

CHAPTER XI.

WHEN the news of the evacuation of Ticonderoga spread over the country, with the wild exaggeration incident to first and imperfect reports, it produced a storm of indignant clamor, especially amongst the uninformed, and those who were least competent to judge the matter intelligently ; and General Schuyler's old enemies in and out of Congress, of every sort, from the small politician to the aspirant for the honors of his office, saw, in the fact that the disaster had occurred in the department over which he was chief captain, a circumstance most favorable for the renewal of their warfare upon his character, and availed themselves of it. He was not only charged with the blunder of ordering St. Clair to abandon the post, but the tongues of "envy, hatred and malice" spoke freely of his incompetence, and some accused him of treason. Others spoke of his cowardice, because he was not present at the evacuation ; and the absurd stories were circulated and believed, that he had ordered the heavy cannons from the fort and substituted lighter ones for them. It was even said that the price of his treason, in British gold, was enclosed in hollow balls shot by the enemy into his lines. Even honest Samuel Adams had been so far influenced by the drift of New England opinion, in regard to Schuyler, that he had been the most persistent partisan of Gates in Congress, and the moment he heard of the disaster, and without waiting for knowledge upon the subject, he indulged

in most ungenerous reflections upon Schuyler's incompetency.

"We have letters from General Schuyler, in the Northern Department," he wrote to Richard Henry Lee, from Philadelphia, on the 15th of July, "giving us an account of the untoward situation of our affairs in that quarter. I confess it is no more than I expected when he [Schuyler] was again appointed to the command there. You know that it was urg'd by some gentlemen, that as he had a large interest and powerful connections in that part of the country, no one could so readily avail himself of supplies for an army there, if wanted upon any emergency, as he could. A most substantial reason why he should have been appointed a quarter-master or a Commissary. But it seems to have been a prevailing motive to appoint him to the chief command. You have his account in the enclosed newspaper, which leaves us to guess what is become of the garrison. It is indeed droll enough to see a general not knowing where to find the main body of his army! Gates is the man of my choice. He is honest and true, and has the art of gaining the love of his soldiers, particularly because he is always present and shares with them in fatigue and danger. But Gates has been disgusted! We are hourly expecting to be relieved from this disagreeable state of uncertainty, by a particular account from some person who was near the army, who trusts not to memory altogether, lest some circumstances may be omitted while others are misapprehended."

But honest Samuel Adams lived long enough to know that his sneers at Schuyler's incompetency (like those he had uttered about Washington's "Fabian policy"), and his commendation of Gates, "the man of his choice," were not only errors of judgment, but great blunders; and his biographer thus comments upon the result of his persevering and successful efforts in Congress to obtain Schuyler's removal: "Time has removed from General Schuyler all blame in the disasters, and the investigation of his conduct resulted in his honorable acquittal. The substitution of Gates gave to the country a general who was in no respect superior to Schuyler, than whom a braver or more trustworthy patriot never lived."

The effect and result of the attacks upon General

Schuyler will be noticed as we proceed in the narrative of events after the evacuation of Ticonderoga.

We left St. Clair making his way, through the forests, toward Fort Edward, on the upper Hudson, leaving the rear-guard and stragglers with Col. Warner, at Hubbardton. We also left Col. Long, with the few who had escaped to Skenesborough by water, hotly pursued toward Fort Anne. The latter was a tumultuous retreat. The fugitives, in going up the lake in conscious safety, had been full of merriment. They had made jokes at Burgoyne's expense, feeling that they had nicely tricked him; and they knocked off the necks of bottles of wine at dawn, and drank deeply a *reveille* to the British commander. They arrived at Skenesborough at three o'clock in the afternoon, and were leisurely debarking, when the booming of great guns, a short distance below, startled them. Burgoyne's frigates and gunboats had attacked the American convoy galleys. The latter defended themselves desperately for a while, when two were compelled to strike their colors, and the remaining three were blown up by their crews.

In the midst of the wild confusion which this sudden attack produced, the fugitives from the galleys reported that the British and Indians were swarming on shore, with the intention of gaining the rear of Long and the garrison at Skenesborough. An immediate flight of both was agreed upon; so they set fire to the batteaux, store-houses, the mills and the fort, and then fled, pell-mell, toward Fort Anne, twelve miles distant, pursued by a portion of the 9th British regiment, under Lieutenant-colonel Hill. Some of Long's people made their way up Wood Creek, in boats, as far as possible, while the main body, led by the Colonel, retreated along a narrow defile cut through

the woods. They were all night long on their way, harassed and worried continually by reports that the Indians were close upon them. At daybreak, Long's command reached Fort Anne, a small picketed work that had been built during the French and Indian war. It was within about sixteen miles of Fort Edward, at which place Schuyler arrived the following night, and immediately sent forward, from his scanty force, some troops, provisions and ammunition, for the relief of Long, and an urgent request that he should hold the post as long as possible.

On the morning of the 8th of July, Long's scouts brought him word that the woods not far distant were glowing with red-coats. At about ten o'clock the colonel led his men out to meet them, and took post in a narrow rocky defile, through which flowed Wood Creek, about three-quarters of a mile north of Fort Anne. As the British advanced, Long opened a heavy fire upon them in front, while a part of his men, re-crossing the creek, and taking position upon ground covered with woods with which they were well acquainted, kept up a shifting attack from their covert, in front and rear. This caused the British, who were apprehensive of being surrounded, to take post upon a hill to their right, where they were besieged for nearly two hours, when some of their Indian allies came up. Long's ammunition was then too nearly exhausted to allow him to cope with the fresh foe, and he ordered a retreat to Fort Anne, whither he carried several prisoners, among them a captain and surgeon. Supposing Hill's regiment to be the advance-guard of the whole of Burgoyne's army, Long set fire to the fort, and fled to Fort Edward, where he informed General Schuyler of the

disaster at Skenesborough, and that nothing had been heard from St. Clair and the main body of the army. This astounding intelligence, communicated to Washington by Schuyler, perplexed him. "It is astonishing beyond expression," he wrote from Pompton Plains, "that you have heard nothing from St. Clair and the army under him. I am totally at a loss to conceive what has become of them. The whole affair is so mysterious that it even baffles conjecture."

The mystery was soon solved. We have seen that General Frazer was in hot pursuit of the fugitives from Ticonderoga on the morning of the 6th of July, followed by Riedesel's corps of reserves, and Colonel Breyman, in accordance with the following order issued by General Burgoyne :

"Brigadier Frazer, with twenty companies of English grenadiers and light infantry, shall march to Castleton, and Skenesborough, and attack the enemy who have retreated by land. General Riedesel, with his corps of reserves, under Breyman, and the infantry regiment of Riedesel, shall follow the corps of Frazer and support it in case of attack. The fleet and the rest of the army shall pursue their way to Skenesborough by water, and attack the fleet of the rebels, and that part of their army which have taken their way thence by water."

That no time might be lost, Riedesel took a company of yagers, and an advanced-guard of eighty men from Breyman's corps, and hastened to the support of Frazer, leaving orders for the rest of that corps, and his own regiment, to follow immediately. It was a most fatiguing chase, for the weather was extremely hot. They did not overtake the fugitives that day ; and after a march of nearly eighteen miles, Frazer, learning from some Tory scouts that they were not far in advance, ordered his men to lie upon their arms that night, and be ready to move forward at three o'clock the next morning. He had been overtaken by Riedesel, and it was agreed that both corps

should push forward together for Castleton and Skenesborough, by way of Hubbardton. They accordingly moved at the appointed hour, Frazer with eight hundred men in advance, and at five o'clock encountered the American sentries, who discharged their muskets, fled to camp and aroused their comrades to arms. These consisted of the regiments of Warner, Francis, and Hale, and stragglers from the main army, and numbered about one thousand three hundred.

The Americans were then at breakfast, but not unprepared. Frazer pressed forward and attacked them with great spirit, expecting to have the immediate support of the Germans. But they were tardy. His attack was received with equal spirit, and a fierce battle ensued. Colonel Hale, whose own health, and that of a large number of his regiment was feeble, did not long continue the combat, but withdrew in haste and fled to Castleton, hoping to join the main army, under St. Clair, there. On his way Hale fell in with a British detachment, to whom he surrendered himself and men without offering any resistance, although their numbers were about equal. So Warner and Francis were left to continue the conflict with only seven hundred men. From behind logs and trees they poured forth a destructive fire. For a while there was no perceptible gain on either side. The British got possession of the Castleton road, and so barred the retreat of the Americans in that direction; but so galling and incessant was the fire of the latter, that Frazer was about to give way, when Riedesel appeared with drums beating and banners flying. He had pressed forward as fast as the rough roads would allow, after hearing the firing, and arrived just in time to secure a victory for the British.

His chasseurs, under Major Barner, were immediately brought into action in support of Frazer's left flank, which the Americans were about to turn, and at the same moment the whole of the British forces made a bayonet charge with terrible effect. The Americans, supposing the Germans to be in full force, broke and fled in wildest confusion, some over the Pittsford Mountains, toward Rutland, and others down the valley toward Castleton. The Americans lost in the battle three hundred and twenty-four, killed, wounded and made prisoners. The brave Colonel Francis was slain by a bullet while gallantly fighting at the head of his men, and was buried by Riedesel's troops. The British loss was one hundred and eighty-three, among whom were Major Pratt and about twenty inferior officers. The British also captured about two hundred stand of arms.

St. Clair was near Castleton, with the militia, when he heard the firing at Hubbardton, and he attempted to send back a force to the relief of Warner, but those followers absolutely refused to go. His Continental troops were then too far on their way toward Fort Edward to be instantly recalled. St. Clair had just then learned, too, that Burgoyne was at Skenesborough, and, fearing to encounter him at Fort Anne, he turned his whole army, and struck off to his left, through the woods, toward Rutland, uncertain whether he should proceed to the upper waters of the Connecticut River or to Fort Edward. He left word for Warner to follow him to Rutland. The latter joined him two days afterward, with his broken forces reduced to ninety men, and was sent to Manchester, north of Bennington, to form a nucleus for the getting of recruits. On the 12th, St. Clair reached Fort Edward, his

troops (at Fort Miller, a few miles below) in the most pitiable condition, after their wanderings in the woods of Vermont for a week. He had only fifteen hundred regulars, the militia having all returned to their homes. So the mystery of St. Clair's disappearance was solved.

The disaster sustained by the Americans, because of their abandonment of Ticonderoga, was immense in every way, the worst of which was the moral effect. Compared with this, the one hundred and eighty pieces of artillery, ammunition and stores, and water craft, that were lost, were as nothing. The army was disheartened, and made so discontented that almost one-half of Schuyler's force which he gathered at Fort Edward left his camp, a few for that of the enemy, and the remainder for their homes. Disappointment was felt through the whole country, and the greatest consternation prevailed in Northern New York. Albanians were seized with a panic; and, according to a letter written to Schuyler by Colonel Varick, the people there ran about as if distracted, and sent off their goods and furniture.*

It was hard to perceive a reason for the abandonment of the lake fortresses. "The evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence is an event of chagrin and surprise not apprehended, nor within the compass of my reasoning," Washington wrote to Schuyler, from "the Clove," on the 15th of July. "I know not upon what principle it was founded, and I should suppose it still more difficult to be accounted for, if the garrison amounted to five thousand men, in high spirits, healthy, well supplied with provisions and ammunition, and the Eastern militia marching to their succor, as you mention in your letter of

* Autograph Letter, July 10, 1777.

the 9th, to the Council of Safety of New York." He added: "We should never despair. Our situation has before been unpromising, and has changed for the better; so, I trust, it will be again." On the 18th, when his ears were filled with clamors against both Schuyler and St. Clair, and he had not yet heard any reasons for the evacuation, Washington wrote to the former:

"I will not condemn, or even pass a censure upon any officer unheard; but I think it a duty which General St. Clair owes to his own character, to insist upon an opportunity of giving the reasons for his sudden evacuation of a post which, but a few days before, he, by his own letters, thought tenable, at least for a while. People at a distance are apt to form wrong conjectures; and if General St. Clair had good reasons for the step he has taken, I think the sooner he justifies himself the better. I have mentioned these matters because he may not know that his conduct is looked upon as very unaccountable by all ranks of people in this part of the country. If he is reprehensible, the public have an undeniable right to call for that justice which is due from an officer who betrays or gives up his post in an unwarrantable manner."

The officers and men of the invading army were highly elated by the event, and believed themselves to be invincible and irresistible. They regarded the Americans with great contempt; believed that their own toils were nearly at an end, and that Albany would soon be their resting-place, and New York their speedy point of departure for home. A similar feeling was produced in England when the news of the evacuation of Ticonderoga reached that country. The belief was soon general that the unconditional surrender of the colonists was an event near at hand, and all the "contemptuous and most degrading charges which had been made by their enemies of their wanting the resolutions and abilities of men, even in defence of what was dear to them, were now repeated and believed."*

* History of the Civil War in America, i. 283.

From Skenesborough, Burgoyne sent forth an exultant general order, on the 10th of July, opening with the statement that "The rebels evacuated Ticonderoga on the 6th, having been forced into the measure by the presence of our army. On one side of the lake they ran as far as Skenesborough; on the other side as far as Hubbardton. They left behind all their artillery, provisions and baggage," et cetera. He made a peremptory call upon the inhabitants of that region to render immediate submission, and to send deputations to Colonel Skene, who had become an active partisan, to make terms, believing that, under the circumstances, immediate obedience would be rendered. This might have been effectual with the poor, frightened inhabitants, had not General Schuyler promptly put a check to the movement by a vigorous counter-proclamation, as follows:

"To the Inhabitants of Castle Town, of Hubbardton, Rutland, Timmouth, Paulet, Wells, Granville with the Neighboring Districts, also the Districts bordering on White Creek, Cambden, Cambridge, etc., etc.

"Whereas Lieutenant-General John Burgoyne, commanding an Army of the British Troops, Did by a written paper by him subscribed, bearing Date at Skenesborough House on the 10th day of July instant, require you to send from your several townships, deputations consisting of ten persons or more from each township, to meet Colonel Skene at Castletown, on Wednesday July 15th at ten in the morning for sundry purposes in the said paper mentioned and that you were not to fail in paying obedience thereto under pain of military execution:

"Whatever, my countrymen, may be the ostensible reasons for such meeting, it is evidently intended by the enemy then to prevail on you, by threats and promises, to forsake the cause of your injured country; to assist them in forcing slavery on the United States of America, and under the specious pretext of affording you protection to bring on you that misery which their promises of protection drew on such of the deluded inhabitants of New Jersey who were weak enough to confide in them, but who soon experienced their Fallacy, by being treated, indiscriminately with those virtuous citizens who came forth in defence of their country, with the most wanton barbarities, and such as hitherto hath not even disgraced Barbarians. They

cruelly butchered without distinction to age or sex ; ravished children from ten to women of eighty years of age ; they burnt, pillaged and destroyed whatever came into their power, nor did those edifices dedicated to the worship of Almighty God escape their sacrilegious fury. Such were the deeds, such they were incontestably proved to be, which have marked the British Arms with the most indelible stains. But they having, by the blessing of divine Providence on our arms, been obliged totally to abandon that State, they left those that were weak or wicked enough to take protection under them to bemoan their credulity and to cast themselves on the mercy of their injured countrymen. Such will be your state, if you lend a willing ear to their promises, which, I trust, none of you will do. But lest any of you should so far forget the duty you owe to your country, as to join with, or in any manner of way assist or give comfort to, or hold correspondence with, or take protection from the enemy ; be it known to each and every of you the inhabitants of said townships, or any other the inhabitants of the United States, that you will be considered and dealt with as traitors to said States and that the Laws thereof will be put in execution against every person so offending, with the utmost vigor. And I do hereby strictly enjoin and command all officers civil and military to apprehend or cause to be apprehended all such offenders. And I do further strictly enjoin and command such of the militia of said townships as have not yet marched, to do so without delay, to join the army under my command, or some detachment thereof.

“ Given under my hand at Head Quarters.

“ *Fort Edward, July 13th, 1777.*

“ By the General’s Command.”

Burgoyne sent back General Phillips to Ticonderoga to superintend the transportation of the artillery, provisions and baggage to Lake George, to be sent in vessels up to Fort George and thence by land to Fort Edward, which was his next place of destination ; and on the 21st he made a reconnoitring expedition in the direction of that post. Meanwhile he had received the news of the arrival of a ship at Three Rivers, in the St. Lawrence, with a reinforcement from England ; and St. Luc and Langlade, two Canadian French partisans, had arrived in his camp with about one thousand Indian braves from the Ottawas and other tribes of the upper country, “ painted and decorated,” says Irving, “ with savage magnificence,

and bearing trophies of former triumphs." With these Indians Burgoyne expected to strike terror to the hearts of the Americans, and he also intended to send them on a forage to the upper valley of the Connecticut river, to force from the inhabitants provisions for his army. With these forces in hand Burgoyne now made immediate preparations for an advance.

In the meantime General Schuyler had been putting forth extraordinary exertions to prevent further losses, and to oppose the expected forward movement of Burgoyne. So early as the 10th he wrote to General Ten Broeck that he had saved about forty pieces of cannon and fifteen tons of gunpowder, by removing them from Fort George, and said: "If the enemy will give me three or four more days' time after General St. Clair joins, I believe they will not see Albany this campaign." He had then sent out General Fellows with a detachment to break up the roads and bridges, and to fell trees in the way of Burgoyne's expected march from Fort Anne to Fort Edward; and he had managed to have a letter fall into Burgoyne's hands which perplexed him exceedingly. He was so "completely duped and puzzled by it for several days," says Stedman, "that he was at a loss whether to advance or retreat."*

Schuyler also called earnestly upon General Nixon to push on, by forced marches, from Albany, with the troops he brought up from Peekskill. "The least delay," he said, "in marching up your brigade, will certainly be attended, with the most fatal consequences. Let me therefore entreat you to march night and day to come up with me." But he was no less than four days marching the forty-six

* The History of the Origin, Progress and Termination of the American War, vol. i. page 326.

miles. "From the slowness with which he moved," Schuyler wrote to Washington, "I was led to conclude that he was at the head of a formidable body, but to my great mortification I find the whole to consist of five hundred and seventy-five, rank and file, fit for duty, and eleven sick; several of them are negroes, and many of them young, small and feeble boys." This force he immediately ordered to Fort Anne, to assist in putting obstacles in the way of Burgoyne's advance.

Two regiments of militia from the State of Massachusetts, sent to supply in part the deficiencies of other regiments from that State, left in a body and went home; and of the four thousand five hundred men which Schuyler gathered at Fort Edward and its vicinity, after the evacuation of Ticonderoga, including the broken army of St. Clair, nearly one-half, utterly dispirited and insubordinate, left his camp. "Desertions prevail, and disease gains ground," Schuyler wrote to Washington; "nor is it to be wondered at, for we have neither tents, houses, barns, boards, or any shelter, excepting a little brush. Every rain that falls, and we have it in great abundance almost every day, wets the men to the skin. We are, besides, in great want of every kind of necessaries, provisions excepted. Camp-kettles we have so few that we cannot afford above one to twenty men." He then spoke of having saved about thirty pieces of light artillery, but he had not a single carriage for them, so that his whole train of effective artillery consisted of two iron field-pieces which General Nixon brought up with him. "I have, indeed, written to Springfield for the cannon which were there," he wrote to Washington, "but the answer I got was that they were all ordered another way. I have also written to

Boston," he continued, "not that I expect anything will be sent me, but that I may stand justified, for I have never yet been able to get much of anything from thence. In this situation, I can only look up to your Excellency for relief; and permit me to entreat you to send me a reinforcement of troops, and such a supply of artillery, ammunition and every other necessary (except provisions and powder) as an army ought to have, if it can possibly be spared. If the enemy will permit me to pass unmolested, three days longer, to Fort George," he added, "I shall be able to bring away all the stores from thence, and then draw off the few troops we have there." He then informed Washington that, accompanied by the general officers and engineers (of whom Kosciuszko, the eminent Pole, was chief), he had chosen a more defensible place than Fort Edward, at Moses' Creek, four or five miles below that post, whither he was then moving a part of his army and stores, while he proposed to remain at Fort Edward until Fort George should be evacuated, or so long as the enemy would permit.

Washington promised, and anxiously desired, to give Schuyler all the aid in his power, for he fully appreciated his great labors and distresses; but he was then watching Howe, and could not spare a man from his necessarily extended line of observation. "Weakening ourselves in a material manner," he wrote, "would make us an easy prey for General Howe, who, though he has embarked the greatest part of his army, still lies under Staten Island, and might suddenly re-land;" and it was thought prudent not to send any more troops to Schuyler than the remainder of Nixon's brigade, then on its way to Peekskill. He wrote that General Glover's brigade was ordered to

be held in readiness to be sent when circumstances warranted it.

At Schuyler's earnest request that he should send a spirited general officer, acquainted with the country, to assist him in his arduous duties, Washington asked Congress to assign General Arnold to that duty, if a question about rank, which that officer had raised, had been settled. Arnold immediately waived all questions of rank, and at once left Philadelphia for Schuyler's camp. At the same time, Washington addressed an earnest appeal to the brigadier-generals of militia in the western parts of Massachusetts and Connecticut, warning them of impending dangers to New England from a penetration of that country by the invaders, or their junction with Howe, by which communication between the Eastern and Southern States might be cut off, and asking them for immediate aid. "It cannot be supposed," he said, "that the small number of Continental troops assembled at Fort Edward is alone sufficient to check the progress of the enemy. To the militia, therefore, must we look for support in this time of trial; and I trust that you will, immediately upon the receipt of this, if you have not done it before, march, with at least one-third part of the militia under your command, and rendezvous at Saratoga, unless directed to some other place by General Schuyler and General Arnold, who, so well known to you all, goes up, at my request, to take command of the militia in particular. I have no doubt but you will, under his conduct and direction, repel an enemy from your borders who, not content with bringing mercenaries to lay waste your country, have now brought savages, with the avowed and express intent of adding murder to desolation.

“Washington also ordered General Lincoln, in Massachusetts, who had lately been ill, to set off immediately, and proceed, as quickly as his health would permit, to join the northern army under the command of General Schuyler. “My principal view in sending you there,” he said, “is to take command of the Eastern militia, over whom, I am informed, you have great influence, and who place confidence in you. Yesterday I was in some doubt whether I should send you to the northward, but I have this day received two letters from General Schuyler, in such a style as convinces me that it is absolutely necessary to send a determined officer to his assistance.*

The fears of the people in his department, because of the gloomy aspect of affairs, gave Schuyler additional anxiety, labor and distress. With only a handful of men to confront the invaders from Canada, he was, nevertheless, importuned to send troops to other points then menaced. The inhabitants of Tryon county were specially importunate, through their committee, in view of a threatened invasion. To General Herkimer he wrote on the 10th of July, that he would send him aid as soon as possible.

“We must oppose the enemy,” he said, “where they show themselves, that is, here, at present; and although Ticonderoga is abandoned, I am nevertheless not afraid that they will be able to get much lower into the country. Keep up the spirits of the people and all will be well.”

* He refers to Schuyler's letters in which that officer had mentioned the uneasiness of the militia on account of its being harvest time, and the return to Massachusetts of the two regiments from that State, already mentioned. He informed Washington that one-half the militia remaining had agreed to stay three weeks longer, but he had not the least hope that he should be able to keep above a quarter of them, if so many. Toryism was very prevalent in the region where he then was, and to the eastward of it; and Colonel Warner, at Manchester, had not been able to recruit his broken force there, as there was a general reluctance to enlist.

To the Committee of Tryon County he wrote on the same day :

“ I am sorry, very sorry, that you should be calling upon me for assistance of Continental troops, when I have already spared you all I could ; when no army has yet made its appearance ; when the militia of every County in the State, except yours, is altogether called out. For God’s sake do not forget that you are an overmatch for any force the enemy can bring against you, if you will act with spirit. I have a large army to oppose and trust I shall do it effectually, and prevent their penetrating to any distance into the country.

“ Keep up your spirits ; show no signs of fear ; act with vigor, and you will not only serve your country but gain immortal honor.”