

## STORIES of New Jersey



Lord Cornwallis



Sir Wm. Howe

Cornwallis and his chief, General Howe, were drawing closer with their powerful force. Washington immediately ordered the American army across the river. As the last men were being rowed over, the bright red coats of the British soldiers appeared on the bank. But in Trenton they found scarcely a row boat to pursue the Continental Army. General Howe sent Cornwallis with several regiments north to Lambertville, and south to Burlington he dispatched a Hessian force, but no boats were to be found. The Americans had done a good job.

Howe garrisoned his troops in the vulnerable chain of posts he had established across New Jersey from Jersey City to Bordentown. This accomplished, he and Cornwallis, who originally intended to return to England, departed for a gay winter in New York. Meanwhile, General Charles Lee, who had ignored Washington's orders to join the main force heretofore, decided to win back New Jersey from the King's army. In the vicinity of Bernardsville, quartered in a house some distance from his troops, he was captured by the British on December 13. The enemy had done Washington a favor, for Lee's men, without their leader to stop them, hurried on to strengthen the skeleton army in Pennsylvania.

The American army needed a victory, for as Washington wrote to his brother on December 18:

...our affairs are in a very bad condition...the conduct of the Jerseys has been most infamous. Instead of turning out to defend their country...they are making their submissions as fast as they can...If every nerve is not strained to recruit the new army...the game is pretty near up...

But if Washington wrote or spoke of defeat, he would never break under it. However weary and discouraged, he pushed forward. It was characteristic that while he wrote with his heart that the game was "pretty near up," he was at about the same time working out with his head one of the most audacious military tactics in history and writing a brilliant political letter to the President of the Congress. In this message, the obedient, and almost powerless servant of Congress, confessing that he had promised his artillery a raise in pay, dared ask for discretionary powers. He wrote:

If...every matter...is to be referred to Congress, so much time must necessarily elapse, as to defeat the end in view... Can anything...be more destructive...than...militia who... consume your provisions, exhaust your stores, and leave you at last at a critical moment?...In my judgment this is not a time to stand upon expense...It may be thought that I am going a good deal out of the line of my duty...to advise thus freely. A character to lose, an estate to forfeit, the inestimable blessings of liberty at stake, and a life devoted, must be my excuse.

The commander in chief went on to request better army organization, an efficient communications system, more commissaries and quartermasters and a clothier-general who "should be a man of business and abilities." He again asked Congress not to interfere in the regular promotion of officers and warned of the immediate need for casting cannon and providing small arms, without which "men will be of little use." He complained that he was "obliged to attend to