

CHAPTER II.

At the opening of the Spring of 1776 the situation of the little patriot army in Canada was extremely perilous. Everything was needed to secure its existence even ; men, money, food, clothing, arms and ammunition. To enable

covered in the official correspondence of Schuyler (all of which is before me) a single sentence that might be justly construed as a *refusal* "to go into Canada." On account of his bodily ailments—liable to sudden and severe attacks of gout, asthma and rheumatism—he had asked Congress to accept his resignation and to fill his place with a more robust man. This Congress had refused to do. So far from uttering a refusal "to go into Canada" were the words of his patriotic letters of this time, that on the day after his return from suppressing the Tory rising in Tryon County, and only a short time before Congress ordered General Lee into Canada, he wrote to the President of that body, saying: "I frankly confess, sir, that I have been greatly chagrined to see the little order that prevailed in the troops under my command, and that, added to the bad state of my health, were the only inducements which made me wish to retire. The first, I hope, will not so much prevail in future, but I am sorry that I have no prospect that the latter will ever mend. Much indisposed when I set out for Tryon County, the severity of the weather, and the fatigue incident to the command of an undisciplined and enraged multitude, ready to run into imprudences of the most dangerous nature, and only to be prevented by the greatest attention and vigilance, has greatly increased my disorder, a complication of which now confines me to my room. But, sir, the affairs of my country are in a worse situation than when I requested to retire. This is motive sufficient for me to continue in *any* station, however inconvenient, in which my countrymen and my superiors are pleased to think I may be of service. I will continue, then, to do what I can. My country may justly claim my last services ; it shall have them."—Schuyler's MS. Letter Books.

It may, with truth, be said, that bodily infirmities and the expressed desires of Congress that he should remain at Albany, where he would be far more useful as the Eye of the Northern Department and general director of its affairs, than at any other place, uniformly "refused" to let Schuyler "go into Canada."—See Hancock's letter, p. 26.

it to successfully prosecute the siege of Quebec and secure the conquest of Canada by force or persuasion, at least ten thousand men with mortars, cannon, shot, shell, provisions, and hard money, were demanded. These were all lacking, notwithstanding Congress and the Provincial authorities had, since the middle of January, when the news of Montgomery's death created the most intense desire everywhere to retrieve the disaster at Quebec, been untiring in efforts to send such a force into Canada, well armed and supplied. At the middle of March less than two thousand men had moved toward the St. Lawrence, and of these, full fifteen hundred were yet between Lake Champlain and Montreal. Meanwhile General Schuyler had sent over five thousand dollars in specie to General Wooster, which he had collected and given his own notes for, payable in kind, on demand.

When Arnold, soon after the death of Montgomery, was able to resume command, he had but a handful of sick and disheartened troops, enveloped in the snows of a rigorous Canadian winter, about three miles from the city walls. His military chest was exhausted; his paper money was worthless in spite of his positive orders to punish all who should refuse to receive it in pay for army supplies, and the whole force of besiegers was surging with discontent and mutinous elements, fostered by a few unpatriotic officers. Fatigue and sickness had exhausted the strength of the troops, and at the middle of February small-pox made its appearance as an epidemic in the little army,* while there were no adequate means for arresting its ravages. Considering the doom of that army as sealed, the inhabitants of the province were almost a unit in opposition to the invaders. Wooster, at Montreal, was too

* Autograph Letter of James Van Rensselaer, February 22, 1776.

weak in men and supplies to render Arnold efficient aid, and the latter was compelled to keep up the siege of Quebec, and its comparative isolation from the surrounding country, with not one half the strength in men of that of the garrison before him. It was done, Wooster wrote to Schuyler, "in a most surprising manner." Fortunately for the besiegers, the cautious or timid Carleton preferred to wait for expected reinforcements when the St. Lawrence should be clear of ice, rather than risk the possible disaster of a sortie. It was a mistake, for a sortie judiciously managed might have easily scattered the besiegers to the winds and allowed Carleton to ascend the river, drive all of the invaders out of Canada, and perhaps sieze the strong posts on Lake Champlain. At one time the number of Arnold's effective troops did not exceed five hundred, and never more than eight hundred. "You will be surprised," he wrote to Schuyler, "to hear that we have been reinforced with only one hundred and fifty men from Montreal. The duty is extremely severe in this inclement climate, the troops being obliged to lay constantly on their arms, and mount guard every other night, and, but for a few officers of spirit, all would have been lost."* He maintained the siege gallantly until the arrival of Wooster on the first of April, and asked for only a few more men to enable him to conquer the walled city before him. "I have no thoughts," he wrote at the middle of March, "of leaving this proud town until I enter it in triumph. I am in the way of my duty, and I know no fear." For his gallant services in the disastrous assault on Quebec, Congress had, in January, promoted Arnold to the rank and pay of Brigadier-General, and those who knew him only as a soldier predicted for him a brilliant military career.

* Autograph Letter, February 10, 1776.

Unfortunately he did not possess a sufficient moral foundation upon which a truly noble character might securely rest.

While the cause of the colonists in Canada was in this perilous condition, General Schuyler was co-operating with Congress, the provincial authorities and Washington, to the fullest extent, in efforts to throw into that province a well-appointed army of ten thousand men. Congress made a very promising resolve, and called loudly upon New York and New England for men and supplies. The provincial authorities made urgent requisitions upon their people; and Washington, then besieging the British in Boston, put forth every effort to accomplish his task very speedily, so as to detach some of his troops for service in Canada. But resolves of Congress, and calls for volunteers did not produce many men, nor did requisitions for supplies find ready responses. The truth is the country was sparsely populated and comparatively poor. The region nearest Canada from which supplies ought to have been obtained was mostly a wilderness; and even in that section, having Albany for its centre and the efficient General Schuyler there, exerting his extraordinary personal influence and the powers of a wide discretion given him by Congress, men and supplies were slowly obtained, and adequate transportation by land could not be found to move such supplies to the destined field of operations. The ice in the lakes would no longer bear loaded sleds; the snows were rapidly melting in the warm March sun, and the frozen ground was dissolving into deep mud, making the roads almost impassable even for unburdened wagons. When, at the middle of March, Washington had driven the British out of Boston, and was in a condition to send help to the little army in Canada, and Wooster was

preparing to go down to Quebec to conduct the military operations there with a reinforced army, it was easier to transport ten thousand troops, with supplies, from England to that city on the St. Lawrence, three thousand miles, than it was to transport an equal number of troops and quantity of supplies from the Upper Hudson to Quebec, a distance of only about as many hundreds.

While these formidable obstacles were in the way of successful military operations in Canada, the change in the sentiments of the people in that province, from friendliness to hostility to the Americans, was positive and alarming. They gave the invaders no countenance, and would not sell them a pound of provisions unless paid for in specie. This was caused partly by the disasters at Quebec, the lack of specie, and the failures to reinforce the invading army, and partly by the conduct of Wooster and Arnold. The former was unfitted by age, temper and education for the delicate position in which he had been placed, and which he had held for several months. He was a Puritan of the Calvinistic stamp, and so hated "popery" in all its manifestations, that he could hardly be civil toward the Roman Catholics by whom he was surrounded. Instead of conciliating them, he repelled them by his stern bigotry. The clergy were offended by his intolerance and social narrowness, and the Canadian nobility were disgusted with his stinginess in living. These two classes of citizens—the priests and nobles—led all the rest, and the mass of the common people followed as one. The leaders sneered at Wooster's attempt to organize a civil government, and the people were taught to regard Arnold as a petty tyrant. When the enlightened, courtly, and just-minded Montgomery was in command, leaders and people were disposed to regard him as their deliverer, and the more orderly troops

as their friends; now the leaders hated and despised Wooster and Arnold, and the people regarded the troops under them as intruders and a scourge. The continental officers, plain in appearances and often uncouth in deportment, were made targets for ridicule and satire; and Carleton and his fellow-officers laughed heartily when from the ramparts at Quebec they saw Wooster, stooping with age and the apparent burden of an immense wig, solemnly walking around the walls trying to discover their weak points.

The garrison affected supreme contempt for the besiegers, yet they were careful, under many provocations, not to measure strength with them. For five months Carleton and his troops were closely imprisoned by them. The despised invaders had burnt the suburbs of the city, battered the walls with solid shot, and thrown red-hot ones among the shipping; made several daring attempts to carry the city by assault or strategem, and compelled military officers and distinguished civilians to mount guard. One officer declared that for eighty successive nights he slept in his clothes, to be ready for action in case of necessity. Finally, when strong reinforcements arrived from England early in May, Carleton made a sortie at the moment when he knew that the patriots were withdrawing, and in his report he foolishly said he "marched out of the ports of St. Louis and St. John's to see what these mighty boasters were about." His report was a pitiful comment upon his previous conduct.

While the lakes were frozen and the sleighing was good, Schuyler had been sending forward such provisions, and lighter artillery, and ammunition as he could obtain, while recruits from New England were also making their way into Canada in small parties. Heavy cannon, shot and shell, had been gathered at Poughkeepsie and awaited the opening of the Hudson

River. This was cleared of ice on the 16th of March, the day before the British evacuated Boston, when sloops reached Albany and the heavy ordnance and other munitions of war went forward. Among these were eight tons of powder from Philadelphia. Schuyler had provided bateaux for their transportation on the Upper Hudson and the lakes, and when the latter were clear of ice at the middle of April, cannon, shot, shell, powder, provisions, and about six hundred New York troops, who had been gathered at Albany, moved on toward Canada by way of Lake George, Ticonderoga, and Lake Champlain. Before the departure of the troops, the small-pox had broken out among them.

On the 27th of March, General Wooster, placing Colonel Moses Hazen in command at Montreal, left for Quebec, and assumed the chief direction of military affairs there on the first of April. On the day after his arrival Arnold was disabled by the falling of his horse upon his lately wounded leg. Considering himself slighted by Wooster, who did not consult him on military affairs, he obtained leave of absence, and repairing to Montreal, took command there.

While Schuyler was engaged in the moving of a force into Canada, other matters of great importance commanded his attention. Unpleasant intelligence came from Tryon County concerning the movements of the Indians at the westward, and it was evident that relations with the Six Nations were assuming alarming aspects. Early in March the savages held a conference at Onondaga, and it was understood that they intended to hold another at Albany, with the Indian Commissioners. This Schuyler dreaded, for he had no Indian goods to give them, as usual, as a peace-offering, and they were likely to be disgusted and become hostile in consequence. At the same time he was

informed that Sir John Johnson had evidently violated his parole and was inciting the Indians to war. Schuyler immediately summoned the baronet to Albany. He appeared on the 18th of March, but his accusers did not, and he feigned such friendliness and honesty of purpose, declaring that he considered his parole of honor a sacred obligation, that the General gave him his confidence, in a degree. He corroborated the rumors which had already reached Schuyler that the Six Nations were preparing for hostilities, and professed to deprecate their conduct.

The hostile attitude of the Indians greatly distressed Schuyler. He had no troops to send into Tryon County to menace the savages or defend the people, and he had no goods with which he might conciliate them by presents. He could not offer any of them employment as soldiers, for he had steadily opposed propositions of that kind, on the plea that humanity might be outraged by the deeds of savages who could not always be restrained; and chiefly through his influence, Congress had just resolved not to employ Indians as soldiers in the armies before the tribes to which they might belong should, in a national council, held in the usual way, consent thereto, nor then without the express approbation of Congress.*

There was, at this time, two efficient emissaries among the Indians. These were James Deane, an interpreter in the employment of the Indian Commissioners, and Samuel Kirkland, a missionary ordained for that purpose under the sanction of the Scotch Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Heathen. Kirkland labored incessantly at the breaking out of the war to keep the Six Nations neutral, but succeeded only with the Oneidas, who, fortunately, were contiguous to the white settlers on the western

* Journals of Congress, ii. 83.

borders of Tryon County. To these men Schuyler looked for the most efficient aid at this perilous time. They had kept him well informed of the movements and temper of the Indians, and Deane was directed to come to Albany with a deputation of Oneidas and others who were expected. Schuyler's interview with them was not very satisfactory, and when the Oneidas, and deputies of seven tribes in Canada departed, Deane was directed to go back with them, bearing a message to the Six Nations from the General, in which he set forth, in glowing terms, an account of the precipitous flight of the British from Boston.

On the 28th of March a council of the confederated nations was held in a hemlock grove. The news from Boston astounded them. The council was greatly divided; debate was warm. Deane took part in the proceedings, and soon found that the usual desire of the Indians to be on the winning side inclined the majority to neutrality. The result was that at the end of three days the tribes gave each other the usual pledges to observe a strict neutrality in the present quarrel. This result was brought about chiefly through the instrumentality of the faithful Oneidas, who had firmly withstood the fierce menaces of the Cayugas, when their indignation was hot because Sir John Johnson had given up his war-belt (surrendered) to General Schuyler.

At about this time Schuyler was annoyed by the conduct of some captive British officers who had been sent to Albany from Canada, some of them accompanied by their families. At first they refused to give their parole, and some of them intimated that they should not consider a breach of it, if given, criminal. They found in Schuyler a kind of man different from Wooster, or Arnold, or,

indeed, any of the officers then in Canada. He was courtly in deportment, affable and scholarly in speech, and firm and stern in duty. He told them they must sign a parole, or suffer close confinement. All but a Captain Dunder signed the promise, and he was closely imprisoned at Albany, and afterward in Kingston. The remainder were told precisely what would be required of them. "I summoned them," Schuyler wrote to Washington, "and informed them that if any of them attempted an escape after having given their parole, and I could lay hands on them, I should resent the injury done to mankind in general by hanging such faithless wretches."* He was never afterward troubled with the insolence of British officers. None so foolishly haughty were again sent to him. To those under his charge he was uniformly kind and considerate, and made every provision in his power for the comfort of themselves and their families.

Early in April Schuyler had the pleasure of entertaining distinguished guests, in the persons of three Commissioners with their attendants, whom Congress, at Schuyler's suggestion as we have seen, had appointed † to repair to Canada, clothed with the full powers of the body that sent them. The Commissioners were Dr. Benjamin Franklin, of Pennsylvania, and Samuel Chase and Charles Carroll, of Maryland. They were invested by Congress with extraordinary powers. They were authorized to receive Canada into the union of colonies, and to organize a republican government there. They were empowered to suspend military officers, issue military commissions, act as umpires in disputes between the civil and military authorities, vote at councils of war, raise additional troops, and draw upon Congress for one hundred thousand dollars. They were

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Books. † Journals of Congress, ii. 62.

charged with the duty of conciliating the people, healing dissensions, and winning the Canadians of all classes to the cause of the struggling republicans, by kindness, reason, and appeals to their interest. They were authorized to establish a newspaper in that province as an aid in the work, to be conducted by a friend to Congress, in the French language.

Mr. Carroll, in accordance with a request of Congress, prevailed upon his brother John, an eminent Roman Catholic priest (afterward the first Archbishop of Baltimore) to accompany the Commission. He was then forty-one years of age, and in full bodily and mental vigor. He had been educated in France, and spoke the French language perfectly. It was expected that he would be eminently useful to the Commissioners in bringing over the powerful clergy of Canada to the side of the colonists, notwithstanding he consented to go on the condition that he was to do no more than to persuade his co-religionists to remain neutral. It was hoped that when that degree of friendliness should be attained, the transposition from hostility to active sympathy would be a necessary result.

With this accession to their strength the Commissioners, with their servants, left Philadelphia late in March, for the St. Lawrence. Schuyler was apprised of the intended time of their setting out, by Dr. Franklin, that he might provide for their journey beyond Albany. At Brunswick, in New Jersey, they overtook the Baron de Woedtke, a Prussian officer, who had been commissioned a brigadier-general, and directed to accompany the Commissioners to Canada and enter upon active service there. Woedtke had been a major in the Prussian service and held a place on the staff of Frederick the Great, but having been compelled to officially announce to his majesty the death of

the monarch's favorite nephew, the brutal King took a dislike to him and drove him into exile. He sought employment in the Continental Army, and now had the happiness of travelling toward the field of active operation with Franklin, who, above all other Americans, he most desired to have as a friend, for there existed a remote family relationship between them.

After journeying two days, the Commissioners reached New York, where they were entertained by Lord Stirling, (William Alexander) then a brigadier in the Continental Army. He furnished a sloop for their transportation to Albany, and at five o'clock in the afternoon of the 2nd of April they embarked and set sail. They lay at anchor that night off the upper end of York Island, and were detained there until five o'clock in the evening of the next day by a heavy north-east storm, when a stiff breeze came suddenly from the south and bore them more than thirty miles to the southern entrance to the Highlands. In the narrow strait at Anthony's Nose they encountered a severe head wind. The storm still raged, and there, in much peril, they lay at anchor all night, and did not set sail again until noon the next day. Then having repaired injured sails, they proceeded a few miles and anchored between West Point and Constitution Island. The Commissioners went ashore upon the island to inspect Fort Constitution, upon which much dependence had been placed as a barrier to the passage of the river by hostile vessels. The Commissioners found it inadequate, and as rumors of the appearance of a British fleet off Sandy Hook were prevalent when they left New York, they sent an express to Congress with an assurance that the Hudson River offered almost a free passage for the ships and troops of the enemy into the open country above the Highlands. They also

informed Congress that in the Highlands were many eligible points for batteries which might make the country above them inaccessible by the river.

On the morning of the fourth day after leaving New York, the sloop's sails were spread before a fine breeze, and at sunset her anchor was cast four miles below Albany after a most delightful voyage of ninety miles. The Commissioners spent the night on board, and after breakfast they stepped on shore at Albany, where they were met by General Schuyler and invited to dine with him. "He behaved to us with great civility," Charles Carroll wrote in his journal; "lives in pretty style; has two daughters (Betsey and Peggy), lively, agreeable, black-eyed gals." The first-named was Elizabeth, afterward the wife of Alexander Hamilton, and the other was Margaret, who became the wife of the Albany Patroon, Stephen Van Rensselaer.

We have observed that John Thomas was appointed a major-general and ordered to take the chief command in Canada. After performing gallant and efficient service with Washington, before Boston, he left there when the British fled, and arrived in Albany at the close of March. So early as that period, according to the record of one of his guests, General Schuyler was contemplating that canal system in which many years afterward he was so deeply engaged, especially in the project of a connection between the Hudson River and Lake Champlain. "General Schuyler informed me," Carroll wrote in his journal, "that an uninterrupted water carriage between New York and Quebec might be perfected at fifty thousand pounds sterling expense."

On the morning of the 9th of April the Commissioners and the churchman, Generals Schuyler and Thomas,

and Mrs. Schuyler and her two daughters, left Albany in a large country wagon, for the General's seat at Saratoga, thirty-two miles up the valley of the Hudson. It was an extremely rough ride, over very muddy roads, and Dr. Franklin, then seventy years of age, was greatly exhausted by it and his previous long and tempestuous voyage from New York. "I begin to apprehend," he wrote to Josiah Quincey, from Saratoga, "that I have undertaken a fatigue that, at my time of life, may prove too much for me; so I sit down to write to a few friends by way of farewell." But most agreeable rest and the kindest and most cheerful nursing for a week by Mrs. Schuyler, whose presence was always like a ray of sunshine to those about her, restored the philosopher to his accustomed vigor, and on the 16th of April, snow still on the ground, the Commissioners renewed their journey toward Lake George. "I parted with regret from the amiable family of General Schuyler," Charles Carroll wrote in his journal. "The ease and affability with which we were treated, and the lively behavior of the young ladies, made Saratoga a most pleasing *séjour*, the remembrance of which will long remain with me." After a fatiguing journey over wretched roads, for two days, the Commissioners reached Fort George, not far from the ruins of Fort William Henry (where the Fort William Henry house now stands), at the southern end of Lake George, in which the ice was then broken up and floating in huge masses.

Generals Schuyler and Thomas were at Fort George, having pressed forward from Saratoga the day after their arrival there. They reached the post on the morning of the 12th, in a furious storm of snow which covered the country as far south as the Highlands six inches in depth. There they found everything in readiness to go forward

when the ice, then honeycombed by heat, should dissolve. Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New York and New Jersey troops were there; and parts of the regiments and battalions had gone forward and were already in Canada. Schuyler at once despatched a courier to Hazen at Montreal, and Wooster at Quebec, with the cheering tidings of approaching reinforcements and an assurance that three or four thousand more soldiers would immediately follow. He directed General Thompson, at New York, to send forward troops as quickly as possible, and also to reinforce the weak posts in the Hudson Highlands. He directed Hazen and Wooster to promulgate as widely as possible among the Canadians an account of the hasty flight of the British from Boston, hoping thereby to awaken new confidence in the cause of the patriots among the doubting and wavering inhabitants.

As the ice was floating loosely in the lake, the Commissioners determined to press forward. Schuyler had prepared for them a stout batteau, thirty-six feet in length, eight in breadth, and one foot in depth. It had a single mast, a blanket sail, the shelter of an awning for a cabin, and plenty of oars. Upon this broad float they embarked at a little past noon on the 19th of April, and in a voyage of thirty-eight miles to the foot of the lake, they battled with the ice most of the time for thirty-six hours. From the landing at the lower end of the lake, six yoke of oxen drew the batteau upon wheels four miles to Lake Champlain, at Ticonderoga, where it was again launched. There they remained five days, during which time Schuyler was prostrated by sickness, of which he wrote to Washington from Fort George, on the 27th, saying: "A vile ague seized me some days ago, but Dr. Franklin and the other gentlemen administered such a number of doses of Peru-

vian bark [quinine] that it has left me, and I hope that I shall last at least for this campaign.”* Although Schuyler was then only forty-three years of age, illness in various forms had so shattered his frame during the past two years that he sometimes indulged the despondent thought that he was a hopeless invalid. He was a stranger to ease from suffering of some kind during the whole time that he was performing such an immense amount of mental and physical labor for the good of his country and mankind. History presents no parallel to his case in its records of sacrifices on the altar of patriotism.

Suffering as he did, perplexed as he was by reasonable and unreasonable demands in every form, for help in the public service which he had no means for satisfying, and fretted continually by sectional jealousies and mean slanders from the lips of low-bred people in high and low places, it is no wonder that General Schuyler won for himself, at this time, the character of an irritable and discourteous aristocrat among those who had been made to feel the lash of his indignation in return for indignities. His condition and surroundings often led him to exercise a harshness toward his inferiors in rank which was foreign to his nature. Captain Graydon, in his *Memoirs*, furnishes a notable example, in recording a scene that occurred at Schuyler's headquarters, at Lake George, a few weeks after the Commissioners were there. Graydon had been appointed by Congress to carry specie to General Schuyler, for the use of the Northern army. He wrote :

“ At length, after a journey of three hundred and twenty miles, arriving at the quarters of General Schuyler, on the border of the lake, we acquitted ourselves of our charge. * * * Though General Schuyler has been charged with such haughtiness of demeanor as to have induced the troops of New England to decline serving under his com-

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Books.

mand, as stated in Marshall's Life of Washington, the reception we met with was not merely courteous but kind. His quarters being contracted, a bed was prepared for us in his own apartment, and we experienced civilities that were flattering from an officer of his high rank. Though thoroughly the man of business, he was also a gentleman and man of the world, and well calculated to sustain the reputation of our army in the eyes of the British officers (disposed to depreciate it), as is evinced by the account given by General Burgoyne of the manner in which he was entertained by him at Albany. But that he should have been displeasing to the Yankees, I am not at all surprised. He certainly was at no pains to conceal the extreme contempt he felt for a set of officers who were both a disgrace to their stations and the cause in which they acted. Being yet a stranger to the character of these men and the constitution of that part of our military force which in Pennsylvania was considered as the bulwark of the nation, I must confess my surprise at an incident which took place while at dinner. Besides the General, the members of his family and ourselves, there were at table a lady and gentleman from Montreal. A New England captain came in upon some business, with that abject servility of manner which belongs to persons of the meanest rank. He was neither asked to sit or take a glass of wine, and after announcing his wants, was dismissed with that peevishness of tone we apply to a low and vexatious intruder. This man, in his proper sphere, might have been entitled to better treatment, but when presuming to thrust himself into a situation, in which far other qualifications than his were required, and upon an occasion, too, which involved some of the most important of human interests, I am scarcely prepared to say it was unmerited.*

The Northern army was greatly demoralized at that time, and insubordination everywhere prevailed. This condition of things tried Schuyler's patience to the uttermost. "The licentiousness of our troops," he wrote to Washington, from Fort George, on the 27th of April, "both in Canada and in this quarter, is not easily to be described, nor have all my efforts been able to put a stop to these scandalous excesses. I shall, however, continue to give the most pointed orders, and shall hope for a more becoming conduct in future." He added: "I have reason to think General Thomas, who left Ticonderoga on Sunday, will reach Quebec to-day or to-morrow, and that the

* Graydon's Memoirs, page 122.

Commissioners will arrive about the same time at Montreal. They parted with me on Wednesday, with a fair wind.

* * * Our military chest is exhausted, and we are deeply involved in debt. Ten thousand pounds will hardly pay what I am personally bound for on the public account.

The Commissioners left Ticonderoga in Schuyler's great batteau with a "fair wind," as he said, after an exchange of cordial good wishes with the patriot. At the end of three days and a half of toil and fatigue—rowing, sailing, battling with ice floes and head winds, and camping on the wet shores at night—they reached St. John's at the foot of the lake. Another hard day's travel in Montreal *caleches* (two-wheeled carriages), over the miry flat country on which some snow yet lay, brought them to La Prairie, opposite Montreal. They crossed the rapid St. Lawrence, and were warmly greeted on the beach at the Post Vandreuil.

"We came hither the night before last," John Carroll wrote to his mother, "and were received at the landing by General Arnold and a great body of officers, gentry, et cetera, and saluted by firing of cannon and other military honors. Being conducted to the General's house, we were served with a glass of wine, while people were crowding in to pay their compliments, which ceremony being over, we were shown into another apartment, and unexpectedly met in it a large assembly of ladies, most of them French. After drinking tea, and sitting some time, we went to an elegant supper, which was followed by the singing of the ladies, which proved very agreeable, and would have been more so, if we had not been so much fatigued with our journey. The next day was spent in receiving visits, and dining in a large company, with whom we were pressed to sup, but excused ourselves in order to write letters, of which this is one, and will be finished and dated to-morrow morning."*

So Father Carroll spent the day after the arrival of the Commissioners, but not so did the Commissioners them-

* Brent's "Biographical Sketch of the most Reverend John Carroll," p. 41.

selves. His mission was of a social nature ; theirs was of more solemn import. They sat at a council of war that day, at which General Arnold presided,* and heard with dismay the appalling evidence that Canada was probably irretrievably lost to the confederated colonies. Already Colonel Hazen had written a long letter to General Schuyler, in which he gave a most gloomy picture of the almost total ruin of the cause of the colonists, in Canada, which the mismanagement of Wooster and the neglect of Congress, had produced. He said :

“ You are not unacquainted with the friendly disposition of the Canadians when General Montgomery first penetrated into the country. The ready assistance which they gave on all occasions, by men, carriages and provisions, was most remarkable. Even when he was before Quebec many parishes offered their services in the reduction of that fortress, which was at that time thought unnecessary. But his most unfortunate fate, added to other incidents, has caused such a change in their disposition that we are no more to look upon them as friends, but, on the contrary, waiting an opportunity to join our enemies. That no observation of my own may remain obscure, I beg leave to observe that I think the clergy or guardians of the souls and conductors of the bodies of these enthusiasts have been neglected, perhaps in some instances ill-used. Be that as it may, they are unanimous (though privately) against our cause, and I have too much reason to fear many of them, with other people of some consequence, have carried on a correspondence the whole winter with General Carleton, in Quebec, and are now plotting our destruction. The peasantry, in general, have been ill-used. They have, in some instances, been dragooned, with the point of the bayonet, to furnish wood for the garrison at lower rates than the current price ; also carriages and many other articles furnished, certificates given not legible, with only half a signature, and of consequence rejected by the Quarter-master general. It is true they are promised payment from time to time, yet they look upon such promises as vague, their labor and property lost, and the Congress or united colonies bankrupt ; and in a more material point, they have not seen a sufficient force in the country to protect them. These matters furnish very strong arguments to be made use of by our enemies.

* The council was held at headquarters on the 30th of April, and was composed of Brigadier-General Benedict Arnold, *President*, and Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Chase, Charles Carroll, Brigadier-General Woedtke, Colonel Moses Hazen, and Colonel De Haas, *members*.

“To take a view of our little army here: I have pretty good information that our strength in camp before Quebec did not, on the 18th of March, much exceed that of the day after General Montgomery’s fall. General Arnold had, at that time, about 400 men in a small-pox hospital. Neither order or subordination prevails, and, of course, shortly no soldiers. On the 15th of this month those who wintered in this country are free, and in my opinion, neither art, craft or money will prevail on many of them to reënlist to serve in Canada. Colonel Livingston’s regiment, consisting of about 200, [Canadians] will be free on the same day. Very few of them, if any, will reëngage. Of my intended regiment, I have about 250. The want of money obliges me to stop, where I shall remain until matters take a change, if ever, in our favor, as not a man more will now engage; and those whom I have enlisted will go to the right about, in case the Canadians, in general, join against us—at least that is my opinion. With respect to the better sort of people, both French and English, seven-eighths are Tories, who would wish to see our throats cut, and, perhaps, would readily assist in doing it.

“The taking of Quebec is not very probable, and the chance of keeping the country, according to the present appearance of affairs, is totally against us. No preparation has, is, or can be made to guard the river, for a very good reason—no money or men of skill to do it. The whole country left without any other kind of law than that of the arbitrary power of the sword in the hands of the several commanding officers, too frequently abused in all cases of this nature. * * * * The savages hereabouts are cool. They keep aloof from us. We are to expect little or no friendships from them; and, indeed, little or no precaution has been taken for that purpose. It is expected by some that numbers will come down from the interior of the country and fall upon our frontier early in the Spring.”*

Three weeks later, Arnold, in a letter to Schuyler, from Montreal, gave him a sad picture of affairs at Quebec when he left there at the beginning of April. He said:

“Inclosed is a list of our force before Quebec, which, I am sorry to say, is so very inconsiderable and illy supplied with every requisite to carry on a siege, that I am very dubious of their success. The 2nd instant we opened a battery of three guns, and one howitzer, on Point Levi; another battery of six guns, two howitzers and two small mortars on the heights of Abraham, and one of two guns at the Traverse, were nearly completed when I came away. To supply the whole there are only three or four tons of powder, and ten or twelve of shot; no engineer, and few artillerymen. Two fire-ships, one at Isle Orleans and one at Point aux Trembles, were nearly completed, to attempt

* Autograph Letter, April 1, 1776.

burning their ships, as soon as the ice would admit of it. We have no seamen, and not one good commander to manage these vessels, or I should conceive great hopes of their success. Our army is supplied with provisions to the 10th of May, after which time their only resource for meat is from below. This country, which is not plentiful at best, is nearly exhausted of beef. We can procure a supply of flour, if furnished with cash. I am now stretching our credit for that purpose, which is at a low ebb. I cannot help lamenting that more effectual measures have not been adopted to secure this country in our interest, an object which appears to me of the highest importance to the colonies. Colonel Hazen, who is a sensible, judicious officer, and well acquainted with this country, has shown me his letter to you of the 1st instant. I am sorry to say I think most of his remarks but too true, and that if we are not immediately supported with eight or ten thousand men, a good train of artillery, well served, and a military chest well furnished, the ministerial troops, if they attempt it, will regain the country and we shall be obliged to quit it, the fatal consequences of which are too obvious.”*

So thought the Commissioners after the first day's conference with Arnold. They knew that the British ministry had been in negotiation with some German princes for a supply of mercenary troops for service against the colonists, but were not yet informed of the actual consummation of the bargain. They certainly knew that a considerable British force would be ready to ascend the St. Lawrence to Quebec so soon as the river should be cleared of ice, and that it would far outnumber the army of Congress in Canada. This fact, and the wretched state of affairs—more wretched than Hazen or Arnold had painted them in their letters—satisfied the Commissioners that Canada could not be held. In their first despatch to Congress they informed that body that its credit in Canada was totally destroyed “from the want of hard money, and the prejudice it is to our affairs.” They wrote :

“Not the most trifling service can be procured without an assurance of instant pay in silver or gold. The express we sent from St. John's to inform the General of our arrival there, and to request carria-

* Autograph Letter, April 20, 1776.

ges for La Prairie, was stopped at the ferry, till a friend passing changed a dollar bill for him into silver; and we are obliged to that friend (Mr. McCartney) for his engagement to pay the *caleches*, or they would not have come for us. The general apprehension that we shall be driven out of the province as soon as the King's troops can arrive concurs with the frequent breaches of promise the inhabitants have experienced, in determining them to trust our people no further."*

They urged the necessity of sending, at least, the sum of twenty thousand pounds, in specie, with the utmost despatch, and said it seemed to be improper to propose the federal union of Canada with the other colonies until the money should arrive, and a sufficient army with it to secure the possession of the country. A week later they again wrote to Congress, urging the necessity of sending a supply of hard money, for they had tried in vain to borrow any, either on the public or their own private credit. They wrote :

" We cannot even sell sterling bills of exchange, which some of us have offered to draw. It seems it had been expected and given out by our friends that we should bring money with us. The disappointment has discouraged everybody, and established an opinion that none is to be had, or that Congress has not credit enough in their own colonies to procure it. Many of our friends are drained dry; others say they are so, fearing, perhaps, we shall never be able to reimburse them. They show us long accounts, no part of which we are able to discharge, of the supplies they have furnished to our army, and declare that they have borrowed and taken upon credit so long for our service that they can now be trusted no longer, even for what they want themselves. The Tories will not trust us a farthing, and some who, perhaps, wish us well, conceiving that we shall, through our own poverty, or from superior force, be soon obliged to abandon the country, are afraid to have any dealings with us, lest they should hereafter be called to account for abetting our cause. Our enemies take advantage of this distress to make us look contemptible in the eyes of the Canadians, who have been provoked by the violences of our military, in exacting provisions and services from them without pay—a conduct toward a people who suffered us to enter their country as friends, that the most urgent necessity can scarce excuse, since it has contributed much to the changing their good dispositions towards us, into enmity, and makes them wish our departure; and, accordingly, we

* Letter of the Commissioners to Congress, May 1, 1776.

have daily intimations of plots hatching and insurrections intended for expelling us on the first news of the arrival of the British army. You will see from hence that your Commissioners themselves are in a critical and most irksome situation, pestered hourly with demands, great and small, that they cannot answer, in a place where our cause has a majority of enemies, the garrison weak, and a greater would, without money, increase our difficulties. In short, if money cannot be had, to support your army here with honor, so as to be respected, instead of being hated by the people, we report it as our firm and unanimous opinion that it is better immediately to withdraw it. The fact before your eyes, that the powerful British nation cannot keep an army in a country where the inhabitants are become enemies, must convince you of the necessity of enabling us immediately to make these people our friends. Exclusive of a sum of money to discharge the debts already contracted, which General Arnold informs us amounts to fourteen thousand pounds, besides the account laid before Congress by Mr. Price, a further sum of hard money, not less than six thousand pounds, will be necessary to re-establish our credit in this colony. With this supply, and a little success, it may be possible to regain the affections of the people, to attach them firmly to our cause, and induce them to accept a free government, perhaps to enter the union; in which case the currency of our paper money will, we think, follow as a certain consequence.”*

At the council of war, held on the 30th of April, it was agreed to fortify at Richelieu and Jaques Cartier, two important points on the St. Lawrence river, the first fifteen leagues, and the second eleven leagues, above Quebec. It was also determined to build at Chamblee six gondolas of a proper size to carry heavy cannon, to be under the direction of General Arnold, who was to employ Colonel Hazen to superintend their construction. Arnold had already sent Colonel Hazen to command at St. Johns, a few miles from Chamblee, for he was a brave and judicious officer, and well acquainted with the region and the inhabitants.† It was a post of great and growing importance, as we shall observe presently. Arnold had also ordered Colonel Timothy Bedel, of New Hampshire, with two hundred men, to the Cedars Rapids, above Montreal, to

* Letter of the Commissioners to Congress, May 8, 1776.

† Autograph Letter of Arnold, April 30, 1776.

prevent any goods being sent to the upper country, and to guard against a surprise from the British or their Indians.*

Circumstances soon modified the plans of Arnold and the Commissioners. Two days after their second letter to Congress was written, a courier arrived at Montreal with the startling intelligence that a British fleet had arrived at Quebec, with troops, a large force of which had landed, attacked the little American army there, and put it to flight. A council of war was immediately held, when it was resolved that the wisest measures to be adopted would be the withdrawal of the troops to St. Johns, fortify and reinforce them there, and at that point make a firm defensive stand, and endeavor to prevent a British army penetrating the country further southward. Orders were immediately issued for such movements, when Dr. Franklin (whose ill health compelled him to leave Canada), with Father Carroll, set off on his return to Philadelphia, there to expedite the new measures, and give to Congress full information of the state of affairs in the Northern Department. Chase and Carroll, the other two Commissioners, were left in Canada to superintend the retreat and the erection of defensive works on the Sorel or lower end of Lake Champlain.

Schuyler gave the venerable Franklin and his travelling companion every facility for comfort in his power in their voyage over the lakes and their journey to Albany, where Mrs. Schuyler furnished them with a comfortable carriage and careful driver to carry them to New York. "We arrived here safe yesterday evening, in your post-chaise, driven by Lewis," Franklin wrote to Schuyler. "I was unwilling to give so much trouble, and would have borrowed your sulkey, and driven myself; but good Mrs.

* Autograph Letter of Arnold, April 20, 1776

Schuyler insisted on a full compliance with your pleasure, as signified in your letter, and I was obliged to submit, which I was afterward very glad of, part of the road being very stony and much gullied, when I should, probably, have overset and broken my own bones, all the skill and dexterity of Lewis being no more than sufficient. Through the influence of your kind recommendation to the innkeepers on the road, we found a great readiness to supply us with a change of horses.”*

On the same day Franklin wrote to the Commissioners in Canada, congratulating them on the great prize captured by an American privateer and carried into Boston, consisting of seventy-five tons of gunpowder and a thousand carbines, and added: “The German auxiliaries are certainly coming. It is our business to prevent their returning.” Some of them were then on the ocean, in British transports, bound for Quebec.

* Autograph Letter, May 27, 1776.