

PREFACE.

In the preface to the preceding volume of the Maryland Archives, the origin, nature and duties of the Council of Safety were explained. The present continues the journal and correspondence during the critical and eventful year, 1776.

The military movements, during the period covered by this volume, were, in brief, as follows:

The theatre of war had been changed from the Eastern States to New York. The British land forces were under the command of Gen. Howe, and the navy under his brother, Admiral Lord Howe.

For the Americans to hold New York City, it was necessary that they should possess Brooklyn Heights, which were occupied by Gen. Putnam with a force of about 9000 men, of whom about one-half, under Sullivan and Stirling, were thrown forward to defend the approaches. On August 22, Gen. Howe crossed over from Staten Island with 20,000 men, and on the 27th defeated the Americans at the battle of Long Island, of which a highly interesting account will be found in Gen. Smallwood's letter on p. 338. On the night of the 29th, Washington withdrew his forces across the East River to New York.

On Sept. 15, Howe crossed over, and Washington evacuated the city and withdrew his army to the north of the island, where he took up a position, his centre resting on Harlem Heights, and his right wing extending to Fort Washington on the Hudson and Fort Lee on the Jersey side. An attempt by Howe to outflank the American position led to the battle of White Plains, fought on Oct. 28, after which Washington withdrew his main body to Northcastle, thus severing his connection with his right wing at Forts Washington and Lee. It was his intention to abandon these forts and make West Point the central position of the defence, but Congress overruled his plans, and ordered Greene to hold them as long as possible. On Nov. 16 Howe attacked Fort Washington and captured it, with heavy loss to the Americans. Washington now withdrew his army through New Jersey, and on Dec. 8 took up a position behind the Delaware.

These repeated disasters produced a deep feeling of discouragement throughout the country. To make matters worse, the terms of enlistment were expiring, and the men were refusing to re-enlist and were going home, so that the American army seemed to be falling to pieces.

On Dec. 2, Gen. Charles Lee, who had remained at Northcastle, despite Washington's summons to join him, crossed the Hudson with 4000 men and marched to Morristown. Here he was captured by a