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## THE BATTLE OF BUNKER HILL

THERE is in Carlyle's *Life of Frederick the Great* an account of a curious conversation which took place in December, 1745, between Frederick and D'Arget, the secretary of Valori, the French ambassador at Berlin. It was at the close of the Second Silesian War, from which Frederick, then only thirty-three years of age, had emerged victorious, thenceforth to be till he died the leading figure in European political action. He was just entering on the eleven years of more or less broken peace which preceded the Seven Years' War. D'Arget, at the instance of Valori, had suggested some grand political combinations in which Frederick was to figure as the "Pacifcator of Europe." The King listened to him, and then replied: "It is too dangerous a part for playing. A reverse brings me to the verge of ruin: I know too well the mood I was in last time I left Berlin ever to expose myself to it again! If luck had been against me there, I saw myself a monarch without a throne; . . . A bad game that; . . . I am not in alarm about the Austrians. . . . They dread my army; the luck that I have. . . . I would not henceforth attack a cat except to defend myself." And so, says Carlyle, Frederick "seems to have little pride in his 'Five Victories'; or hides it well . . . and at times acknowledges, in a fine sincere way, the omnipotence of Luck in matters of War."<sup>1</sup>

On the 14th of October, 1895, the centenary of the death of Colonel William Prescott, who commanded in the redoubt at Bunker Hill, was commemorated at Boston, and Dr. William Everett then delivered an address marked by a high order of eloquence and much reflection. A month later, on the 13th of November, there was unveiled at Hartford, Conn., a bronze statue

<sup>1</sup> Carlyle, *Frederick II.*, Book XVI., chap. i.

of Colonel Thomas Knowlton, of Ashford, the gallant officer who commanded the Connecticut troops which covered Prescott's left, and whose death a year later at Harlem Heights was not the least of the grievous losses sustained by the American army in the disastrous New York campaign of 1776. These events, and the addresses they called forth, revived the memory of two of the most interesting and important military operations in the struggle for American Independence, in both of which, also, "the omnipotence of Luck in matters of War" made itself felt in a way not to be overlooked.

And first of Bunker Hill. The affair of the 17th of June, 1775, on the peninsula of Charlestown, opposite Boston, affords, indeed, one of the most singular examples on record of what might be called the "balancing of blunders" between opposing sides, and of the accidental inuring of all those blunders to the advantage of one side. So far as the American, or what we call the patriot cause, was concerned, the operation ought to have resulted in irretrievable disaster, for on no correct military principle could it be defended; and yet, owing to the superior capacity for blundering of the British commanders, the movement was in its actual results a brilliant success; and, indeed, could hardly have been made more so had the Americans controlled for that occasion the movements of both sides, and so issued orders to their opponents. Looking over the accounts of that battle and examining the ground upon which it was fought, it is difficult to understand how the Americans could knowingly have put themselves in such an untenable position; much more how the British should so utterly have failed to take advantage of the mistakes of their inexperienced antagonists.

In 1775 Charlestown, including Breed's Hill, was a peninsula of limited size and hilly formation, connected with the mainland by a single narrow causeway, which was, at times of sufficiently high tide, itself overflowed. When, therefore, on the night of the 16th-17th of June, Colonel Prescott led his force across the causeway, and established it upon Breed's Hill, he put himself and those who followed him in a trap where, with an enemy having complete control of the sea, and so commanding his rear and both flanks, it was merely necessary to snap the door and hold him, utterly powerless either to escape or to resist. He had literally thrust his head into the Lion's mouth.

Consequently, when the guns of their ships woke up the British officers in Boston on the morning of the 17th of June, had there been any, even a moderate, degree of military capacity in their

commander, he would have ejaculated his fervent thanks to Heaven that his enemy had thus delivered himself into his hands ; and proceeded incontinently to "bag" him. To do this, it was only necessary for him to move a sufficient detachment round by water to the causeway connecting Charlestown with the mainland, seize it securely under cover of the fire of his ships and floating batteries, there establish himself, and quietly wait a few hours for the enemy to come down to surrender, or come out to be killed. To bring this result about he might not have been compelled to fire a single gun ; for his enemy had not even placed himself upon the summit of Bunker Hill, which overlooked and commanded Charlestown Neck, but had absolutely moved forward to the lower summit of Breed's Hill, between Bunker Hill and Boston, from which point, with a powerful and well-equipped enemy in undisputed control of the water, he would have been unable to escape and powerless to annoy. His position would have been much that of a rat when the door of a trap is securely sprung behind it. The only alternative to an ignominious surrender would have been a general engagement on open ground ; for, with his line of communication cut off, unable to advance, unable to retreat, and unable even to strike or worry his adversary, between whom and himself he had interposed Bunker Hill, the only course open to Prescott would have been the hurried abandonment of his redoubt ; and a scramble to get possession of the summit of Bunker Hill. Had he succeeded in doing that, the patriot army would still have been hopelessly cut in two, and mere starvation would within twenty-four hours have compelled the Americans to choose between surrender and an almost hopeless aggressive movement. In case of a general engagement, the patriots, a mere mob, must attack a well-armed and disciplined opponent, on ground of his own selection and protected by the guns of a fleet. Such an engagement, under the circumstances then existing, could, in all human probability, have had but one result. The patriot forces must have been routed and dispersed ; for, hardly more than a partially armed militia muster, they were without organization or discipline, only inadequately supplied with weapons, artillery, or munitions, and, except on Breed's Hill, unprotected even by field-works.

The untenable position into which the patriots had got themselves, and the course to pursue in dealing with them, were, from a military point of view, so obvious that, in the council of war that morning held in Boston, the proper military movement was at once urged, it is said, by a majority of the British officers with Clinton at their head. Instead of following it, a sufficient force of

British was sent across to Charlestown, landed directly in the face of their enemy, and proceeded to take the American intrenchments by assault; finally, after great loss, doing so, and absolutely driving the rat out of the trap, of which the British commander had left the door wide open.<sup>1</sup> A more singular exhibition of apparently unconscious temerity on one side, and professional military incapacity on the other, it would be difficult to imagine.

Under these circumstances, it becomes somewhat curious to consider the actuating causes of the operations on that day. Who was responsible for what occurred?

It is sometimes asserted that, so far as the Americans were concerned, their object was to force the fight with a view to firing the colonial heart, and that the result entirely justified the calculation. This may be true. Nevertheless, on the other side, it is apparent that, unless the American commanders calculated with absolute certainty upon the utter incapacity of their opponents, by the precise move then made they placed the cause which they had at heart in most imminent jeopardy, and came dangerously near quenching the so-called fire in the colonial heart in a sickening drench of irretrievable disaster; for if, instead of attacking the American line in front exactly at the point where it was prepared for attack and ready to resist, the British had operated by sea and land in their rear, it is difficult to see what could have saved the patriot cause from a complete collapse. If Colonel Prescott and his detachment had been obliged to surrender, and on the evening of June 17 had been ignominiously marched prisoners into Boston,

<sup>1</sup> As a matter of criticism from a military point of view, the facts and conclusions here set forth are so obvious that they must suggest themselves to any one on an examination of the maps, and much more if familiar with the ground. Yet in the extensive literature relating to Bunker Hill fight only here and there are passing references to be found. The subject is mentioned in an incidental sort of way, without apparent appreciation of the possible consequences involved, or the reflection implied upon those on either side responsible. Yet as long ago as August, 1789, Jeremy Belknap wrote: "I have lately been on the ground and surveyed it with my own eye, and I think it was a most hazardous and imprudent affair on both sides. Our people were extremely rash in taking so advanced a post without securing a retreat; and the British were equally rash in attacking them only in front, when they could so easily have taken them in the rear." (*Mass. Hist. Soc. Coll.*, Series V., Vol. III., p. 159.) Gordon in his history (Vol. II., p. 51) dwells upon it, using the correct phrase in the assertion that the British commander "might have entrapped the provincials by landing on the narrowest part of Charlestown Neck, under the fire of the floating batteries and ships of war." But, of the modern writers, Frothingham scarcely alludes to the subject in his text; while Devens, himself a soldier of experience, only refers to it incidentally and in a passing way (*Centennial Anniversary*, p. 87), and Carrington's criticism (*Battles of the American Revolution*, p. 113) is of the most meagre possible description. Bancroft devotes to it three lines. Fiske (*The American Revolution*, Vol. I., p. 138) states the case clearly and correctly.

it would only have remained for Gage, by a vigorous movement next day from Charlestown in the direction of Cambridge, only two miles away, to have dispersed the now demoralized patriot army and made any further organized armed resistance practically impossible. Even numerically the forces were very nearly equal. Beside the ships of war, General Gage could muster 8000 effectives operating on interior lines; while, with a force nominally 16,000 strong, General Ward could probably never have put 10,000 men in action. A general engagement was the one result the British commander ought on every consideration to have sought to bring about; while the American officers knew perfectly well that for a general engagement they were prepared in no single respect. Yet the occupation of Bunker Hill by the patriot forces meant, if met by the British with any degree of military skill, an immediate general engagement. It is quite out of the question to suppose that those who assumed to guide the patriot operations could have measured this risk, and then knowingly taken it. There are limits to any amount of rashness, except that of ignorance.

While the course which should have been pursued by the British commander was apparent, the theory on which the patriots acted is, thus, more difficult to explain. The movement on the night of June 16 had been decided upon at a council of civilians and military officers held that day at Cambridge. More than a month before, a joint committee of the council of war and the committee of safety had, after careful consideration of the ground, recommended the construction of a strong redoubt on Bunker Hill. At the same time, however, provision was to be made for apparently a simultaneous occupation of Winter, Prospect, and Plowed Hills on the other, or land, side of Charlestown Neck. This plan of operations is intelligible. If, at the same time that Bunker Hill was occupied, Prospect, Winter, and Plowed Hills also had been occupied, the patriot army would have commanded Charlestown Neck, and, by preventing a landing there and driving away the floating batteries, could have kept communication open between their army and the advanced and isolated force in occupation of the heights on the Charlestown peninsula. To do this successfully implied, it is true, the control of a body of artillery and munitions far in excess of what the provincial force had; but still, from a military point of view, the plan was well conceived, and, if successfully carried out, would have compelled an immediate evacuation of Boston by the British.

But, had this line of operation been pursued, it would have been quite needless to occupy Breed's Hill at the outset; seeing

that Breed's Hill was immediately in front of Bunker Hill and thirty-five feet lower, so that artillery posted on Bunker Hill commanded it completely. It could accordingly have been occupied at any time when a force in firm possession of Bunker Hill was ready to advance and take it.

If such was the general plan of operations under which Colonel Prescott's movement of the 16th of June was ordered, the next question is, — Who was responsible for its partial execution, and consequent failure? Its success involved two things: first, the seizing of Bunker Hill; and, secondly, and at the same time, the erection of works upon Prospect, Winter, and Plowed Hills, or the high ground at the base of those hills commanding Charlestown Neck and the adjacent water. It is impossible to ascertain conclusively whether any one was then in command of the left wing of the provincial army. If any one, it was Putnam. At the council of war he had strenuously advocated the forward movement to Bunker Hill; and, it is said, the same evening discussed with Knowlton, at the quarters of the latter, the reasons and details of the step. Knowlton was a natural soldier, and he at once, the same authority asserts, pointed out to the far from clear-headed Connecticut farmer metamorphosed into a general, that, if the proposed move was made, the enemy under cover of his floating batteries could land troops at the Neck, cutting off both reinforcements and retreat; that the approaches and flanks of the position could be enfiladed from the shipping; and, finally, that Gage could, by a judicious disposal of the land and naval forces at his command, compel the American force on the peninsula to surrender from mere starvation.<sup>1</sup>

This excellent advice, if really given, seems to have been thrown away on Putnam, who during the following day was most active in all parts of the field, and seems to have been recognized in a way as the general officer in command of the entire field of operations, while unquestionably Colonel Prescott was in immediate charge of the detachment on Bunker Hill. He occupied the position of a brigadier-general whose command was in action; while Putnam held, in vague unmilitary fashion, the position of chief of the grand division of which Prescott's command for the time being was a part. Certainly, on the night succeeding the engagement, General Putnam was active in holding and fortifying Prospect Hill, and was then practically recognized as in a sort of irresponsible command of the left wing of Ward's army. If, therefore, any one was to blame for the failure to carry out that essential

<sup>1</sup> Historical Address of P. Henry Woodward at the Knowlton Ceremonial, p. 20.

part of the original plan of operations which included the fortification of the ground commanding Charlestown Neck from the land side, it was Putnam.

But the truth probably is that no one was responsible. The lack of organization in the patriot army was then such that no distinctive and recognized officer was in charge of the left wing. Prescott had his orders direct from the headquarters at Cambridge; and the other officers with separate New Hampshire or Connecticut commands seem throughout what took place to have taken orders, or declined to take them, pretty much as they saw fit.

It is, however, useless to venture surmises on this head. The essential fact is that Prescott was ordered to march across Charlestown Neck and to occupy Bunker Hill; and did so, leaving his rear wholly unprotected. After that, on his own responsibility, he exposed himself to great additional risk by advancing from the summit of Bunker Hill, from which he overlooked both Breed's Hill in his front, and his single line of retreat across Charlestown Neck in his rear, to the lower summit before him, at which point he was helplessly in the trap, unless his opponent, by coming at him in front, drove him bodily out of the hole in which he had put himself. His opponent did just that!

It was well for the patriot cause that both Gage and Howe outranked Clinton that day. When, in the morning, with the eye of a soldier, Clinton urged Gage to pay no attention to the patriot front, but to seize the causeway in its rear, Gage seems to have replied that to do so was not in accordance with correct military principles, as, by such a movement, his force engaged might be placed between two divisions of the enemy. In other words, the movement suggested might bring on the very thing he should most have sought to bring on,—a general engagement under cover of his ships. But this was not his real reason for acting as he did. Gage was, in fact, that not uncommon type of soldier familiarly known in military parlance as a "butt-head." As such, he, as a matter of course, fell into the dangerous error of underestimating his opponent; and, while he could urge an abstractly correct military principle, he had not the capacity to judge whether it had any application to the facts before him. So much for laboring with Gage in the morning.

But Clinton on that occasion seems to have had a hard day of it. Having failed to inspire Gage with a certain degree of intelligence in the early hours of the day, he, in its later hours, tried his hand on Howe. When, at last, about four o'clock of the long June afternoon, with several hours of daylight still before him,

Howe stormed the redoubt and drove Prescott's little force out of it and in pell-mell flight over Bunker Hill and across the causeway to the hills beyond, Clinton, again with the eye of a soldier to the situation, urged his superior in command to follow up his advantage, cross the causeway, and, then and there, smite and spare not.

The thing was perfectly practicable. The confusion in the patriot ranks was complete. In vain had Putnam tried to hold his own men, and rally the fugitives from the redoubt, in the partially finished works on Bunker Hill. He had been simply swept away in the panic rout. On the land side of Charlestown Neck the patriots had no works thrown up behind which they might hope to rally. Cambridge and headquarters were only two miles away. They had challenged the blow; and the blow was impending. Fortunately for the patriots and the patriot cause, Howe, and not Clinton, was now in immediate command of the king's troops. Howe, though personally brave, was as incompetent as Gage, and, if possible, a little slower; and so he wholly failed to grasp the opportunity which Clinton saw and pointed out to him.

The singular thing, however, in all these operations, as already pointed out, is that, from beginning to end, if the patriot army had been commanded by a military genius of the highest order, and gifted with absolute prescience,—having, moreover, the power to issue commands to both sides,—he could not, so far as the Americans were concerned, have bettered the course of events. The whole purpose of the move was to forestall the proposed operations of the British, who planned on the 18th, only a day later, to occupy Bunker Hill and Dorchester Heights, preliminary to an advance on the patriot lines at Cambridge. It was intended to draw their fire. If, in doing this, Prescott had, in obedience to his orders, and as technically he unquestionably should have done, contented himself with seizing Bunker Hill and there intrenching, it can hardly be questioned that the British would then have landed on Charlestown Neck, immediately in his rear, and forced him to retreat precipitately as the alternative to surrender. His very reckless audacity in moving forward to Breed's Hill led to their attacking him squarely in front.

Had Prescott directed the assaulting column, he would have ordered it to do just that. But his good fortune did not stop here. Twice he repulsed the attacking force, inflicting terrible loss upon it; and this is his great claim for credit on that memorable day. Prescott was evidently a fighter. He showed this by his forward midnight move from Bunker to Breed's Hill; and he showed it

still more by the way in which he kept a levy of raw ploughmen steady there during the trying hours that preceded conflict; and then, in face of the advancing line of regulars, made them hold their fire until he gave the word. This was superb,—it deserves unstinted praise. Again the luck of the Americans soared in the ascendant. Under the exact conditions in which they then found themselves, they had chanced on the right man in the right place,—and it was one chance in a thousand.

And then followed yet more good luck,—indeed, a crowning stroke. Twice did Prescott repulse his enemy. Had he done so a third time, he would have won a victory, held his position, and, the next day, in all human probability, the force which relieved him would have been compelled to surrender, because of properly conducted operations in its rear under cover of the British fleet. For it is impossible to suppose that Clinton's advice would not then have been followed; and had it been followed, with Clinton in charge of operations in the field, a result not unusual in warfare would no doubt have been witnessed,—the temporary and partial success of one day would have been converted into the irretrievable disaster of the succeeding day. It was so with Napoleon himself at Ligny and Waterloo.

Fortunately for Prescott and the patriot cause, the ammunition within the Bunker Hill redoubt was pretty much consumed before the third assault was made; and so his adversaries drove the patriot commander out of his trap and into the arms of his own friends. In spite of himself Prescott was saved from ultimate disaster. Yet, curiously enough, he does not even then seem to have realized his luck; for, instead of going back to the headquarters of General Ward, as well he might have gone, in a towering rage over the incompetence which had put him and his command in such a position, without reason or support,—a position from which he had escaped only by a chance in a thousand;—in place of taking this view of the matter, he actually offered, if a fresh force of 1500 were put under his command, to recross Charlestown Neck and recapture Bunker Hill the next day,—in other words, to go back into the trap from which the stupidity of his opponents had forcibly driven him!

The original plan of operations matured by the Cambridge council, including as it did the simultaneous occupation of both Prospect and Bunker Hills, was, therefore, bold, well-conceived, calculated to produce the results desired, and entirely practicable; assuming always that the patriot army had the necessary artillery and ammunition to equip and defend the works it was proposed

to construct. Such was not the case; but, doubtless, under the circumstances, something had to be risked.

This plan, thoroughly good as a mere plan, was, however, executed in part only, and in such a way as to expose the provincial army and cause to disaster of the worst kind. And yet, through the chances of war, — the pure luck of the patriots, — every oversight of which they were guilty, every blunder they committed, worked to their advantage, and contributed to the success of their operations! They completely drew the British fire and forestalled the contemplated offensive operations, throwing the enemy on the defensive; they inspired the American militia with confidence in themselves, filling them with an aggressive spirit; they fired the continental ardor; and, finally, the force engaged was extricated from a false and impossible position, after inflicting severe punishment on their opponents. For that particular occasion and under the circumstances, Cromwell or Frederick or Napoleon in command would probably have accomplished less; for, with the means at disposal, they never would have dared to take such risks, nor would they ever have thrust themselves into such an utterly untenable position.

To penetrate the mind and plan of an opponent, — to pluck out the heart of his counsel and to make dispositions accordingly, — has ever been dwelt upon as one of the chief attributes of the highest military genius; — Hannibal, Cæsar, Gustavus, Marlborough, Frederick, Napoleon, all possessed it in a noticeable degree. Possibly, General Ward and Colonel Prescott may instinctively have acted in obedience to this rarest military quality on the 16th and 17th of June, 1775. If so, they certainly developed a capacity for which the world has not since given them credit; and the immediate results justified to the fullest extent their apparently almost child-like reliance on the combined professional incapacity and British bull-headedness of General Thomas Gage. Fourteen months later, as will hereafter be seen, Ward's more famous successor got himself and his army into a position on Long Island scarcely less false and difficult than Prescott's at Bunker Hill.<sup>1</sup> He, also, was then saved from irretrievable disaster through sheer good luck, happily combined with his opponent's incompetence. In this case, however, Fortune did not, as at Bunker Hill, positively shower its favors on the patriot cause.

Yet in one respect the battle of Bunker Hill was, in reality, epochal. Prescott did not occupy Breed's Hill and begin to throw up his intrenchments until nearly midnight on the 16th–17th of

<sup>1</sup> *Narrative and Critical History of America*, Vol. VI., p. 290.

June. Thus his men had but about four hours in which to work before the break of day disclosed their whereabouts. Yet when, less than twelve hours later, the British stormed the field-works, they were amazed at their extent and completeness, and could not believe that they had all been thrown up in a single summer's night. It was something new in warfare.

There can be few things more instructive and suggestive, from a military point of view, than a visit to the battle-fields of Waterloo and Sedan, passing rapidly from the former to the latter. To one whose impressions of active warfare and military field methods are drawn from campaigns in Virginia, now thirty years ago, it is not easy, while surveying the scenes of the battles of 1815 and 1870, to understand what the English in the one case and the French in the other were doing in the hours which preceded the engagements. In the Virginia campaigns nothing was of more ordinary observation than the strength and perfect character of the intrenchments which both armies habitually threw up. Such skill in the alignment and construction of these works did the common rank and file of the armies acquire, that a few hours always sufficed to transform an ordinary bivouac into a well-protected camp. In the case of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington had days and even weeks before selected it as his battle-ground; he had even caused a topographical survey to be made of it; he arrived there from Quatre Bras twenty hours before the battle of Waterloo began; he made all his dispositions at his leisure. Yet not a spadeful of dirt seems to have been thrown; and the next day, while his line was exposed to the fury of Napoleon's famous artillery, the French cavalry rode unobstructed in and out among the English squares.

It seems to have been the same, more than half a century later, at Sedan. Strategically, the French were there in almost as false a position as the Americans at Bunker Hill. They were in a hole, — rats in a trap. Tactically, their position was by no means bad. The ancient fortifications of Sedan secured and covered their centre; while their two wings were free to operate on the high grounds behind, sloping sharply to the river. They occupied the inside of a curve, with perfect facilities for the concentration of force by interior lines. A better opportunity, so far as the character of the ground and country was concerned, for the rapid throwing up of intrenchments and field-works could not have been desired. As at Waterloo, the facilities were everywhere. McMahon's army, when surprised and cornered in Sedan, was, it is true, on its march to Metz, and all was in confusion. But they

had twelve hours' notice of what was impending, and they fought on the ground on which they had slept. Yet, again, not a spadeful of dirt seems to have been thrown. What were the French thinking of or doing all those hours?

Judging by the record of Bunker Hill, and recollections of what was habitually done ninety years later in Virginia, if an army of either Federals or Confederates, as developed in 1865, had held the ground of the British at Waterloo or the French at Sedan, the lines and intrenchments which on the days of battle would have confronted Napoleon and Von Moltke could hardly have failed to give them pause. Before those temporary works they would have seen their advancing columns melt away, as did Gage at Bunker Hill, Pakenham at New Orleans, and Lee at Gettysburg.

The simple fact seems to have been, that, until the modern magazine gun made it an absolute necessity, digging was never considered a part of the soldier's training. Indeed, it was looked upon as demoralizing. In the same way, the art of designing temporary field-works and camp intrenchments was not regarded as belonging to the regimental officer's functions. The famous lines of Torres Vedras showed that Wellington knew well how to avail himself of defensive works; but they were laid out on a large scale and on scientific principles. Mere temporary field-works and improvised protections seem to have been contemptuously looked down upon as a branch of irregular warfare or Indian fighting. It was something unprofessional, and which savored of cowardice. Often, during the Confederate rebellion, old West Point graduates, high in rank, but somewhat hide-bound, might be heard lamenting in the same spirit over the ever-growing tendency of the armies to protect themselves by intrenchments wherever they camped. It made soldiers cowardly. As the military martinets expressed it, they wanted the rank and file to be made "to stand up and fight, man-fashion." How often, in the olden days, was that expression used! Yet their idea of fighting was apparently that of Wellington at Waterloo, and of McMahan at Sedan. At either of those places our veterans of 1865, Federals or Confederates, would have protected themselves with field-works, though only bayonets were to be had for picks, and tin dippers for shovels.

Putnam, therefore, showed a very profound insight when, on the eve of Bunker Hill, he remarked that, as a soldier, the Yankee was peculiar. He didn't seem to care much, the Connecticut general said, about his head, but he was dreadfully afraid of his shins; cover him half-leg high, and you could depend on him to

fight. The fact seems to be that, as a fighting animal, the Yankee is unquestionably observant. Breastworks are in battle handy to the assailed; and he saw at once that breastworks admit of rapid and easy construction to men accustomed to the use of shovel and pick. Prescott taught that lesson on the 17th of June, 1775. He did not realize it, and apparently it took almost a century for the professional soldier to master the fact thoroughly; but those light, temporary earthworks scientifically thrown up on Bunker Hill in the closing hours of a single June night introduced a new element into the defensive tactics of the battle-field. Its final demonstration was at Plevna, a whole century later.

CHARLES FRANCIS ADAMS.

## THE BOHUN<sup>1</sup> WILLS

MANY a place in France has given its name to an English family of distinction ; it was left to a town<sup>2</sup> in the northwest of Normandy, in the arrondissement of St. Lo, to give its name to a family which flourished in England for three hundred years, and not merely flourished, but proved its capacity for leadership by steadily stretching to the front when matched with all the baronage of the kingdom, until at last it reached a stage from which it disappeared in royalty itself. Other houses have surpassed it at times ; few have equalled it in long-sustained eminence and power ; few, if any, have had so great a part in the making of England.

Humphrey de Bohun, 'with the beard,'<sup>3</sup> a kinsman of the Conqueror,<sup>4</sup> and with him on the field of Senlac, received, it is true, but scant reward for his services, the single lordship of Taterford in Norfolk.<sup>5</sup> But he was already getting on in years, and infirmity may have prevented him from performing vigorous service. Wace, the *trouveur*, calls him

'de Bohon le vieil Onfrei,'

and that is the only stated fact on which a reason for the smallness

<sup>1</sup> Probably pronounced 'Boon.' The 'h' is often omitted in early times, thus 'Boon,' 'Boun,' 'Bown,' and 'Buun.' See also Addison, *Spectator*, No. 60. But the family spelling was 'Bohun.' See, besides the wills, the facsimile seal, *post*, p. 426. The name should not be confounded with 'Bowen' (= 'ap Owen').

<sup>2</sup> Of two villages and parishes lying near together and distinguished by the names of their parish saints, St. George de Bohon and St. André de Bohon.

<sup>3</sup> At the time of the Conquest the Normans generally shaved off the beard. Those who did not were accordingly marked men, so much so that 'with the beard' was fairly part of the name. The Bayeux tapestry shows that the back of the head as well as the face was shaved. Wace tells us that one of Harold's spies reported William's soldiers an army of priests; they could chant masses, for all were shaven and shorn, not even having moustaches left; chap. xiv. *sub fin.*; Taylor, p. 147. But the fashion changed soon after the Conquest, and the Conqueror himself is represented in a drawing in a MS. of William, Abbot of Jumièges, as wearing a short beard and moustache. A copy of the drawing is given in Fairholt's *Costume in England*, I. 68, 3d ed. See also the first cut in Sandford's *Genealogical History*, the seal of the Conqueror.

<sup>4</sup> 'Dominus Humfredus de Bohun, cum barba, qui prius venit cum Willielmo Conquestore in Angliam de Normannia, cognatus dicti Conquestoris,' etc. *Chron. Lanthony, Monasticon*, VI. 134.

<sup>5</sup> *Doomsday*, II. 262. Under Rufus, however, he held an extensive barony in Wiltshire. Stapleton's *Norman Exchequer*, II. xxiii.; *Doomsday for Norfolk*, Munford, 50.