CHAPTER XXII.

The surrender of Burgoyne was an event of infinite importance to the struggling republicans, for it gave confidence in their ability to win success, both at home and abroad. The waning credit of the Congress was restored, and new life and vigor were thereby given to the public service. The militia of the country readily obeyed the summons to the camp, and the great patriot heart of America beat strongly with pulsations of hope. The tide of public opinion in Europe set strongly in favor of the Americans. France hastened to form an alliance with the States, and to declare their independence; and Spain, the States-General of Holland, and even Catharine of Russia and the Pope, all of whom feared and hated England, because of her increasing potency and pride, now spoke kindly of the Americans, and were willing to afford them material aid.

In the joy of the moment, Gates was apotheosized in the hearts of the people, and his egotism knew no bounds. In the pride of his heart, he scorned to send a report to Congress through his commander-in-chief, as in duty bound, but forwarded the news of his victory directly to that body, in the mouth of his aide-de-camp, Colonel Wilkinson. The Congress forgot their own dignity, in the excitement of the hour, and allowed that subaltern to stand upon the floor of their hall, eighteen days after the

surrender, and proclaim: "The whole British army have laid down their arms, at Saratoga; our own, full of vigor and courage, expect your orders: it is for your wisdom to decide where the country may still have need of their services."* The Congress voted the nation's thanks to General Gates and his army, and decreed that he should be presented with a medal of gold, to be struck expressly in commemoration of so glorious a victory.

The character of Gates, as a general and patriot, was now brought into strong contrast with that of Schuyler. The supercilious demeanor of Gates, while wearing the fresh, borrowed laurels of a great victory, disgusted sensible people. He treated General Schuyler, to whom he was largely indebted for his honors, almost with disdain, and allowed his jealousy of that unselfish patriot to make him so far forget or defy the proprieties of social life, as to be guilty of actually opening a letter from the President of Congress to that gentleman, which came into his (Gates') hands before Schuyler had returned from Saratoga. Gates sent the letter to Colonel Varick, to be forwarded to Schuyler, without a word of apology for his misconduct.

Gates now had dreams of occupying Washington's position, and he seemed to be as willing to ruin his commander's military reputation as he and his friends in the Congress had been to ruin the reputation of General Schuyler.

* The tardiness of Wilkinson (who had stopped to gossip on the the way, spent a day at Reading with a young lady from Philadelphia, whom he afterward married, and took three days, after his arrival at York, where Congress was sitting, to arrange his papers and prepare for his grandiloquent speech to that body) caused much remark. When it was proposed in Congress to pay a proper compliment to him who had brought them such agreeable news, Samuel Adams arose, and, with a grave and solemn face, moved that the "young gentleman should be presented with a pair of spurs." Congress soon made this favorite of General Gates a brigadier-general by brevet.

For weeks, Washington had been struggling, with an inferior force, to save Philadelphia from the grasp of the invaders, or to drive them from it after they had gained possession of it. Gates had no further use for his large force in the north, and it was his imperative duty to send to Washington a greater portion of his troops to reinforce the broken battalions in Pennsylvania, and so assist the General-in-chief in reducing Howe to the condition of Burgoyne. But this course did not suit the ambitious views of Gates. He was willing to see the sun of Washington's renown set among the clouds of disaster to his country, that his own feeble orb, endowed with reflected light, might appear the most brilliant luminary of the two, and so insure the success of his intrigues. He, therefore, detained a large part of his army in the vicinity of Albany, under the false pretence, as it afterward appeared, of undertaking an expedition against Ticonderoga and Mount Independence, the garrisons of which had fled into Canada soon after the surrender of Burgoyne, while Sir Henry Clinton, and his marauders on the Hudson, had almost as speedily returned, in affright, to New York.

Gates' tardiness in obeying the orders of the Commander-in-chief to send reinforcements to Pennsylvania amounted to absolute disobedience, and Washington sent his most trusted aid, Lieutenant-colonel Alexander Hamilton, to acquaint Gates with the necessities of the service below, and to hasten the forwarding of troops.* Gates

* Hamilton bore a letter from Washington to Gates, in which the Chief said the former would give the latter fuller information than he thought it prudent to write. He congratulated Gates on his success, and then said: "At the same time, I cannot but regret that a matter of such magnitude, and so interesting to our general operations, should have reached me by report only, or through the channel of letters not having the authenticity which the importance of it required, and which it would have received by a line, under your signature, stating the simple fact."

still hesitated. Hamilton's keen perceptions divined his reasons, and he used very plain language toward the intriguer. He demanded and obtained the forwarding of strong reinforcements, but these, at the instigation of Gates, were detained by General Putnam, below the Highlands, who contemplated the winning of glory for himself, by driving the British army from New York city. Hamilton found Putnam actually advanced as far as White Plains, on that Quixotic undertaking, when, by the advice of Governor Clinton, Washington's aid spoke authoritatively, in the name of his chief, and arrested the foolish expedition.* But Gates had, by these delays, frustrated the plans of Washington, and so powerful was the faction of the intriguer's friends in the Congress that they caused legislation which was calculated to dishonor Washington, by making him subservient to his inferiors in rank. They forbade him to detach more than twenty-five hundred troops from the Northern Army, without first consulting General Gates and Governor Clinton; and the Adamses and Gerry, of Massachusetts, and Marchant, of Rhode Island, even voted for a resolution that Washington should not detach *any* troops from that department, excepting after consultation with Gates and Clinton. The Congress also ordered Gates to "regain the forts and passes on the Hudson," which Washington had already regained by pressing Howe so closely that he was compelled to order their abandonment. But it afforded an excuse for keeping back reinforcements for the Commander-in-chief.

That Gates, at this juncture, not only aspired to be the

* It was during this visit to Albany that Colonel Hamilton became acquainted with General Schuyler's second daughter, Elizabeth, whom he afterward married.

General-in-chief of the American forces, but conspired with others to effect that object by supplanting Washington, cannot be doubted by any intelligent student of the documentary history of that time.

"I cannot precisely mark the extent of their views," Washington afterward wrote to Patrick Henry, "but it appeared, in general, that General Gates was to be exalted on the ruin of my reputation and influence. This I am authorized to say, from undeniable facts in my possession, from publications, and from private detractions, industriously circulated. General Mifflin, it is commonly supposed, bore a second part in the cabal; and General Conway, I know, was a very active and malignant partisan."

So active was the latter officer—a Franco-Irishman—in the conspiracy, that it is known in history as "Conway's Cabal." The story is so familiar to American readers that it is not necessary to repeat it here. Suffice it to say that the character of Washington grew brighter and brighter under the trials to which the conspirators subjected him, and these men, in the end, were covered with shame and confusion.

Foiled in their more direct attempts to ruin General Washington by means of anonymous and forged letters, and slanders industriously circulated, as they had been against General Schuyler by the same men, the faction resorted to the more direct means of abridging the influence of the Commander-in-chief, by the creation of a new Board of War, and the appointment of Gates as its president. That work was effected late in November. Mifflin and Colonel Trumbull (Schuyler's bitter enemy) were active members of the Board. It was invested with large powers, and, by delegated authority, assumed the control of military affairs, which properly belonged to the province of the Commander-in-chief. It was evident that Congress intended to make Gates thenceforth the master-spirit of the war; for, by resolution, that body instructed

their president to inform the general of his appointment to an office "upon the right execution of which the success of the American cause does eminently depend," and that it was the "intention of Congress to continue his rank as Major-general in the army, and that he officiate at the Board, or in the field, as occasion may require."* Gates' partisans in the Congress hastened to assure him that he would soon be the virtual commander-in-chief.

The first important business of the Board of War, after Gates' arrival, was the arrangement of a winter campaign against Canada, suggested by General Schuyler, in a long and able letter to Congress, written on the 4th of November. That letter seems to have passed unnoticed by Congress, as no record of it appears in their journals. It was used by Gates, however, in arranging the plan of the expedition, but that officer made no reference to Schuyler's agency in the matter, but claimed and received full credit for the plan. If it had been carried out, in detail, as Schuyler proposed, it might have been eminently successful.

Evidently hoping to win Lafayette to their interest, the faction procured his appointment to the command of the expedition, without any consultation with Washington. The shrewd young Marquis, aware of their intrigues, saw in his own appointment a part of the nefarious plan, and he asked Washington's advice as to how he should act. Washington told him it was an honorable position, though he could not see how the enterprise was to be accomplished, and advised him to accept the commission. He repaired to York, where Congress was sitting, to procure it, and there met Gates and the Board of War, at table.

* Journals of Congress, iii. 423.

Wine circulated freely, and toasts were offered. At length the French Marquis, thinking it time to show his colors, arose and said: "One toast, I perceive, has been omitted, and which I will now propose." They filled their glasses, when he gave: "The Commander-in-chief of the American Armies." The coldness with which the toast was received confirmed the Marquis' worst opinions of the men around him. These ill-opinions were heightened when he found that Conway had been appointed his second in command. He procured the appointment of De Kalb as the second, and so made Conway the third.

Lafayette was cordially received, at Albany, by General Schuyler, under whose roof he was an honored guest. Conway had arrived before him, and been assured, by Schuyler, Lincoln and Arnold, that, with the materials at hand, a successful expedition into Canada was impossible. Lafayette had been promised three thousand men, well supplied. "I don't believe I can find," he wrote to Washington, "twelve hundred men, fit for duty, and the quarter part of these are naked, even for a summer campaign." He found himself utterly deceived by the falsehoods of Gates. That officer had told him that he would find Stark and his New England troops there, awaiting his coming, and had even said: "General Stark will have burned the fleet before your arrival."

The Marquis found, instead, only a letter from Stark, inquiring what number of men, from where, and at what rendezvous, he desired him to raise. Lafayette fully comprehended the trick. "I fancy," he wrote, "the actual scheme is to have me out of this part of the country, and General Conway as chief, under the immediate command of Gates." The conspirators could not use Lafayette.

Congress finally abandoned the enterprise, and the Marquis, disgusted with the whole affair, returned to Washington's camp at Valley Forge.

So ended an injudicious scheme as prepared, if honestly planned; a wicked and treasonable one if dishonestly planned by a faction to acomplish their own selfish purposes. And so ended the conspiracy to elevate Gates to the chief command; and so, also, ended the persecutions of General Schuyler by the same cabal, for, as we have seen, he was, a few months later, tried and triumphantly vindicated by a court-martial, and his conduct fully justified by the Congress.*

At about this time, the British Parliament, alarmed by the successes of the Americans and their alliance with the French, passed Lord North's "Conciliatory Bills," as they were called, which were intended to bring about a pacification of the insurgent States. They were silent on the subject of independence—a fatal omission. Commissioners were appointed to proceed to America to negotiate for peace, in accordance with their provisions. The bills preceded the commissioners, and copies were sent throughout the colonies. Governor Tryon had the impertinence to send some of them to Washington, at Valley Forge, with a request that he should distribute them among his officers. He sent them to the Congress, at York, saying:

"Nothing short of independence, it appears to me, can possibly do. A peace on any other terms would, if I may be allowed the expression, be a peace of war. The injuries we have received from the British nation were so unprovoked, and have been so great and so many, that they can never be forgotten."

These brave words were spoken before the news of the alliance with France had reached the colonies. They

* See page 320.

found a coincident response in Congress. The Conciliatory Bills did not propose the independence of the revolted States, and the Congress were prepared to reject any overtures from the commissioners, unless preceded by an expressed willingness to treat on the basis of their absolute independence. This the Commission were not authorized to do. They came, their overtures were rejected, and they returned in the autumn, after scattering broadcast over the land a proclamation uttering threats of a vigorous prosecution of the war against the contumacious "rebels."

Before their arrival, news of the French alliance had been received and joyfully celebrated in the camp at Valley Forge; and the Congress, the army and the people felt renewed confidence in the final success of the struggle, because they knew that they were in the right. "Nothing short of independence ought to be considered by us," General Schuyler wrote to Edward Rutledge. "The precious prize is within our grasp, and we should be faithless to the cause of human freedom were we not to accept it with all its consequences. For myself, my life and fortune shall be freely given to the cause until that prize shall be ours."

General Schuyler's military career, as a commander, ended when General Gates became his successor, in 1777, yet he held the office of Major-general in the army, as we have seen, until the spring of 1779, because the Congress would not, before that time, accept his resignation. But he was by no means inactive. He served his country faithfully, in various ways, as an officer and private citizen, and especially as a Commissioner of Indian Affairs, until the close of the war.

Although the Congress, in November, 1777, gave Schuyler permission, by resolution, to attend to his own suffering private affairs, until the committee appointed to inquire into the causes of the loss of Ticonderoga and Mount Independence should make their report,* he did not relax his efforts to serve the cause. He continued to be, as hitherto, the great Eye of the Northern Department, vigilant to detect all hostile movements, and quick to give information. He kept up a correspondence with the President of Congress and the Commander-in-chief, on public affairs, during the whole of the next eventful year; and those officers relied more upon him for correct information than upon any other man.

As President of the Board of Commissioners of Indian Affairs, Schuyler's duties were now very arduous, for it required incessant and energetic action to hold a large portion of the Six Nations to their neutrality. His associates were Timothy Edwards, Oliver Wolcott, and Volkert P. Douw, assisted by James Duane, who had been appointed by the Congress to represent that body in the Board. When the two great armies in the field went into winter-quarters, that of Howe in Philadelphia, and of Washington at Valley Forge, the more active duties of the Indian Commissioners began, and were chiefly performed by General Schuyler.

So threatening became the aspect of the more western of the Six Nations, at the close of 1777, that Congress recommended the Commissioners to hold a treaty with them, having for its prime objects: (1) to induce the Indians to make war upon the tribes (their enemies) then desolating the frontier settlements of Pennsylvania and

* Journals of Congress, iii. 392.

Virginia; and (2) to induce them to surprise and capture the British post of Niagara.

The treaty was held at Johnstown, and was opened on the 9th of March, when about seven hundred dusky delegates were present. Lafayette, yet commander of the Northern Department, accompanied the Commission. A speech, brought from Congress by Mr. Duane, was read by General Schuyler, and interpreted by Mr. Deane. It asserted the power of the United States in the most emphatic manner, and their magnanimous conduct toward the Six Nations; distinctly charged the latter with ingratitude, cruelty and treachery, with which their friendly advances had been met, and demanded reparation for these crimes. From these charges the Oneidas and Tuscaroras were exempted.

The council was not satisfactory. It was evident that the more powerful of the Six Nations, with Brant at their head, were devising schemes of vengeance because of losses inflicted upon them at Oriskany, and the Commissioners left the council with the painful impression that war with those nations would speedily be an inevitable event.

At the middle of April, Schuyler laid before the Commissioners letters from the Congress and Washington, respecting the retaining of four hundred of the warriors of the Six Nations in the Continental service; and Deane was sent among them to recruit that number of volunteers. This was followed by a stirring letter from Colonel Marinus Willett, at Fort Schuyler, in May, announcing the alliance between the United States and France. But all peaceful efforts failed, and hostile preparations were wisely made. Buildings were stockaded at Cherry Valley and among the Schoharie settlers, and garrisoned, and each was

armed with a small brass field-piece. Forts Schuyler and Dayton (the latter on the site of the village of Herkimer) were strengthened, and Fort Plain, lower down the Mohawk valley, was enlarged and provided with more power. Their movements were watched by scouts and spies sent out by Johnson and Butler; and a nephew of Sir Guy Carleton was lurking near Johnstown, for the same purpose.

These preparations were not made a moment too soon. While the stockading of Colonel Samuel Campbell's house, at Cherry Valley, was going on, Brant and his followers were hovering around the settlement, and he was organizing scalping parties at Oghquaga, and sending them out against other settlements. Very soon, the hills and valleys were nightly illuminated by burning buildings, and made hideous by the shrieks of women and children. Springfield, at the head of Otsego lake, was laid in ashes in May. In June, Cobleskill, in Schoharie county, was attacked by Brant and his warriors, who killed a portion of the garrison, and plundered and burnt the houses. In July, a severe skirmish occurred on the upper waters of the Cobleskill, between five hundred Indians and some regulars and militia; and at about the same time occurred the dreadful tragedy in the valley of Wyoming, whose history is familiar to all American readers.

Meanwhile Brant, with fearful energy, was sending war parties through all the country south of the Mohawk river, and the Johnsons and their Tory followers were the allies of the savages in their bloody work. They kept the dwellers in that region in continual alarm all the summer and autumn, and, finally, at near the middle of November, during a storm of sleet, these ferocious allies fell, like

lightning, upon Cherry Valley, and murdered, plundered and destroyed, without stint. Walter Butler, son of Colonel John Butler, who had been treated leniently by the patriots, and kindly by General Schuyler, while a prisoner in Albany, was the arch-fiend of the occasion, and would listen to no appeals for mercy from the more humane Brant. He seemed like the incarnation of evil; but his crimes were arrested by his death, soon afterward, for the bullet and the hatchet of a friendly Oneida left his carcass for the wild beasts in the woods on East Canada Creek.

In the meantime stirring events had taken place in other parts of the struggling States. The suffering army of Washington, at Valley Forge, had been made happy and hopeful by the news of the alliance with France; and the same news, and intimations of a powerful French fleet being on its way toward the Delaware, made the commander of the British army, in Philadelphia, resolve upon speedy flight. Howe had left, and Sir Henry Clinton was in his place. The latter passed over the Delaware, and fled, with his army, across New Jersey, closely followed by Washington and his troops. They fought a severe battle at Monmouth, at near the close of June; and that night, after the moon had gone down, the British silently withdrew from the field, and hastened toward the shores of Raritan Bay, where lay Admiral Howe's fleet. By it the fugitives were carried to New York, while Washington made his way to the east side of the Hudson, and encamped in Westchester county.

There had also been stirring but indecisive events in Rhode Island, and the fourth year of the war drew to a close without much apparent advantage having been gained by either party during the twelve months. Clinton

sent a force to Georgia, late in the year, to operate in the weaker Southern States; and, at about the first of December, Washington distributed his army in a line of cantonments, extending from Long Island Sound to the Delaware river, and made his head-quarters at Middlebrook, in New Jersey.

Lafayette was anxious to distinguish himself in a separate command, and urged an expedition against Canada, in 1779. The Congress approved the project. Schuyler gave such minute and valuable information to Washington concerning the matter, that the Chief was enabled, by mere figures, to so wisely oppose the measure as to defeat the scheme.

During the winter preceding the acceptance of his resignation, Schuyler was chiefly instrumental in bringing about the expedition, under Sullivan, against the more westerly of the Six Nations, which shattered the power and enfeebled the spirit of the Iroquois league, and finally led to a lasting peace. He was continually consulted by Washington and the Congress, long after he had left the military service. When, in June, 1779, Washington moved his head-quarters from Middlebrook to the banks of the Hudson river, Schuyler was frequently called into personal consultation with the Chief, especially concerning affairs on the Northern frontier; and when, in the autumn of 1779, peace with the Six Nations seemed to be secured by conquest and severe discipline, and no immediate danger threatened the Northern Department, Schuyler took a seat in the Continental Congress as a representative of the State of New York, to which he was elected in October, to the great gratification of his friends. "It is a mark of respect," James Duane wrote to him from the Manor of Livingston,

"which is due to you; and, however indifferent to you, affords your friends much satisfaction. But this is not the principal reason why I wished it. Your country requires your services." From several members of the Congress he received letters of similar tenor.

As we are now to view the life of General Schuyler as only incidentally connected with the military events of the Confederation, I shall relate, in most simple outlines, the history of those events in his State, after his resignation, until the close of the war.