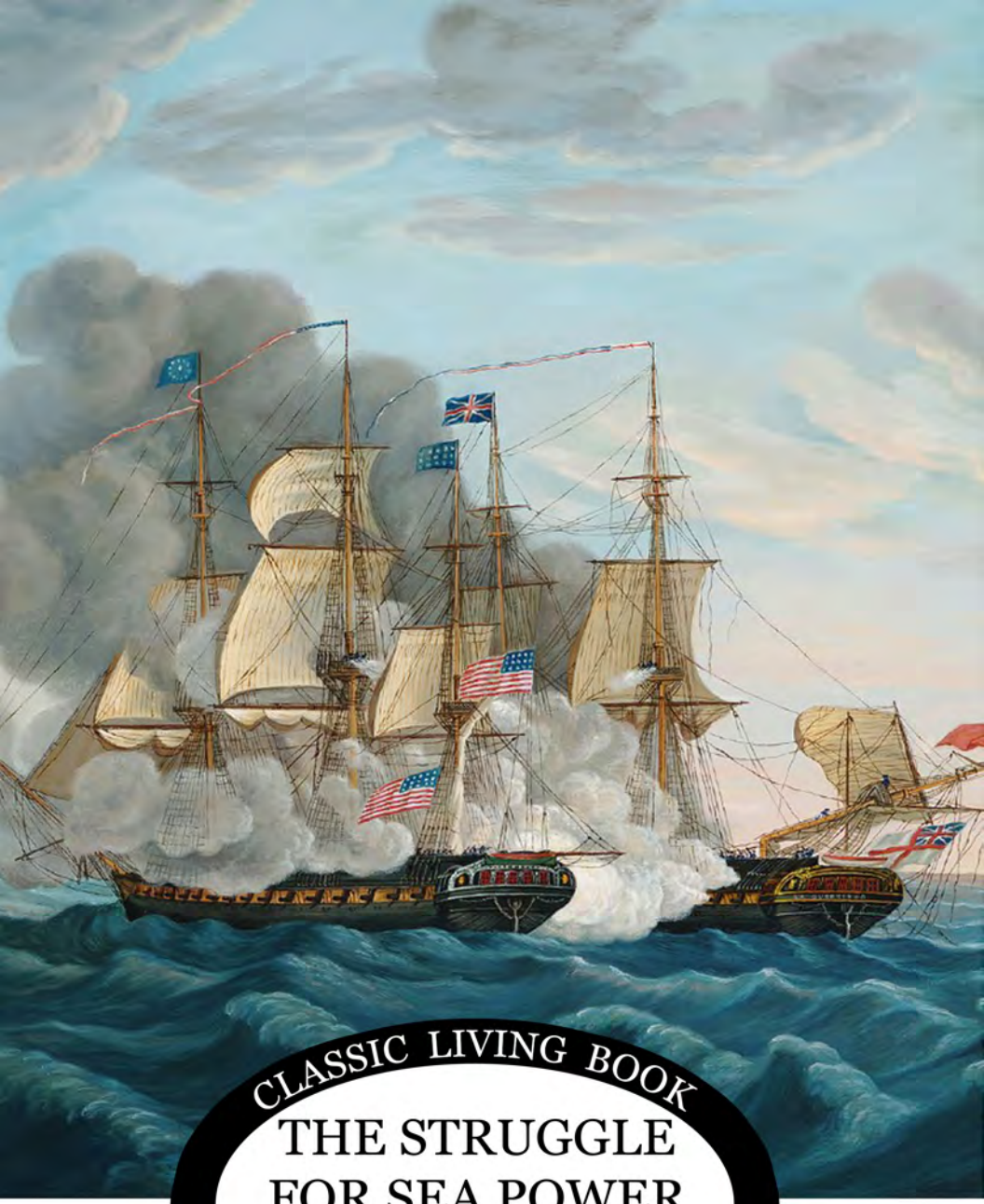

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE STRUGGLE FOR SEA POWER

M. B. Synge

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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THE STORY OF THE WORLD

BOOK FOUR

The Struggle for Sea Power

FROM THE AMERICAN WAR TO WATERLOO (1745-1815)

by

M. B. SYNGE

NAPOLEON.

Contents

1. THE STORY OF THE GREAT MOGUL

"Oh, East is East, and West is West,
and never the twain shall meet."

—KIPLING.

The wonderful story of England's conquest of India reads, even to-day, like some fairy legend of the Old World.

It is the story of how one small island, away in the Northern seas, conquered an empire ten times its own size, at a distance of 6000 miles. In the ages of long ago, when the Egyptians were building their pyramids, when the Phœnicians were sailing to the Pillars of Hercules, when the Greeks were adorning Athens and the Romans were spreading their empire far and wide, this England was still sleeping on the waves of the boundless sea.

It was not till after the Roman Empire had fallen, not till the Portuguese had found their way across the Sea of Darkness to India, not till the Spaniards had discovered the New World, that England awoke to a sense of the great possibilities that lay before her. Slowly and surely, from this time onwards, she stretched forth her arms over the broad seas that had once been her barriers, until, by her untiring energy, she won for herself an empire "on which the sun never sets."

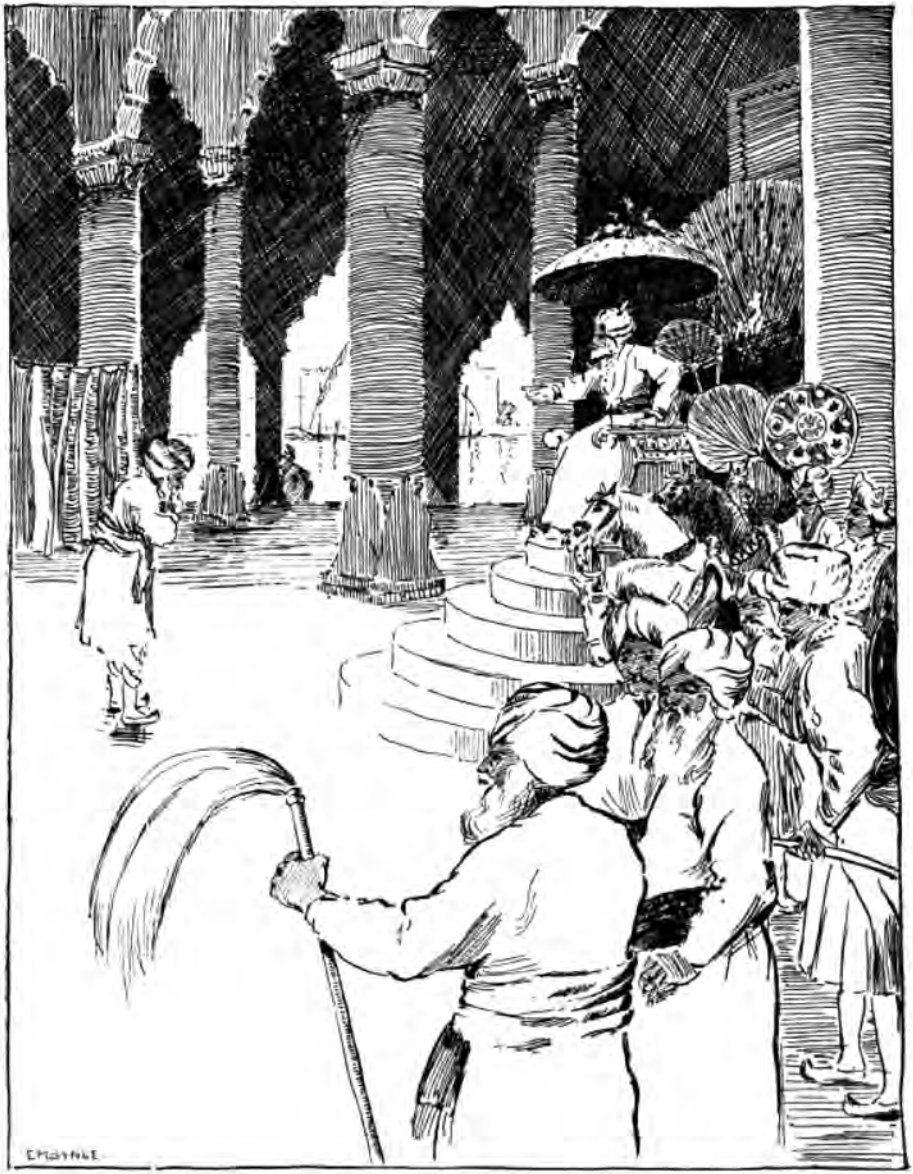
Her first great conquest was that of India or Hindostan—the land of the Hindoos. It is a country cut off from Asia by a lofty range of mountains known as the Hima-laya, or snow abode. Here are some of the highest peaks in the world, never scaled

by man. Here, too, rise the largest rivers in India—the Indus and the Ganges, on which most of the large towns are built. Most of the country lies within the tropics. Hence it is a land of wondrous starlight and moonlight, a land of whirlwind and tempest, of pitiless sun and scorching heat. Here to-day, as of old, are men with dark faces and long beards, dressed in turbans and flowing robes—men for the most part Mohammedans, praying at intervals throughout the day, with their faces toward Mecca.

At the time that Alexander the Great entered India,—327 years before the birth of Christ,—the land was parcelled out into a number of small kingdoms, each under the government of its own Raja. Each Raja had a council known as the Durbar. When a Raja conquered other Rajas he was known as a Maharaja or Great Raja, and all these words are used in India to-day.

In the sixteenth century a race of Mongols or Moguls swept into India from Central Asia and founded an empire in the north. Marco Polo had heard a great deal about these Mongols when he was at the court of the Great Khan. The first of the Mogul emperors was called Baber, or the Tiger; but he was succeeded by a yet more famous grandson called Akbar, whose power is spoken of still in India to-day. Akbar added to the Mogul Empire until it became the most extensive and splendid empire in the world. In no European kingdom was so large a population subject to a single ruler, or so large a revenue poured into the treasury. The beauty and magnificence of the buildings, the huge retinues and gorgeous decorations, dazzled the eyes of those accustomed to the pomps of Versailles.

But under the Great Mogul Aurangzeb, the "Conqueror of the Universe," the empire reached the height of its glory. He had usurped the throne, put his father into prison, and murdered his three brothers. His crown was uneasy, but secure. At Delhi



THE GREAT MOGUL.

he held his magnificent court. Here was the palace of the Great Mogul, built on the river Jumna, a tributary of the Ganges. The magnificent gateway of the palace was guarded by two huge elephants of stone, each bearing the colossal statue of a Raja warrior on his back. Here too was the grand hall of audience, where the Durbar was held. The ceiling was of white marble, supported by thirty marble columns, bearing an inscription in gold: "If there be a Paradise on earth, it is this." The throne was in a recess at the back of the hall, and over the throne was a peacock made of gold and jewels, valued at a million pounds.

One day Aurangzeb was sitting on his throne at a Durbar at Delhi, when his old tutor appeared before him. The Great Mogul had suddenly stopped his pension, and he had come to know the reason. Aurangzeb gave him the explanation in public.

"This tutor," he cried, "taught me the Koran (Mohammedan Bible) and wearied me with rules of Arabic grammar, but he told me nothing at all of foreign countries. I learnt nothing of the Ottoman Empire in Africa. I was made to believe that Holland was a great empire, and that England was bigger than France."

When his birthday came round the Great Mogul was weighed in state, and if he was found to weigh more than on the preceding year there were great public rejoicings. All the chief people in the empire came to make their offerings: precious stones, gold and silver, rich carpets, camels, horses, and elephants were presented to him. He had tents of red velvet embroidered in gold. He had seven splendid thrones,—one covered with diamonds, one with rubies, one with pearls, one with emeralds, though the Peacock Throne was the most valuable. While the Great Mogul was on his throne, fifteen horses stood ready on either side, their bridles enriched with precious stones. Elephants were trained to kneel down before the throne and do reverence with their

trunks. The Emperor's favourite elephant was fed on good meat, with plenty of sugar and brandy.

Aurangzeb himself was nearly one hundred years old when he died. Suspicion lest his sons should subject him to the fate which he had inflicted on his own father left him a solitary old man. As death approached terror and remorse seized him. "Come what may," he cried desperately at the last, "I have launched my vessel on the waves. Farewell! farewell! farewell!"

So passed the last of the Great Moguls who ruled for over two hundred years in India. The empire was soon after broken up, and the way left clear for England to found her great Eastern Empire beyond the seas.

2. ROBERT CLIVE

"Clive kissed me on the mouth and eyes and brow,
Wonderful kisses, so that I became
Crowned above Queens—a withered beldame now
Brooding on ancient fame."

—KIPLING (MADRAS).

During the forty years after the death of Aurangzeb a great change passed over India. The great Mogul Empire was broken up; enemies invaded the land from north and south. They preyed on the defenceless country, they marched through the gates of Delhi and bore away in triumph the Peacock Throne and all its priceless jewels.

From the time of Alexander the Great little intercourse had been held between Europe and the East. But from that May day in 1498, when Vasco da Gama and his brave Portuguese sailors stepped ashore at Calicut, there was constant communication with the ports on the western coast. For some time Portugal had claimed exclusive right to her Indian trade, but after a time Dutch ships sailed to her eastern ports. The enterprise of Holland roused commercial enthusiasm in England and France until these three nations had established trading stations in the East.

The Dutch headquarters was at Batavia; the French at Pondicherry, on the east coast of India; the English at Madras, some eighty miles to the north. The governor of Pondicherry was a Frenchman called Dupleix. He was the first European to see the possibility of founding an empire on the ruins of the

Great Mogul, though it was reserved for the English to carry out his wonderful idea.

Neither the French nor the English traders knew much about the government of India at this time. They knew that they paid a yearly rent to the native ruler or Nawab, who lived in Oriental splendour at the city of Arcot, some sixty-five miles west of Madras. This Nawab of Arcot was in his turn under the Nizam of Hyderabad, and both in the old days were under the Great Mogul.

Dupleix, full of his dreams of empire, saw that his first step must be to capture the English trading station of Madras. England and France were at war, so he seized this opportunity of attacking Madras, which was but poorly defended, and carried off the English in triumph to Pondicherry. Here all was joy and gladness. Salutes were fired from the batteries, Te Deums were sung in the churches. The Nizam came to visit his new allies. Dupleix, dressed in Mohammedan garments, entered Pondicherry with him, and in the pageant that followed took precedence of the native court. He was declared Governor of India from Hyderabad to Cape Comorin, a country the same size as France itself; he was given command of seven thousand men; he ruled over thirty millions of people with absolute power, and the Nizam himself became but a tool in his hands.

It was at this moment that the genius and valour of a single young Englishman, Robert Clive, changed the whole aspect of affairs, and won the empire of India for England.

"Clive," said a Frenchman afterwards, "understood and applied the system of Dupleix."

Robert Clive was the eldest of a large English family. He was born in Shropshire in the year 1725. At a very early age he showed that he had a strong will and a fiery passion, "flying out on every

trifling occasion." The story is still told in the neighbourhood of how "Bob Clive," when quite a little boy, climbed to the top of a lofty steeple, and with what terror people saw him seated on a stone spout near the top. He was sent from school to school, but made little progress with his learning. Instead, he gained the character of being a very naughty little boy. True, one far-seeing master prophesied that he would yet make "a great figure in the world," but for the most part he was held to be a dunce. Nothing was expected from such a boy, and when he was eighteen his parents sent him off to India, in the service of the East India Company, to "make his fortune or die of a fever."

His voyage was unusually long and tedious, lasting over a year. At last he arrived at the port of Madras—a barren spot beaten by a raging surf—to find himself very lonely and very poor in a strange land. He found some miserably paid work in an office, but he was shy and proud and made no friends. Moreover, the hot climate made him ill.

"I have not enjoyed one happy day since I left my native land," he cried piteously. Twice, in desperation, the poor home-sick boy tried to shoot himself, but twice he failed.

"Surely," he cried at the second failure—"surely I am reserved for something great."

So it happened that Robert Clive was at Madras when the French came and carried away the English captives to Pondicherry. Disguising themselves as natives, in turbans and flowing robes, Clive and some friends managed to escape to another English trading station. There was no more office work to be done at present, and Clive, together with hundreds of other Englishmen, entered the army to fight against the French. His bravery and courage soon raised him above his fellows, and he became a captain.

Clive was now twenty-five. He saw plainly that unless some daring blow were aimed at the French soon, Dupleix would carry all before him. He suggested a sudden attack on Arcot, the residence of the Nawab; and though the scheme seemed wild to the point of madness, he was given command of 200 Europeans and some native troops to march against the town.

Arcot was sixty-five miles away. The fort was known to be garrisoned by 1100 men, but Clive marched bravely forth. During the march a terrific storm arose. The rain swept down in a deluge on the little army, the lightning played around them, the thunder pealed over their heads; but they pushed on through it all, undaunted in their desperate undertaking. Tidings of their fearless endurance reached the town before them. A panic seized the native garrison: they abandoned the fort. Not a shot was fired, and Clive with his 500 men entered the city in triumph. The young boy-captain had already won a deathless renown.

3. THE BLACK HOLE OF CALCUTTA

"Clive it was gave England India."

—BROWNING.

It was not likely that the spirited little army should be left in undisputed possession of Arcot, and Clive now prepared for an inevitable siege. Soon 10,000 men had swarmed into the place, hemming in the garrison on every side. Days grew to weeks, and the ready resource of Clive alone saved the situation. The handful of men—European and native—caught the spirit of their leader, and each became a hero. History contains no more touching instance of native fidelity than that related of the men who came to Clive, not to complain of their own scanty fare, but to propose "that all the grain should be given to Europeans, who required more nourishment than the natives of Asia. The thin gruel, strained away from the rice, would do for them," they said. With such as these Clive held the fort for fifty days.

At last the French resolved to storm the town. Clive busied himself with preparations. In the evening he threw himself down to sleep, utterly tired out; but he was soon awakened, and at his post in a moment. The French attacked in strong force. They had brought with them huge elephants, with great pieces of iron fixed on their foreheads, to try and break down the gates. The English fired on them; and the unhappy creatures, unused to firearms, turned round and fled in their fright into the midst of the French, trampling many under foot. Night fell, and Clive, with his little band of weary men, passed an anxious

time. Morning dawned to find the enemy had melted away. The siege of Arcot was ended. The growing power of the French in India was arrested. Robert Clive was the hero of the hour.

Indeed, not long after this Dupleix was recalled from the East by Louis XV., his dream of empire ended, to die in France heart-broken.

But India's troubles were by no means at an end. English trade in the East was growing, and the English had long ago established a trading station at Calcutta on the river Hoogly, one of the mouths of the Ganges. They had had no water-way at Madras; but here, at Calcutta, they had been able to penetrate inland and annex some of the surrounding country, known as Bengal.

Now the Nawab of Bengal hated the English. His imagination was fired with fabulous stories of the vast wealth stored up in the treasury at Calcutta. So he collected a huge army, and in the year 1756 he appeared on the outskirts of the town. The English were taken by surprise,—they had no Clive to lead them to victory,—and the Nawab took Calcutta with ease, making 146 prisoners. But the treasury did not yield the vast riches he had been led to expect, and he wreaked his revenge on the luckless prisoners. It was a hot night in June when the 146 English captives were driven by clubs and swords into a little room some twenty feet square, with only two small gratings at the entrance to let in air. The "Black Hole" had been built to shut up troublesome soldiers: it was intended to hold four or five at a time. To cram in 146 human beings was to court slow but certain death. The day had been fiercely hot, the night was sultry and stifling. Not a breath of air could enter to relieve the sufferings of the Europeans, too tightly packed into the small space to move. In vain they cried for mercy; in vain they appealed to the guards in their agony. The guards

only replied from outside that the Nawab was asleep, and none dared wake him or remove a single prisoner without his leave. Then followed cries for water. A few water-skins were brought to the gratings, but in the mad struggle to reach it many were trampled to death. The heartless guards only held burning torches to the gratings and mocked at their frantic struggles. As the long night passed away the struggles ceased, the screams died away, and a few low moans were the only sounds audible. Morning dawned at last. The Nawab awoke and ordered the doors to be opened. Twenty-three fainting people alone staggered forth: the rest lay dead in heaps upon the floor. And even to-day, though nearly 150 years have passed away since that horrible crime, the Black Hole of Calcutta cannot be mentioned without a shudder.

The tale of horror thrilled through the British Empire. All eyes turned to the young hero of Arcot to avenge the wrongs done to his countrymen, and Robert Clive was soon hurrying to the scene of action.

Early in January he arrived at Calcutta, and soon the British flag was waving above the town. Meanwhile the Nawab was waiting for him at Plassey, some ninety-six miles to the north of Calcutta, with a tremendous army, at least twenty times the size of Clive's. Clive was marching north, hoping for help to be sent, but he reached the banks of the Hoogly with a force wholly inadequate for the work before him. He was in a painfully anxious dilemma. Before him lay a wide river, across which, if things went ill, not one would ever return. For the first time in his life he shrank from the fearful responsibility of making up his mind. He was but thirty-two at the time. He called a council of war. Should they attack the mighty force before them with their little band of men, or wait for help?

"Wait for help," said the officers; and Clive himself agreed with them.

But still he was not satisfied. He retired alone under the shade of a tree near by, and spent an hour in the deepest thought. Then he returned to the camp. He knew his mind now: he was determined to risk everything. "Be in readiness to attack to-morrow," he cried.

The river was soon crossed, and Clive with his army took up his quarters in a grove of mango-trees, within a mile of the enemy. He could not sleep. All night long he heard the sound of drums and cymbals from the vast camp of the Nawab. He knew but too well the fearful odds against which he would fight on the morrow.

The day broke—"the day which was to decide the fate of India."

An hour after the battle began, all was over. The Nawab had mounted a camel and was in full flight, and the great native army was retreating in wild disorder. Clive stood triumphant on the battlefield of Plassey. With a loss of twenty-two men he had scattered an army of nearly 60,000, and subdued an empire larger than Great Britain. The "heaven-born general" was conqueror not only of the battlefield of Plassey, but of the British Empire in India.

4. THE STRUGGLE FOR NORTH AMERICA

"Few, few were they whose swords of old
Won the fair land in which we dwell,
But we are many, we who hold
The grim resolve to guard it well."

—BRYANT.

"It was the volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America that set the world on fire."

So said the great English minister Horace Walpole. Let us see why that volley was fired.

While the English and French were fighting for the mastery of India away in the East, a great struggle was going on between the same two peoples—New England and New France—for the mastery of North America in the Far West. Clive had fought till the English flag waved over the cities of Madras and Calcutta. Now Wolfe was to fight in America till the English flag waved from the capitals of Quebec and Montreal.

At present the lilies of France floated over these towns. They had floated there since the early days when the first Frenchman—Jacques Cartier broke the solitude of this distant wilderness. Canada was the seat of French power in North America. French Canadian life centred round Quebec and Montreal, on the banks of the river St Lawrence. Here, in the castle of St Louis, upon the famous rock of Quebec, sat the all-powerful governor of Louis XV., King of France. A new governor had recently been sent out—a man who viewed his country's pros-

pects in America with the keenest anxiety. He knew full well the rivalry that existed between France and England in that land of the Far West. The English had already viewed with distrust the long arms stretched out by France over the fur-bearing regions around Hudson's Bay.

But it was in the south that the coming storm was now brewing; it was to the south that the French governor was looking with those dreams of empire that inspired Dupleix to conquer Southern India.

From the Canadian lakes southwards stretched a dense "ocean of foliage," broken only by the white gleam of the broad rivers Ohio and Mississippi. The beautiful valleys formed by these large rivers reached to the French settlement of New Orleans, on the Gulf of Mexico. At distant intervals, faint wreaths of smoke marked an Indian village: otherwise all was solitude. The country was unclaimed, for the most part, by either French or English.

Now these two rivers, the Ohio and Mississippi, practically cut North America in two. A cork dropped into the small stream that rises near Lake Erie, not far from the Falls of Niagara, would flow out through the mouth of the Mississippi at New Orleans into the Gulf of Mexico.

On the sea side of these rivers lay the thirteen English colonies, fronting the broad Atlantic Ocean. These colonies were under no one local governor: each was independent, the only tie holding them together being their allegiance to the mother country. Each colony had started life on its own account. There were the colonies founded by the Pilgrim Fathers, by the Puritans, by the Quakers. There were colonies of English, Irish, and Scotch, and each colony had its own governor. Thus the English possessions at this time consisted of a long straggling line of little quarrelling Commonwealths, resting along the sea-

coast between the Atlantic and the Ohio river and Alleghany mountains. Both France and England now claimed the Ohio valley, and there was little doubt that some day their respective claims must be settled by the sword. No treaty could touch such debatable ground; no one could adjust the undefined boundary in this far-distant land.

One day, in the summer of 1749, the French governor started a small expedition to explore the country about the river Ohio. It was the first of many such. Slowly but steadily the French pushed farther and farther down the valley of the Ohio. They built fort after fort, until suddenly the governor of the English colony of Virginia became aware of what was happening.

He selected a young Virginian, George Washington, to go and protest against such encroachment. He was to march to the last new French fort, with a note from his English governor, expressing a hope that the French would at once retire from British territory, and so maintain the harmony at present existing between the two countries.

It was late autumn; but George Washington pushed manfully through the dripping forests with his little band of men, till he reached the fort. He delivered his message, and started home with the first formal note of defiance from France to England. After a three months' absence and numerous hairbreadth escapes, young Washington rode into Virginia with his ominous message from the French.

There was danger ahead. The French were pushing their dreams of empire too far. The Governor of Virginia exerted himself more vigorously. He too would build forts on the Ohio. In the early spring of 1754, a little band of Virginians was sent to build a fort in a spot where two large streams meet to form the river Ohio, a spot to become famous later as the site of

the city of Pittsburg. But the French were there already, and they soon tumbled the forty Virginians back again into their English settlements. Washington was now sent with 150 men to the French fort on the Ohio. He was marching on through the pathless wilderness, when news reached him that the French were advancing to clear the English out of the country.

Taking forty men, Washington groped his way through a pitch-dark soaking night to the quarters of a friendly Indian chief. The news he found was but too true. There was not a moment to be lost. At daybreak he stole forth and found the French lying in a ravine. He gave orders to fire. A volley was given by his men and returned by the French. Their commander was slain, and the French were all taken prisoners.

And so the war began.

"It was," as Horace Walpole had said—"It was the volley fired by a young Virginian in the backwoods of America that set the world on fire."