

CHAPTER XXV .

THE easy reduction of Chamblée gave Montgomery assurances of success ; and having thereby secured an ample provision of powder, he prepared to prosecute the seige of St. John's with greater vigor. His troops were inspirited, a better feeling prevailed among them, and he had the most satisfactory declarations that the Caughnawaga Indians would remain strictly neutral. He had succeeded in sinking the enemy's armed schooner and possessing himself of every avenue to the country from the fort ; and he at once proceeded to the erection of a battery within two hundred and fifty yards of the enemy's strongest works, upon which he mounted four heavy guns and six mortars. He also erected a block-house on the opposite side of the river, and there mounted one gun and two mortars, and then commenced the assault with great earnestness. The gallant Major Preston, who commanded the fort, held out manfully, for he was in daily expectation of relief from Governor Carleton.

At this time General Schuyler had some unpleasant experiences in connection with General Wooster and his troops, who had arrived at Ticonderoga. He had received assurances from time to time that Wooster was prepared to act as independently as possible, and to be governed by the regulations of the Continental Congress and the mandates of the commander-in-chief of the army of the North,

no further than was absolutely necessary to comply with the strict letter of his obligations. He also heard rumors that Wooster was provided with ample provisions for his troops, independent of the Continental commissariat ; that he regarded his commission as major-general in the Connecticut service as giving him rank superior to that of brigadier-general in the Continental service ; and that he would claim to outrank Montgomery.

Schuyler foresaw in this disposition much trouble for himself and great danger to the expedition, and desired to avoid it if possible. He had, from the beginning, been much annoyed by letters from Wooster, who, naturally presuming upon his age and past services, made suggestions concerning military operations at the North, that at times were quite censorious in tone. Schuyler was not a man to receive such letters with complacency, and at length, being irritated by Wooster's impracticable suggestions too much for further forbearance, he wrote a spicy letter to the veteran that made him more sparing of his advice about matters of which he knew very little.

"You speak," wrote Schuyler, "with as much ease of marching into Canada as if there were no greater obstacles in getting there than marching from Greenwich to New York. Taking possession of Montreal and Quebec is more easily said than done, for as our troops have not yet learnt to swim across a lake of an hundred miles extent, we who are upon the spot find some difficulty to 'march directly into Canada, and take possession of Montreal and Quebec!' The building of boats when not one material was on the spot ; when even the saw-mills were to be erected or repaired to cut the plank ; when after the 18th of July, on which I arrived here [Ticonderoga], I had to send down the country for carpenters, and to bring up every individual article for the very existence of the troops, was found a matter that required a little more time than you seem to be aware of, although I flatter myself that as much has been done since my arrival as could have been completed by any man in my situation."*

* Schuyler's MS. Orderly Book, August 14, 1775.

When, a month later, the Continental Congress directed Wooster to proceed to Albany with his troops, in order to join the expedition against Canada, and Thomas Lynch, a delegate in Congress, wrote on the same day, "There will arise a difficulty (and God knows you need no additional ones) about the old Connecticut general," Schuyler felt a strong desire not to risk the interests of his expedition by the collisions of authority that might occur. Tender of his brother officer's reputation, he was unwilling to lay before the Congress his real reasons for not desiring the presence of Wooster and his troops, and he simply remarked, as if incidentally, in a letter to that body, on the 28th of September :

"I do not think I shall have occasion for General Wooster's regiment, as I only wait for batteaux to send on five hundred New Yorkers that I now have here, and which I suppose will soon embark, as the wind is now favorable for craft to come from St. John's, and which I expect with impatience."*

But the Congress was already aware of the assumptions of Wooster, and the independent feeling, of his troops ; and on the receipt of Schuyler's letter they wrote to the Connecticut general informing him that it was thought his services would not be needed in the North, and ordering him to march with his troops "to the batteries erecting on the Highlands, on the North River," there to leave as many of them as the officer in charge of the works might desire, and to proceed with the rest to New York, and remain there until further orders from the Congress. They added :

"But in case you should have any orders from General Schuyler previous to the receipt of this, to join the army under his command, or in any way to be aiding to his ex-

* Schuyler's Letter Books.

pedition, you are wholly to conform yourself to his directions, the above orders of Congress notwithstanding.”*

Long before this order was issued Wooster and his troops had made their way northward ; and the day before its date, they had left Fort George at the head of Lake George, and arrived at Ticonderoga, where the veteran was courteously received by Schuyler. But the latter had resolved that Wooster should not proceed any further, because information which had just been communicated to him by Gunning Bedford, the deputy muster-master-general, then at Fort George, made him fearful that on his arrival at the camp the Connecticut general would assume rank and authority superior to Montgomery, and cause disturbances that would be fatal to the expedition.

“Suffer me to condole with you,” wrote Bedford, one of the most active, truthful, and reliable men in the army—“suffer me to condole with you at the approach of troubles I see ready to be heaped upon you. General Wooster and his regiment will be with you in a few days. They are making great preparations, as if all the execution of the army was to be done by them alone. He brings provisions of his own, they tell me, to serve his regiment for the campaign. They will not touch Continental stores, nor eat Continental provisions! They boast of having nothing to do with the Continent. Indeed, to me they appear rather to come with a determination to abuse the Continental troops and their commanders, and to make the most profit by the campaign they can, than to serve the cause.

“Officers and all seem to be concerned in *sutling* ; but your calling some of them to account at Ticonderoga has frightened them from carrying their stores across, at least under appearance of their sutling. General Wooster has bought up the stores of Majors Lockwood and Colt, the former of whom is secretary to the General, and the latter, commissary to the regiment! So that he means to carry them down as necessary stores for his regiment! He told me himself he had a large quantity of pork he had brought with him, with molasses, sugar, peas, rice, chocolate, and soap enough, to last his troops ; and they would not go forward without them, nor indeed till they saw them go before. The general told Dr. Stringer that he was *Major General of the Connecticut forces*, and that no man on this side Connecticut had a right to discharge one of his soldiers, but himself.

* October 19th, 1775.

“Mr. Cobb, the commissary here, is a Connecticut man (but who despises them thoroughly in his heart), and was let into his counsels. He was present when General Wooster was about calling a court-martial. He had not officers enough of his own to form it, and how to get others he did not know, without signing himself brigadier-general. He mentioned the difficulty to his officers, ‘Why,’ one of them replied, ‘you have two strings to your bow;’ another, ‘take care you don’t pull on the weakest;’ and a third, ‘you may pull on both, on occasion.’ Cobb says he believes he signed brigadier-general, but would not be certain; however, it might be found out by getting the orders.

“So I foresee the difficulties you will be involved in by the jealousy Wooster’s regiment must create among the other troops, when they see them so much better provided with everything than they are or can be, and more especially, should Wooster oppose your superior command over the Connecticut forces. It is almost incredible, but their conduct is really astonishing. I am very apprehensive lest they may more deserve the cause, than if they had not come at all.

“As the most virtuous character is never secure from the envious, malignant tongue of slander, so the disaffected to you, in your army, have delighted your enemies by poisoning your fame therewith. They would wish the contagion to spread, but their tools are too insignificant, and your upright conduct must ever check its progress; and I assure you, dear sir, I feel particularly happy in having it in my power to do your character that justice it really merits.”*

Walter Livingston, the deputy commissary-general, writing from Albany at about the same time, confirmed Bedford’s statement of the independent provision made by Wooster for his troops. “The general himself told me,” he wrote, “that he had twenty day’s provisions with him, and that he had ordered his own commissary to furnish him from time to time, and that he would not trouble me on that score. Provisions have arrived for him since he left this.”

These accounts confirmed Schuyler’s worst anticipations of difficulty with Wooster. And the conduct of some of his troops who preceded him a few days, made him resolve not to allow Wooster to join Montgomery. They evinced

* Autograph Letter, Oct. 15, 1775.

a disposition to recognize no authority except that of their own commander.

“Two hundred and fifty-three of General Wooster’s regiment came across Lake George on Sunday,” wrote Schuyler to the Continental Congress on the 18th of October, “but the general is not yet arrived, and they do not choose to move until he does. Do not choose to move! Strange language in an army; but the irresistible force of necessity obliges me to put up with it. This morning I gave an order to Lieutenant-Colonel Ward, to send a subaltern, a sergeant, corporal, and twenty privates, in two batteaux, to carry powder, artillery, stores, and men. The colonel, who is a good man, called upon me to know if he would not be blamed by General Wooster for obeying my orders. I begged him to send the men, and urged the necessity. The men, I believe will condescend to go. I could give many instances of a similar nature, but General Montgomery has most justly and emphatically given the reasons: ‘Troops who carry the spirit of freedom into the field, and think for themselves, will not bear either subordination or discipline.’”*

Schuyler, as we have observed, received Wooster courteously. He was agreeably disappointed in his apparent disposition. He found him courteous, conciliatory, yielding, and self-sacrificing. “My intentions,” he wrote to the Continental Congress, on the 18th, “were to have him remain at this post, but assuring me that his regiment would not move without him, and that although he thought hard of being superseded,† yet he would most readily put himself under the command of General Montgomery; that his only views were the public service, and that no obstructions of any kind would be given by him; this spir-

* Schuyler’s MS. Letter Books.

† When, in June, 1775, the Continental Congress made their appointments of general officers for the army, Wooster was major-general and commander-in-chief of the Connecticut troops. He was raised only to the rank of brigadier in the Continental service, while Israel Putnam, his inferior in rank in the Colonial service, was promoted to major-general. He felt the slight keenly, yet, with the spirit of true patriotism, he consented to serve in the subordinate capacity, and took the field among the earliest of the Continental officers.

ited and sensible declaration I received with inexpressible satisfaction, and he moves to-morrow with the first division of his regiment.”*

On the following morning Schuyler received official notice that Wooster had held a general court-martial at Fort George (hinted at in Bedford's letter of the 15th) without apprising him of the fact. He could not, in justice to his position, and the good of the service, overlook the indignity; and he felt specially aggrieved that Wooster had not, by either a written or oral communication, mentioned the subject to him. He naturally regarded Wooster's professions as insincere, and he immediately addressed to him the following letter :

“The Continental Congress having taken the first six regiments raised this year, in the Colony of Connecticut (of which yours is one), into the pay and service of the associated colonies, at the earnest request of the honorable delegates representing the colony of Connecticut, and you having, in a variety of instances, obeyed the orders of Congress, who have conferred on you the rank of brigadier-general in the army of the associated colonies, I was taught to believe that you considered yourself as such, both from what I have above observed, and from your declarations to me yesterday. But I am just now informed that you have called a general court-martial at Fort George, on your way up here; a conduct which I can not account for, unless you consider yourself my superior, and that can not be in virtue of your appointment by Congress, by which you are a younger brigadier-general than Mr. Montgomery; and unless you consider yourself as such, I can not, consistently with the duty I owe the public, permit you to join that part of the army now under Brigadier-General Montgomery's command, lest a confusion and disagreement should arise that might prove fatal to our operations in Canada. You will, therefore, Sir, please to give me your explicit answer to this question: Whether you consider yourself and your regiment in the service of the associated colonies, and yourself a younger brigadier-general than Mr. Montgomery or not? that no misapprehensions or misrepresentations may hereafter arise.”†

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Books.

† Schuyler's MS. Letter Books.

To this letter General Wooster immediately replied, as follows :

“ In answer to your favor of this day, give me leave to acquaint you that, immediately upon my receiving the Continental articles of war I gave them out to the different captains and commanders of companies in my regiment, but they universally declined signing them ; of consequence in the discipline of the troops under my command I was obliged to continue in the use of the law martial of Connecticut, under which they were raised, which I certainly had a right to do, by virtue of my commission from that colony. Upon the same principle I ordered a general court-martial at Fort George, which, whether right or not, was never designed in the least to contradict or counteract your authority as commander-in-chief of the troops within this department.

“ With regard to the other question, my appointment in the Continental army, you are sensible, could not be very agreeable to me, notwithstanding which, I never should have continued in the service, had I not determined to observe the rules of the army. No, Sir! I have the cause of my country too much at heart to attempt to make any difficulty or uneasiness in the army, upon whom the success of an enterprise of almost infinite benefit to the country is now depending. I shall consider my rank in the army what my commission from the Continental Congress makes it, and shall not attempt to dispute the command with General Montgomery at St. John's. As to my regiment, I consider them as what they really are, according to the tenor of their enlistments and compact with the colony of Connecticut by whom they were raised, and now acting in conjunction with the troops of the other colonies in the service and for the defense of the associated colonies in general. You may depend, Sir, that I shall exert myself as much as possible to promote the strictest union and harmony among both officers and soldiers in the army, and use every means in my power to give success to the expedition.”*

This letter, and the following official notice of the action of the General Assembly of Connecticut, which both Schuyler and Wooster received at about that time, were satisfactory. Complaints had been made to Governor Trumbull, from time to time, of the insubordination of the Connecticut troops ; and finally, on the second Thursday of October the Assembly took action, as follows :

* Autograph Letter, October 19, 1775.

“This Assembly being informed that certain questions and disputes have arisen among the troops lately raised by this colony, and sent into the colony of New York, and such as are now employed against the ministerial forces in Canada, which disputes, unless prevented, may be attended with unhappy consequences: Therefore, it is hereby *Resolved*, by this Assembly, that all the troops which have been lately raised by this colony, for the special defense thereof, and sent into the colony of New York, and all such as are now employed against the ministerial troops in Canada, are, and shall be subject to the rules, orders, regulations, and discipline of the Congress of the twelve united colonies, during the time of their enlistment.”*

General Wooster sailed with his troops for St. John's, on the 21st of October, and arrived at the camp on the morning of the 23d. The soldiers departed with great reluctance on account of the lateness of the season and the possibility of their not being able to return. They numbered three hundred and thirty-five men, including the officers.

On the day after Wooster left, Schuyler suffered a severe attack of rheumatism, and on the following day the fever returned with great violence. Mrs. Schuyler had been with him for a while, and when she left for home, on the 12th, he was so much better that he wrote to General Montgomery, saying, “I am gaining strength so fast that I propose to join you as soon as I have sent on Wooster's corps, who are now at Fort George.”

He was now tortured by both disease and disappointment, and while in that state of mind and body, he was informed, by some injudicious person, of remarks made by Wooster, at different times, since his arrival at Fort George, disparaging to the skill and bravery of both Schuyler and Montgomery. Under the lashes of keen irritation, he wrote to Wooster, as follows, on the 23d :

* Schuyler's papers.

“SIR:—Being well informed that you have declared on your way to this place, that if you were at St. John’s, you would march into the fort at the head of your regiment, and as it is just that you should have an opportunity of showing your prowess, and that of your regiment, I have desired General Montgomery to give you leave to make the attempt if you choose. I do not wish, however, that you should be too lavish of your men’s lives, unless you have a prospect of gaining the fortress.”

Schuyler inclosed this in his letter to Montgomery, alluded to, saying, “You may seal and deliver, or destroy as you choose.” Montgomery should have destroyed it, for he well knew that only under the influence of extraordinary irritation would Schuyler have written it. Wooster made no reply to it, but in a letter written to Schuyler some months afterward, he referred to it with indignation, as having been a false accusation.

Montgomery, wearied and worn, was glad when the arrival of Wooster gave him a prospect of release.

“I am exceedingly well pleased,” he wrote to Schuyler, “to see Mr. Wooster here, both for the advantage of the service, and upon my own account, for I most earnestly request to be suffered to retire, should matters stand on such a footing this winter as to permit me to go off with honor. I have not talents nor temper for such a command. I am under the disagreeable necessity of acting eternally out of character—to wheedle, flatter, and lie. I stand in a constrained attitude. I will bear with it for a short time, but I can not support it long. The Canadians, too, distress me by their clashing interests and private piques.”*

Montgomery and Wooster acted in concert, and upon the most friendly footing. Montgomery asked the veteran soldier to live with him, and he showed him every attention in his power. Together they pressed the siege of St. John’s with vigor.

Carleton made great efforts to relieve the garrison at St. John’s. He sent to Quebec for aid, and Colonel McLean,

* Autograph letter, October 31, 1775.

a gallant Scotch officer, who had served the British King in the famous rebellion in 1745, and was now at the head of three hundred Highlanders at Quebec, called *The Royal Highland Emigrants*, agreed to ascend the St. Lawrence to the mouth of the Sorel, march along its bank, and join Carleton at St. John's. With this assurance, Carleton with a motley force of one hundred regulars, several hundred Canadians from the northward of the St. Lawrence, and a few Indians, accompanied by Le Corne St. Luc, embarked in thirty-four batteaux, and attempted to land at Longueuil, a mile and a half below the city. Colonel Seth Warner, with a detachment of three hundred Green Mountain Boys, and a part of the second (Van Schaick's) New York Regiment, was on the alert in the neighborhood, and lay in covert near the spot where Carleton was about to land. Warner allowed the batteaux to approach very near the shore, when he opened upon them a severe storm of grape-shot from a four pound cannon, and volleys of musketry. The enemy were driven back in great confusion, and Carleton, utterly disconcerted, retired to Montreal, leaving behind him a few killed and wounded, and four prisoners. The latter were sent immediately to Montgomery's camp.

McLean, meanwhile, had landed at the mouth of the Sorel, and had increased his force by pressing many Canadians into his service. With full expectation of success against a band of undisciplined rebels whom he affected to despise, he was marching toward St. John's when he was met by Majors Brown, Livingston, and Easton, flushed by their recent victory at Chamblée, and their little force strengthened by some Green Mountain Boys. McLean was driven back to his landing place, where his Canadian recruits by compulsion, deserted him. There intelligence of the repulse of Carleton met him. A panic seized his

troops, and before the republicans reached the mouth of the Sorel, the gallant McLean and his followers had embarked, and were on their way to Quebec. Brown and Livingston took post there, erected batteries, and prepared to oppose the passage of vessels up or down the St. Lawrence.

Warner's prisoners arrived at Montgomery's camp toward the evening of the day on which they were captured, and while the great guns of the assailants were playing briskly upon the British works. The cannonade was immediately silenced, and a flag with a letter, was sent in to Major Preston, by one of the captives, to inform him of the repulse of Carleton and to demand an instantaneous surrender of the fort. Major Preston affected to doubt the story of the prisoner, and asked for a delay of four days. The request was denied, and the demand was instantly renewed. The garrison had then been on half allowance for some time. Menaced with starvation, and perceiving no hope of relief, the gallant Preston was compelled to yield. On Friday, the 3d of November, Montgomery wrote to Schuyler, saying :

"I have the pleasure to acquaint you, the garrison surrendered last night. This morning we took possession. To-morrow I hope the prisoners will set off. Inclosed you have the capitulation, which I hope will meet with your approbation, and that of Congress. I have ventured to permit an officer or two to go to their families, which are in some distress at Montreal, on their parole. They can't do us any harm, and there would have been a degree of inhumanity in refusing them. . . Several men of rank in Canada are among the prisoners. I have permitted them to remain at Crown Point till the return of two gentlemen they sent to their friends for money, etc. They pleaded hard to return home, but they are too dangerous to let loose again. . . I am making the necessary preparations to press immediately to Montreal, by way of Laprairie, as the enemy have armed vessels in the Sorel."*

* Autograph Letter.

The siege had continued fifty-five days, and Preston was honored by all for his gallant defense in the midst of every discouragement. When he with the other prisoners were about to depart for Connecticut (that great receptacle of captives during the earlier years of the war), under the charge of Captain Mott, General Schuyler wrote as follows to Governor Trumbull :

“From Major Preston and the officers of the 26th Regiment, I have experienced the most polite and friendly attention when I was a stranger, a traveler in Ireland. A return of good offices is the duty of every honest man, and I therefore beg leave to recommend them to your Honor's notice, and would wish if there is any choice in the quarters which you shall destine to them, that theirs were the best, which I shall consider as a particular favor done me.”*

Honorable terms were granted to the garrison at St. John's. They marched out of the fort with the honors of war, and the troops grounded their arms on the plain near by. The officers were allowed to retain their side-arms ; and the baggage of both officers and men was secured to them. The generous Montgomery went still further—even beyond what, perhaps, courtesy or the usages of war, under the circumstances, required. He allowed to each of the privates a new suit of clothes from the captured stores. Of this the scantily clad (and some half-naked) republicans made complaint. The rigors of a Canadian winter were about to set in, and they needed thick and ample clothing, while the captives were to be sent to a milder climate. Both officers and men murmured loudly, and finally they boldly demanded a reconsideration of the capitulation. But Montgomery refused even while the harsh sounds of mutinous discourse were ringing in his ears. “The officers of the first regiment of Yorkers and artillery

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Books, Nov. 10, 1775.

company," he wrote to Schuyler, "were very near a mutiny the other day, because I would not stop the clothing of the garrison of St. John's. I would not have sullied my own reputation, nor disgraced the continental arms, by a breach of capitulation, for the universe. There was no driving it into their noddles that clothing was really the property of the soldier—that he had paid for it, and that every regiment (in this country especially), saved a year's clothing to have decent clothes to wear on particular occasions."*

The garrison that surrendered to the republicans, consisted of five hundred regular troops and about one hundred Canadian volunteers, many of them of the rank of *noblesse*, or gentry. Among the officers were Major (then Captain) Andrè, the unfortunate spy in .after years. Also Captain Anbery and Lieutenant Anstruther, who were exchanged, and again made prisoners with Burgoyne, in the autumn of 1777. Anbury published, in two volumes, an interesting account of his sojourn in America, while a prisoner the second time.

The spoils of victory were seventeen brass ordnance, from two to twenty-four pounders ; two eight-inch howitzers ; twenty-two iron cannon, from three to nine pounders ; a considerable quantity of shot and small shells ; eight hundred stand of arms, and a small quantity of naval stores. The ammunition and provisions were inconsiderable, for the stock of each was nearly exhausted.

The Congress voted thanks to both Montgomery and Wooster, for their services in securing the victory ; and the president of Congress, in his long letter to the former, fully approved of his course in the capitulation.

"Nor are the humanity and politeness with which you have treated those in your power," he said, "less illustrious instances of magnanimity

* Autograph Letter, Nov. 13, 1775.

than the valor by which you reduced them to it. The Congress, utterly abhorrent from every species of cruelty towards prisoners, and determined to adhere to this benevolent maxim till the conduct of their enemies renders a deviation from it indispensably necessary, will ever applaud their officers for beautifully blending the Christian with the conqueror, and never, in endeavoring to acquire the character of a hero, lose that of a man."