

CHAPTER XVI.

GENERAL ARNOLD'S volunteers consisted chiefly of the Massachusetts brigade, commanded by General Learned, some of which Schuyler had already sent in the same direction. With a part of his force Arnold pushed on rapidly to Fort Dayton, where he arrived on the 20th of August, and where he intended to wait for the remainder under Learned; but hearing there of the imminent peril of Fort Schuyler he pressed onward, determined to hazard a battle before it should be too late.

Meanwhile St. Leger had advanced by parallels to within one hundred and fifty yards of the fort, and the garrison, ignorant of the fate of Willet and Stockwell, or of the relief that was approaching from below, began to feel uneasy. Some hinted to Gansevoort that as their provisions and ammunition were getting low it might be a humane policy to surrender. But the colonel's brave and hopeful nature could not be made to yield to dangers or doubts, and he repelled every shadow of a proposition to give up until absolutely compelled to. He told his followers that he intended to hold the fort until his provisions and ammunition should give out, when he would sally out at night and cut his way through the enemy's ranks. Suddenly, on the 22d of August, that enemy broke up their camp, abandoned the siege and fled so precipitately

from before the fort that they left their tents, artillery, and camp equipage behind them.

This movement was an inexplicable mystery to the garrison, but it was soon solved. We have just observed that Arnold determined to risk a battle. He knew that his small force was not adequate to sustain a regular engagement, and he resorted to strategem. Among some Tory prisoners then at Fort Dayton was an unlettered and half idiot, named Hon Yost Cuyler, a nephew of General Herkimer. He had been tried for crime and condemned to death. His mother implored his pardon. Arnold promised it on condition that Hon Yost, with a friendly Oneida Indian, should repair to St. Leger's camp, and by representing the immense number of Americans on the march for the relief of Fort Schuyler, so frighten him as to induce him to raise the siege. Hon Yost promised and set off with the Oneida, leaving his brother Nicholas as a hostage for his faithfulness. He had several bullets shot through his coat before leaving Fort Dayton, and with these evidences of a "terrible engagement with the enemy" he appeared among the Indians in St. Leger's camp running with all his might and nearly out of breath. He appeared to be terribly frightened; told them that he had barely escaped with his life from the approaching Americans, who were as numerous as the leaves on the trees or the stars in the sky, and shook his head mysteriously. The Indians were greatly alarmed. They had been discontented since the battle of Oriskany, and were then holding a *pow-wow*—a consultation of the Great Spirit concerning their future action. They at once resolved on flight, and sent Hon Yost to the quarters of St. Leger, who questioned him. He told that commander that Gen-

eral Arnold, with two thousand men, would be upon him in twenty-four hours. At that moment the Oneida made his appearance from another direction, accompanied by two or three members of his tribe whom he had picked up on the way, and they confirmed Hon Yost's story. The valley below, one of them said, was swarming with warriors. Another said that Burgoyne's army was cut to pieces, and a third assured St. Leger that Arnold had three thousand men. When questioned about numbers they shook their heads mysteriously and like Hon Yost they pointed upward to the leaves and the stars.

The savages, now thoroughly alarmed, resolved to fly. St. Leger tried to persuade them to remain. He offered them bribes and made them promises, but they would not listen to them; he tried to make them drunk, but they would not drink; he begged them to take the rear in the retreat, which confirmed their suspicions that he intended foul play. "You mean to sacrifice us," they said. "When you marched down you said there would be no fighting for us Indians; we might go down and smoke our pipes; whereas numbers of our warriors have been killed and you mean to sacrifice us also." Then the Indians fled in a panic. The fright was communicated to the rest of the camp, and in a few hours the besiegers were retreating in hot haste toward the boats on Oneida Lake. Hon Yost managed to escape, returned to his friends, and by this exploit wiped out the odium of being a fool.

Arnold issued, at Fort Dayton, on the 23d of August, a proclamation to the people of Tryon County, intended to counteract the address put forth by Johnson, Claus, and Butler, and had then marched on ten miles toward Fort Stanwix, where he was met by a messenger from Ganse-

voort who told him of the flight of the enemy. He sent forward nine hundred men with orders to pursue them, and he reached the fort the following day himself. Gansevoort had already sent out a detachment after the fugitives, who followed them some distance and returned, when the pursuit was abandoned. Colonel Willet was placed in command of the fort, and Arnold and his troops marched back and joined the main body of the Northern Army, on the Hudson, with which he afterward performed valorous deeds for his country.

The Indians murdered and plundered their white allies in this pell-mell retreat, and became "more formidable," St. Leger said, "than the enemy they had to expect." The regulars, Tories, and Canadians, half starved and half naked, made their way to Oswego, and thence went down Lake Ontario to Canada. At the falls of the river above Oswego (now Fulton), St. Leger received a letter from Burgoyne which satisfied him that he had been made the victim of a successful trick.

The repulse of St. Leger and the utter failure of his expedition against Fort Schuyler and the Mohawk Valley was a severe blow to the hopes of Burgoyne. He had moved down the east side of the Hudson River to the mouth of the Batten Kill, nearly opposite Saratoga; made his head-quarters at the house of William Duer (then in Congress), near Fort Miller; encamped his army on the plain at the junction of the streams; constructed a bridge of boats across the river, and threw over Fraser's corps to form a fortified camp on the heights of Saratoga.

At three o'clock on the morning of the 17th of August Burgoyne received news of Stark's victory at Bennington, and he resolved to start immediately with his

whole army to save, if possible, what was left of his own troops after the battle. Captain Gerlach, of Riedesel's corps, led the van, and soon met Colonel Breyman with what troops had escaped slaughter or captivity, when all returned to the camp on the Batten Kill. Perceiving the hopelessness of obtaining the much-needed supplies from the east, Burgoyne told his army plainly, in a general order issued a few hours later, that, "the attempt [to get supplies] having failed through the chances of war," they must "necessarily halt for some days," to await the arrival of his magazines from the rear. At the same time he charged Riedesel with the duty of keeping open the communication with Forts Anne and George. For this purpose that officer fell back to Fort Edward with the German regiments of Rhetz and Hesse Hanau, and the 47th English regiment, and encamped at John's Farm on the 19th of August, where he was joined by his family, which had lately come from Germany with the recruits from that country. His charming wife has left, in her letters written from this country to her friends, and in her journals, exquisite pictures of camp life, and of society, manners and customs in America, while she remained in the country. She willingly endured every privation for the privilege of being with her husband. Her first experience in camp was a foretaste of what often occurred. Their quarters were at the "Red House," near Fort Edward, which contained "only one room and a bed-chamber." They dined in a barn, with boards laid across barrels for seats, and ate bear's meat frequently, because of the scarcity of other animal food.

Burgoyne's hopes now centred upon the assured success of St. Leger in the west. But within ten days after

the calamity at Bennington he received the direful news of the utter failure of the western expedition. A courier, guided by a friendly Indian, had hastened with a message from St. Leger, by way of Saratoga Lake and Glen's Falls, telling him of his disasters. The news almost disheartened the usually hopeful Burgoyne. It fell like an incubus upon the spirits of his army. The fidelity of the Indians in his camp began to waver, for they were always fair-weather warriors; and the Canadians and timid loyalists became lukewarm and deserted by hundreds. He wrote to the ministry despondingly: "The great bulk of the country is undoubtedly with the Congress in principle and zeal, and their measures are executed with a secrecy and despatch that are not to be equalled. Wherever the king's forces point, militia to the amount of three or four thousand assemble in twenty-four hours; they bring with them their subsistence, etc., and, the alarm over, they return to their farms. The Hampshire Grants, in particular, a country unpeopled and almost unknown last war, now abounds in the most active and most rebellious race of the continent, and hangs like a gathering storm upon my left." He complained that Howe had not coöperated in his favor from below, and the consequence was that American troops from the Highlands had been sent to the Northern Army. He said if he was free to choose his mode of action he would remain where he was, or perhaps fall back to Fort Edward, where his communications with Fort George were secure; but as his orders to force a junction with Howe were imperative he should remain inactive no longer than circumstances should compel him to. When reinforcements, then on Lake Champlain, should reach the army, and he had collected sufficient provisions for twenty-five

days, he should cross the Hudson River and proceed toward Albany. "I yet do not despair," he said. "Should I succeed in forcing my way to Albany, and find that country in a state to subsist my army, I shall think no more of a retreat, but, at the worst, fortify there and await Sir William's operations."

Burgoyne's perplexity was great. To proceed would be madness; to retreat would not only lose him a promised Order, perhaps a peerage, but would operate powerfully in giving friends to the Republicans. The idea of British invincibility would be dissipated, and thousands who favored the cause of the king on account of that supposed invincibility would become at least mere passive loyalists. In this view of the case he resolved to remain where he was until the panic in his army should subside and his stores be brought forward from his posts on Lakes George and Champlain. He was also in daily expectation of advices from Sir William Howe or Sir Henry Clinton at New York, announcing a coöperating movement up the Hudson, which might draw away American troops from the Northern Army for the protection of the country below, and so make diversions in favor of Burgoyne.

Burgoyne's disasters and his slow movements down the Hudson Valley in consequence of the wise policy and untiring exertions of General Schuyler, had a most salutary moral effect. The patriots were encouraged and the loyalists disheartened. Schuyler felt his own hopes brightening, which only a few days before seemed shrouded in gloom, when he felt compelled to write to Washington (on the 13th) when sending him a return of his army: "At the very least, one-half of those returned on command are in such places that they cannot be of any service

to us, and since that return Van Schaick's, Bailey's, and Jackson's are marched to the relief of Fort Schuyler by the unanimous advice of all the general officers here. We have not one militia-man from the Eastern States and under forty from this. Can it, therefore, any longer be a matter of surprise that we are obliged to give way and retreat before a vastly superior force daily increasing in numbers, and which will be doubled if General Burgoyne reaches Albany, which I apprehend will be very soon. Last night I received a letter from Governor Trumbull, advising me that the militia from the State of Connecticut were ordered to Peekskill, and Mr. President Sever of the Massachusetts, in a letter of the 29th ult., informs me that orders had been issued for the march of one-sixth part of six regiments in the County of Worcester and one in the County of Middlesex. When these arrive, if ever they do, our strength will not be much increased, as I do not suppose they will exceed five or six hundred men." He wrote a congratulatory letter to Stark on the 19th of August, on the signal victory he had gained. "Please to accept my best thanks," he said. "The consequence of the severe stroke they [the enemy] have had cannot fail of being the most salutary. I have despatched one of my aid-de-camps to announce your victory to Congress and the commander-in-chief. Governor Clinton is coming up with a body of militia, and I trust that, after what the enemy have experienced from you, their progress will be retarded, and that we shall still see them driven out of this part of the country."

To General Lincoln he wrote on the same day, expressing the same hopes, and saying: "If the enemy have entirely left that part of the country you are in, I think it

would be advisable for you to move toward Hudson's River, tending toward Stillwater ; but as you are on the spot, and better able to judge than I can be, you will use your discretion." With the hope of receiving news of the relief of Fort Schuyler by Arnold, he wrote to Congress on the same day : " If that takes place it will be possible to engage two or three hundred Indians to join the army, and Congress may rest assured that my best endeavors will not be wanting to accomplish it."

These hopes had a solid foundation. There were evidences everywhere that the people were aroused from their despondency. The harvest was gathered and the yeomen were taking the field. There seemed to be a general exultation of feeling throughout the country, for the hostile savages had disappeared in the forests and could not be drawn forth ; the foreign mercenaries, whose powers had been so much magnified by the friends of the king, had been beaten by militia, and farmers who had never seen a cannon had captured British artillery. Light began to break in upon minds darkened by the foul mists of slander which had been wide-spread by partisans in and out of Congress concerning the ability and patriotism of General Schuyler since the evacuation of Ticonderoga, and there was a rapidly growing appreciation of his great and patriotic services, which now seemed to make men willing to give him means for striking the invaders an offensive and effectual blow.

With the wisest precaution Schuyler had moved the army down to the islands at the fords of the Mohawk, where that river empties into the Hudson. This movement was in pursuance of the unanimous advice of a council of officers held on the 13th of August (the day when

the expedition under Arnold, for the relief of Fort Schuyler, was raised), who decided that the post at Stillwater was untenable; and there, with rapidly augmenting means placed in his hands, he was preparing to move forward and attack Burgoyne. For many weeks he had kept that invader back with only a handful of men (too few to warrant an engagement with the foe), whom he had continually encouraged by words and deeds, while truly informing the proper authorities, civil and military, of the deplorable condition of the Northern army. Now he was about to strike for victory, and reap the reward of his anxious, wonderful, patriotic toils, when, on the evening of the 19th of August, General Gates arrived in his camp and took command of the army, in accordance with the following resolution, passed by Congress on the 1st of that month:—

“*Resolved*, That Major-General Schuyler be directed to repair to head-quarters.

“That General Washington be directed to order such general officer as he shall think proper to repair immediately to the Northern Department, to relieve Major-General Schuyler in his command there.”

This, and a copy of another resolution, passed on the 29th of July, directing “that an inquiry be made into the reasons of the evacuation of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, and into the conduct of the general officers who were in the Northern Department at the time of the evacuation,” were forwarded to Schuyler on the 5th of August, accompanied by a letter from President Hancock, directing him to repair to head-quarters. At about the same time a committee, consisting of Messrs. Laurens, John Adams, Dyer, Roberdeau, and Folsom were appointed to digest and report the mode of conducting the inquiry.

On the following day a committee, consisting of Messrs. Laurens, Wilson, J. Adams, Duane, and Law, were appointed to "consider the state of affairs in the Northern Department," and they were ordered to "confer with General Washington, and report as soon as possible." They did so on the 3d of August (his head-quarters then being in Philadelphia), when the successor of General Schuyler was given more aid and larger discretionary powers than had hitherto been conferred, by the following resolution :—

Resolved, That General Washington be directed to order the general whom he shall judge proper to relieve General Schuyler in his command, to repair with all possible expedition to the Northern Department, giving him directions what numbers of the militia to call forth from the States of New Hampshire, Massachusetts Bay, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

"That notice be immediately sent to the executive powers of the said States, and that they be earnestly requested to get the militia in those parts of their respective States most contiguous to the Northern Department ready to march at a moment's warning, and to send, with all possible expedition, such parts of them as the General commanding in the Northern Department shall require, to serve till the 15th of November, if not sooner relieved by Continental troops, or dismissed by the commanding officer of the department, and be entitled to Continental pay and rations.

"That the commanding officer in the Northern Department have discretionary power to make requisitions on the States aforesaid, from time to time, for such additional numbers of the militia, to serve in that department, as he shall judge necessary for the public service."

The resolution of Congress relieving General Schuyler of his command reached that gentleman at Albany on the 10th of August, five days after it left Philadelphia. He was just on the point of mounting his horse to repair to the army at the mouth of the Mohawk when the despatch arrived. Only the day before he had written to General Lincoln, as we have seen, concerning the grievances of which Stark complained, asking him to say to that officer

that "the greater the sacrifice he makes to his feelings, the greater will be the honor due to him for not having suffered any consideration whatever to come in competition with the weal of his country." Schuyler was now called upon to exercise that philosophy, and he did it nobly. He went back to his study, pulled off his spurs, and wrote to President Hancock :

"I am this moment honored with your favor of the 5th instant, inclosing the resolutions of Congress of the 29th ult. and 1st instant. I am far from being insensible of the indignity of being ordered from the command of the army at a time when an engagement must soon take place. It, however, gives me great consolation that I shall have an opportunity of evincing that my conduct has been such as deserved the thanks of my country. I will not acknowledge that my exertions have been exceeded by any officer in this department, and the force of conviction will make others avow it."

Two days later, in a letter thanking General Stark for compliance with his request to come to the army with New Hampshire troops, he said : "Be assured I would not wish you to do anything inconsistent with honor ; but in this critical conjuncture, if a gentleman, while he asserts his rights, sacrifices his feelings to the good of his country, he will merit the thanks of his country." In his letter to Washington on the 13th, just mentioned, he alluded to the subject, in saying : "Whether the resolution of Congress, ordering me to repair to head-quarters at this critical juncture, was a wise one, time must determine. It is a very disgraceful one to me, and my feelings on the occasion are very sensible." To the Council of Safety of New York he wrote on the same day : "Disgraceful as the measure is to me at this critical conjuncture, it leaves me the consolation that the public will, by such an inquiry, be authentically informed how unjustly my character has suffered."

The safety of his country held a paramount place in the heart of General Schuyler, and he would not endanger that safety by obeying the commands of Congress to repair to head-quarters until his successor, whoever he might be, should arrive in camp; so he continued his strong exertions against Burgoyne and St. Leger, as we have seen, with signal success, and on the 15th of August, fourteen days after the date of the summons for him to repair to head-quarters, he wrote to Congress from the army, "Five miles below Stillwater :"

"Yesterday I was honored with a letter from his Excellency, General Washington, in which he observes that, as it is probable you will be on your way when this reaches you, I presume it unnecessary for me to enlarge upon the subject of your several letters. But as the resolution of Congress directed that I should be relieved by an officer to be sent by his Excellency, and that officer not yet arrived, nor any here named to take the command, I thought it my duty to remain with the army until either took place. I have the satisfaction to find that the general officers in this department extremely regret the necessity of my being obliged to leave them; and altho' it is their duty, as well as mine, to acquiesce in the determination of Congress, they have nevertheless thought that my presence was so necessary at this important crisis, that they have requested me to remain some time in the department after I shall be relieved, in order to bring up the militia, too many of whom, unhappily, refuse to march, and assign for reasons that the command is taken from me. I shall, therefore, in consequence of the application of the general officers, which I have the honor to inclose, and out of regard to my country, venture to continue some time longer, trusting that my motives will shelter me against the effects of any censure that I may on this account experience. But, sir, altho' I shall make a great sacrifice to my feelings on the present occasion by acting under a junior officer, I owe it to myself to assure Congress that as soon as an inquiry is made into my conduct, the result of which cannot fail of being as honorable to me as chagrining to many, I shall put it out of the power of anybody on earth, however respectable, to offer me further indignities, and shall, therefore, resign every office I hold under Congress. The Indian affairs, which daily engross much of my attention, from the very frequent messages and belts I receive from them in this distressing day, will claim that of Congress without delay, for if Fort Schuyler should be relieved, which I have good hopes will be the case, as General Arnold is on march with a

body of troops which, with the militia of Tryon County, I trust will be competent to the business, the Indians of the Six Nations will immediately repair to Albany. The business to be transacted with them will be of the first importance, and requires some address to prosecute it with propriety. Mr. Douw is removed; Colonel Woolcot and Mr. Edwards in New England, and I shall probably have left Albany when the Indians arrive. It is, therefore, necessary that commissioners should be immediately appointed. Permit me to add that no time ought to be lost on this occasion.

“May I be permitted to request Congress to be furnished with the charges to which I am to answer, that I may bring down with me the papers and witnesses necessary to refute them.

“The Eastern papers contain accounts of vast bodies of militia having been ordered from thence to this quarter. I hope my successor will have the happiness of seeing them arrive in time to prevent the enemy’s progress; but we have not yet the satisfaction of being joined by any from thence, and have only about sixty or seventy on the ground from this State.”