

L I F E   A N D   T I M E S  
O F  
P H I L I P   S C H U Y L E R.

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CHAPTER I.

ABOUT thirty years after Albany, the capital of the State of New York, was founded by the erection of Fort Orange upon its site, and half that length of time before the English conquest gave new masters to the province and new names to the principal settlements, a serious disturbance occurred in the little village that had grown up along the bank of the Hudson, near that earliest regular fortification erected by the Dutch in America. At that time, Beverwyck,\* as the village around Fort Orange was called, contained about one hundred houses, seated along a single street in regular line, with gardens between, and here and there a stray one upon the slope whereon broad State street now reposes. Around these, in a figure of septangular form, were palisades for defense against the savages or other foes ; and in due time several minor fortifications, holding allegiance to Fort Orange, were interlinked by these defenses.

\* The Mohegan name of Albany was *Pem-po-ta-wuth-ut*, or "place of fire"—a council ground.

North of Albany was the seat of the *Patroon* of Rensselaerwyck, called the *Colonie*, where the representatives of the lord of that superb manor that stretched along the Mauritius, as the Hudson river was then called, north and south, east and west from Fort Orange, over an area of almost a thousand square miles, assumed an independence of the servants of the Dutch West India Company, by whom the purchase of this large domain from the Indians had been confirmed.\* That assumed independence, and the petty tyranny of the *Commissary*, as the commander of Fort Orange was called, became, in the course of time, productive of bitter blood.

Killian Van Rensselaer, the first *Patroon*, and lord of this manor, never came to America. Johannes, his son and heir, likewise never saw the noble domain of which he was proprietor. The management of the great estate was entrusted to agents. When Killian died, Johannes was a minor, and his uncle, Van Wyley, and Wouter Van Twiller, who had been to America previously to examine the lands in the neighborhood of Fort Orange, became his guardians. Brant Arent Van Slechtenhorst, of Niewkerke, in Guilderland, was commissioned Director of the *Colonie*, President of the Court of Justice, and immediate manager of the whole estate of the *Patroon*. He came over with his family in 1647, the same year when Peter Stuyvesant arrived at New Amsterdam as governor or director-general of the province. Being an energetic man, full of loyalty

\* For the purpose of encouraging emigration to New Netherland, the Dutch West India Company offered, in 1620, large tracts of land and certain privileges to those persons who should lead or send a given number of emigrants to occupy and till the soil. The land was to be fairly purchased of the Indians, and the title was to be confirmed by the Company. The proprietors were called *patroons*, (patrons,) and held a high political and social station in the New World.

to his young master, and inspired with that Dutch spirit of independence that was born centuries before among the Batavian marshes, he became a practical rival in authority, not only of the *Commissary* at Fort Orange, but of Stuyvesant himself.

From the first attempt to plant patroon colonies in New Netherland, the directors of the Amsterdam chamber of the West India Company had been jealous of them, and Stuyvesant, and his immediate predecessors in office, used every fair means to wipe out those already in existence. Two of them were purchased of the grantees, but neither money, threats, nor persuasions could induce the proprietors of Rensselaerwyck to relinquish that princely estate. The company therefore determined to weaken a power which they could not suppress by purchase, and Governor Stuyvesant and Commissioner Van Slechtenhorst became obstinate champions of rival interests. The former claimed general jurisdiction over the whole province; the latter acknowledged no authority within the domains of Rensselaerwyck outside of Fort Orange, except that of the *Patroon* himself.

For three years the quarrel went on, when a call for a subsidy from Rensselaerwyck, made by Governor Stuyvesant, produced a crisis. Commissioner Van Slechtenhorst went to New Amsterdam to remonstrate with the governor. Both were equally unyielding, and high words ensued at their separation. As it was the custom of Peter the Headstrong to use the logic of physical force against an opponent when oral argument failed, he caused Van Slechtenhorst to be visited that day, before he had finished his dinner, by an officer charged to bring him before the director-general and council. By these he was immediately condemned as an unruly subject, and when he asked

“Can a man be condemned unheard?” he was answered by an arrest. He was detained four months on Manhattan Island, when he escaped in a sloop and returned to the *Colonie*. At about that time Jean Baptiste Van Rensselaer, the first of that name who came to America, appeared at Beverwyck, and was elected one of the magistrates. Very soon after this, an order was issued, requiring all the freemen and other inhabitants to take the oath of allegiance to the *Patroon* and his representative.

The disturbance alluded to now occurred. On New Year's night, 1652, some soldiers, armed with match-locks, issued from the fort and fired several shots at the *Patroon's* house. The reed-covered roof was ignited by the burning gun-wads, and for a while the mansion was in imminent peril. Hard words passed between the soldiers and the friends of the *Patroon*; and on the following day a son of Commissioner Van Slechtenhorst was assailed in the street by some of the former, badly beaten, and dragged through the mud, while Johannes Dyckman, the West India Company's commissary at Fort Orange, stood by and encouraged them, saying, “Let him have it now, and the devil take him!” Young Van Slechtenhorst found a champion in Philip Pietersen Schuyler, a spirited young gentleman from Amsterdam, who, a little more than a year before had married the victim's sister Margaret. Young Schuyler endeavored to save his brother-in-law, when Dyckman drew his sword and threatened to run him through. A general fracas ensued, but ended without serious bloodshed.

Here we will leave the actors in this quarrel, the events and results of which are recorded in history. Nor will we further display the chronicles of the manor and of the province. The curtain has been thus slightly lifted from the interesting picture of the past, that a glimpse might

be had of the first of the Schuyler family who appeared in America, the lineal ancestor of the one whose character and services will be portrayed in the pages that follow.

Of the antecedents of Philip Pietersen Schuyler, who first appears in history in the famous quarrel at Beverwyck, we have no positive knowledge. We only know that he came to the New World from Amsterdam, in Holland, in the year 1650. Tradition says that his family were merchants in that old city, were connected with the West India Company, and had a country seat near Dordrecht. Ancient pieces of silver plate, with the family arms\* and year marks engraved on them, yet in possession of some of the descendants of Van Slechtenhorst's son-in-law, attest the opulence of the family previous to the appearance of Philip Pietersen in America.

The marriage of young Schuyler and Margaret Van Slechtenhorst was celebrated at Rensselaerwyck on the 12th of December, 1650. The nuptial rites were performed by Anthony de Hooges, the Secretary of the *Colonie*, in the presence of the officers of Fort Orange, the magnates of Rensselaerwyck, and of some of the principal inhabitants. These were the ancestors of the Schuyler family in America.

\* The arms of the Schuyler family are as follows: *ESCUTCHEON argent*, a falcon *sable*, hooded *gules*, beaked and membered *or*, perched upon the sinister hand of the falconer, issued from the dexter side of the shield. The arm clothed *azure*, surmounted by a helmet of steel, standing in profile, open-faced, three bars *or*, lined *gules*, bordered, flowered and studded *or*, and ornamented with its lambrequins *argent* lined *sable*. *CREST*—out of a wreath, *argent* and *sable*, a falcon of the shield.

In the original genealogical record of the family in the Dutch language, the name of the first emigrant, who arrived in 1650, is written Philip Pietersen Von Schuyler, which may be translated Philip, son of Peter, from Schuyler. No doubt the latter was the name of the place where the family resided, and had been recently adopted as a surname, as it is not found as such in the records of Holland at that time.

Margaret Van Slechtenhorst was two-and-twenty years of age when she married young Schuyler, and ten children were the fruitful results of their union.\* She lived sixty years after her nuptials, and survived her husband more than a quarter of a century. She possessed great energy of character and independence of spirit, like her father; and after her husband's death her wealth and position enabled her to exercise a controlling influence in public affairs at Albany. In 1689 she advanced funds to pay troops at Albany; and it is asserted that toward the close of that year she made a personal assault upon Milborne, the son-in-law of Jacob Leisler, (the usurper, as he was called, of political power at New York,) when he came to Albany to assume command of the fort, then under charge of her second son Peter, the eminent mayor of that city, and commander of the militia in the northern department of the province.

Peter inherited the talents and virtues of his parents, and for many years was one of the most prominent men in the province. He was mayor of Albany from 1686 until 1694, and was the first chosen chief magistrate of that city after its incorporation in 1683, the year before his father died.† In 1688 he was commissioned major of the militia, and toward the close of the following year he was placed in command of the fort at Albany. It was about that time that Milborne went up with some armed men to take Schuyler's place, but the latter, aided by some Mohawk

\* These were Guysbert, Gertrude, (who married Stephanus Van Cortlandt,) Alida, (who married, first, Reverend Nicholas Van Rensselaer, and second, Robert Livingston, the first lord of the manor of Livingston, on the Hudson,) Pieter, Brant, Arent, Sybilla, Philip, Johannes, and Margretta.—*From Dutch Genealogical Manuscript, translated by S. A洛夫森, Esq.*

† Philip Pietersen Schuyler died on the 9th of March, 1684, and was buried, on the 11th of the same month, in the ancient Dutch Church at Albany, that stood in the center of State street at the intersection of Broadway. His will bears date "Tuesday evening, May 1, 1683."—*Dutch Manuscript.*

Indians who were in the neighborhood, successfully resisted his pretensions. Over the Mohawks, the most noble of the nations of the Iroquois confederation, Peter Schuyler then had almost unbounded control ; and until that league was broken, and the nations had dwindled to a few hundreds in the State of New York, at the close of the last century, the Schuyler family had no competitors in influence and friendship with those sons of the forest except Sir William Johnson. They always treated the Indian as a brother and friend, dealt honorably with him, and never deceived him in word or deed.

John, the youngest brother of Major Schuyler, was an active young man at this time ; athletic, brave, and full of military aspirations. He was the paternal grandfather of General Philip Schuyler. When, in February, 1690, a party of French and Indians came from the north, and at midnight set fire to Schenectada, and butchered the unsuspecting inhabitants, the vengeance of this young man was powerfully stirred, and he sought and obtained the command of a small force of white people and Indians, with which to penetrate the country of the enemy on the borders of the St. Lawrence. He was then only twenty-two years of age. He received a captain's commission, and in August he set out "with twenty-nine Christians, and one hundred and twenty savages," whom he recruited at the foot of Lake Champlain "to go to Canada to fight the enemy." They went down the Lake in canoes, penetrated to Laprairie, destroyed considerable property, took quite a number of prisoners, and returned with little loss, after an absence of seventeen days. The journal of this expedition, kept by Captain Schuyler, reveals the fact that the elk deer were very abundant in northern New York at that time. They have now entirely disappeared.

In June, the following year, Major Peter Schuyler led a small force into Canada. It consisted of "Christians, 120; Mohawques, 80; R. (River or Mohegan) Indians, 66."\* They followed the route taken by Captain Schuyler, went down the Sorel or Richelieu to the rapids above Chamblée, and penetrated to Laprairie. A Mohawk deserter left the camp near Chamblée, and informed the French of the approach of the invaders. The latter were thus prepared for the reception of the former, and well defended their fort at Laprairie. After several skirmishes, the expedition returned to Albany toward the close of August, with a loss of nineteen white men and savages. "Thought by all," says Major Schuyler, in his journal, "to have killed about two hundred French and Indians."†

From this time the two brothers were engaged almost continually in public life. The former became first a member, and then President of his Majesty's Council for the Province of New York. For a short time he was acting governor of the colony, and for many years he was chief commissioner for Indian affairs. In 1710 he went to England with four Indian chiefs, who were representatives of four nations that composed the Iroquois confederacy. These, and the nations they represented, were much attached to Schuyler, whom they familiarly called "Brother Queder." They were taken to Britain for a twofold purpose: First, to have these heads of the tribes impressed with the greatness of the English nation, and thereby detach the wavering ones from the French interest; and, Secondly, to arouse the British government to the necessity of assisting the Americans in expelling the French from Canada, whose

\* Major Schuyler's "*Journal of the Expedition.*"

† Colden, in his "*History of the Five Nations,*" says the French lost two captains, six lieutenants, and three hundred men.

hostility to the English colonists, and whose influence over the savage tribes were daily increasing. Colonel Schuyler bore an address to Queen Anne from the Colonial Assembly of New York, and he and his confederate "kings," as they were called, were treated with distinguished honor.\*

Captain John Schuyler, meanwhile, was serving his country faithfully in both civil and military employments. In September, 1698, Governor Bellomont sent him to Canada with a message to Count Frontenac, respecting the designs of the latter toward the Five Nations and the English. He visited Quebec and Montreal; "felt the pulse" of the Indians on his journey; made careful observations of the strength and condition of the French, and gave the governor of Canada an exalted idea of the great military power which the Earl of Bellomont might command—"One hundred thousand men, rather more than less," he said. This mission was successful, and in May, the following year, he and John Bleecker were appointed commissioners to hold a general council with the Five Nations at Onondaga Castle. He was an Indian commissioner for a great many years, and his name appears frequently in the colonial records of the period between 1701 and 1730 as one of the most active of the servants of the government in keeping the Iroquois in alliance with the English. He was chosen to a seat in the Colonial Assembly in 1705, and held that position until 1713. From that time until the kindling of our old war for independence, the name of Schuyler appears almost continually among those of the representatives of the people in the legislature of the province of New York.

Captain John Schuyler was married to Elizabeth Staats,

\* For an interesting account of this embassy, see Drake's *Book of the Indians*.

widow of John Wendell, in April, 1695. The ceremony was performed by Dominie Dellijs, minister of the Dutch Church at Albany. In that church they were buried, the wife in 1737, and the husband ten years afterward. Their eldest son, JOHN, was born early in the autumn of 1697, and was baptized on the 31st of October, when Robert Livingston, Jacob Staats, (the child's uncles by marriage,) and his aunt, Maria Schuyler, who held him in her arms, were the sponsors. Being the eldest son, he was heir-expectant to the real estate of his father, which, before his death, became large in amount, he having purchased several valuable tracts from the Indians in the vicinity of Albany, and in the Mohawk country.

This son of the active Captain Schuyler does not appear prominent in history. He married his cousin Cornelia, youngest child of Stephen Van Cortlandt, of New York, by whom he had reasonable expectations of considerable wealth, that aristocratic Dutch family then ranking among the most opulent in the province. He appears to have lived the quiet life of a gentleman of leisure. He died in 1741, six years before his father's death, and was buried in the little family cemetery of Colonel Peter Schuyler, at *The Flats*, (now Watervliet,) as the place of that gentleman's residence was called. He left five small children, his eldest son, PHILIP, the subject of this memoir, being only eight years of age. PHILIP was born at the family mansion in Albany, on the 20th of November, 1733, and, like Dr. Franklin, was baptized on the day of his birth.