

#1 *New York Times* Bestselling Authors of *Killing the Rising Sun*



BILL O'REILLY

— & MARTIN DUGARD —

Killing England

The Brutal Struggle for American Independence

ALSO BY BILL O'REILLY AND MARTIN DUGARD

Killing Lincoln

Killing Kennedy

Killing Jesus

Killing Patton

Killing Reagan

Killing the Rising Sun

Killing England

Killing England

The Brutal Struggle
for
American Independence

Bill O'Reilly
and
Martin Dugard

Henry Holt and Company
New York



Henry Holt and Company
Publishers since 1866
175 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10010
www.henryholt.com

Henry Holt® and  are registered trademarks of Macmillan Publishing Group, LLC.

Copyright © 2017 by Bill O'Reilly and Martin Dugard
All rights reserved.

Distributed in Canada by Raincoast Book Distribution Limited

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication data is available.

ISBN: 978-1-62779-0642

Our books may be purchased in bulk for promotional, educational, or business use.

Please contact your local bookseller or the Macmillan Corporate and
Premium Sales Department at (800) 221-7945, extension 5442, or by e-mail at
MacmillanSpecialMarkets@macmillan.com.

First Edition 2017

Designed by Meryl Sussman Levavi

Printed in the United States of America

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

QG/T

This book is dedicated to all American history teachers
past and present.

Killing England



VALLEY FORGE, PENNSYLVANIA

FEBRUARY 16, 1778

MID-MORNING

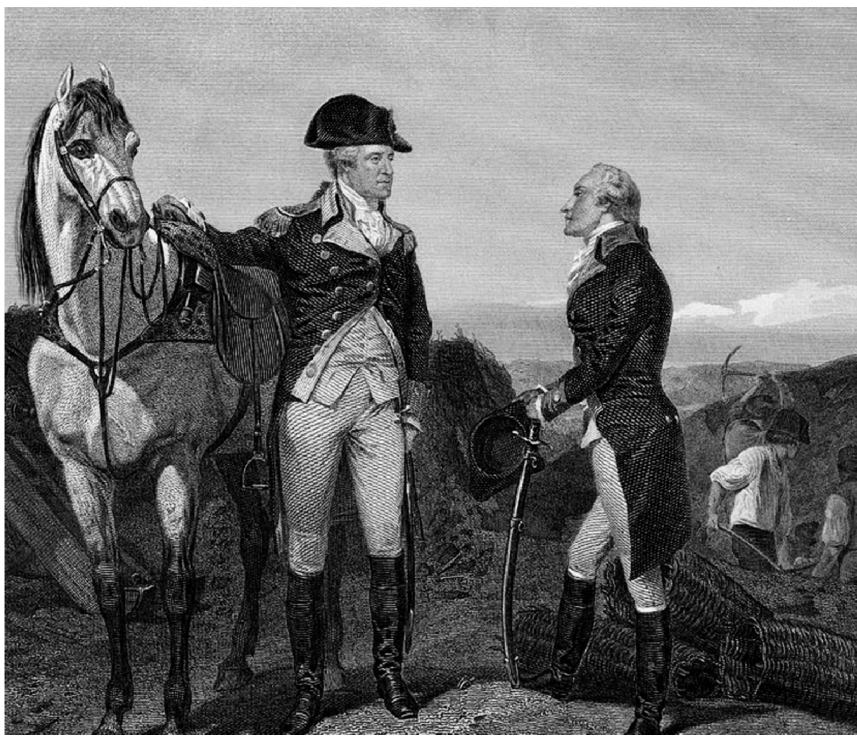
George Washington's army is desperate.

It has been a miserable winter, with rebel troops camped just eighteen miles away from the British Army, which is comfortably housed in Philadelphia. While the English are enjoying the luxuries of a big city, Washington's men are suffering grievously.

"For some days past, there has been little less than a famine in our camp," says Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton, writing on behalf of George Washington. The bond of trust between the general and his young aide-de-camp has grown substantially since Hamilton's arrival on the staff nearly one year ago. Now, rather than dictate letters or take the time to write them himself, Washington very often directs the twenty-three-year-old Hamilton to compose his correspondence, after which Washington simply signs his name.*

This particular letter is a cry for help. The Continental Army is starving. Hamilton's missive, addressed to New York governor George Clinton, is an urgent plea for food.

*Hamilton's actual birth year is uncertain. He could be as much as two years younger.



George Washington and Alexander Hamilton

On the surface, the situation in Washington's headquarters is almost serene. A small blaze roars in the fireplace of this massive stone cottage. Martha Washington has recently arrived from Mount Vernon, to the general's delight. She joins the slave cook, Hannah Till, and the aging Irish housekeeper, Elizabeth Thompson, in adding a feminine touch to the general's current situation. All around Washington, his staff bustles about, keeping themselves busy, and warm, during this long winter encampment.

Outside the cottage, however, things could not be direr. Row upon row of small log huts fill a broad meadow, tongues of wood smoke curling out of hundreds of makeshift chimneys. Half-dressed men scurry outside to openly relieve themselves, not caring who sees them, and then quickly race back inside to the warmth of their shelters. The average hut is a log cabin with a ceiling height of six and half feet. Each structure is fourteen feet long and sixteen feet wide. The men sleep twelve to a hut, on straw spread across bare dirt floors, inhaling

the fireplace smoke filling their dank quarters. There is nothing clean or comforting about these hovels. When a man dies, his body is removed, but it is common for the remaining men to continue sleeping on the same straw—which, in many cases, is infected with lice, maggots, or even smallpox. There is no furniture, and no kitchens.

Even if the huts were equipped with kitchens, there is very little food. The men are supposed to be issued a pound of meat or fish per day, along with flour and peas, but there is frequently not enough to go around. Most often, the soldiers make do with “fire cakes,” flour and water mixed together and cooked in a skillet over the fire or on a heated flat rock. If a hut runs out of food before the next allotment, the soldiers starve.

It is a situation that is quickly becoming untenable. The men while away the frigid days playing cards and dice, cooking whatever food they can find, and, in the unlikely event that a libation is made available, drinking. When called upon to perform military duties such as standing guard, many soldiers stick their heads out their hut door and shout the familiar refrain “No bread, no soldier!”

If they were to fight in their present condition, there would be little hope of victory. Their firearms are covered in rust and lack bayonets. Many weapons can't even fire.

And then there is their attire.

The soldiers themselves provide their own clothing. The men from New England seem better prepared for the winter, while soldiers from warmer states such as North Carolina suffer in their thinner garments. The states are supposed to provide clothing for their soldiers, but many have failed to do so. Therefore, even if the temperatures drop close to zero, most of Washington's men do not have overcoats and many do not even have shoes—footwear having rotted away months ago.

Throughout the camp, field hospitals stand amid the rows of huts. They are nine feet high and twenty-five feet long, with a chimney at one end. As in the cabins, the sick sleep on straw. General Washington has issued an order that each hospitalized man be visited daily by a representative from his brigade, but this directive often goes unheeded; the men are afraid of catching a disease. The doctors themselves have no such qualms, treating the ill and also making regular visits to the hovels the soldiers call home. Every Wednesday and

Saturday, the physicians make a report of the sick, whether hospitalized or not. This number continues to grow with each passing day.

Sentries stand duty in the freezing rain, clad in blankets, dressing gowns, and any other sort of clothing they can find, their frostbitten feet wrapped in rags. Soldiers have resorted to sharing clothing, offering the few garments they own to the men stepping outside to stand guard. Upon returning to the cabin, the man leaving guard duty will be expected to offer those same rags to the next soldier on duty.

These are the lucky ones: as Hamilton, writing for Washington, recently noted in a letter to Virginia governor Patrick Henry, a quarter of his twelve-thousand-man army is “unfit for duty by reason of their being barefoot and otherwise naked.”

Hundreds more are dead already or are dying from starvation, typhus, smallpox, dysentery, and influenza. Almost all suffer from an insidious condition known only as “the itch,” brought on by lice infestation. The army’s malnourished artillery horses are also perishing at an alarming rate, due to a lack of forage. They are quickly butchered for their meat, and their carcasses, which now litter the frozen ground, left to rot.

Adding to Washington’s responsibility are the wives and camp followers who have made their way to Valley Forge. Their role is to offer physical comfort and emotional support, but these women and children must also be fed and housed.*

It is in this dismal environment that Washington now signs his letter to Governor Clinton. This is not the first time he has written to an influential official asking for help. With the Congress doing very little to provide for his men, the general has cast a wide net in search of provisions, sending letter after letter in the hope of securing food and clothing.

“A part of the army has been a week, without any kind of flesh,”

* Married women were sometimes allowed to sleep in huts with their husbands, but most often women and children were kept in separate housing. All were expected to work in order to be afforded a daily ration, with women doing laundry, sewing, and performing nursing duties. Children did sundry chores around camp, with older boys offered the opportunity to enlist once they reached the legal age of sixteen—although many joined up much earlier. There were prostitutes at Valley Forge, too. These women plied their trade discreetly—the punishment for being caught was expulsion from camp.

Washington writes, referring to the lack of meat and protein in the daily diet. "Naked and starving as they are, we cannot enough admire the incomparable patience and fidelity of the soldiery, that they have not been . . . excited by their sufferings, to a general mutiny."



It has been two months since the Continental Army retreated into its winter quarters northwest of Philadelphia. Washington himself observed that the British could easily track their location by following the trail of blood in the snow left by the bare, frostbitten feet of his battered force.

The location at this broad field known as Valley Forge is equal parts tactical and political—the rebel forces are close enough to Philadelphia to satisfy those in the Pennsylvania legislature who would prefer Washington fight through the winter, but distant enough to afford his men the rest and succor they require after months of hard combat.*

Valley Forge's location also has its disadvantages. Thousands of civilian refugees who fled Philadelphia before the British took the city now inundate the Pennsylvania countryside, straining its limited resources. Corruption within the American supply system has seen money and supplies diverted away from Washington's army. And many local farmers are actually hiding their stores of grain from the general's foragers, hoping to sell them at a higher profit to the British.

Thus, Washington and his men are hard pressed to find even the most basic stores. Worse, small bands of British soldiers and Pennsylvania Loyalists are conducting guerrilla operations against the foraging parties, a stark reminder that there is no vacation from war.

"Soon I came in sight of the camp," one officer wrote of his first impression of Valley Forge. "My imagination had pictured an army with uniforms, the glitter of arms, standards—in short, military pomp of all sorts. Instead . . . I noticed soldiers wearing cotton nightcaps

* Another vital reason for remaining in the region was the location of the forges specific to southeastern Pennsylvania, which has an abundance of ore deposits and was the hub of American iron production. These forges were vital to casting weapons of war, thus the need to protect them from falling into British hands. Originally called the Mount Joy Forge, the furnace closest to Washington's camp soon became known by locals as the "valley forge," due to its location.

under their hats, and some having for cloaks or greatcoats coarse woolen blankets. . . . I learned afterwards that these were the officers.”

At first, the army lived in tents. Even Washington, knowing the power of example, endured those windswept and bitter December nights in his own blue-and-white shelter. But soon he ordered that trees be felled for the construction of huts, and he offered a ten-dollar reward to the first group of men to build their own. Within weeks, several of what would be almost two thousand log huts covering the fields and meadows appeared.

As if there were not enough to concern the general, a commission from Congress has arrived to observe the army—and Washington. Questions about his leadership abound, and many in Congress wish to see him replaced. Washington is aware of his critics, but he refuses to acknowledge the dissent publicly—knowing that Loyalists and the British would use this as a propaganda wedge to undermine America’s growing strength.*

Deprivation, anger, day after day of filthy despair and impending doom—this is life at Valley Forge. Washington still believes that victory is possible, but the successes at Trenton and Princeton are an entire year in the past. In war, twelve months can seem like an eternity. Endurance has carried the Continental Army through three years of battle, but stamina is no longer enough. A new way must be found to survive this winter and win this war.

Washington is deeply private about his religious views, often spending moments in the morning and evening alone, performing a daily devotional with his Bible. But for all that he has prayed in the past, there has never been a time as desperate as now.

“What methods you can take, you will be the best judge of,” ends his letter to Governor Clinton, Washington’s fear barely concealed beneath the surface, “but if you can devise any means to procure a quantity of cattle or other kind of flesh, for the use of this army, to be at camp in the course of a month, you will render a most essential service to the common cause.”

* *Propaganda*, often misconstrued as a modern term, is from the Latin for “to propagate.” In 1622, Pope Gregory XV established the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith, also known as the *Propaganda Fide*. In time, the word *propaganda* was applied to any attempt to spread an ideology.

Seven days later, George Washington gets his answer.

It is not a herd of cows or some other source of food, and the relief does not come from Governor Clinton.

Instead, it is Benjamin Franklin who has provided an answer to Washington's prayer.



Lt. Col. Alexander Hamilton realizes that his leader, George Washington, has almost lost control of the American army.

Hamilton, born illegitimately on the Caribbean island of Nevis, has proven himself an indispensable member of Washington's staff. He is a wiry five foot seven, a competitive and ambitious soldier who has fought since the war began, first in a militia and then in an artillery company. Hamilton's intelligence and courage were quickly noticed, and three generals offered him the all-important position of aide-de-camp. He refused, preferring to fight rather than accept a rear-echelon position. It was only when General Washington offered the same aide-de-camp job that Hamilton accepted.

Alexander Hamilton soon concluded that Washington needed to overhaul the entire command structure of his army. Almost immediately, he wrote a three-thousand-word manifesto emphasizing the need for greater discipline and punishment for wayward soldiers. Washington accepted the criticism because he knew that his army would not hold together much longer. The general also realized that if the nearby British force had any ambition, an attack might seal America's doom.

Alexander Hamilton knows that his commander is a brave man, but Washington's lack of in-depth military knowledge and tactics often leads to his defeat by superior British generals. Sometimes Washington's men fight like a true army, but most often they behave as the individual tradesmen, farmers, and societal castoffs they were before the war began.

Both Hamilton and Washington see catastrophe in the future. "Unless some great and capital change suddenly takes place," Washington writes to Congress, "the army must inevitably be reduced to one or other of these three things—to starve, dissolve, or disperse."

On February 23, 1778, that "great and capital change" arrives.



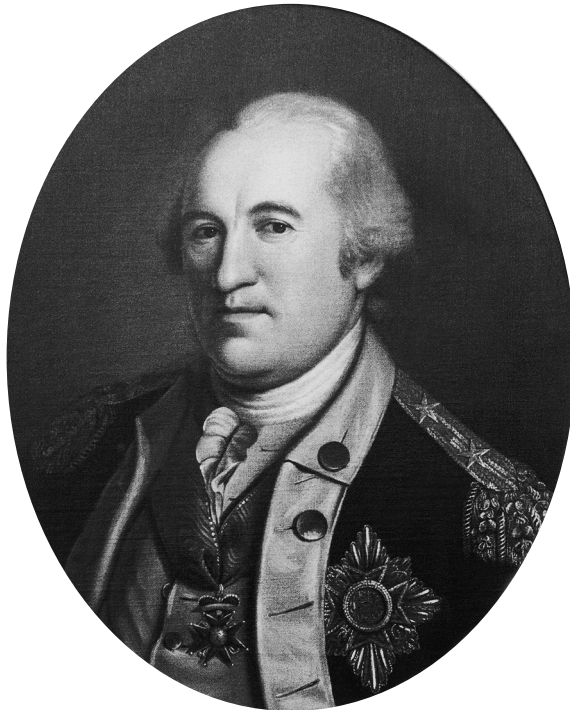
In the summer of 1777, Benjamin Franklin wrote a letter in Paris recommending a Prussian soldier named Friedrich Wilhelm Ludolf Gerhard Augustin von Steuben for a position in the American army. Baron von Steuben, who prefers to be called “Baron,” was referred to Franklin by Claude Louis, Count of Saint-Germain, the French minister of war. As the French slowly became more involved in the American war effort, in defiance of a treaty of neutrality with England, they decided to send a well-trained European officer to America to transform the Continental Army into a fighting force worth their financial backing. Franklin’s letter was addressed to the Congress, and word of von Steuben’s imminent arrival soon reached Washington at Valley Forge.

So it is that George Washington mounts his favorite horse, Blue-skin, and rides several miles outside Valley Forge to meet a man he is not yet convinced can help him. But the respect the general shows by going out to greet von Steuben is deeply felt by the Prussian.

“General Washington came several miles to meet me on the road,” von Steuben later writes, “and accompanied me to my quarters, where I found an officer with twenty-five men as a guard of honor. When I declined this, saying I wished to be considered merely as a volunteer, the general answered me in the politest words that the whole army would be glad to stand sentinel for such volunteers.”

The Baron is forty-seven and has come to America to rehabilitate his reputation. He would have preferred to remain in Europe to work as a soldier for hire, but allegations of improper relations with male soldiers are proving a detriment to his career chances on the Continent—and are perhaps even threatening his imprisonment. Those same rumors will eventually follow the Baron to America.

At six foot two, von Steuben is George Washington’s equal in height, with a slight paunch and a long, aquiline nose. He wears a Prussian general’s uniform and a red-jeweled medallion around his neck. The Baron carries the recommendation letter from Benjamin Franklin giving his rank as lieutenant general, but the fact of the matter is that although von Steuben served on the staff of Frederick the Great, he has never risen above the rank of captain. Nevertheless, the Prussian’s



Baron von Steuben

years of training have prepared him for the challenge of transforming the American army.

Von Steuben's eyes sweep Valley Forge as he enters the camp for the first time. He cannot help but see the lack of discipline, and his senses are assaulted by the odors coming from the mounds of sewage. The Baron is accompanied by his aide, a servant, and his pet greyhound, Azor. He is appalled by the conditions at Valley Forge but knows that they will soon change.

As he settles into his own stone cottage, the thickly muscled, double-chinned, homosexual Prussian officer has only one thought in mind—to save the U.S. Army.*

*The difference between Hessians, who are fighting for the British, and Prussians is partly a matter of geography. Hessians took their name from the Hesse-Kassel and Hesse-Hanau regions of what is now central Germany. The Kingdom of Prussia was much larger, at one time stretching across northern Germany from Denmark to what is now the Czech Republic.



For George Washington, the Prussian's arrival presents yet another challenge.

"The General is well, but much worn with fatigue and anxiety," Martha Washington writes to a friend. "I never knew him to be so anxious as now."

In addition to the lack of food, clothing, and shoes, Washington has personnel issues. He already has the French marquis Lafayette spending the winter at Valley Forge. The young officer is showing himself a true believer in the American cause, enduring the cold and hardships without complaint, but there is resentment among some American units about taking orders from a foreigner. Washington does not need another European officer adding to the commotion. Making matters worse, von Steuben barely speaks English and has an obvious bent toward self-importance. In order to keep an eye on him, Washington assigns Lafayette to assist the Baron, who does speak the marquis's language, French.

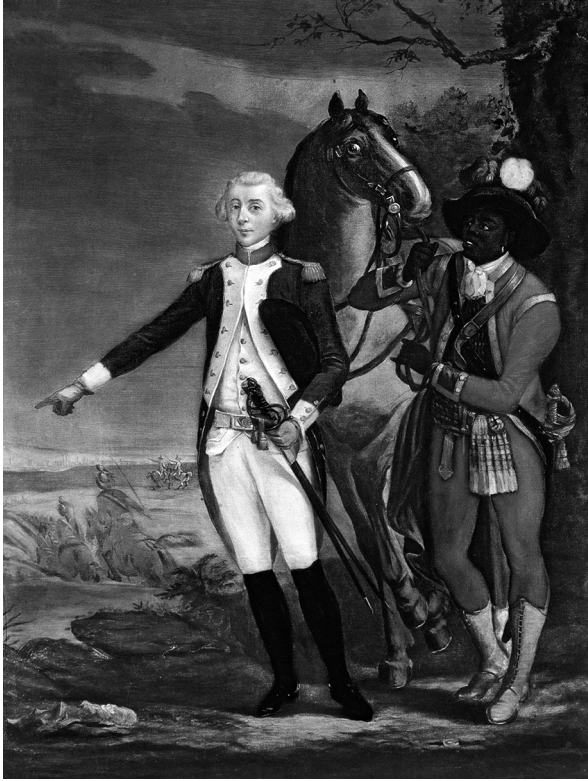
But Franklin's letter, along with von Steuben's military bearing and lifetime of training within the vaunted Prussian military tradition, leads Washington to be cautiously optimistic. Despite the horrific conditions at Valley Forge, his men have chosen to stay on rather than sneak away in the night, showing their loyalty and love of America by enduring vast hardships. It will all be for naught if the Continental Army does not use the downtime winter affords them to become professional soldiers. Congress has already drafted a resolution calling for an "inspector general, agreeable to the practice of the best European armies," in the hope of raising discipline in the American ranks.

So, Washington, Lafayette, and von Steuben begin their challenge. The fighting will begin anew in three months—maybe sooner. Von Steuben must work quickly to create a revitalized Continental Army. Success means he can stay on, perhaps leading men into battle.

Failure means von Steuben will be sent away.

For his own sake, the Prussian must succeed.

In truth, the Baron is nearly penniless. Middle age has arrived and,



Marquis de Lafayette

with it, the dwindling of personal opportunities. Despite his grand façade, this is the Prussian's last chance.

So begins the transformation of the American army.*



The Baron spends his first few weeks at Valley Forge observing the troops. He takes long walks around the grounds, scrutinizing minute details of everyday life. The scene of chaos and disarray is beyond anything he has ever seen in a military encampment.

"Matters had to be remedied, but where to commence was the great difficulty," he would later write.

"With regard to their military discipline, I may safely say no such

*Many of von Steuben's methods of drill and training are still in use today. He is considered by some historians to be the father of the U.S. Army.

thing existed. In the first place, there was no regular formation. A so-called regiment was formed of three platoons, another of five, eight, or nine, and the Canadian regiment of twenty-one. The formation of their regiments was as varied as their mode of drill.”

Many American officers do not even live at Valley Forge, preferring to sleep in homes miles away. Some have abandoned the war altogether for the winter, traveling home to wait for spring.

Beginning in early March, von Steuben slowly starts making changes. He rises each morning at 3:00, smokes a single pipe, and drinks one cup of coffee while his servant shaves and grooms him. He is in the saddle and riding to the parade ground by first light. Assisted by Hamilton’s translations, he communicates his orders to the army. One of the few words of English von Steuben knows is *goddamn*, and he uses it frequently, to great effect. Sometimes he doesn’t say anything at all: “When duty was neglected,” one officer will write, “the baron’s look was quite sufficient.”

The appalling lack of sanitation comes to an end. Latrines are dug, but always on a downhill slope outside camp. Until now, the Americans have never practiced such a simple concept. Also, George Washington makes it a whipping offense for a man to relieve himself in public.*

Kitchens are built for communal eating, specifically situated on the opposite side of Valley Forge from the latrines. Great ovens begin preparing loaves of bread to feed the entire army.

Rather than soldiers being housed in random fashion, von Steuben orders them billeted together by company. The companies, in turn, are grouped with their regiments—the regiments with the brigades, and the brigades with the divisions.



Von Steuben realizes it is impossible for one man to train an entire army. He also understands that there might be apprehension about embracing his methods, as he is not an American. He therefore selects

*The connection between human waste and the spread of deadly diseases such as cholera may seem like common sense, but as late as the Mexican-American War, in the 1840s, American troops were still defecating in the same rivers and streams they used for washing clothes, drinking water, and cooking.

one hundred twenty of the best officers and soldiers and places them under his personal command. He sees these soldiers as the battle-hardened leaders within the Continental Army.

"I made this guard my military school. I drilled them myself twice a day. And to remove that English prejudice which some officers entertained, namely, that to drill the recruit was a sergeant's duty and beneath the station of an officer, I often took the musket myself to show the men the manual exercise which I wished to introduce."

Thus begins the drill.

Von Steuben teaches this small group of soldiers to march seventy-five steps per minute, always beginning with the left foot. The "quick step" is one hundred twenty steps per minute.

Only when these men are thoroughly trained does the Baron have them display their new skills to the others. "I paraded them in the presence of all the officers of the army," he will write. "They formed in column, deployed, attacked with the bayonet, changed front, etc. It afforded a new and agreeable sight for the young officers and soldiers.

"Having gained my point, I dispersed my apostles, the inspectors, and my new doctrine was eagerly embraced. I lost no time in extending my operations on a large scale . . . in less than three weeks I executed maneuvers with an entire division in presence of the commander-in-chief."

Von Steuben's core group then returns to the ranks, imparting these newly learned lessons to the men within their regiments. These men, in turn, teach others. In this way, the knowledge of basic drill is spread through Valley Forge.

No longer do the Americans spend all day shivering in their smoke-filled cabins. The day now begins at 6:00 a.m. Eight-man squads of soldiers march in parade, a noncommissioned officer to their right, calling out the cadence. The morning drill continues until 8:00 a.m. An hour later, the training starts again, focusing on the specifics of tactics. There is a meeting of all officers at noon, followed by another two hours of drills at 3:00 p.m. The evening is a time of discussing "theoretic maneuvering" with the command staff.

As March turns to April, the sight of entire companies drilling in lockstep becomes commonplace. The sense of camaraderie is augmented by the work of Martha Washington, who has helped orga-

nize the many women in camp into a nursing corps. The elegant twenty-four-year-old wife of Gen. Nathanael Greene has also joined the encampment. Caty Greene speaks fluent French, making the Greene quarters a haven for foreign officers. And whether from America or not, the senior officers meet two or three evenings a week at General Washington's quarters for dinner and coffee.



It is General Greene who emerges as a hero of Valley Forge. In March 1778, Washington appoints him as quartermaster general, in charge of procuring food, clothing, wagons, and horses. It is well known that an army's success depends upon being well supplied. General Washington has been reluctant to rob the local citizens of their horses and grain to supply his army, but there is no longer any choice. Greene's troops scour the countryside for supplies, issuing receipts for all they take. This bounty includes grain, horses, cattle, and wagons.

"Like a pharaoh, I harden my heart," Greene tells Washington, when speaking of the daily sight of sobbing local people watching their favorite horses and livestock being led away. He reminds himself that if the Americans do not "forage the country naked," taking possession of all food and grain within twenty miles of Valley Forge, then the revolution will surely fail.



Finally, George Washington feels some relief. As spring arrives in full blossom, he receives the news of France's entry into the war. He also knows that von Steuben's army is ready to fight. Yet the British are holding back, unwilling to engage the rebels.

On May 6, 1778, Washington sets war aside for a night, ordering a massive feast for the entire officer corps. The return of warm weather and the results of Greene's successful foraging mean that plentiful amounts of game and beef fill the camp. The men have all been provided with clothing, although some grumble that they finally have winter clothes just as summer is about to arrive. George Washington also abandons his stoic demeanor and drinks his fill at the special celebration, ordering Alexander Hamilton to ascend a platform front and center to offer toasts in the general's name. This rouses the officer corps, who

are feeling no pain. Washington, whether concerned about having had too much to drink or embarrassed by his poor dental health, is averse to doing his own speaking on this grand public occasion.

"After a sufficient merriment his Excellency retired," one officer will write, "Desiring the officers to be very attentive to their duty."

The meaning of "duty" becomes clear in the days that follow—the British are on the march. The time has come to leave Valley Forge and put von Steuben's lessons to work on the field of battle.

The winter has transformed the army in more ways than one. There will be no more talk of another general replacing George Washington. In the six months spent at Valley Forge, roughly two thousand men have died, about one-sixth of the entire force. The general has endured the severe weather with his men, so much so that his very presence gives them hope, despite these losses.

"I am content should they remove almost any general except his Excellency," Capt. Ezra Selden of the First Connecticut Regiment writes home. "Even Congress are not aware of the confidence the army places in him."

On June 19, 1778, the Continental Army marches out of Valley Forge, ready, at last, to confront the enemy.

BUY THE BOOK

