

WASHINGTON'S LAST BATTLE

Washington had been fighting for seven years to drive the British soldiers out of this country. But there were still two strong British armies in America.

One of these armies was in New York and it had been there for years. The other army was far away at Yorktown in Virginia. The British general at Yorktown was Cornwallis. One of our other stories tells how Washington got away from him at Trenton.

The King of France had sent ships and soldiers to help the Americans. But still Washington had not enough men to take New York from the British. Yet he went on getting ready to attack the British in New York. He had ovens built to bake bread for his men and bought hay for his horses. He had roads built to draw his cannons on.

He knew that the British in New York would hear about what he was doing. He wanted them to think that he meant to come to New York and fight them. When the British heard what the Americans were doing, they got ready for the coming of Washington and the French. All at once they found that Washington had gone. He and his men had marched away and the French soldiers that had come to help him had gone with him.

Nobody knew what it meant. Washington's own men did not know where they were going. They went from New Jersey into Pennsylvania. Then they marched across Pennsylvania. Then they went into Maryland. They marched across that State, and then they went into Virginia.

By this time everybody could tell where Washington was going. People could see that he was going straight to Yorktown. They knew that Washington was going to fight his old enemy at Yorktown.

But he had kept his secret long enough. The British in New York could not send help to Cornwallis, as it was too late. The French ships sailed to Virginia, and shut up Yorktown on the side of the sea. Washington's men shut it up on the side of the land. They built great banks of earth round it and on these banks of earth they put cannons.

The British could not get away. They fought bravely, but the Americans and French came closer and closer.

Then the British tried to fight their way out, but they were driven back. Then Cornwallis tried to get his men across the river. He wanted to get out by the back door, as Washington had done at Trenton. But the Americans on the other side of the river drove them back again and Washington had now caught Cornwallis in a trap.

The Americans fired red-hot cannon balls into Yorktown and these set the houses on fire. At last Cornwallis had to give up.

The British marched out and laid down their guns and swords.

The British army in New York could not fight the Americans by itself. So the British gave it up. Then there was peace after the long war. The British pulled down the British flag and sailed away and our country was free at last.