

CHAPTER VIII.

THE New York Convention espoused the cause of General Schuyler. They appointed him a delegate to Congress, with his friend William Duer, and directed delegates Philip Livingston and James Duane to repair thither at once. "The Convention have a proper sense of the ill treatment I have sustained," Schuyler wrote to Colonel Varick, "and are resolved that justice shall be done me." On his arrival in Philadelphia, he took his seat in Congress, and was cordially received by many of the delegates who had taken no part in the matter; and others who had been active against him seemed to wish to avoid an inquiry, and "threw out," he wrote, "that there are no complaints against me, and that they have never believed in any of the malicious reports propagated to my disadvantage. They have, however, gone too far," he continued, "and all that stands on their journals injurious to me must be expunged or I quit the service."* A week earlier he had been appointed commander-in-chief of the military in the State of Pennsylvania. He was the second Major-general (Lee being the first) in the Continental Army. After an official interview with Thomas Wharton, the President of Pennsylvania, he assumed the duties of his new position on the 14th of April.† He formed a

* Autograph Letter to Colonel Varick, April 16th, 1777.

† The following order was issued from the Pennsylvania War Office on the 14th of April:

"All the Troops belonging to and in the pay of this State, wherever

camp on the western side of the Schuylkill, completed works on Fort Island, threw up others at Red Bank, and with marvellous dispatch he sent troops and provisions to the commander-in-chief in New Jersey. During his two months' sojourn in Philadelphia he displayed great skill and energy in the reorganization of the Commissary Department; and made such valuable suggestions to Congress concerning it, that they embodied them in rules.

Meanwhile, Gates, flushed with the expectation of being speedily made the commander-in-chief of the Northern Department, and perhaps become a marked conqueror in the campaign about to be opened, obeyed with alacrity the orders of President Hancock, who, on the 25th of March, wrote to him, saying: "I have it in charge to direct that you repair to Ticonderoga immediately, and take command of the army stationed in that department." He set off, with Brigadier-general de Fermoy, as soon as he could make preparations to do so, and arrived at Albany on the 17th of April, where he was waited upon by Colonel Varick with a message from Mrs. Schuyler, inviting him to take up his quarters at the General's house, just below the city. He declined on the plea that dispatch of business required him to be continually in town. He breakfasted with Mrs. Schuyler the next morning, and evinced the most cordial friendship for her husband, at the same time showing the greatest coolness toward Colonel Varick. This was probably induced by the fact that he had found in a package which Varick had prepared for General Schuyler, and which Gates unwarrantably opened before

they may be, are directed and required to pay obedience to any orders that may be given them by Major-General Schuyler, the present commander-in-chief of this State.

By Order of the board,

"OWEN BIDDLE, Chairman."

forwarding it, some expressions not very complimentary to himself. He had no doubt met the fate indicated in the proverb, that "listeners seldom hear any good of themselves." Of this violation of his rights Colonel Varick complained to General Schuyler.

Intelligence of Gates's appointment to the command preceded him, and the question, Has General Schuyler been superseded? produced much excitement in Albany. This was intensified by the receipt of a letter from Schuyler to the Committee of Albany, inclosing the resolutions of Congress which appointed Gates to the command, in which he said: "By these you will readily perceive that I shall not return a general. Under what influence it has been brought about, I am not at liberty now to mention. On my return to Albany I shall give the Committee the fullest information."*

General Schuyler took his seat in Congress as a delegate a few days after his arrival in Philadelphia, and, in compliance with his request, that body, on the 18th of April, appointed a committee of inquiry in his case, under the following resolution:

Resolved, That a committee be appointed to inquire into the conduct of Major-General Schuyler, since he has held a command in the army of the United States."

That committee was composed of one delegate from each State, and consisted of the following-named gentlemen: Messrs. Thornton, Lovell, Ellery, Wolcott, Duer, Elmer, Clymer, Sykes, W. Smith, Page, Burke, Hayward and Brownson. † There was tardiness in beginning the investigation, which made Schuyler impatient, and, on the 3d of May, he wrote to Washington that he intended to resign

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Book.

† Journals of Congress, iii. 117.

his commission in a day or two. "As soon as I have done it," he said, "I shall transmit to your Excellency my reasons for such a step." The announcement grieved the Commander-in-chief. He fully appreciated the purity of character, integrity of purpose and vast usefulness to the cause, of the eminent New York patriot. He knew, too, how often his sense of honor had been violated, and to what unceasing annoyances he had been subjected, and he did not feel now, as he had done on a former occasion, called upon to persuade him to change his resolution, by an appeal to his patriotism. "I am sorry," he wrote, "that circumstances are such as to dispose you to a resignation, but you are the best judge of the line of conduct most reconcilable to your duty, both in public and personal view; and your own feelings must determine you in a matter of so delicate and interesting a nature."

But other friends urged Schuyler to be patient. On the 25th of April the committee had begun their inquiries into his conduct, and he was almost immediately satisfied that the result would be most favorable. On the 26th, he wrote to Colonel Varick:

"Such a change has taken place in the sentiments of the members who were unacquainted with me, that it is thought that they will expunge the resolutions of March 15th, copy whereof you have inclosed, but they have a much more difficult point to get over; they wish me to remain in the command, but having already appointed (or, at least, implicatively so) Gen. Gates to the command of the Northern Department, they do not know how to manage the matter; they wish to make Ticonderoga a separate command; that they have a right to do, but they know that I will not serve at Albany on those conditions; indeed, not on any, unless an absolute command is given me over every part of the army in the Northern Department. This they will not do, and, therefore, I shall return Mr. Schuyler only, to Albany."

This was the ultimatum of General Schuyler, and, because he supposed Congress would not agree to it, he

wrote to Washington that he should resign. There were indications that they would yield, but, without some explanations from General Schuyler concerning his letter of the 4th of February, they could not consistently expunge their resolutions of the 15th of March. Those explanations he gave in a memorial, dated the 7th of May, in which he took a lucid view of the whole matter, as follows :

“ He trusted that a candor, rendered necessary on the principle of self-justification, will not give offence, so long as he confines himself within the bounds of that decency and respect which are due to the Grand Council of the United States.

“ For the sake of perspicuity, he begs leave to recite the passages of his letter on which the resolutions were founded.”

[Here follows the passage quoted on page 165.]

These expressions gave rise to the following resolutions :

[Here followed the first two resolutions quoted on page 166.]

“ The other passage of your memorialist’s letter, which has given offence, is in these words :

“ ‘ I perceive, by some of the resolutions, that my letter of the 30th December, continued to the 1st of January, was received by Congress. I was in hopes that some notice would have been taken of the odious suspicion contained in Mr. Commissary Trumbull’s intercepted letter to the Hon’ble W. Williams, Esq. I really feel myself chagrined on the occasion. I am incapable of the meanness he suspects me of, and confidently expected Congress would have done me that justice which it was in their power to give, and which I humbly conceive they ought to have done.’

“ Upon which the Congress was pleased to resolve, ‘ That it is altogether improper, and inconsistent with the dignity of this Congress, to interfere in disputes subsisting among the officers of the army, which ought to be settled, unless they can be otherwise accommodated, in a Court-Martial, agreeable to the rules of the army, and that the expressions in General Schuyler’s letter of the 4th of February, that he confidently expected Congress would have done him that justice which it was in their power to give, were, to say the least, ill-advised and highly indecent.’

“ With respect to the first resolution, your memorialist begs leave

to observe that the word *acquiesce* admits of a very extensive construction, and may either mean that your memorialist ought to have obeyed your orders and he ought to have been convinced of their justice and propriety, and that he be obliged to suppress his sentiments concerning them.

“ If an obedience to your order was meant, your memorialist assures this House that he caused the letter from General Washington, conveying the dismissal of Dr. Stringer, to be conveyed to that gentleman within half an hour after its receipt, and that he prevailed on Dr. Stringer to continue in the care of the sick and of the hospital stores until the arrival of Dr. Pitts, by whom he was superseded. If this latter part of your memorialist’s conduct, which was dictated by common humanity and a regard to public economy, be deemed a disobedience, he must plead guilty.

“ If, by the word *acquiesce*, a belief of the justice and propriety of the measure was meant, your memorialist begs leave to observe that Congress, having made rules for the government of the army and its followers, and appointed a mode of trial, a general opinion has prevailed therein that all persons who enter the military service have a right to be tried by these rules, and, if guilty, to be punished.

“ The following resolutions of Congress, of the 29th November, ordering an inquiry to be made into the conduct of persons in the medical department, and which your memorialist begs leave to quote, seem to justify this opinion.

“ ‘ *Resolved*, That the General or commanding officer in each of the armies cause strict enquiry to be made into the conduct of the directors of the hospitals, and their surgeons, officers and servants, and of the regimental surgeons, that if there had been any just ground of complaint in these matters, the offender may be punished.’

“ Your memorialist begs leave to observe that though this resolution did not come to his hands till the 12th of January, when he was on public business at Fishkill, the dismissal of Dr. Stringer took place on the 9th of that month, a circumstance which superseded the enquiry, which your memorialist was on the point of instituting.

“ The power of Congress to dismiss their servants without a formal enquiry, your memorialist, for his own part, never questioned, but its policy as a general rule, he humbly begs leave to observe, may be subject at least to one strong objection: it may tend to prevent men of worth and abilities from affording to the public that assistance which they are capable of giving, from the apprehension that the suggestion of clamors, too often arising from a jealousy of office, might expose them to the disgrace and injury of a dismissal without being heard in their own defense.

“ If an idea was intended to be conveyed by the word *acquiesced* that your memorialist ought to have suppressed his sentiments concerning the resolutions of Congress, he is apprehensive that a principle would

be held up of so broad a nature as might sometimes be injurious to the public interest. Should the great confidential servants of Congress be precluded from the indulgence of expressing their opinions or sentiments on such of the resolutions of your House as appear to them to affect the public interest or to wound their own feelings, Congress would certainly be deprived of many useful suggestions, and one important channel of information, frequently arising from actual experience, be entirely cut off.

“ This privilege, your memorialist, from a sense of duty, has exercised on several occasions, in which Congress has not only acquiesced, but sometimes expressly approved, of his sentiments; even when they did not coincide with their resolutions.

“ Amongst several instances, your memorialist begs leave to remind Congress of the resolutions of the 1st of July, 1775, ordering him not to remove any of the troops under his command from New York.

“ That of the 8th of January, 1776, directing shipwrights to be sent from New York and Philadelphia, to build batteaux at Fort George.

“ That of the 14th October last, withdrawing the allowance of one and one half dollars as a compensation to recruiting officers for enlisting soldiers.

“ That for ordering batteaux to be raised in New York, and several more, which your memorialist humbly conceives were repealed or altered in consequence of the information he gave, and the execution of others not insisted upon, when your memorialist pointed out the objections to which they were liable.

“ It is true that when the servants of the public give their opinion of the measures of Congress, decency, as well as candor, should be observed, and your memorialist flatters himself that when his motives for using the expressions which have incurred displeasure are duly compared and weighed, it will appear that he has not deviated from that line. This, at least, he conscientiously affirms, that he hath in no instance done it intentionally, nothing having been more distant from his thoughts, however they may be expressed, than to offend or reflect upon Congress.

“ Your memorialist took it for granted that Congress was acquainted that he had, in a manner, forced Dr. Stringer in the service; that, in August, 1775, when sickness was spreading thro' the army under his command at Ticonderoga with great rapidity, and they were not only destitute of competent medical assistance, but even of medicines, the repeated solicitations of your memorialist, supported by the promises of the late Mr. Lynch, a member of your Honorable House (who was at Albany), prevailed on Dr. Stringer to exchange an extensive and well-established practice for your service, and to appropriate a large stock of his own medicines to the public use.

“ Your memorialist begs leave to observe that Dr. Stringer, since his dismissal without any inquiry into his conduct, imputes the loss

of a profitable business, as well as that of his medicines, which cannot now be replaced, to your memorialist, who, for that reason, could not but be anxious to have it in his power to assign the motives of Congress for taking that measure. When those circumstances are attended to, and when it is considered that your memorialist expressed his wish of being informed of the reasons for dismissing Dr. Stringer, not as a right, but merely as a matter of compliment, and not from impatience and curiosity, but with a view to obviate that gentleman's complaints, he flatters himself that the expressions on which the first and second resolutions were founded will not appear in that unfavorable point of light in which they have hitherto been considered. Conscious he is (and he must again repeat) that he did not mean to wound *the dignity of Congress*, or dispute their authority.

"Your memorialist begs leave to trespass on the patience of the House while he proceeds to the third resolution, which is founded, as he hopes to convince, on misapprehension.

"The Commissary-General, in a letter to Congress, which was accidentally made public, had accused your memorialist with detaining the commission of Deputy Adjutant-General of the Northern Department, which had been directed to be made out for Col. John Trumbull, the Commissary's brother. An imputation so injurious to the honor of your memorialist could not be passed over in silence; to vindicate himself became a duty, and the only means by which it could be effected were in the power of Congress, because their honorable President must have known, and, from his candor and regard for justice, been ready to declare, that the commission had not, at the time of writing that letter, been transmitted.

"Your memorialist entertained not the most distant wish that Congress should interfere in the dispute between him and Commissary Trumbull, tho' the third resolution is founded on such a supposition. He applied only for their testimony of the facts, whether the commission had been transmitted to him or not, and very far was he from apprehending that this would have given offence and displeasure; even now he cannot but flatter himself but that, upon a revision, it will not appear to have been a presumptuous or unreasonable request.

"Without this evidence, how could it have been possible to convince the world that the suspicion was ill-founded? or to have brought Colonel Trumbull to a Court-Martial for slandering a superior officer, had this mode been deemed by your memorialist consistent with the public good?

"Candor, however, obliges your Memorialist to confess that, ignorant as he was of the sense of Congress in this point, he should not have tho't it a transgression of the bounds of his duty, if he had directly applied to them as a mediating power. May he be permitted to refer to their consideration whether the exclusion of an appeal to Congress in disputes between the great officers of the army might not, in many instances, be attended with unhappy effects?

“ What, he begs leave to ask, must have been the consequences, had your memorialist immediately arrested Major-General Gates, when, on the retreat of the army from Canada, he disputed his commands ?

“ Might it not have been greatly detrimental to the service, especially as your Memorialist was under the necessity, at that time, to quit the army to attend an Indian treaty at the German Flatts ?

“ Would that Harmony have subsisted, which was so necessary to the good of the service ; which your Honorable House so warmly recommended, and which your Memorialist trusts he can convince the whole world he has strenuously labored to cultivate.

“ In that dispute, from a pure zeal to the public cause, your memorialist waived the rights of a superior officer, and appealed to Congress. They tho't proper to take the matter into consideration, and passed the following resolution :

“ ‘ In Congress, July 8th, 1776.

“ ‘ *Resolved*, That General Gates be informed that it was the intention of Congress to give him the command of the troops while in Canada, but had no design to vest him with a superior command to General Schuyler while the troops should be on this side of Canada, and that the President write to General Schuyler, and General Gates, stating this matter, and recommending to them to carry on the military operations with harmony, and in such a manner as shall best promote the public service.’

“ They further directed their President to express their approbation of the measures which your Memorialist had taken on this occasion.

“ In the case of Colonel Trumbull, if it be considered that he was then Commissary General of all your forces ; that he accompanied the main body of the Army under his Excellency General Washington, and that your memorialist commanded in the Northern Department, might not great prejudices have accrued to the public service, if your Memorialist, as he had a right to do, had arrested the Commissary General ? Either the one or the other must, at a very critical period, have left his station to attend the enquiry, and your Memorialist fears that if any misfortunes had followed such a step, tho' he might have stood justified in the opinion of Congress, the world would have laid all the blame upon him, and he should have been censured for precipitation, intemperance and disregard to the public good.

“ Your Memorialist, with gratitude, begs leave to remind Congress that he has on many occasions received their thanks for the zeal and unremitting attention which he has shown in the service of his country. He hopes he has studied to deserve them ; his feelings are deeply wounded whenever he reflects that on the same journals he is recorded as an intemperate person, who has acted in contempt of that body whose dignity he has endeavored to maintain with his life and fortune ; he therefore hopes that the Honorable Congress will recon-

sider the resolutions of the 15th of March, and that they will adopt such measures in consequence, as to their justice and wisdom shall appear expedient : and your Memorialist shall ever pray, etc.

“ PH. SCHUYLER.

“ *Philadelphia, May 6th, 1777.*”

This dignified and unanswerable statement made a deep impression upon Congress, and silenced all cavil. The committee made a report highly satisfactory to General Schuyler and his friends. It placed the character of the patriot higher than it had ever been before ; and on the 22d of May, in accordance with the report of the Board of War, they resolved “ That Albany, Ticonderoga, Fort Stanwix and their dependencies be henceforward considered as forming the Northern Department ;” and “ that Major-General Schuyler be directed forthwith to proceed to the Northern Department, and take command there.” Also, “ that the resolutions, passed the 6th of March, 1776, directing General Schuyler to establish his head-quarters at Albany, be repealed.”

The Treasury Board had been made to believe that he pointed at them in a letter of his, dated the 24th of February, in which he had spoken of persons “ as lending willing ears to improbable tales” about his misuse of the money-chest of the Northern Department, and they had, in a letter to him on the 11th of April, used severe language toward him. This he now called their attention to, declaring that he did not then even know the names of the persons who composed that Board ; that he did not have them in his thoughts, and that he only alluded to self-constituted committees who had taken the liberty to try him for ruining the affairs of Congress in Canada. He called upon them to make proper explanations of their harsh expressions, and demanded an immediate examina-

tion into all his accounts with the Government. This was done, and on the 15th of May the Board of Treasury officially discharged him "of all demands of the United States of America against him."

So was General Schuyler thoroughly vindicated, and liberty given him to make his head-quarters wherever he pleased. His triumph was complete. He was given "absolute command over every part of the Northern Department." And more: Congress expunged the offensive resolutions of the 15th of March by officially informing him that they "now entertain the same favorable sentiments concerning him that they had entertained before that letter [4th February] was received." Schuyler wrote to the President of Congress on the 27th of May, saying:

"I do myself the honor to return my sincere thanks to Congress for the attention and justice I have experienced from that respectable body since my arrival in this city. I entreat you, sir, to assure them that I entertain the most grateful feelings on the occasion; that I shall, by a steady and zealous perseverance in the line of my duty, strive to merit a continuance of their confidence; that I shall most assiduously labor to introduce discipline, harmony, and economy, in that part of the army committed to my immediate care; that, as I am the officer of the United States, I shall make no Colonial discriminations, and deprecate every measure that has the least tendency to disunite or create jealousies among us."*

So soon as General Schuyler could close up his official career in Pennsylvania, he hastened to Albany, where he arrived on Tuesday, the 3d of June, and was received with open arms by the citizens. A great public demonstration was made. "I had the satisfaction," he wrote to the delegates in Congress from the State of New York, "to experience the finest feelings from the general joy which my country expressed on my arrival and reappointment, a happiness I might have been deprived of had I

* Schuyler's MS. Letter Books.

not profited by the advice and assistance you afforded me, which I shall remember with gratitude, and reflect on with great satisfaction. The day after that the whole County Committee did me the honor, in form, to congratulate me on my arrival and reappointment to the command of this department."

General Gates was still at Albany, where he had remained ever since his arrival in April. He had been kept uneasy by reports from his friends in Congress concerning the debates in that body, relative to his connection with the Northern Department. He considered himself as holding the supreme command—as having actually superseded General Schuyler—a view which prominent New York delegates and others declared to be erroneous. Congress, they said, had never entertained such an idea. They had simply settled the question whether Gates should be appointed Adjutant-general or be sent to command the post of Ticonderoga. They argued that it would be absurd to give him the command of the Northern Department, and yet confine him to Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, where his view of the necessities of the service must be very limited—confined to one spot, against which the enemy were not compelled to march in an invasion from the North. They argued that the affairs on the northern and northwestern frontiers were in a critical situation, and that no one but General Schuyler could hold in check the clashing interests and keep all united against the common enemy. He stood on the books of Congress as the commander of the Northern Department, and his presence as the general-in-chief was absolutely necessary there.

This was the substance of the argument on one side,

given by Mr. Lovell, of the New England delegation, to General Gates, in a letter. He told him, also, that Gates' friends (chiefly of that delegation) called it an absurdity that an officer holding such an important post as Ticonderoga should be under the absolute control of another a hundred miles distant, who was engaged, much of the time, in treating with the Indians, and busied with the duties of a commissary. But, as we have seen, Schuyler's friends prevailed; and Mr. Lovell, taking a sensible view of the subject, said to Gates: "I wish some course could be taken which would suit you both. It is plain all the Northern Army cannot be intended for the single garrison of Ticonderoga. Who, then, has the distribution of the members? This must depend on one opinion, or there can be no decision in the defence of the northern frontier. It is an unhappy circumstance that such is the altercation at the opening of the campaign."

Gates was nettled by the contents of this letter, and wrote, in evident irritation:

"Why, when the argument in support of General Schuyler's command was imposed upon Congress, did not you, or somebody, say, 'The second post upon this continent next campaign will be at or near Peekskill?' There General Schuyler ought to go and command; that will be the curb in the mouth of the New York Tories and the enemy's army. He will then be near the convention, and in the centre of the colony, have a military chest and all the insignia of office. This command, in honor, could not be refused without owning there is something more alluring than command to General Schuyler, by fixing him at Albany. By urging this matter home, you would have proved the man. He would have resigned all command, have accepted the government of New York, and been fixed to a station where he must do good, and which could not interfere with, or prevent, any arrangement Congress have made, or may hereafter make. Unhappy State! that has but one man in it who can fix the wavering minds of its inhabitants to the side of freedom! How could you sit patiently, and, uncontradicted, suffer such impertinence to be crammed down your throats?"

Gates then went on to argue from the precedents of

the "last war" (French and Indian), that Ticonderoga was a proper place for the head-quarters of the Northern Department. "Nothing is more certain," he said, "than that the enemy must first possess that single rock before they can penetrate the country. It is foolish in the extreme to believe the enemy, this year, can form any attack from the northward but by Ticonderoga. Where, then, ought the commanding general to be posted? Certainly, at Ticonderoga. If General Schuyler is solely to possess all power, all the intelligence, and that particular favorite, the military chest, and constantly reside at Albany, I cannot, with any peace of mind, serve at Ticonderoga."

Gates well knew the importance of having head-quarters at Albany, so as to have an immediate eye upon and control over movements connected with the Indians and the British, who might penetrate the country from Oswego, but he chose to ignore that fact altogether; and, in the irritable state of mind in which he then was, he ventured to insult the Commander-in-Chief, by disrespectful language concerning tents. Gates had sent an aid-de-camp to procure these shelters, who brought word back that Washington wanted every tent for use in the South, and saw no occasion for any in the North, where the army was at fixed posts, and might be hutted. "Refusing this army what you have not in your power to bestow, is one thing," Gates insolently wrote to Washington, "but saying that this army has not the same necessities as the Southern armies, is another. I can assure your Excellency the service of the northward requires tents as much as any service I ever saw." Washington rebuked him, in a dignified manner, for this disrespectful imputation of sectional partiality, at the same time assuring him that he should do all in his power to supply him with tents. But Gates was not satis-

fied. He was then having ambitious schemes, which he could not always conceal. He aspired to the chief command of the Continental armies; indulged in the egotistical idea that he knew better how to move them than did the Virginia general, and that the New England delegates would support him in such preposterous claims. He poured into the ears of that delegation insidious suspicions that Washington was a sectional general. "Either I am exceedingly dull," he wrote to Mr. Lovell, "or unreasonably jealous, if I do not discover by the style and tenor of the letters from Morristown, how little I have to expect from thence. Generals are so far like parsons, they are all for christening their own child first; but let an impartial moderating power decide between us, and do not suffer Southern prejudice to weigh heavier in the balance than the Northern."

Lovell desired no further correspondence of that kind, and put an end to it and Gates' hopes, by writing to him on the 22d of May, saying: "Misconceptions of past resolves and consequent jealousies have produced a definition of the Northern Department, and General Schuyler is ordered to take command of it. The resolve, also, which was thought to fix head-quarters at Albany, is repealed."