

XVIII

THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE

If I were an American as I am an Englishman, while a foreign troop was landed in my country,
I never would lay down my arms—never! never! never!—*William Pitt.*

97. The British Plan of Campaign.—The people of New York were in the midst of rejoicings over the Declaration of Independence when a British army of 25,000 men, under General Howe, landed on Staten Island. It was the plan of the British, after they had been driven from Boston, to secure possession of the Hudson River region and thus to cut the colonies in twain. With the Hudson River and Lake Champlain in the hands of the British, New England could be prevented from joining forces with the colonies—or States, as we may now call them—toward the south. The British planned that Howe should take New York and gain control of the lower Hudson, while General Carleton was to come down from Canada, recapture Ticonderoga, and gain control of the Upper Hudson. The two armies were finally to meet at Albany.

98. The Battle of Long Island.—Washington had foreseen the British plan, and when Howe arrived in New York he found the American general already on the ground with 18,000 men, half of whom, under General Israel Putnam, were holding Brooklyn Heights. These heights commanded New York just as Dorchester Heights commanded Boston, and Howe saw that the first thing to do was to drive out Putnam. So he landed his army on Long Island and advanced upon the heights. Putnam sent down 5000 men to meet the British, and the battle of Long Island was fought (August 27, 1776). The Americans were outnumbered nearly four to one, and were badly beaten. After the battle Howe pushed on to take the heights, but was foiled by Washington, who, under cover of a foggy night, carried 8000 men over to the New York side, and thus saved them from the clutches of the enemy.