheet on which this statement is written encloses a manuscript copy of this account, with the interlineations preserved, and that I found this at Worcester. Now this document—page 385 of the Siege of Boston—is either false, or it is true. If false, let Mr Swett say so; if true, there can be no supposition. It is as much a *fact* that Rev. Peter Thatcher says that Colonel Prescott was the commander, as it is that the battle was fought. 2. Let the authority bear as it will, even though it cut a theory at right angles, there is no such limitation about it as Mr Swett puts to it. Here it is—that part of it relating to the command:—"The following account was written by a person who was an eye witness of the Battle of Bunker Hill. Some of the circumstances the intervention of the hill prevented him from seeing, for he stood on the north side of Mystic river. What facts he did not see himself were communicated from Col. Prescott (who commanded the provincials), and by other persons, who were personally conversant in the scenes which this narrative describes." Such is the authority. Where is the limitation that Mr Swett applies to it? Mr Thatcher is talking about the *whole* battle. What right has Mr Swett to restrict his language to the party who raised the redoubt and fought *there* under him? If Prescott's *position* during the battle is confined to his post, the original entrenchments, it must be deduced from other circumstances and authorities, and not from Thatcher's words. If Prescott did not go to the rail fence, his sagacity saw the necessity of this new position, and his order occasioned it to be taken. But more of this is in the sequel.

23

2. Mr Swett next comments on the letter of General Ward. So important an authority required an exact quotation, but he introduces it as follows:—"Gen. Ward, in his letter to President Adams, 30th Oct., '75, says

that Bunker Hill battle was conducted by a Massachusetts officer," p. 6. These words are put in quotation marks. But whose language is it? Not Ward's, for he says, October 30, 1775,—"I think there has been no one action with the enemy which has not been conducted by an officer of this colony, except that at Chelsea, which was conducted by Gen. Putnam:" not mine, for this is an opinion on these words expressed as follows:—"General Ward's remark is decisive that a Massachusetts officer conducted the battle." Who, then, is quoted? There were no such words to quote. They were manufactured by Mr Swett.

And the comment is of a piece with the coinage. Mr Swett sees the difficulty—with these words of Ward to take into the account—a writer who desires to be accurate has to meet, if he ascribes to a Connecticut officer the command of the battle, but he removes it in the following curious way:—"Ward was endeavoring to make out a strong case for the Massachusetts against the southern officers. As he knew it was physically impossible for Prescott to have conducted the battle—because he was on foot, and militarily so; because there were generals and other officers older than Prescott on the field—he must have intended to designate himself or Warren as the conductor of the battle. Possibly he intended to claim the honor himself. The first syllable of the word "conducted" has been altered by the pen: he began, perhaps, to write the word "commanded," but, recollecting that he could not claim the command, altered it into "conducted," p. 7. This twisting and syllable business will not answer. General Ward must be dealt with in a straighter way and with more breadth of view.

It adds force to this remark of General Ward, that it was written at a time when the circumstances of the battle of Bunker Hill were much talked of in the American camp. Nobody at this time (October, 1775,) thought of ascribing much credit to the plan of the enterprise to Charlestown. At this time it was no glory to have had the general command, or conduct, or responsibility of the Bunker Hill battle. But those who really fought this battle stood out then, as they do now, in envied prominence. An article in the Connecticut Courant, which does not say that Putnam commanded, had much to say in praise of the Connecticut officers, but not a word about such officers as Prescott, Brewer, Gardner, Parker, &c. "This account," General Heath writes October 23, 1775, "was detested by the brave Putnam." The trials, also, had for months been going on for the ill behavior of officers. The battle, then, was no obsolete affair. The camp was alive with talk about it. It is at such a time, that General Ward writes to John Adams, October 30, 1775—"I think there has been no one action with the enemy which has not been conducted by an officer of this colony, except that at Chelsea, which was conducted by General Putnam." The action at Chelsea took place in the previous May, in which General Putnam commanded, and led the men with great bravery. Now, General Ward was thinking over the actions there had been with the enemy, and thinking also of General Putnam's agency in them. Had there been, as to the Bunker Hill enterprise, an express agreement between Ward and Putnam—had Putnam been detached as the general officer to exercise the command—had he conducted so important a battle—is it probable, is it possible, that a person of the strict integrity of General Ward would have written in this way only four months afterwards? Is not the inference from his words a *necessary* one, that General Putnam did not conduct, or command, in the battle of Bunker Hill, as he conducted or commanded in the battle at Chelsea, but that it was a Massachusetts officer who performed this duty? It would not be inconsistent with these words to ascribe the conduct or command of the battle to Ward, or to Warren, or to Prescott—all *Massachusetts* officers—but it is utterly inconsistent with them to ascribe it to General Putnam, a *Connecticut* officer. This remark has this significance or it has none.

24

The way Mr Swett treats this authority deserves notice. He first garbles it, and then endeavors to evade its force. He tells, with due gravity, what General Ward began to write, but did not write and to crown all, tells who he probably intended to name as the commander, but somehow did not name. Mr Swett says that he meant to say "That Warren was the conductor or commander of Bunker Hill battle"!! Now really all this looks like "manufacturing a case." Is not this modest in one who professes to be so indignantly averse to such discreditable business? But Mr Swett, on this *fifth* page of twisting, surely did not so faithfully reflect as he did on the ninth page, that, "We were dealing with hard characters. Ward, Warren, Putnam and Prescott," he there rousingly writes, "are not rag babies, that an historian may bend and distort according to his fancy. The whole kingdom of Great Britain could not bend one of them," &c. Why then does he try to bend Ward's words to suit his theory, or distort them according to his fancy? This is no way to deal with authorities. This is trifling with history. Mr Swett must take the language of Ward as it is, even though unaltered it consigns a theory, nursed with parental care for more than a generation, to the tomb of the Capulets.

25

3. The remark of Colonel Scammans—that "there was no general officer who commanded at Bunker Hill"—made too as though it were a perfectly well known fact, is first denied, and then characteristically explained so as to mean nothing. "The author," Mr Swett says, "attributes to Colonel Scammans an anonymous note in a newspaper, written perhaps by the editor." Now if the note were written by the editor, it was not anonymous! But let this absurdity pass. Let any one turn to the New England Chronicle of February 29, 1776, read there a letter requesting the editor "to print the proceedings of the court martial, *with some remarks upon the depositions then taken*," and signed "James Scammans," Colonel Scammans, and then say how cool it is in Mr Swett to write that "the note was anonymous" or that it was "written by the editor." The remark, I repeat, was undoubtedly made by Colonel Scammans, and it is so plain that it speaks for itself. Besides this, Mr Swett charges me with omitting to mention here, that "Scammans, during the battle, sent to General Putnam, at Bunker Hill, to see if he was wanted," and that afterward "General Putnam came up and ordered the regiment to advance." Now truly this is not omitted, but it all appears on page 164 of the Siege of Boston among the things *bearing in favor of General Putnam!* Mr Swett however plies his ridicule here: but really I do not see the cause of it, without he designed it to rebuke me for the presumption of putting corn into his hopper. Up stream or down stream it seems to be all the same. Mr Swett's zeal for his hero has even a lover's jealousy. He frankly admits (p. 4.) that I treat General Putnam's character "with the utmost candor and kindness," but still to his mind, there is a heathenish heart in it,—for he says, it is done, "as animals destined for the altar are pampered, to be sacrificed at last." The renowned Mr Burchell would say *fudge*.

4. Mr Swett's remark on Dr J. Thatcher's statement,—a surgeon in the army—the first, I think, to make such a

statement, is still worse. He says Thatcher is unequivocal in favor of Putnam's command, by placing him at the head of all the officers in the following words: "Generals Putnam, Warren, Pomeroy, and Colonel Prescott were emphatically the heroes of the day." And Mr Swett writes this, too, when Dr Thatcher goes on to say that "though several general officers were present, Colonel Prescott retained the command during the action"!! Comment on this is unnecessary.

It is not very surprising that Mr Swett, after such a sham review of the authorities bearing in favor of Colonel Prescott, should venture to write that "in the whole of them there is not a shadow of an excuse" for my conclusion, one half of which he actually quotes, but the other half he characteristically suppresses! Is it then possible that such authorities, the whole of them, do not supply even "a shadow of an excuse" for stating that "the original detachment was placed under the orders of Colonel Prescott, and that no general officer was authorized to command over him during the battle?" What! When, according to General Ward, a Massachusetts officer must have conducted the battle; when, according to Judge Tudor, there was no authorised general officer on the field; when Col. Scammans says no general officer commanded; when Martin, Gordon, Thatcher, and Prescott himself state explicitly that the original detachment was put under Col. Prescott's orders; when James Thatcher states that, though several general officers were present, Prescott retained the command during the action; when Peter Thatcher states that he commanded; when John Pitts states that no one but Prescott appeared to have any command; and when Judge Prescott states that he had orders in writing, and that no officer exercised or claimed any authority over him during the battle! When a writer confesses that evidences of this sort "come like shadows, so depart," all that need be said is, that the difficulty is not with them, it is not that they lack character, directness, or substance, but it is in the writer's mind, it is what metaphysicians term *subjective*—perhaps it is a "*prepossession*" that is "*invincible*"—and it therefore cannot be reached and removed.

In direct conflict with this conclusion, however, is the statement made first by Rev. Mr Whitney in 1790, as from conversations with General Putnam—"That the detachment was put under the command of General Putnam; with it he took possession of the hill, and ordered the battle from beginning to end;" or as Hon. John Lowell (1818) states it:—"If General Putnam is to be believed, he first proposed the taking possession of Bunker Hill, and was detached for the purpose of fortifying it, and Col. Prescott was placed under his orders;" or as Mr Swett (1818) states it—"General Putnam having the general superintendence of the expedition," accompanied the detachment; or (in 1850) he went to Breed's Hill, p. 23, "under the express agreement with General Ward that he was to do so, and to have the direction and superintendence of the whole expedition." The proof to sustain this consists, 1. Notices in diaries, letters, or newspapers, giving the earliest rumors of the action, as Stiles' Boyle's, S. Ward's, Jackson's, Clarke. None of these are dated later than June 1775. Or, 2. Matter commencing with Whitney's declaration, May, 1790, and supported in 1818, and afterwards, by the statements of the soldiers and others; as, Putnam, Grosvenor, Dexter, Bancroft, Cleaveland, Allen, Trevett, Dearborn, Thaxter, Keyes, Smith, and Low. The character of this sort of evidence has been sufficiently dwelt upon. It is granted that a specious argument may be framed out of it, either in favor of Prescott or of Putnam, and still a more specious one, I am sure, in favor of the position that there was no command in the action. A re-reading of this matter has only served to strengthen a conviction of its unsatisfactory nature, and that contemporary testimony, of a proper character, ought to determine the question. As to proof of this sort, it will only be remarked, that I have not met with a *single statement*, in manuscript or in print, to the effect that General Putnam commanded in the battle of Bunker Hill, *between the dates of June, 1775 and May, 1790*. Mr Swett does not produce any such statement. On the contrary, every contemporary allusion to his conduct in the battle, I could find, has been faithfully quoted. But the same allusions to Colonel Prescott, which also might be supported by soldiers' statements, are of the most positive character, and they state that the orders to occupy Bunker Hill were given to him, and that no general officer interfered with his command. In accounting for this conflict of testimony, in page 166 of the Siege of Boston, I remark—"Without intending to question the honor or the veracity of any one, it is more reasonable to conclude that the facts communicated by the general (Putnam) have not been stated exactly, and with the proper discriminations, than it is to conclude that so many independent contemporary authorities are incorrect in stating that the first detachment was placed under the orders of Colonel Prescott."

Mr Swett has over a page of comment, as unjust to me as usual, on the extracts I make from Stiles' MS. Diary. President Stiles resided in Newport, and was in the habit of writing in his journal, very minutely, of the occurrences of the day; and in long entries, under the dates of June 18, 19, 20, 23, and 30, he writes of the all engrossing subject of this battle, as he could gather facts from letters, or from persons from the camp. The extracts before me are of much length, and they furnish an excellent and curious specimen of the rumors that went abroad relative to this battle, and show how cautiously this material must be used. From all this I selected two extracts, one to the effect that Gen. Putnam with 300 men took possession of Bunker Hill; another, that detailed *from his own lips*, his course in the action. Mr Swett does not quote these extracts, nor others fully. Why does he not do it? I here give a specimen. Stiles, June 18, journalizes: "A gentleman" from camp "this morning" "informs" among other things "that Col. Putnam is encamped in Charlestown, on Bunker Hill, and has lost one of his best captains, but is determined to stand his ground, having men enough," &c., &c. June 19. "Every one filled with the greatest solicitude." \* \* \* "Charlestown is in ashes." \* \* \* "We have various accounts—some that Gen. Putnam is surrounded by the king's troops—some that he repulsed them," &c. June 20. William Ellery comes in and shows copies of several letters from camp, one from General Greene, "dated Lord's day evening, (June 18) giving an account of the battle." "General Greene says General Putnam *with 300 men* took possession and entrenched *on Bunker Hill* on Friday night the 16th inst." I said (p. 164) this was a rumor from camp, and say so again. Why does not Mr Swett quote *the whole* of it? Why *leave out the 300 men*? Various other rumors, and also opinions of Greene's, are given. To return to Stiles. He writes: "Upon news of the action or landing the congress *instantly broke up* and those who had arms repaired to the field of action. *Hence Dr Warren's being in the action*," &c. Why does not Mr Swett quote? "Sterling gold," he says, "stamped at the highest mint in America!" But to go on with Stiles. The next entry I have is dated June 23, and here we *first come to authentic history*. *It is General Putnam's own account*, and it is so curious, *that it ought to be in print*. I quote here, therefore, all I have of this entry, which is from Bancroft's

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copy:—

"June 23, 1775. Messrs Ellery, Chang, &c., returned here from a visit to the camp which they left on Saturday last. They spent an hour with General Putnam in his tent on Prospect Hill, about half way between Cambridge and Charlestown. The general gave them an account of the battle last Saturday, said the number on one side was not ascertained, but the nearest account was, that we had about fifty (not sixty) killed, and about twenty wounded. We lost few till the retreat. We repulsed the regulars three times, fought four hours. The small arms and six field pieces made great havoc among the regulars till our powder failed. General Putnam said by accounts from within Boston, the regulars confessed their loss of killed, wounded, and missing, was about one thousand. Our body on Bunker Hill, where was the action, was about 1500 first and 700 afterwards. Putnam says he judged the regulars were 3000. There was a reinforcement within perhaps half a mile and ought to have come up to their assistance, but they must pass an open causeway, where the regulars kept up a heavy fire from floating batteries. *Putnam was not at Bunker Hill at the beginning, but soon repaired thither, and was in the heat of the action till towards night, when he went away to fetch across this reinforcement which ought to have come before. Soon after, and before he could return, our men began to retreat; for some imprudently calling out the powder is gone, the regulars heard it, and rallied again, and came on with fury, and forced the trenches, and then our people retreated leaving the heroic General Warren mortally wounded in the trenches. \* \* \** The army are in high spirits. They consider this scarcely a repulse, considering the damage they did to the enemy; and indeed, if, with the loss of 50 or 60 killed, our people killed and damaged the regulars more than a thousand, it is a wonderful Providence. The troops landed under fire of the shipping, then set fire to Charlestown in which were 300 houses, all which, but 2 or 3, were reduced to ashes and ruins. Then about 1 or 2 o'clock P. M. they marched for the attack, and continued it four hours till near night."

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Now it seems almost incredible that Mr Swett should have made the hard remarks upon me he has, pp. 14, 15, for selecting, of this entry, the *paragraph in italics* relative to General Putnam's personal service in the battle; and even ascribe to me a motive for quoting it that I did not dream of! One more extract from Stiles must suffice. "In June 30, Rev. Mr Martin visited me and gave me an account of the battle of Charlestown." "Mr Martin was in the whole affair from first to last." "He says that about 1500 went on Friday night and took possession of Bunker Hill, *under the command of Colonel Prescott.*" And this is the first mention of Prescott's name there is in such extracts of this journal as I have. Then follows several pages of details, some of which are interwoven in the narrative in the Siege of Boston. All I have to add is, that those who rely on such rumors from the camp as Stiles' first chronicles,—which however have their value as the life-like talk of the day—will be liable to frame just such an account of this battle as Humphries in his life of Putnam has, where (in the beginning) the original detachment is put under Warren, and in the end, the British pursues to Winter Hill, Putnam there makes a stand, and drives them back under cover of their ships!

In connection with this testimony in favor of General Putnam, Mr Swett finds what he calls "the most astonishing inadvertence of the author, though (bless the charitable admission) mere inadvertence we believe," p. 25. It consists in "never hinting" that in Rivington's New York Gazette, June 29, 1775, it is stated that 'Putnam on the evening of June 16, took possession of Bunker Hill, and began an entrenchment,' and this extract from Rivington was mentioned in a publication of ours, which he had among our documents," p. 25. I am not indebted to Mr Swett for a single contemporary document; and as for Rivington's paper, I examined the fine file of it in the rooms of the New York Historical Society, and made the extract, but found the same sentence in other newspapers, for they copied from each other. What an "astonishing inadvertence" it was in "*never hinting*" this, the reader may easily see by looking at page 124 of the Siege of Boston, for there the fact of such a statement being in the papers is given to show that Putnam was on the hill at night; and once more at page 164, where it is a *second time* named among the facts bearing in his favor, in the evidence on the question of command! Is Mr Swett's remark, however, "*mere inadvertence?*"

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The *only new piece of evidence* adduced is an extract from John Boyle's manuscript annals. Mr Swett says, He "writes in his diary, 16th of June, 1775, General Putnam, with a detachment of about a thousand American forces, went from Cambridge and began an entrenchment on an eminence below Bunker Hill." This MS., which I did not hear of until after the publication of the Siege of Boston, is not a diary written at the time. Certainly, Mr Swett must, at least, have known that the record about Bunker Hill battle could not possibly have been put there on the day it was dated, for it contains Gage's official account of the killed and wounded, and the American account from the Providence Gazette, which did not appear till *months afterwards*, and could not have been then known! And it requires but a moderate acquaintance with the newspapers of this period to see, at a glance, that this interesting MS. is a compilation mostly from them, and often, as in this case, in their language. Yet Mr Swett quotes this in a diary *written at the time!* The fact stated by Boyle is taken from the newspapers, and is given on p. 164 of the Siege!

To supply the place of this diary, thus struck away, I cheerfully quote a *real* diary, which I did not see until the Siege was in type, and which will answer Mr Swett's purpose as well as Boyle's, if not better. It is the account of Samuel Bixby, at the time of the battle a soldier at Roxbury. It begins:—"June 17, Saturday, Colonel Putnam, with a large party, went on to a hill in Charlestown, called Bunker Hill, last night to entrench"—and all through the relation, no officer is even named but "Colonel Putnam." The simple explanation of the whole of these early rumors, or reports, is, that from General Putnam's being so active during the day of the battle, the *report* went abroad, that the entrenching party went on under him; when the *fact* was that it went on under the orders of Colonel Prescott.

Mr Swett's statements about Putnam, Warren, Prescott, and the question of command, when brought together, make a singular medley.

1. He represents (p. 22,) that Putnam at last persuaded "the prudent Ward" "to grant him a detachment" "to meet the enemy;" and went to Breed's Hill under "an express agreement" that he was "to have the direction and superintendence of the whole expedition" (p. 23,): and he proves that Putnam was the commander by the

nature of the army, by his rank, and a third and fourth time, by his conduct in the battle, during which "there was scarcely a regiment, corps, or individual of the army that Putnam did not personally command, direct, or encourage" (p. 28.): for "he was galloping from end to end of the line, encouraging, directing, commanding every body." In fact "no military despot was ever obeyed with more implicit subjection." He was "the bright particular star, to which, during all the storm and tempest of the battle every eye was turned for guidance and for victory," p. 29. This is exclusive enough, dogmatic enough, and general enough, to satisfy any body. Here General Putnam, if words mean anything, is from first to last, and by special agreement, the authorized, sole general commander.

2. Mr Swett, however, states (p. 7,) that Gen. Warren "was on the field, vested with all the rights and authority of a major general;" and (p. 29,) "notwithstanding he declined to issue any orders, was authorized to do so whenever he pleased," and "thus was the authorized, and for many years the supposed commander." Knowing this, Ward, (p. 7.) "probably intended to say that he was the conductor or commander" in his letter. But (p. 29,) General Putnam was the actual, and *on Warren's declining*, the "authorized commander." Ward was (p. 7,) "doubtless ignorant of the fact that Warren refused to exercise any command on the occasion"!! But what becomes of the "express agreement" between Ward and Putnam? Was this contingency of Warren's declination in it? Was Putnam to have the whole direction only in case Warren did not choose to assume it? Is it for a moment admissible that General Ward did not know when he wrote his letter, who was detached to the command, who exercised it, or who conducted the battle? Is it not a direct attack on Ward's reputation to impute to him such disgraceful ignorance?

3. Mr Swett states (p. 30,) "Colonel Prescott was commander at Bunker (Breed's) Hill the night before the battle, and the next day till Gen. Putnam came on with the reinforcements; and during the battle, the commander at the redoubt." What is the authority for such a statement? If Dr Whitney, Mr Lowell, and Mr Daniel Putnam are exact in giving General Putnam's conversation, he stated that the original detachment was placed under his command, and that Colonel Prescott acted under his orders. This indeed must have been so, if General Putnam, according to Mr Swett, by express agreement, had the superintendence of the whole expedition. How then could Prescott have been the commander the night before the battle and up to noon the next day? If Putnam and Prescott had differed any time previous to noon on the 17th, then, according to this last theory, the responsibility of decision rested on Prescott. Was this in the agreement? Did a general agree to be commanded by a colonel? There could have been no such incongruity.

4. Mr Swett viewing General Ward as, in one sense, the commander, comes to the conclusion, (p. 30,) that, "There were then four who in some sense participated in the command of Bunker Hill battle"—not the exact truth, but nearer to it than any theory of the pamphlet. And he says, "It may be impossible to demonstrate who was exclusively the commander as to discover the author of Junius or the birth place of Homer." *Et tu Brute!* And alter so much "incontrovertible," "perfectly decisive proof," "express agreement," despotic command, and "implicit subjection" relative to Putnam? After charging me with treating his character with candor only to sacrifice it at last—with robbing him of the command and not enriching any one? Who is doing sacrifice here? Who is committing robbery here? Who is enriching any one here? However, Mr Swett is correct if he means that it is impossible, from the known evidence, to demonstrate who was exclusively the commander, for it all tends to show that there was on the field no general officer who exercised a general command. Such at least is the view that will be found to be taken in the Siege of Boston!

5. Mr Swett (p. 10,) says: "All the world knows that he (Putnam) did come forward and exercise the command most effectually from the beginning to the end of the engagement:" on p. 29, Mr Swett says: "Seventy-five years ago the battle of Bunker Hill was fought. Who the commander was has ever since remained a mystery." Now these two things cannot be. What "*all the world knows*" certainly cannot be a "*mystery*," i. e. a profound secret, (see Webster) on something wholly unknown. If Mr Swett clings to the mystery he must give up the knowledge.

Such are the conclusions on the subject of command in the Bunker Hill battle, of "an author in spite of himself," who "thirty-two years ago consented to write an account" of it, and who this year considered it his "duty to enter into a thorough investigation" of this question. History cannot be worth much that resolves itself into such a mass of absurdity and contradiction.

But there is something more serious than inconsistency to allege against Mr Swett's conclusions. What is the authority for the following, I think, *new* statement?—"Maj. Gen. Ward was the commander in chief of the army at Cambridge; Maj. Gen. Warren, the next; Brig. Gen. Putnam the third in command; and Col. Prescott, another officer of the army," p. 29. This is neither correct, *first*, as to the *general* army, even if it were "consolidated;" for General Thomas was the second in command; General Whitcomb ranked above General Warren; General Pomeroy probably (for he was an older officer) ranked above General Spencer, and Spencer certainly ranked Putnam. It is difficult to say who would have ranked as between Brigadier General Putnam and Brigadier General Greene. Nor *second*, as to that portion of the army stationed immediately at Cambridge, for Major General Whitcomb ranked above Major General Warren, and General Pomeroy ranked above General Putnam. Nor was General Ward, in either case, at the date of the battle, the regular commander-in-chief, excepting of the Massachusetts forces. But more about these officers in another place. The only strictly accurate thing in the statement is, that Col. Prescott was another officer of the army! Mr Swett's facts being taken from him his theory falls.

I have done with Mr Swett's pamphlet. A remark relative to his History needs justification.

It has been stated that the narrative of the organization of the army and of the battle of Bunker Hill in the Siege of Boston, differs materially in details from the account of the same events in Mr Swett's History. As an instance of this, as to the former, take the two statements of the action of Rhode Island,—selected because they are the shortest:—



"The Rhode Island assembly, April 25, voted to raise fifteen hundred men, to constitute 'an army of observation,' and ordered it to 'join and coöperate with the forces of the neighboring colonies.' This force was organized into *three regiments*, of eight companies each, under Colonels Varnum, Hitchcock, and Church, and placed under the command of *Nathaniel Greene*, with the rank of *brigadier-general*. One of the companies was a train of artillery, and had the colony's field pieces. General Greene, on arriving at the camp, Jamaica Plains, found his command in great disorder: and it was only by his judicious labors, and great personal influence, that it was kept together. In the rules and regulations for the government of this force, it is called 'The Rhode Island army.' They provide that 'all public stores, taken in the enemy's camp or magazines,' should be 'secured for the use of the colony of Rhode Island.' It was not until June 28 that this colony passed an act putting its troops under the orders of the general of the combined army."

*From Mr Swett's History.*

"Rhode Island had sent *a regiment* to Massachusetts imbued with the determined spirit of civil and religious liberty, which the founder of their state maintained through every peril. *Colonel Greene* was their commander, one of the most prominent heroes of the revolution. The elements of a soldier were so mixed in him, that his elevated rank among distinguished warriors was already anticipated. Under him were Lieut. Col. Olney, and Maj. Box, an experienced English soldier. An artillery company with four field pieces was attached to the corps."

And the variations, as to the details of the action of the other three colonies, are still greater.

The same thing will be found to prevail as to the battle. Take, as an illustration, the two first paragraphs of the two accounts.

*From the Siege of Boston.*

"On Friday, the sixteenth of June, the commanders of the army, in accordance with the recommendation of the committee of safety, took measures to fortify Bunker Hill. Orders were issued for Prescott's, Frye's, and Bridge's regiments, and a fatigue party of two hundred Connecticut troops, to parade at six o'clock in the evening, with all the entrenching tools in the Cambridge camp. They were also ordered to furnish themselves with packs and blankets, and with provisions for twenty-four hours. Also, Captain Samuel Gridley's company of artillery, of forty-nine men and two field-pieces, was ordered to parade. The Connecticut men, draughted from several companies, were put *under the command of the gallant Captain Knowlton*, a captain in General Putnam's regiment." p. 122.

*From Mr Swett's History.*

"On the 16th of June, 75, the sun fell with its full force on the American camp, the earth was parched up, but the vigorous frames and patriotic spirit of the soldiers were proof against its influence. With the advice of the council of war General Ward issued orders to Col. William Prescott, Col. Bridge, and the commandant of Frye's regiment, to be prepared for an expedition, with all their men fit for service, and one day's provisions. The same order issued for one hundred and twenty of *Gen. Putnam's regiment*, and Capt. Gridley's company of artillery with two field pieces." p. 18.

These extracts will serve to show the character of such variations between the two narratives of the battle, as will be found to run through them. Other paragraphs might be quoted containing things of far more consequence. The variations as to the parts individuals bore, are also important. To do justice to the actors, they should be named in connection with the service they rendered. With this in view, let the critical reader, as an illustration, compare the notices in the two accounts, of what the brave Knowlton did. Mr Swett's first and last mention of him, in describing the battle, is on p. 26, as follows: "While the enemy were landing, Putnam ordered Knowlton with the Connecticut troops, to take post behind a rail fence." Passing the correctness of this, it is every syllable there is about Knowlton, until p. 56 of the supplementary chapter, where there is, so far as this battle is concerned, only a general, but deserved, compliment to him. In the whole, the reader is not told that he had the command of the Connecticut fatigue party of two hundred, one fifth of the whole, or even went on at night. In the "Notes" of Mr Swett, his name will be found to occur twice in depositions. Now is not Knowlton's well won reputation as dear as Putnam's or Prescott's? With this, compare the notices of him on pp. 122, 134, 136, 151, 189, 190, of the Siege of Boston, which rest on authorities that are named. Before these details, or others that may differ *in toto* from Mr Swett's History, be unceremoniously shovelled aside as a "*chaos of mistakes*," I have a right to demand that the authorities on which they rest, shall go through the process first.

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It is then frankly admitted that the two histories, as far as they go on together, will not harmonize in their details. All that need be said on my part is, that an endeavor was made to frame the account in the Siege of Boston with care and with a partiality only for well directed effort, and lofty patriotism, and noble self-sacrifice, by whomsoever manifested, going directly to original authorities in all cases where it was practicable; and at a risk of being charged with pedantry, references are made in notes to authorities, especially where this battle is described, that will justify every line of the text. It is these that are to decide who is most in error. The appeal is cheerfully and confidently made to the candid and unprejudiced. But whatever the judgment may be as to my selection of authorities, I feel incapable of manufacturing facts, or of intentionally disparaging the services, or of doing injustice to the reputation, of any of the patriots who took a part in the great work of the Revolution.

Having thus done with Mr Swett, who really deserves much credit for his patriotic and indefatigable pioneer labors, and done, it is hoped, finally with controversy on this subject, this opportunity is embraced of making

a few remarks on the character of the army and the commanding officers of the battle of Bunker Hill. This is done the more readily, as it will serve as an occasion to-weave in additional contemporary matter, not in print, that may afford aid to a future enquirer in settling this question.

The organization of the American army besieging the British army in Boston at the time of the Battle of Bunker Hill, was peculiar. The Massachusetts forces, though all of them had enlisted either as minute men, or as part of the quota of this colony, were less regularly organized, perhaps, than the troops of at least two of the other colonies. Several of the colonels, and other officers, had not been commissioned, and their rank had not been determined. Up to this time, and all through the records and the documents of the Provincial Congress, the forces of this province are called "*The Massachusetts Army.*" General Ward's commission terms him the commander-in-chief of the Massachusetts forces, and he signs his name, June 4, as such. The troops of Rhode Island, under Brigadier General Greene, were also termed "The Rhode Island Army"—and "The Army of Observation," and all the captures by it were to enure to the benefit of the colony of Rhode Island. In like manner the Connecticut forces, under Brigadier General Spencer, (the senior officer,) and Putnam, were controlled by a Connecticut "committee of war" and all captures were to enure to the benefit of that colony. Rhode Island and Connecticut had not instructed their generals—June 17, 1775—to put themselves under General Ward. The troops of New Hampshire were differently situated from those of the two other colonies. The minute men who flocked to the neighborhood of Boston on the Lexington alarm, were advised by the New Hampshire officers to enlist in the service of the Massachusetts colony, until their colony could have time to act. These troops, then under Colonel Stark, were adopted by the New Hampshire Provincial Congress, (May 20th) and put under the command of Brigadier General Folsom. He did not arrive at camp until just after the battle, but he gave an order to Colonel Reed, whom the congress had also appointed colonel, to collect his regiment, a part of which was under Stark at Medford, and put himself under General Ward. The latter ordered him (June 15) to take post at Charlestown Neck.

The facts relative to the army, whatever bearing they may have on the question of command, show that it was an army of allies. The four New England colonies came together as equals, respecting each other's equality, and with no idea in one of claiming precedence over the others. The description of President John Adams is strictly correct, and is borne out by contemporary documents. "Massachusetts had her army, Connecticut her army, New Hampshire her army, and Rhode Island her army. These four armies met together and imprisoned the British army in Boston. But who was the sovereign of this united, or rather congregated army? It had none." And he goes on to remark, that the commanding officers of each colony were independent of each other. Hence Elbridge Gerry (June 4, 1775) writes "We want a regular general to assist us in disciplining the army." Hence the "committee of war" of the colony of Connecticut, to remedy this evil of the want of a commander-in-chief, on June 19th, 1775, considered the following important votes:—

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"On motion of the difficulties the army are and must be under for the want of a general and commander-in-chief of the whole body, raised by different colonies &c., and a due subordination, in consideration, &c.

"*Voted*, That his honor the governor be advised to give orders to our officers and soldiers to be subordinate and yield obedience to the general and commanding officer of the troops of the Massachusetts Bay, while they act in that province, and until the governor, with advice, shall see fit to order otherwise."

On the next day (June 20, 1775) the committee passed this order, when the votes were as follows:—

"An order subjecting our officers and soldiers to the command of the Massachusetts commander-in-chief, during their continuance in that province, or until further orders, was read and agreed to.

A letter to General Ward, informing him thereof, and endorsing a copy of said order, read and approved.

A letter to Deputy Governor Cook, of Rhode Island, informing him of the same, and moving him to do the same respecting the troops of that colony, read and approved.

A letter to the New Hampshire Congress of the like tenor and for the same purpose, also read and approved.

A letter to General Spencer enclosing a copy of said order of subordination, &c., read and approved.

And another letter to the same purpose, and copy, to General Putnam."

These facts certainly warrant the important inference, that there was no *regular* commander-in-chief; that the evil of not having one had been felt; and that it had been determined to apply the needed remedy, even as it regarded the four New England colonies. Besides this, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts (May 3) had *suggested to the Continental Congress* (convened May 10) the expediency of raising "a powerful army:" and on the 15th it had sent an express advising that body to assume the general direction and regulation of the forces besieging Boston. Thus it was before the army had been consolidated, before there was a commander-in-chief "of the whole body," before the ranks of its officers had been determined, and while it was in a transition state, that the Battle of Bunker Hill was fought. It was while the troops were under the control of the several colonies that had raised them, and before they had become as Washington's first order (July 4, 1775) terms them, "the troops of the United Provinces of North America." There was great want of discipline, and there were many irregularities, but it gives a very erroneous idea of the army to term it a mob; for even the hastily assembled bands that fought the British troops from Concord, on the Nineteenth of April, cannot justly be called an armed mob, but they were an organized power, set apart, and trained, to do the thorough and immortal work that was done that day. It also gives an idea quite as erroneous to term the army regularly organized and consolidated.

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The operations of this army were decided by its general officers,—Ward, Thomas, Whitcomb, Pomeroy, Heath, Spencer, Putnam, Greene, and perhaps others,—convened in council, and hence called "The council of war." The Massachusetts committee of safety had no power over it as a whole, though it was clothed with ample authority to control the Massachusetts generals. Thus when it acted in the important matter of occupying

Bunker Hill, it passed but an advisory vote. The ultimate, directing power was in the council of war. It is however stated, that the orders of the day were copied by all the troops, and that a voluntary obedience was yielded to General Ward as the commander-in-chief.

The immediate occasion of this battle hardly needs a passing remark. "*The commanders of the New England Army*" (the words of the committee of safety account,) received authentic advice that the British intended to penetrate into the country; when the Massachusetts committee of safety (June 15) unanimously recommended to the council of war to occupy Bunker Hill. This recommendation was complied with. Hence the building of the memorable redoubt. The object of the British was to drive the Americans from it.

The remarks that follow are not designed to present a narrative of the battle, but as suggestions that may aid in showing more precisely its character, and the agency that general officers exercised in it.

Artemas Ward, the commander of the Massachusetts army, graduated, at Harvard University in 1748, had been a firm and useful member of the general court and provincial congress, and had also seen service in the military line. He was major in the Canada expedition of 1758, and the next year was appointed colonel, but he had the honor of having it revoked by the royal governor on account of his prominence in the patriot cause. When forcible resistance had been resolved on, and the first provincial congress, (October 1774) took such admirable measures to keep the patriot cause free from any thing like mob action, it appointed him (Oct. 27, 1774) one of the generals to command, what then was very properly called "*the constitutional army*," or minute men, or militia, whenever the committee of safety should call them out to defend the colony. He was reëlected Feb. 9, 1775, and in a long resolve commencing as follows:—"That the Honorable Jedediah Preble, Esq., Honorable Artemas Ward, Esq., Colonel Seth Pomeroy, Colonel John Thomas, and Colonel William Heath, be and they are, hereby appointed general officers." &c. Preble declined, which left Ward the highest officer, and accordingly when the minute men were summoned to the field on the nineteenth of April, he on the next day took the command. But his commission was not delivered to him until May 20, 1775, and it constituted him general and commander-in-chief of all the forces raised by the Massachusetts provincial congress; and it instructed him to obey the directions of the committee of safety. General Ward had gained distinction in Canada, was of great integrity of character, was a calm, cool, intrepid man, and ranked high in public estimation; but he was thought to be a better civilian than general.

38

General Ward's headquarters were at Cambridge on the day of the battle. It is represented that, in the council of war, his opinion was decidedly adverse to the measure of occupying so exposed a post as Bunker Hill, and this would be in keeping with his cautious character. At any rate, so thought the majority of this council, until the resolution was suddenly taken (June 15) to occupy this hill. Few contemporary allusions occur as to Ward's personal agency in the battle. Dr Belknap's Diary (Oct. 20, 1775) supplies one:—"In conversation with Mr Ward at Roxbury, I learned that the reason of our throwing up the entrenchment at Charlestown, on the night of the 16th June, was, that there had been intelligence received, such as could be depended on, that the regulars had determined to make a push for Cambridge after the arrival of their three generals and reinforcements, who landed a few days before." There is nothing satisfactory to show that General Ward did not concur with this decision of the council of war.

His orderly book contains no orders relative to the expedition; but Fenno's, contains a copy of the order issued to the Massachusetts forces to parade. It was as follows: "June 16. Frye's, Bridge's and William Prescott's regiments to parade this evening at six o'clock, with all the entrenching tools in this encampment." This order, it will be noticed, did not include the Connecticut forces, which were also ordered to parade at this time. Now depositions say, that General Putnam ordered these to parade. They did not consist of a company under the command of Captain Knowlton, and were not all from one regiment, but were ordered by Putnam to be draughted out of several companies; and the next day, when more Connecticut troops were ordered on, the fact is given by Chester, that Putnam also ordered them on. But contemporary authorities and depositions, unite in the fact, that the orders for the troops of New Hampshire and Massachusetts to go on, went directly from General Ward. Thus Colonel Stark, (June 20, 1775) states that he "*was required by the General*" to send a party to Bunker Hill. So Prescott received his orders from Ward, and when he applied for reinforcements, it was directly to him. The orders of Ward to the forces of these two colonies, therefore, did not *go through any other officer*, as they would have done had one been specially detached to exercise a general command.

39

Throughout the action Gen. Ward had constant and frequent communications with Charlestown. Henry Knox, afterward General Knox, and Samuel Osgood, acted as his aids. Col. Joseph Gilbert is named in the newspapers as having "at the request of General Ward" freely exposed his life on this day by crossing the Neck several times "in the time of action and under a galling fire to carry intelligence to and from headquarters." But Ward remained at Cambridge. He considered the attack on the redoubt as only a part of the object of the British general, but that his main object was to march out of Boston, attack his stores, break up his army, and then proceed to Charlestown Neck, and enclose the Americans in the peninsula. It was not until the intentions of the British general were clearly revealed, that he detached large reinforcements to Charlestown. Such is the statement made by General Ward's friends. And had the valor of the patriot band on Breed's Hill been less, the greater might have been the estimate placed on Ward's judgment.

The circumstances already stated, with others that might be named, would seem to indicate that General Ward controlled the movements in such a way, that he may be regarded as the general commander, if any one can be so regarded. This view is supported by several allusions that occur to him in contemporary letters. It should be borne in mind that the result of the battle, the loss of the ground, occasioned great indignation, and naturally gave rise to much unfavorable comment. In some of this comment General Ward is spoken of *as the direct commander* of the battle. I will name here as one instance, a letter of James Warren, (June 20, 1775) who was elected president of the Massachusetts provincial congress, in the place of Joseph Warren. He regards him and writes of him as the commander.

General Ward was in long and important service subsequently to the battle. He was appointed by the

continental congress first major general, commanded the right wing of the army during the Siege of Boston, and was left in command of the eastern department on the removal of Washington to New York. He soon resigned his commission, but at the request of congress, continued in service until the close of the year. He subsequently filled most responsible offices, being in 1777 president of the executive council of the colony, in 1779 a member of the continental congress, in 1786 speaker of the Massachusetts house of representatives, and sixteen years a representative of the town of Shrewsbury. He died October 27, 1800, age 73, leaving behind him an unblemished character, and a name "precious among the friends of liberty and religion."

40

John Whitcomb was the officer next in rank who gave orders on the day of the battle. He was chosen general by the provincial congress, Feb. 15, 1775. He was an old veteran—took the field promptly on the nineteenth of April, and, according to the orderly books, was one of the three generals who formed the first council of war convened on the 20th of April, at Cambridge. He was one of the sterling, disinterested, uneducated patriot officers of the early revolution, and appears to have enjoyed to a great degree the respect and confidence of his contemporaries; and so valuable were his services considered that when the provincial congress resolved, June 12, to elect two major generals, on the next day (13th,) they elected him the "first major general." He expressed an unwillingness to accept this appointment, but on a "complaisant letter," dated June 16, being sent to him by order of congress, strongly urging his acceptance, the brave patriot replied, that "as the circumstances of the army were so difficult and the enemy so near" he would accept. He was not commissioned, however, until the 23d of June. But if Warren is to be considered a major general—and his commission is to date from the day of his appointment—so is Whitcomb. Indeed the evidence in Scammans's trial shows that he was on duty on the 17th, and gave orders in the afternoon. A letter of Samuel Gray, July 12, 1775, states that two generals and the engineer went on to Breed's Hill on the night of June 16, and reconnoitred the ground. One of them, certainly, was General Putnam, and the other might have been General Whitcomb. There is no mention, however, of his having been in the battle, and no special service appears in connection with his name. He was certainly in the field that day, gave orders, and was also the officer next in rank to General Ward at Cambridge.

Joseph Warren was the officer next in rank, having been on 14th of June elected the second major general of the Massachusetts army. It is not necessary here to recount his history; but no one represented more completely the fine enthusiasm and the self-sacrificing patriotism that rallied to the support of the revolution, and no one saw more clearly the great principle involved in this contest. If he was of a high, chivalrous spirit, and of fascinating social qualities, he had also a judgment beyond his years, and wielded surprising influence with his contemporaries. He had been an active and most efficient working patriot, in the civil line, and as such he acted, as president of the Massachusetts provincial congress and member of the committee of safety up to the day, and almost to the hour of his death. He had twice exposed his life in the battle field, once on the Lexington day, when he is said to have been the most active man on the field, and again at Noddle's Island in May, under General Putnam, yet it was as a volunteer and without a command; and there is nothing on the records of the provincial congress, or among its documents, to indicate that a commission as major general had been made out for him, or that he had accepted this appointment; nor does his name appear on such orderly books, as I have seen; neither is it stated that General Ward ordered him, on the 17th of June, to Charlestown, but on the contrary, his friends were urgent in their entreaties that his valuable life should not be exposed in battle. He went voluntarily, deaf to the most affectionate remonstrances, listening only to the call of patriotic duty, in his own lofty spirit of self-sacrifice, and to give the patriot band when it was in peril the benefit of his presence. He went on, in his own simple words, uttered after he got to the redoubt, "To encourage a good cause." On his way from Cambridge he armed himself with a musket, took position in the redoubt, and declined to give orders to Colonel Prescott. Here I quote an entire note in Judge Prescott's MS. Memoir. It indicates the cautious manner in which that eminent man wrote on this interesting subject:—"General Warren came to the redoubt a short time before the action commenced with a musket in his hand. Col. Prescott went to him and proposed that he should take the command, observing, he understood he had been appointed a major general a day or two before, by the provincial congress. General Warren replied, 'I shall take no command here, I have not yet received my commission; I came as a volunteer with my musket to serve under you, and shall be happy to learn from a soldier of your experience.' General Warren fought gallantly with his musket, and unfortunately for his country, fell; but, whether killed during the battle or on the retreat, is made a question. I believe it was just after he left the redoubt, but am not positive that I ever heard my father state it."

41

Deacon Samuel Lawrence, of Groton—the father of the Hon. Abbott Lawrence—who went on under Colonel Prescott, aided in raising the redoubt, was in it during the whole battle until the retreat, and whose subsequent life was marked by great usefulness, integrity, and public spirit, says of General Warren—"Just before the battle commenced Gen. Warren came to the redoubt. He had on a blue coat and white waistcoat, and, I think, a cocked hat, but of this I am not certain. Colonel Prescott advanced to him, said 'He was glad to see him, and hoped he would take the command.' General Warren replied—'No, he came to see the action, but not to take the command; that he was only a volunteer on that day.'" He further states—"I knew General Warren well by sight, and recollected him perfectly when Colonel Prescott offered him the command, and was sorry to see him so dangerously situated, as I knew him to be a distinguished character, and thought he ought not to have risked his life without command on that occasion."

42

The determined spirit with which the leading officers went into this battle could hardly have been exceeded. Putnam, Pomeroy, and Stark were veterans beyond fear, and their names had become associated with daring enterprise. Prescott went on to the hill on the night of June 16th, with the resolution not to be taken alive—"I will never be taken alive," he had remarked. "The tories shall never have the satisfaction of seeing me hanged." Warren's high spirit had been often stirred by the taunts which the British officers were wont to indulge against the colonists. Indeed he felt them as keenly as though they had been personal insults. It was only a few weeks before the battle, that he remarked to William Eustis, afterwards governor, at a moment when his spirit was galled by such insolence: "These fellows say we won't fight! By heavens, I hope I shall die up to my knees in blood." The report at first was that he disdained to fly. Mr Bancroft, during his late

residence abroad, got the account of the battle which the French ambassador in London sent to Vergennes, the French minister, which gives, with much particularity, an account of the battle. It says—"Il (Warren) a refusé de le (Putnam) suivre dans sa retraite; il est resté lui septième dans les entrenchments de Charlestown et n'a pas voulu accepter de quartier." "He (Warren) refused to follow him (Putnam) in the retreat; he remained one of seven in the entrenchments at Charlestown and would not accept quarter." General Ward (October 20, 1775) told Dr Belknap—"That Dr Warren was the last man in the trenches after they were forced, and died on the breastwork with his sword in his hand. That his body was stripped naked, and buried so; his coat was sold in Boston by a soldier for eight dollars. His body was dug up several times, and buried again, to gratify the curiosity of those who came to see it." In connection with the death of Warren is the chivalric act attributed to the British Major Small, (which figures so largely in Trumbull's picture,) who, in return for a similar service which General Putnam had rendered him in the battle, it is said, endeavored to save Warren's life. The whole relation, however, about Major Small, bears too much the aspect of romance to be relied upon.

The most probable account, of the many accounts of his fall, is, that he was killed early in the retreat, just outside the trenches. As the contemporary notices of his death are interesting, a few more of them are here quoted:—

The Remembrancer, (British) vol. 1, p. 250, says—"When the provincials were retreating, of the three concurring circumstances, Charlestown being on fire, the ships cannonading, and the regulars advancing, the Doctor, with that intrepidity and contempt of danger which peculiarly marked his character, stood alone for some time, endeavoring to rally the troops and animate them by his example. He was observed in this situation, and known by an officer in the regulars, who, wresting a musket out of the hands of one of his men, took aim, and lodged a bullet in his breast, of which he expired without a pang."

43

A British lieutenant in the battle, John Clarke, in his pamphlet account, printed in London, 1775, writes as follows of Dr Warren:—

"A report having prevailed that Dr Warren was not killed, I think it necessary to contradict it, as I saw a soldier, after the Doctor was wounded and lying in the trenches, going to run him through the body with his bayonet; on which the Doctor desired he would not kill him, for he was much wounded and could not live a great while longer; on which the soldier swore that he would, for that he had done more mischief than any one else, and immediately run him through the body. The Doctor's dress was a light-colored coat, with a white satin waistcoat laced with silver, and white breeches with silver loops; which I saw the soldier soon after strip off his body. He was supposed to be the commander of the American army that day; for General Putnam was about three miles distant, and formed an ambuscade with about three thousand men."

If John Clarke could stand idle and see this barbarity, he must have been a fiend in human form. Both of these British accounts cannot be true.

James Warren, MS. letter, June 20, 1775, says: "Here fell our worthy and much lamented friend Dr Warren, with as much glory as Wolfe on the plains of Abraham, after performing many feats of bravery, and exhibiting a coolness and conduct which did honor to the judgment of his country in appointing him a few days before one of their major generals; at once admired and lamented in such a manner as to make it difficult to determine whether regret or envy predominates."

J. Palmer, Cambridge, MS., June 19, 1775, says: "We yet have about 60 or 70 killed and missing; but—among these, is—what shall I say? How shall I write the name of our worthy friend, the great and good Dr W—. You will hear by others who will write to-morrow, such particulars as I am not possessed of."

William Tudor, MS., June 26, 1775, writes:—"The loss of Dr Warren is irreparable—his death is generally and greatly lamented. But

'Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.'

This is a day of heroes. The fall of one will inspire the surviving glorious band to emulate his virtues and revenge his death on the foes of liberty and our country."<sup>[B]</sup>

Immediately after the battle it was reported in Boston that Dr Warren had the command during the action, and statements to this effect were written to England. Hence, in nearly all the British accounts, this honor is awarded to him. The same thing is stated in some of the almanacks of 1776. George's Cambridge Almanack, or the Essex Calendar for 1776, says that he was the "commander in chief on the occasion." The same account was printed in a handbill, with a parcel of wretched rhyme, some of which also appeared in the newspapers. Governor Trumbull, of Connecticut, in his Historical Letter, printed in vol. VI. of the Massachusetts Historical Collection, dated August 31, 1779, gives an account of the action, and states that "the brave General Warren" was the "commanding officer." The same thing is stated in a History of the War in America, published by Coverly & Hodge in Boston in 1781, and is repeated in an account in the Analectic Magazine, (1818,) where it is stated that "General Putnam directed the whole on the fall of General Warren."

44

That General Warren, in being present, and behaving so heroically, exerted great influence in the battle by infusing his own spirit into the patriot band, cannot be doubted. He acted, however, only as a volunteer. There is no reliable account which states that he assumed any command—that he performed any military duty in the army previous to the battle, or that he gave an order during the engagement. He was in the redoubt, and Colonel Prescott's letter makes it certain that here he (Prescott) commanded throughout the action.

Seth Pomeroy was the next officer in rank, as he was the oldest officer, being one of the first generals elected. He was one of the intrepid veterans of the French wars, having commanded a company under Sir William Johnson, when he defeated the army under Baron Dieskau. He exerted large influence in Hampshire

county, and had a marked character for intrepidity, generosity, frankness and patriotism. He was a delegate in the first and second provincial congress from Northampton, and a colleague with the celebrated Major Hawley. His name often appears on important committees. He was elected a general officer Oct. 27, 1774, and again Feb. 9, 1775; and probably preferring military service, was not returned a delegate to the third provincial congress, which met on the 31st of May, 1775. He aided in organizing the army that assembled at Cambridge to besiege the British army, and was in service at the time of the battle. It is stated that he had not received a commission in the Massachusetts army, as Ward and Thomas had, but served under "his old commission;" but the authority for this is not given. I have met with but few authentic notices of him in connection with the battle. But it is admitted that he went on to the field as a volunteer, and though he ranked above Putnam, there is no evidence that he gave him an order. He is said to have borrowed a horse of General Ward to carry him on; but on arriving at Charlestown Neck, and seeing the severe fire that raked it, he refused to risk the borrowed animal, but walked across. He fought with a musket at the rail fence breastwork. He behaved bravely during the battle, and in some accounts, figures as the commander of a brigade. But he appears to have had no special command. He was elected a brigadier general by the continental congress, but declined on account of his age.

45

Israel Putnam, of Connecticut, was the general next in rank stationed at Cambridge. Not an officer of the army, if Warren be excepted, had a larger measure of popularity. His daring exploits at home, and on the Canada frontier, had established his character for bravery, while his public spirit and efficient political action, on trying occasions during the ten years controversy from 1764 to 1775, had made him widely known as a decided and bold patriot. But it is unnecessary to relate his history. The Connecticut assembly, in April, made him a brigadier general, and he was second in command of the forces of that colony. At the time of the battle of Bunker Hill, the greater part of these forces was stationed at Cambridge—the remainder, under General Spencer, the senior officer, was at Roxbury. It was not, I think, until subsequently to the battle, that Patterson's, Sargent's, and other regiments (Mass.) were placed under his command.

No reliable contemporary account states that the detachment which was detailed to take possession of Bunker Hill, was placed under the orders of General Putnam, or gives him by express agreement the superintendence of the whole expedition, or puts Col. Prescott under him. On the other hand, the negative evidence is decisive and conclusive. Scammans writes as though it were well known that there was no general officer in command; James Thatcher states that though several general officers came on to the field, no one assumed the command; William Tudor says there was no authorised general command; and Judge Prescott says that neither General Putnam nor any other officer claimed or exercised any command over Prescott. It is also a singular fact, that the patriot governor of Connecticut, Governor Trumbull, the head of the committee of war of that colony, under whose direct orders Spencer and Putnam acted, who speaks in the most friendly manner of Putnam in his letters, who would be likely to know the fact if he had commanded, and to claim the honor for his colony if he justly could, yet in his historical letter (Aug. 31, 1779) names General Warren as the commanding officer. General Putnam, too, in a letter dated May 22, 1776, speaks of venturing "his life in the high places of the field," and of "taking possession of Prospect Hill the very night after the fight on Bunker Hill, *without having any orders from any person.*" This does not indicate that he was the commander in this fight, or had entrusted to him the whole direction of the expedition. Nor does the relation that Stiles has given—already quoted—indicate such a responsibility; but if it indicates any thing, it is that he was not responsible for the result. To all this must be added the decisive negative testimony of the letter of General Ward, which is clearly to the point, that a Massachusetts officer conducted the battle.

46

In order to show how decided is the denial that General Putnam was detached to exercise a general command, or that the original detachment was put under his orders, or that he gave an order to Col. Prescott, I now add the following extract of a letter of the late Judge William Prescott, the son of Colonel Prescott, which has not before been printed. It is appended to his MS. memoir of the battle. After remarking on Mr. Swett's history, he says (October 30, 1838)—

"There is one (fact) however, in which I cannot concur with the statement in the history. This, as I understand it, represents that General Putnam had the command of all the troops engaged in the action. I have not the smallest disposition to disparage Gen. P. or his services, but I believe no authority or reason can be found for this supposition, other than his rank, and that he was on the heights during the battle.

The detachment that marched from Cambridge the night before, including the one hundred and twenty Connecticut men, was placed under the command of Colonel Prescott, by an order in writing from the commander-in-chief, with instructions to proceed to Bunker Hill and fortify it till relieved. Colonel Prescott conferred with his officers and Colonel Gridley (General Putnam might be present) as to the place intended for the fortification; but Colonel Prescott took on himself the responsibility of deciding, as well he might, for on him it would rest.

I know from evidence that with me is conclusive, that General Putnam never exercised any authority over this detachment, or any part of it; and that he never at any time, before, during, or after the battle, gave an order or command to Colonel Prescott."

These authorities and *facts* in the case are put together without the slightest disposition to do injustice to this brave old general. Still, if there be any authority, *in manuscript or in print*, between June 1775 and May 1790, which assigns to him the command of the original detachment, or of the battle of Bunker Hill, let it be produced.

But General Putnam had been an efficient officer since the rustic army gathered at Cambridge, was one of the council of war, is understood to have been in favor of fortifying Bunker Hill, and was the last to shrink from a perilous enterprise. His patriotic zeal carried him to the heights during the watches of the memorable night when the redoubt was built, and also early on the next day, to give the entrenching party the benefit of his presence and council; and this carried him also into the heat of the fight, at the commencement, at the rail fence—at its conclusion, on the brow of Bunker Hill. The contemporary accounts that name him in

connection with the battle, harmonize as to the nature of his service. Chester gives the fact that about noon he ordered on all the Connecticut troops at Cambridge; Martin states that he came on with a reinforcement; Gordon states that he was employed in aiding and encouraging the troops here and there, as the case required; Pitts states that he was employed in collecting the men; and Williams (secretary of the Connecticut committee of war) states he received it that he commanded the troops, perhaps not in chief. And thus, while the negative testimony is against the idea of his being detached to exercise a general command, that of a positive cast is that as a general officer he acted the part of an aid, an assistant, a volunteer.

47

And in such capacity he did his duty fearlessly, faithfully, well. He was on horseback, and rode quickly from place to place.<sup>[C]</sup> His main service was in connection with the reinforcements. He gave orders to them, not in the redoubt, not, I think, near the redoubt, but at the rail fence, and on Bunker Hill, and in the rear of this. He stated himself—so Stiles says—that there was "a reinforcement within half a mile" that ought to have gone on to the hill, but the heavy fire at "the open causeway" deterred it, and that "in the heat of the action he went away to fetch across *this reinforcement*." Now this service is consistent with the duty of a patriotic volunteer "collecting men," but is it consistent with the duty of a responsible commander, ordering a battle? What would be thought of a general, who, in the heat of an action, should leave the field, and go half a mile after a reinforcement, and not get back until a retreat had commenced? Is it not at considerable hazard to General Putnam's reputation that, with such contemporary evidence to meet as there is in this case—the authenticity of which cannot be successfully impugned—the position is maintained that he was the immediate and responsible commander of this battle? But to return: General Putnam most probably left the hill after the first attack. He next is seen braving the balls at Charlestown Neck, and, in the rear of it, urging on the backward troops. Thus Samuel Bassett says he came in full gallop to Ploughed Hill (Mount Benedict) from the neck, (which, probably, was *after* the first attack) exclaiming, "Up my brave boys, for God's sake! We drive them;" and Sargent and Cooke say that he was at Prospect Hill, at an hour and under circumstances, which must have been while the battle was going on. Here the contemporary evidence (Stiles and Pitts) and the soldiers' statements (Bassett, Sargent and Cooke) harmonize. The retreat (Stiles says) had commenced before he got back. But he must soon have rode to Bunker Hill, for he is found here by a messenger Col. Scammans sent; and when his regiment got to this hill he ordered it forward. On the brow of this hill, where there was hot fighting, he put himself between the retreating throng and the advancing enemy; and, regardless of personal danger, he urged the flying troops to stop. "Make a stand here!" he exclaimed, "We can stop them yet! In God's name form! and give them one shot more!" There are other circumstances that will harmonize with this detail; and if it will not furnish a stage on which to act the Major Small romance—where Putnam saves Small's life—all that need be said is, that it is time to ignore *some* of the romance that has accumulated about the battle of Bunker Hill.

48

In all this, General Putnam acted as a general officer would have acted. He gave orders, undoubtedly, not only to the Connecticut officers and troops, over whom he had a specific command, but to others over whom he had no special command. If it be true that even in an army of allies the oldest or highest officer ranks, still it is also true there must be the requisite discipline, regularity and subordination, to allow this principle to operate, and that the officer who appears on a field of battle to take the command from an inferior officer, must be *ordered on by his superior*. Such in either particular is not the case here. Every thing was in an irregular, half-organized, transition state, and there is no more evidence that Ward ordered Putnam on than that he ordered Pomeroy (his senior) or Warren on. Besides: he was neither the highest nor oldest allied officer, for Whitcomb, Warren, and Pomeroy ranked him. Indeed it has been stated, by those defending Putnam, that Ward could not order him on. Thus Hon. John Lowell remarks: "It is certainly true that there could not in the nature of the case have been any authorized commander." General Putnam might give orders, even accompany them with threats, and yet not be detached to supercede Prescott. In so trying a scene, an officer so popular on being seen in the field, would naturally be looked up to for advice and applied to for orders. A case in point is that of Arnold at Saratoga. He was only not ordered by Gates on to the field, but was actually under arrest, yet seeing the necessity of prompt and decisive action, he galloped about, giving orders, leading on the troops, and was obeyed as though he were ordered on. So with General Putnam during the Bunker Hill battle. He rode about from place to place, cheering all with whom he came in contact, "aiding and encouraging where the case required." Some of the officers and troops not under his immediate command respected his authority, while others refused to obey him. Some of the Connecticut forces whom he ordered to the field, did a brilliant service, and indeed no service was more brilliant; but some of the Massachusetts forces, whom he labored hard to get into the battle, behaved badly. Indeed in the afternoon, during the battle, and in the rear of Bunker Hill, there was great confusion, as Captain Chester's excellent and life-like letter (July 12, 1775) firmly establishes. That Gen. Putnam was not successful in getting these backward troops into action, in sheer justice, ought to be ascribed neither to his lack of energy nor of conduct, but to the hesitancy of inexperienced troops, to the want of spirit in some of their officers, and to the general lack of discipline and subordination in the army. General Putnam was not blamed for this at the time, but on the contrary, his services as an officer throughout the siege are spoken of in letters in terms of lively approbation. Indeed among all the documents of the time—I mean those I have seen—in print or in manuscript, there is not a disparaging remark on his services this day; and none occur until the unjust comments made by General Wilkinson in his memoirs, printed in 1816. Still, to represent that the detachment sent to Bunker Hill was under his command, and that Colonel Prescott acted under his orders, is to contradict the most positive evidence and violate the integrity of history.

49

William Prescott was one of the French war veterans. He served as a lieutenant of a company under General Winslow at the capture of Cape Breton, and so decided was the military talent he displayed, that he attracted the particular notice of the British commander-in-chief, who urged him to accept a commission of a lieutenancy in the regular army. This he declined, as he was unwilling to adopt a military profession and leave his native country. He was born in Groton, but he lived in that part of it which was set off, and became Pepperell. Here he took a prominent part in the questions that arose between the colonies and the mother country, and on the popular side. He represented Pepperell in the celebrated convention of committees held

in Boston in 1768, in the convention of Middlesex county Aug. 30, 1774, when the boldest measures were determined upon, and in the provincial congress of October. He is called on the records of this congress Captain William Prescott. He was not a member at the time of the battle. He had been also chairman of the Pepperell committee of safety. He was chosen colonel of the minute men, when they organized agreeably to the advice of the provincial congress, and it was in this capacity that, on the "Lexington Alarm," he hastened at the head of his men to Cambridge, and acted as one of the members of the first council of war. To him were assigned some of the earliest duties of the campaign. On the 27th of May he received a colonel's commission in "the Massachusetts army," being then about fifty years of age.

Among the Massachusetts colonels there was, at that time, no one more distinguished, both in the civil and military line, than Colonel Prescott. And when the resolution to occupy Bunker Hill, so unanimously advised by the Massachusetts committee of safety, was so suddenly taken by the council of war, the selection of an officer to perform this service could not have fallen upon a patriot of greater decision of character, or a soldier of more dauntless resolution. His established reputation furnishes a sufficient reason for his being selected for so dangerous and trying a duty. Though in the afternoon of June 16, his regiment, with Frye's and Bridge's, was required to parade at six o'clock, yet it was not until evening that he received orders in writing to take the command of a detachment. He received them directly from General Ward. They required him to proceed, at the head of his detachment, to Bunker Hill, and there erect such fortifications as he and Colonel Gridley—the chief engineer of the Massachusetts army—should judge proper for its defence; and he was instructed not to communicate his orders until after he had passed Charlestown Neck. Thus he was regularly detached for a special service, and as such marched at the head of his troops. "General Putnam"—so Judge Prescott expressly states from information from his father—"did not head the detachment from Cambridge to Bunker Hill, *nor march with it.*" It was under the entire command of Colonel Prescott.

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In all the evidence, it is only twice that Colonel Prescott, up to about the time of the attack, appears in consultation with general officers: once in the night, in reference to the place to be fortified, and once just before the enemy made his first landing, in reference to the removal of the entrenching tools. It may be well to look at both these cases.

When Colonel Prescott, in the evening of June 16th, arrived at Charlestown Neck, he halted, and sent a small party, under Captain Nutting, to the lower part of the town, to serve as a guard. He soon marched over to Bunker Hill, and again halted. It was here, probably, that he communicated his orders to his officers, and held a consultation as to the place to be fortified. Other officers, who did not march with the detachment, were present, and took part in the discussion. Samuel Gray (Letter July 12, 1775,) gives the best account of what took place. He states that "the engineer and two generals went on to the hill at night, and reconnoitred the ground; that one general and the engineer were of opinion we ought not to entrench on Charlestown Hill (Breed's Hill) till we had thrown up some works on the north and south ends of Bunker Hill, to cover our men in their retreat, if that should happen; but on the pressing importunity of the other general officer it was consented to begin as was done." One of these generals was General Putnam. There is no data to determine who the other was, but rather from the estimation which Gen. Whitcomb's character was held, his recent appointment as major general, and the fact he was on active duty, than from anything else, it may be inferred that he was the general. No account states that Colonel Prescott here received an order; but Judge Prescott does say that the responsibility of the decision rested with him. When the troops got to the spot, so Prescott states, "the lines were drawn by the engineer." After the men were at labor General Putnam, and probably the other general, returned to Cambridge.

51

The other instance, which was before the British landed, occurred between eleven and twelve o'clock in the forenoon. The men had mostly ceased to labor on the entrenchments, and the entrenching tools had been piled in the rear of them. General Putnam rode on horseback to the redoubt, and consulted Colonel Prescott relative to beginning works on Bunker Hill; he also remarked to the colonel that the entrenching tools ought to be sent off or they might be lost. General Heath first relates this circumstance, and he is supported by the depositions of several soldiers. Col. Prescott replied that if he (Prescott) sent any of the men away not one of them would return. To this Putnam replied, "they shall every man return." "A large party," Heath says, "was then sent off with the tools, and not one of them returned. In this instance the colonel was the best judge of human nature." No order was given to Colonel Prescott, and the collision of opinion was merely as to whether the men would return to the redoubt. It is probable, by the way, that this affair of the tools is the kernel of truth there is in the stories told of Putnam's riding off the field with parcels of "pickaxes," "spades," "tents," or "tent-poles," on his horse. As though an officer with his reins in one hand and his sword in the other, would or could have, in the thick fight of such a retreat as that of Bunker Hill, such gear about him. These stories are neither consistent with a general's duty nor with a coward's fear.

Such are the only two occasions where mention is made of any thing done when Colonel Prescott, up to about the hour of the attack, was in consultation with general officers. It is, however, now admitted, that he was the commander during the night of June 16th, and until the next day about two o'clock in the afternoon. He detached guards to the shores, convened his officers in council, applied directly to General Ward for reinforcements, and no general officer gave him an order. It is at the precise time when Generals Warren, Pomeroy and Putnam came on to the field that the command is said to have changed. But no authority states that General Ward *ordered on one of these generals to supercede Prescott*; and that their volunteer presence, so far as the *fact* is concerned, changed the command, is expressly denied by contemporary testimony. Besides, it is thoroughly refuted by Colonel Prescott's admirable letter giving an account of the action. This letter throws great light on the battle; for it specifies, for the first time, important dispositions that were made, and important orders that were given, and who gave them. It indicates any thing rather than a change of command at this precise time. If this letter is characterised by directness and modesty, it has also a soldier's frankness.

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But there may be said to have been, in the action, a divided command. Colonel Prescott's letter, in connection with another contemporary letter (July 22, 1775,) of almost equal interest and authority, written by Captain



John Chester, an accomplished Connecticut officer in the battle, clearly shows this; and, in fact, it is only necessary to put together a few passages from these two letters, which have so long lain in manuscript, to show minutely how it originated. At the time the British first landed, between one and two o'clock, there had been *but one position taken*, (the small parties stationed in Charlestown, and, possibly, slight works just began on Bunker Hill, excepted)—namely, that of the first entrenchments, close together, on Breed's Hill. Here were the Massachusetts troops and the two hundred Connecticut men,—the New Hampshire forces not having arrived. The enemy, on landing at Moulton's Point, immediately formed in three solid columns; but soon there were indications that he intended to surround the redoubt. It might have been as General Howe, with a party, reconnoitered the entrenchments, or on the appearance of a flanking party. Colonel Prescott saw the necessity of a counteracting movement. But let the two letters tell the story. Chester says: "They (the British) were very near Mystic River, and, by their movements, had determined to outflank our men and surround them and their fort. But our officers in command, soon perceiving their intention, ordered a large party of men (chiefly Connecticut) to leave the fort, and march down and oppose the enemy's right wing." That is, the enemy appeared determined to move his right wing along the shore of Mystic River and surround the fort, and this "large party" was detached to take a position to prevent him. Now Prescott says: "I ordered the train, with two field pieces, to go and oppose them (the British) and the Connecticut forces to support them." The train did not do the required service, but it was otherwise with the Connecticut forces. Chester adds: "This they did, and had time to form somewhat regularly behind a fence half of stone and two rails of wood. Here nature had formed something of a breastwork, or else there had been a ditch many years ago. They grounded arms, and went to a neighboring parallel fence and brought rails, and made a slight fortification against musket ball." Now Samuel Gray, (July 12, 1775,) states that this party was under the command of Captain Thomas Knowlton. Here, then, is a clear, circumstantial and authentic contemporary account, which cannot be set aside. *It was Colonel Prescott, not General Putnam*, who gave the important order for Captain Knowlton to leave the fort and "oppose the enemy's right wing," which occasioned the construction of the rail fence breastwork that ran down to Mystic River; and to this gallant and noble soldier, of keen military eye, who had admirable discretion as well as marked bravery, belongs the honor of beginning this celebrated defence. In a short time after it had been commenced, and while his men were thus occupied, Colonel Stark, and, closely following him, Colonel Reed, each at the head of a New Hampshire regiment, came on, took position here, and went on extending this work. General Putnam also came here, and what more like him than that, as the companies were falling into line, and the British were slowly marching to the attack, he should ride about, and speak cheering words, and give them orders, and tell them how to place the rails, and exclaim, "Man the rail fence, for the enemy is flanking on us fast!" "Men, you are all marksmen; don't any of you fire until you see the white of their eyes." Such facts are stated by several of the soldiers in their depositions. Indeed the evidence, with few exceptions, will agree well in fixing Putnam, on the first attack, at the rail fence. This attack was made about half past three.

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In this way, there had been *two positions* taken, when the British made their assault, the last one—the rail fence—being at the base of Bunker Hill, some six hundred feet in the rear of the first one at Breed's Hill; the diagonal line between the two being but slightly protected, if protected at all. It was General Howe's plan first to turn this last position, "to penetrate" the rail fence by his light infantry, surround the fort, and cut off a retreat. Lieut. Page's plan of the battle, which has been accurately engraved for the Siege of Boston, by far the best plan, (so correct that its ground work finely agrees with Felton & Parker's excellent plan of Charlestown, taken in 1848,) has named on it the order in which it was intended the British troops should advance upon the redoubt, after this part of the defence had been forced. "But," says a British letter, July 5, 1775, "how could we penetrate? Most of our grenadiers and light infantry, the moment of presenting themselves, lost three fourths, and many nine-tenths of their men; some had only eight and nine men a company left; some only three, four, five." Another British letter says it "was found to be the strongest post ever occupied by any set of men." The noble service done here is universally acknowledged. General Putnam was here during the first attack, but after it he rode to the rear to urge on the reinforcements. Pomeroy, Stark, Reed, McClary and Knowlton, however, remained here during the battle, and towards the close they were joined by others. This brave band did not retreat until the main body under Prescott was obliged to leave the hill. Where all behaved so gallantly, it is delicate to name the most active officer. After Putnam left, Colonel Stark was the senior officer, who had a special command. But there was little military order, or general command here. Hence Colonel Stark, his son Major Stark, General Dearborn, and others, were in the habit of stating that there was no general command, and even no efficient command at all, but that every one fought pretty much on his own hook.

54

But Colonel Prescott did not go to the rail fence. His letter clearly warrants the inference that, after he ordered Captain Knowlton out of the fort, he had no intercourse with him or with the forces that took position there. Of Knowlton's party he says, they went "I suppose to Bunker Hill." (The rail fence was at the base of this hill.) Of the New Hampshire troops he says—"There was a party of Hampshire, in conjunction with some other forces, lined a fence at a distance of threescore rods back of the fort, partly to the north." The committee of safety account also indicates that this was a separate party. Other authorities are to the same point. Wilkinson, for instance, states that there was no concert or coöperation between the party at the fence and the main position at the redoubt. Pomeroy, Putnam, Stark, Knowlton, and other officers, named as being at the fence, are not named as being, during the battle, in the redoubt. But Colonel Prescott remained at the original entrenchments. Soon after he detached Captain Knowlton to the important duty assigned to him, he detached the lieutenant colonel and major of his own regiment for other duty. He says—"I commanded my Lieut. Col. Robinson and Major Woods, each with a detachment, to flank the enemy, who, I have reason to think, behaved with prudence and courage." The depositions of the soldiers are too confused to admit of a satisfactory detail of the movements of these two parties. The service performed by the brave Captain Walker, of Chelmsford, so far from being a reckless volunteer dash, was probably done by Prescott's order, and under one of those higher officers. The letter of Prescott mentions other particulars, indicating independent command, and states that he kept "the fort about one hour and twenty minutes after the attack with small arms." He then gave the order to retreat. The first position was the important post of the day, the

main object of the enemy; and here Prescott remained certainly the regular, responsible, authorized commander—"the proper commanding officer," Heath writes, "during the whole action." Dr Eliot, I think, of all the contemporary authorities who name the officers, observes this distinction between the two positions. He says—"Colonel Prescott commanded the party within the lines, and Colonel Stark the men who were without, behind a rail fence."

Now such efficient, uncontrolled, command—without, however, this discrimination—is positively asserted by the contemporary evidence and sustained by subsequent depositions. Thus James Thatcher says: "The incomparable Colonel Prescott marched at the head of the detachment, and though several general officers were present he retained the command during the action." John Pitts says: "No one appeared to have any command but Colonel Prescott, whose bravery can never be enough acknowledged and applauded." Peter Thatcher says that he "commanded the provincials." William Tudor says "Colonel Prescott appeared to have been the chief." To this may be added subsequent statements. I select, here, only two. Judge Prescott states that no general officer "ever exercised or claimed any authority or control over him, before or in the battle;" and the anecdotes he gives, as woven into the narrative in the Siege of Boston, harmonize with this independent command. Several of the soldiers mention his efficiency in glowing terms. Thus the brave Captain Bancroft, in the redoubt, says: "He continued throughout the hottest of the fight to display admirable coolness and a self-possession that would do honor to the greatest hero of any age. He gave his orders deliberately, and how effectually they were obeyed I need not tell." What the estimate of his services by his contemporaries was, may be gathered from the enthusiastic remark of Samuel Adams, (Sept. 26, 1775,)—"Until I visited headquarters, at Cambridge, I never heard of the valor of Prescott at Bunker Hill." "Too much praise," Heath also says, "can never be bestowed on the conduct of Colonel William Prescott."

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Colonel Prescott continued in the service through the year 1776; distinguished himself again at the memorable retreat from the city of New York, and served under Gates at the capture of Burgoyne. He died at Pepperell, Oct. 13, 1795. A simple tablet over his grave marks the place where his ashes repose. It is time that a monument worthy of his deeds should be erected to his memory.

Such were the parts which general officers, on or off the field, performed in this memorable battle. Colonel PRESCOTT, acting under written orders, was regularly detailed for the service of fortifying Bunker Hill, and, from the time he ordered ground to be broken until he ordered the ground to be abandoned, he kept at the original entrenchments, and acted the part of a commanding officer, no general officer giving him an order, and none having been ordered to supercede him; General WARREN, a volunteer in spite of the affection that would have kept him from the field, without having any special command, remained in the redoubt and fought side by side with Prescott; General POMEROY, fighting with a bravery worthy of his veteran renown, but with no special command, remained at the rail fence; General PUTNAM, in the regular command of the Connecticut troops stationed at Cambridge, was active, energetic and fearless throughout, ordering them on to the field, giving orders to other troops, and aiding and encouraging, as a patriotic volunteer, wherever his services seem to have been required; and General WARD, keeping at his headquarters, having frequent communication with the battle field, directed the general movements of the troops to such a degree that, at the time, he was regarded as the responsible general commander. Such seems to be the conclusion which the evidence warrants.

But if to no one can be assigned a general command of all the troops in the battle, yet to all may be justly and gratefully assigned the award of having done a great work, which made an immediate mark on events. The Americans were victorious enough to answer every purpose that was necessary for the good of their cause—the British were not beaten badly enough to prompt the ministry to resolve upon a crushing blow. Indeed, the importance of this service can hardly be overrated. The Americans, with defences, soon to become so formidable, hardly commenced, for there were but slight defences on Cambridge road, and slighter still at Roxbury—with their inefficient organization—with their scanty supply of ammunition—were hardly in a condition to act either offensively or defensively; while the ten thousand veterans in Boston, supplied with every art of war, were in high discipline, arrogant in their confidence, and exasperated at the presumption of the "rebel" force in pretending to hold them in a state of siege. Suppose Prescott, and Warren, and Pomeroy, and Putnam, had been of less resolute hearts; suppose the patriot band instead of their steady valor, and wonderful execution, had made but a feeble defence and left the works; suppose about three o'clock on the memorable seventeenth of June a panic had commenced on Breed's Hill—what might not have been the disastrous result! The whole British army in Boston was under arms and ready for any service. Only about a third of it, say three thousand, was in the first attack. Had Howe gone uninterruptedly forward, instead of the astounding repulse, and rushed over Bunker Hill, and so onward, General Gage would have seen that no more of his troops were needed there; and the seven thousand remaining in Boston, with Clinton and Burgoyne to lead them, would have been ready for other work. It was no chimera of General Ward that the enemy might concentrate his force in Cambridge.

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But the work done on Breed's Hill stopped all this. In less than an hour and a half more than a thousand gallant British veterans, who certainly behaved with remarkable courage, lay maimed or dead, on this bloody field. Such an unlooked for, astounding result, shook out of the British generals their arrogance and confidence, and changed boldness into timidity; while it filled the Americans with nerve and resolution. Contemporary language, uttered in the camp, shows best the effect of the action—"The battle has been of infinite service," writes one; "Our troops are in high spirits and their resolution increases," writes another; "I wish we could sell them another hill at the same price," writes a third. William Tudor, (June 26, 1775,) tells the whole in a few words—"The unanimous voice is, if the continent approve and assist, we will die or be free. The sword is drawn, and the scabbard thrown away, till it can be sheathed with security and honor." So true is the remark of Daniel Webster, that when the sun went down that day there could not be peace except on the basis of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

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NOTE.—Mr. Swett has made much account of the entry in Stiles's Diary of June 20, 1775. I therefore print that portion of it relating to the Bunker Hill Battle:—

"June 20, 1775. Mr. William Ellery came in last evening from Providence, and showed me a copy of His Excellency Gen. Ward's letter of Saturday morning last, to the congress, informing the landing of the king's troops. Also a letter from the Chamber of Supplies, and another from Gen. Greene to Lieut. Gov. Cook, dated on Lord's day evening, giving an account of the battle. Gen. Greene says *Gen. Putnam with 300 men took possession* and entrenched on Bunker Hill on Friday night the 16th. The Chamber of Supplies says that *Saturday morning early, the king's troops landed on the bank of that hill*, under discharge of cannon from the ships of the line drawn up before Charlestown, and from the battery on Copp's Hill in Boston. That afterwards they attacked General Putnam, who defended himself with bravery till overpowered and obliged to retreat—that the loss was not ascertained, but more of the enemy was killed than of us. Gen. Greene says that Gen. Ward had published from headquarters that our loss was about 40 killed and 100 wounded, and that the enemy's loss was judged three times as much. Greene seemed to doubt this at first, but from after enquiry, and considering that Putnam fired from the trenches, and that it was said the dead of the enemy covered an acre of ground, Gen. Greene seemed rather to credit the superior loss of the regulars.

Upon news of the action or landing, the congress instantly broke up, and those who had arms repaired to the field of action. Hence Dr Warren's being in the action where he fell dying gloriously. Others went off each way into the towns to rally and convene the militia, which poured in vast multitudes to sustain the army if necessary. A cannonade was also began from the Neck, firing red-hot balls, &c. upon Roxbury. And this firing was continued all Saturday, Lord's day and yesterday, and was heard at Dighton, Warren, &c. Mr. Cook, of Tiverton, came from the camp, where he yesterday morning was on Winter Hill, and there saw Gen. Putnam entrenching and in good spirits, being fully reinforced. All are expecting another action."

## FOOTNOTES

Mr Swett, on the publication of the Siege of Boston, favored me with the following note, which, in another note written subsequently to the publication of his pamphlet, he informed me was intended for publication. Under the present circumstances I hope to be excused for printing it:—

"Richard Frothingham, Jr., Esq.,—

My dear Sir: For your history of the Siege of Boston I am very much obliged to you. Without time to have read it critically, I find it a remarkable monument of diligent and successful research, candor, impartiality and judgment. It is a very valuable addition to history. The subject of Bunker Hill battle I thought I had exhausted thirty years ago, but your additional information is interesting and important. We differ on one point only I believe worth mentioning, and that important only as a matter of curiosity, the commander in the battle, which we may discuss hereafter.

With friendly regard and respect,  
S. SWETT."

I am indebted to Hon. Charles Francis Adams for the three letters from which these extracts are made.

Here I quote an extract from p. 169 of the SIEGE OF BOSTON. To sustain the statement I have before me several pages (MS.) in which the notices of General Putnam's movements to be found in the soldiers' statements, are compared with such contemporary notices of his conduct as I have been able to glean. I see no cause to alter a line of it:—"The mass of matter relative to General Putnam's movements on this day presents the following account of them as the most probable. On the evening of June 16, he joined the detachment at Charlestown Neck; took part in the consultation as to the place to be fortified; returned in the night to Cambridge; went to the heights on the firing of the Lively, but immediately returned to Cambridge; went again to the heights about ten o'clock; was in Cambridge after the British landed; ordered on the Connecticut troops, and then went to the heights; was at the rail fence at the time the action commenced; was in the heat of the battle, and during its continuance made great efforts to induce the reinforcements to advance to the lines; urged labor on works at Bunker Hill; was on the brow of this hill when the retreat took place; retreated with that part of the army that went to Prospect Hill, and remained here through the night. He was on horseback, and in a few minutes' space of time could be not only in any part of the heights, but even at Cambridge. It is not, therefore, at all strange, that statements made by the soldiers as to the time when, and the place where, they saw the general, amid the confusion of so terrific a scene, cannot be reconciled; and more especially as these statements were made after an expiration of forty or fifty years."

## Transcriber's notes

Clear printer's errors were corrected, but original spelling was not modified.

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