

Life of General Philip Schuyler

CHAPTER SEVEN

British Defeats at Bennington and in the Mohawk Valley

Bright Prospects of the American Army

Schuyler Superseded by Gates

Saratoga

Last Services During the War

WHILE SCHUYLER WAS AT STILLWATER RECRUITING AND ORGANIZING HIS ARMY, Burgoyne remained on the east bank of the Hudson.

As Schuyler had anticipated, every day of delay was favoring the Americans, while the British were getting deeper and deeper into difficulty.

Their first embarrassment was caused by the Indians.

Burgoyne had disliked the employment of such allies, but his orders on the subject were positive.

The speech by which he had sought to establish among savages the rules of civilized warfare had been, of course, fruitless.

They burned and murdered on the line of march without discriminating between loyalist and rebel, and thus sent many indignant waverers into the American camp.

They robbed the commissary stores, wasted the provisions, and defied all discipline.

At the end of July an incident occurred which turned the Indian alliance into a boomerang.

A marauding party of savages, under a chief called the Panther, captured near Fort Edward the young daughter of a Scotch clergyman named Jeanie McCrea, who was visiting the house of a Mrs. McNeil.

Both women were loyalists, and Jeanie was engaged to a Tory officer in the British army.

The Indians were taking their captives toward the British camp when, being pursued by a party of Americans, they became separated.

Mrs. McNeil arrived in safety.

But there was no news of Jeanie until the next day, when the Panther appeared bearing a scalp which, from the long hair attached to it, Mrs. McNeil recognized as belonging to her unfortunate companion.

A search revealed the body in the forest, pierced by three bullets.

Various stories were told of how the young woman came to her death.

But the exact circumstances were immaterial.

Great indignation was aroused in the British camp, and Burgoyne was the last man to endure such enormities.

He issued a strict order that no party of Indians should be allowed to pass out of the lines unless accompanied by an English officer.

The savages, already restless, became enraged at this order.

That night, after loading themselves with all the provisions they could carry, they decamped, scattering into the Adirondacks.

Burgoyne thus lost a body of men who, however troublesome, might have proved of great assistance as scouts.

But the loss of the Indians was only a part of the damage caused by the murder of Jeanie McCrea.

The story of her fate spread far, angering patriots and loyalists alike, bringing home to all the realities of war.

Great was the effect in New England.

There the people were slow to rouse.

They were busy with their harvest, and the British army were attacking another and a little liked colony.

There was a disposition to let New York and the Continentals take care of Burgoyne.

But the story of the Panther striding into the British camp swinging the long hair of a murdered American girl recruited the ranks and quickened the steps of every militia company in Massachusetts and Connecticut.

Burgoyne's next and very serious difficulty was to procure provisions for his men.

The roads from Ticonderoga were almost impassable, and besides, he had neither the wagons nor horses for transportation.

His reliance on foraging had proved quite vain.

As the army advanced, the people fled, driving their cattle before them.

The Tories, instead of giving the expected assistance, came into camp to be supported, adding a new embarrassment of mouths to feed.

In this emergency, Burgoyne listened readily to Major Skene, a loyalist, who told him that the New England militia had collected a quantity of horses, ammunition, and provisions at a village called Bennington, in the Hampshire Grants, which they intended as a point of distribution for the troops then recruiting.

To capture Bennington, therefore, would mean to the British not only a supply of provisions for present needs, and horses to convey their own supplies from the north, but also a severe blow to the New England forces which Burgoyne knew to be gathering in his rear.

To accomplish this important object, Colonel Baum was sent off with five hundred Germans and a hundred Indians who had just arrived from Canada.

Colonel Skene had assured Burgoyne that on the appearance of this force, Tories in large numbers would join it, so he was sent too, with other loyalist officers, to command the expected accessions.

But Baum had been hardly a day on his march when the actions of the inhabitants convinced him that no help could be expected from that source, and he wrote to Burgoyne for re-enforcement.

The British commander dispatched Colonel Breyman, with five hundred more Germans and two cannon.

They were most inappropriate troops for a purpose requiring rapidity and enterprise.

The hat and sword of a Hessian dragoon weighed nearly as much as the whole equipment of an English soldier, and the men were so little accustomed to lay aside their habits of discipline that while marching through thick woods they would stop every ten minutes to re-form their ranks.

With such slow progress, the Americans had ample warning and time to prepare.

The action at this time of the New England militia and of their commander, General Stark, is a good illustration of the peculiarities of these soldiers, of their splendid qualities as defenders of their own homes, and of their uncertain usefulness in a regular army.

General Stark was a veteran of the French and Indian war.

He had fought at Bunker's Hill, and had served as a continental officer with Washington at Trenton and Princeton.

But in recent promotions Congress had passed him over, and he had retired in disgust to his Hampshire home.

When Burgoyne's invasion was in progress, and General Lincoln was mustering in troops at Manchester, he conveyed to Stark the orders of Schuyler to join the main army at Stillwater.

Stark flatly refused, alleging that he owed allegiance only to his native State of New Hampshire, and that it was "his option to act in conjunction with the continental army or not."

Lincoln wrote to Schuyler:

"Whether he will march his troops to Stillwater or not, I am quite at a loss to know."

"But if he doth, it is a fixed point with him to act there as a separate corps, and take no orders from any officer in the northern department, saving your honor."

When Congress heard of the attitude of Stark, it declared it to be "destructive of military subordination, and highly prejudicial to the common cause."

Schuyler wrote at once to Lincoln:

"You will please to assure General Stark that I trust and entreat that he will, on the present alarming crisis, waive his right, as the greater the sacrifice he makes to his feelings, the greater will be the honor due to him, for not having suffered any consideration to come in competition with the weal of his country, and I entreat him to march immediately to this army."

How much this provincial jealousy added to the difficulties of Schuyler's position is plain to see.

He had a great invasion to repel.

He had to rely for men almost entirely on volunteer militia from neighboring colonies.

But he had to beg instead of to command.

Whether the militia would come, or in what numbers, could not be definitely known.

If they came, the length of time that they would remain, was equally uncertain.

Under such circumstances, to make plans, to map out a campaign, was nearly impossible.

But when Baum was known to be approaching Bennington with his Germans, there was no uncertainty regarding the action of Stark and his militia.

The men who refused to join Lincoln's continental army at Manchester to fight in New York were eager to serve with Stark as a partisan officer and repel the foreign mercenaries who dared to attack their native colony.

On August 15th, Baum arrived at Bennington with his dragoons and Indians and entrenched himself to wait for Breyman and the re-enforcement.

But that purpose he was not allowed to attain.

The next morning Stark and a thousand provincials had surrounded him.

Five hundred rustic marksmen poured in a fire on his flanks and rear while Stark charged with the rest of his men.

The Indians ran off yelling into the woods, and in two-hours Baum had been killed and his Germans captured.

The Americans were busy plundering the enemy's camp when Breyman arrived with his five hundred Hessians, and might have turned the tables.

But Colonel Warner came up at about the same time with fresh provincials.

Breyman was assailed on all sides and was glad to escape with sixty men, leaving all the rest either killed or prisoners.

These sixty were all that ever returned to Burgoyne out of the thousand which he had sent.

One-seventh of the army which he had brought from Canada was lost with all the arms and four cannon.

And the prospect of drawing provisions from the country was destroyed.

This victory, so discouraging to the British, was of immense benefit to the Americans.

All western New England was fired by it.

No more was heard of reluctance to serve in another colony, nor of officers unwilling to take orders from continental generals.

Lincoln's army at Manchester, and Stark's at Bennington, grew rapidly, and were soon marching to join Schuyler at Stillwater.

Another disaster now befell Burgoyne in the destruction of the army which was to invade the Mohawk Valley and to join him at Albany.

On July 15th, St. Leger landed at Oswego on Lake Ontario, where he was joined by Sir John Johnson with his Royal Greens, Colonel Butler with his Tories, and a body of Indians under Joseph Brant.

The expedition, about seventeen hundred strong, took the old fur trade route, up the Onondaga River, through Oneida Lake, and over the long carry to Fort Stanwix or Schuyler, which stood at the head of the Mohawk River.

On August 3rd, St. Leger had invested the fort and summoned it to surrender.

But its gallant commander, Colonel Peter Gansevoort, sent back a message of defiance.

When General Nicholas Herkimer of Tryon County heard that Fort Schuyler was besieged, he gathered his militia and marched to the rescue.

On August 5th he was at Oriskany, on the Mohawk, eight miles below the fort.

Here he made a plan of operations, and messengers were sent ahead to communicate it to Colonel Gansevoort within the fort.

The plan was that Herkimer should march up and attack St. Leger from the rear at the same time that the garrison made a sally upon his front.

The signal for concerted action was to be given by three guns from the fort.

Unfortunately the messengers had so much difficulty in getting into the fort that they were delayed in communicating the plan.

When the expected time for the attack arrived, the three guns were not heard at Oriskany.

Herkimer wished to wait.

But some of his officers accused him of treachery or cowardice and insisted on an advance.

Against his better judgment, Herkimer yielded and led his men up the river bank.

But his presence at Oriskany had been reported by some of St. Leger's Indians.

A strong force of Royal Greens and Mohawks had been posted in ambush in the forest.

In this trap Herkimer's men were soon caught.

A fierce hand-to-hand battle ensued, the most bloody of the Revolution.

Herkimer, with a leg shattered by a bullet, sat on a stump and gave orders while smoking his pipe.

His men fought with such fury that finally the Indians fled and the Royal Greens soon followed.

But the Americans, although victorious in holding the ground, had suffered such losses that they could do no more than carry their wounded back to Oriskany, leaving the garrison at the fort to take care of itself.

When Herkimer's messengers made their way into the fort, the sounds of the distant battle could be heard.

Gansevoort understood the situation, fired his three guns, and made an impetuous sally.

Sir John Johnson's men, taken by surprise, were driven across the river.

Gansevoort looted the British camp, loading seven wagons with booty, including all Sir John's papers.

Five British flags were taken, which Gansevoort raised on his fort with an improvised American flag hoisted above them.

The result of the two fights was greatly in favor of the Americans.

St. Leger still kept up his siege of Fort Schuyler.

But his losses at Oriskany were severe, and the successful sortie of the garrison so affected his prestige that the Indians became insolent and rebellious.

Unable to take the fort before, his prospects were now much worse.

Colonel Gansevoort, although so far successful and resolved to defend Fort Schuyler to the last extremity, feared that St. Leger might receive re-enforcements or that he might be able in time to starve out the garrison.

From the battered force at Oriskany there was no hope of further assistance.

Hence Gansevoort sought for it from Schuyler.

Colonel Marinus Willett, who had led the late gallant sortie, stole out of the fort with one companion, with infinite skill and labor passed St. Leger's lines, reached Schuyler's camp at Stillwater, and asked him to relieve the fort.

Schuyler then knew unofficially that Congress had superseded him, but he was working none the less hard in the interest of the country.

He called a council of war to determine means to relieve the fort.

He told the assembled officers that it was of the utmost importance to destroy St. Leger's force at once.

If the fort were taken, the Mohawk Valley would be at the mercy of the British, and a large detachment of the army would be needed in that quarter.

If St. Leger could be driven off now, while Burgoyne was quiet on the other side of the Hudson, there would remain but one enemy to face, against whom all the American forces could be concentrated.

Several officers spoke in opposition, alleging that the army then present was too weak to meet Burgoyne, and objecting to any detachment.

Schuyler was walking the floor in anxious reflection when he overheard the whispered remark of one of the officers:

"He means to weaken the army."

This remark, a repetition of the ceaseless accusations of treachery made against him since the fall of Ticonderoga, angered him so that he bit in two the pipe which he held in his mouth.

He turned upon the council, saying:

"Gentlemen, I shall take the responsibility upon myself."

"Where is the brigadier that will take command of the relief?"

"I shall beat up for volunteers tomorrow."

Arnold, soured by the neglect of Congress, but always ready for a deed of daring, offered at once to go.

The next morning, in response to Schuyler's call, eight hundred men joined Arnold and set off up the Mohawk.

When arrived at the German Flatts, twenty miles below the fort, Arnold resorted to a stratagem to encourage the garrison and to intimidate the enemy.

A half-witted fellow, named Jan Jost, and his brother, both well-known Tories, had been captured.

Arnold threatened to hang them both, and then offered to Jan Jost his own and his brother's life if he would spread the news at the fort of a large force advancing to its relief.

Jan arrived at St. Leger's camp with bullet holes through his coat and apparently overcome by terror.

He was known to be a violent Tory, and when he described the coming enemy as numerous as the leaves upon the trees, he was readily believed.

St. Leger had a motley force composed of British, Indians, Canadians and American Tories.

They were bound together more by the hope of plunder and scalps than by a common sentiment or military discipline.

The fight at Oriskany, where many Indians had been killed, left the savages in bad humor, and the successful sortie of the garrison had injured the prestige of St. Leger and Sir John Johnson.

Demoralization had already begun.

When Jan Jost arrived with his discouraging news, the Indians made up their minds that there was no profit in the business for them.

They seized some barrels of rum, got very drunk and ran amuck through the camp.

A free fight was kept up all night.

The next morning St. Leger and Sir John had lost all control.

They retreated, abandoning everything in the camp.

The garrison sallied forth and pursued for a time.

Many of the invaders were lost in the forest and many shot by the Indians, who cared little from whose heads they took their scalps.

It was a very small band that embarked at Oswego for Canada with Sir John Johnson and St. Leger.

The great expedition which had terrified the Mohawk Valley, which had given so much anxiety to Schuyler and upon which Burgoyne depended as an important part of his plan, thus melted away.

Arnold returned without loss to the main army.

Looking at the situations of Burgoyne and of Schuyler after the battle of Bennington and the retreat of St. Leger, it is evident that the tables were turned.

Burgoyne had taken Ticonderoga without loss and had advanced to the Hudson River with a flourish of trumpets.

King George, at the news, had rushed into the Queen's room, exclaiming triumphantly, "I have beat them; I have beat all the Americans."

But Schuyler had prevented Burgoyne from reaching Fort Edward until the 30th of July, and now, three weeks later, the British general was still on the same ground, beset by difficulties and uncertain what course to pursue.

At the news from Bennington and Fort Schuyler, the Tories and Canadians began to drop off.

If he once left his communication with Lake George, he would have no means of getting provisions.

The assistance which he had been led to believe would be given by the loyalist population turned out to be a dream.

"The great bulk of the country," he wrote home, "is undoubtedly with the Congress in principle and zeal, and their measures are executed with a secrecy and dispatch that are not to be equalled."

"The Hampshire Grants, in particular, a country unpeopled and almost unknown in the last war, now abounds in the most active and rebellious race on the continent, and hangs like a gathering storm on my left."

He had been obliged to leave a large force at Ticonderoga to protect his rear.

A thousand of his men were lost at Bennington.

St. Leger was gone.

From Sir William Howe nothing could be heard.

How he was to provision his army when he left his communication with Lake George, he could not tell.

There could be no re-enforcement for him, while he knew that his enemy's army was growing every day.

Yet positive orders compelled an advance.

Concerning his situation at this time, he wrote afterwards:

"The expedition which I commanded was at first evidently intended to be hazarded and circumstances might require it should be devoted."

Burgoyne was already a beaten man, and every day made his position worse.

"I do not despair," he wrote.

"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."

It was not until the 13th of September, nearly a month later, that he had gathered enough provisions to enable him to cross the Hudson.

On the other hand, Schuyler's army was growing in strength and confidence.

It was stationed on the west bank of the Hudson, about thirty miles below the British, from Stillwater to the mouth of the Mohawk.

It had been re-enforced by General Putnam's regiment from Peekskill and by Morgan's riflemen.

Volunteers were arriving in small groups every day.

Lincoln wrote that he was on his way with two thousand men from the Hampshire Grants.

Stark, that he was coming with the victors of Bennington.

Arnold was returning from the Mohawk Valley, not only with his own detachment, but with a large body of militia whose services were no longer needed to defend the West.

The whole country was aroused.

With an enemy approaching and fighting imminent, every man was ready to leave his farm and carry a rifle into the continental camp.

Schuyler was sure of ten thousand men.

The dark days of uncertainty had gone, and a bright prospect was opening.

At this juncture, on the 19th of August, General Gates arrived in the American camp bearing a commission as commander-in-chief of the northern department.

The causes which brought about this change of commanders are to be found partly in inter-colonial prejudice and partly in the selfish intrigues of General Gates.

Immediately after the evacuation of Ticonderoga, the New England delegates in Congress renewed their campaign to substitute Gates for Schuyler, which had been defeated the previous month.

They secured the support of southern members, who, discouraged by that disaster, were ready for a change.

They had the assistance of Gates himself, who had been pushing his own interests at Philadelphia while Schuyler was facing Burgoyne at Fort Edward.

On the 29th of July it was resolved that an investigation should be made of the evacuation of Ticonderoga.

But as it speedily became known that St. Clair accepted full responsibility for that event, and the justification for it was recognized, another ground for action had to be found.

This was that the New England militia disliked Schuyler and would not join the northern army while he was in command.

On August 1st, Congress recalled Schuyler and asked Washington to appoint a new general-in-chief.

A memorial in the handwriting of Samuel Adams and signed by all the New England delegates, requested him to appoint Gates.

Washington, who had seen enough of Gates, refused to interfere, and left the matter in the hands of Congress.

On August 5th Gates received his appointment.

Gouverneur Morris and John Jay had gone to Philadelphia to represent to Congress the situation in the north, but arrived the day after Gates's appointment.

Morris wrote to Schuyler:

"You will readily believe that we were not pleased at this resolution, and I assure you for my own part I feel exceedingly distressed at your removal, just when changing fortune began to declare in your favor."

"Congress, I hope, will perceive that our successes have been owing to the judicious plans adopted previous to your removal."

Jay also wrote him:

"Washington and Congress were assured that unless another general presided in the northern department the militia of New England would not be brought into the field."

"The Congress, under this apprehension, exchanged their general for the militia-a bargain which can receive no justification from the supposed necessity of the times."

James Duane wrote:

"Your enemies, relentless, and bent on your destruction, would willingly include you in the odium of losing Ticonderoga."

"The change of command was not, however, founded on this principle, but merely on the representation of the Eastern States that their militia, suspicious of your military character, would not turn out in defense of New York while you presided in the northern department."

The reason for superseding Schuyler which was urged by the New England delegates was a serious accusation for them to make against their own people.

Generals Lincoln, Putnam, Stark and Arnold, who were the officers under whom the New England militia would actually serve, were all New England men and all popular with eastern troops.

To say that under these leaders of their own they would not rally to defend their country against the British, the Germans and the savages who were invading it, while Schuyler remained commander-in-chief, was to accuse them of a lack of patriotism, of a narrowness and intensity of prejudice which would have made them little deserving of consideration.

But the accusation was false and so proved by the facts.

When the knowledge that Burgoyne's army was penetrating southward reached the scattered settlements of western New England, when it was realized that a great fight was imminent, the militia flocked to the standards of Lincoln and Stark.

The murder of Jeanie McCrea came like an alarm bell to call them to action.

The victory at Bennington filled them with confidence and enthusiasm.

Long before Gates's appointment was known in the north, the eastern militia was marching to join Schuyler.

By the time Gates arrived, and he brought with him the first definite news of his appointment, Schuyler had in camp, or known to be approaching it, an army of ten thousand men.

Of course, a strong prejudice against each other existed between the colonies of New England and New York.

An amusing instance of it is given in the will of Lewis Morris of Morrisania, who wrote in 1762:

"It is my desire that my son, Gouverneur Morris, may have the best education that is to be had in Europe or America, but my express will and directions are, that he be never sent for that purpose to the Colony of Connecticut, least he should imbibe in his youth that low craft and cunning so incident to the people of that country, which is so interwoven in their constitutions, that all their art cannot disguise it from the world, though many of them under the sanctified garb of religion, have endeavored to impose themselves on the world for honest men."

On the other hand, democratic New England disliked aristocratic New York.

That Schuyler was of Dutch descent, and that he had supported the claim of New York to the Hampshire Grants, were sufficient causes for the early prejudice against him.

This feeling was increased by Schuyler's attempt to introduce the military discipline which he had learned in the British army during the French war, and which was in accordance with the Dutch spirit of order and system which was an essential part of his character and of his success in private life.

But military discipline was unendurable to these independent, self-reliant New Englanders.

They regarded it as tyranny and aristocratic assumption.

That they were not allowed to help themselves to commissary stores at will, that they were subjected to sanitary regulations, that they were constrained to a silent obedience, were regarded as so many encroachments on their liberties.

They enlisted only for short periods, and considered themselves free to join the army or to leave it as they pleased.

All this was galling to Schuyler, whose temper was by no means easy.

These remarks apply to eastern men when employed as militia, not when acting as continental soldiers.

It is well known that the New England portion of the continental army was its very Backbone and that these hardy soldiers, when used to discipline, formed the certain reliance of Washington.

But let us see what Washington himself had to say about the New England troops when employed as militia:

"Our situation is truly distressing," he wrote to Congress, September 2nd, 1776.

"The check our detachment sustained on the 27th ultimo has dispirited too great a proportion of our troops, and filled their minds with apprehension and despair."

"The militia, instead of calling forth their utmost efforts to a brave and manly opposition in order to repair our losses, are dismayed, intractable and impatient to return."

"Great numbers of them have gone off, in some instances, almost by whole regiments, by half ones, and by companies at a time."

"When their example has infected another part of the army, when their want of discipline, and refusal of almost every kind of restraint and government, have produced a like conduct but too common to the whole, and an entire disregard of that order and subordination necessary to the well doing of an army."

"Our condition becomes still more alarming."

Again, on September 22nd, he writes his brother:

"The dependence which the Congress have placed upon the militia has already greatly injured, and I fear will totally ruin our cause."

"Being subject to no control themselves, they introduce disorder among the troops, whom we have attempted to discipline, while the change in their living brings on sickness."

"This causes an impatience to get home, which spreads universally, and introduces abominable desertions."

And to Congress, on the 24th of September, he wrote:

"To place any dependence upon militia is assuredly resting upon a broken staff."

"Men just dragged from the tender scenes of domestic life, unaccustomed to the din of arms, totally unacquainted with every kind of military skill, which is followed by want of confidence in themselves, when opposed to troops regularly trained, disciplined and appointed, superior in knowledge and superior in arms, are timid and ready to fly from their own shadows."

"Besides, the sudden change in their manner of living, particularly in their lodging, brings on sickness in many, impatience in all, and such an unconquerable desire of returning to their respective homes, that it not only produces shameful and scandalous desertions among themselves, but infuses the like spirit into others."

"Again, men accustomed to unbounded freedom and no control cannot brook the restraint, which is indispensably necessary to the good order and government of an army, and without which licentiousness and every kind of disorder triumphantly reign."

"To bring men to a proper degree of subordination is not the work of a day, a month or even a year."

"If I was called upon to declare upon oath whether the militia have been most serviceable or hurtful upon the whole, I should subscribe to the latter."

In the light of Washington's own experience of militia, which at the time he wrote were chiefly from New England, it is easy to see with what a problem Schuyler had had to deal.

When he first gathered his little army together at Ticonderoga for the invasion of Canada his efforts to establish military regulations, to control the distribution of stores, to enforce sanitary rules, met with rebellious resistance.

His own exertion of authority was stigmatized as aristocratic pride.

He was disliked for trying to be a soldier himself and for trying to make his army Soldier-like.

Montgomery met the same fate.

Popular at first for his gallant and generous qualities, as soon as the men were in the field and began to feel the trials and rigor of a military life, his popularity waned.

Of the trials which he endured from the insubordination of his men, how nearly half of them deserted him at Montreal, leaving him to go on to Quebec with a remnant, has been told in a previous chapter.

The same unwillingness to endure the restraints of military discipline and to remain away from their homes for more than a short time, had made the militia an extremely doubtful reliance for Schuyler through the year 1776.

When he returned from Philadelphia in June and had the invasion of Burgoyne to face, it was this uncertainty about the militia which made his chief difficulty.

He was told by Congress and by Washington that he must draw his army from New England volunteers.

He sent to the governors and received promises.

But it was impossible to tell whether the men would come in sufficient numbers or would come in time.

No aggressive plan could be made when the material of the army was so indefinite.

Bancroft blames Schuyler for appealing to Washington for continental troops.

But it was natural that a general facing a great invasion of trained veterans should prefer a thousand regular soldiers who would certainly stay with him to a possible three thousand who might or might not join him, and might or might not choose to remain until the campaign was over.

On the eve of the battle of Bennington the Rev. Mr. Allen, who had come up from Pittsfield, Massachusetts, with the militia of his neighborhood, said to Stark:

"Colonel, our Berkshire people have often been called out to no purpose, and if you don't let them fight now they will never turn out again."

That was exactly the spirit of the New England militia.

Fight they would when there was a fight on hand.

But the general who was to benefit by their services must have the battle already arranged and the enemy on the spot so that they could fight and return without loss of time.

To join an army, wait perhaps for months, march and counter-march through a campaign while their crops were ungathered, that they would not do.

Nor should Congress have expected it of them.

The general military outlook was gloomy when the resolution to supersede Schuyler was passed.

Howe's army was superior to Washington's, and in the north Burgoyne seemed to have an overwhelming force.

Congress acted in accordance with its best lights in yielding to the claim of the New England delegates that their men would not come out at Schuyler's call.

The retirement of Schuyler was an error excusable under the circumstances.

But the choice of his successor was a great mistake.

Gates had done nothing during his employment in the northern department in 1776.

The two months of his command there in 1777, before the approach of Burgoyne, were spent in Albany in writing letters to his political supporters, while Ticonderoga, his special charge, was left to itself and never even visited.

We shall see how little the victory of Saratoga was due to him, and later history tells of his disgraceful connection with the Conway Cabal, his incompetence at Camden, and the final pricking of the bubble of his military reputation.

Useless as a general as Gates turned out to be, the worst feature of his career was the constant base intrigue by which he sought to supplant a fellow soldier who had shown him nothing but generosity and kindness.

His own correspondence with the New England delegates places his conduct in the worst light.

Of the reprehensible character of such intrigue, evidence enough is given by the way another Englishman looked at a similar accusation made against himself.

When Burgoyne returned to England a defeated man, there were many attacks made upon him.

But the one that angered him most was that he had intrigued at court to obtain the command of an expedition which rightfully belonged to Sir Guy Carleton, the senior officer in Canada.

Before the committee of the House of Commons, Burgoyne said:

"The next tendency was to impress the public with an opinion that I was endeavoring to supplant Sir Guy Carleton in the command of the northern army, an action abhorrent to the honor of an officer and the liberality of a gentleman, and of which, thank God, I can prove the falsehood by irrefragable evidence upon your table."

That Gates pursued persistently during a whole year a course of action which Burgoyne considered "abhorrent to the honor of an officer and the liberality of a gentleman" is exposed in his correspondence with the New England delegates.

Schuyler's character was severely tried when he received the humiliating news that after his untiring and successful labors, when a bright military prospect seemed before him, when the wished-for army was assured and a decisive battle imminent, another man was to take his place.

By the way he bore this trial he must be judged as a man and a patriot.

To President Hancock he wrote:

"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."

A few days later he wrote to James Duane:

"Last night I was advised that General Gates is on the point of arriving to relieve me."

"Your fears may be up, lest the ill-treatment I have experienced at his hands should so far get the better of my judgment as to embarrass him."

"Do not, my dear friend, be uneasy on that account."

"I am incapable of sacrificing my country to a resentment however just, and I trust I shall give an example of what a good citizen ought to do when he is in my situation."

"I am nevertheless daily more sensible of the affront Congress has so unjustly given me."

General Stark had just informed Schuyler that he had waived his military claims and would march his Hampshire troops to Stillwater.

In thanking him Schuyler said:

"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 such a spirit Schuyler himself acted.

From the time that he heard of his retirement until the arrival of Gates, he worked as hard as ever.

It was in this interval that Arnold was sent up the Mohawk, and that great progress was made in organizing and provisioning the army.

Schuyler's generous acceptance of this humiliation marks the climax of his revolutionary career and constitutes his best claim to the respect of his countrymen.

Many men have put life and property in jeopardy for their country's sake.

But few men, holding high commands, have borne calumny from the people and unjust treatment from the government as Schuyler did.

He did so without being soured, without vindictive feeling, and without any diminution of public spirit.

This test of character, so nobly met, touches the highest note of patriotism.

When Gates arrived in camp on August 19th with his commission as commander-in-chief, Schuyler received him with politeness, gave him all the information he possessed regarding the enemy and his own army, and offered his assistance in any capacity.

But Gates ignored him completely.

Although he invited everybody to his first council of war, even calling up General Ten Broeck from Albany, he did not ask Schuyler to attend it.

Upon which Gouverneur Morris remarked with his usual trenchant phrase:

"The new commander-in-chief of the northern department may, if he please, neglect to ask or disdain to receive advice, but those who know him will, I am sure, be convinced that he needs it."

As Schuyler's active military service terminated on the 19th of August, when he left the camp for Albany, a detailed account of the battles of Saratoga need not be repeated here.

But the circumstances which led to the surrender of Burgoyne show clearly that the result was not due to the change in commanders.

That Schuyler would have contributed more to the victory than Gates is, to say the least, probable.

That he would have contributed less is incredible.

Burgoyne's position became more embarrassing every day.

It was not until the 13th of September that he had acquired enough provisions to enable him to cross the Hudson on the march to Albany.

Hearing no word from Howe, knowing that St. Leger had been driven off, he was loath to advance further into a hostile country where he might be unable to subsist his army.

But his orders were positive.

On the 19th occurred the first conflict at Bemis Heights and Freeman's Farm, where the British advance was checked by Generals Morgan and Arnold, without assistance from Gates.

For nearly three weeks more Burgoyne remained inactive and uncertain, his situation becoming desperate for lack of provision, while the American army increased to sixteen thousand men.

October 7th occurred the second battle of Freeman's Farm, resulting in a decisive victory for the Americans under the leadership chiefly of Morgan and Arnold, while Gates was quarrelling in his tent with a wounded English prisoner.

During the next ten days the American army had increased to twenty thousand men.

The British were surrounded and assailed from every side.

Retreat to Ticonderoga was cut off, provisions were exhausted, and they found even water unobtainable.

On the 17th followed the inevitable capitulation.

The credit for the destruction of Burgoyne's expedition belongs to no one man.

Schuyler contributed largely to it by the courage and energy with which he held together the little army left after the loss of Ticonderoga, kept up a bold front toward a greatly superior enemy, delayed and harassed his advance.

To Schuyler's prompt action, as to Herkimer and Arnold, was due the safety of the Mohawk Valley.

Stark's victory at Bennington contributed much.

Lincoln's aid in raising the New England militia was of great value.

Looking at the military operations, which together constitute the battle of Saratoga, it is impossible to credit Gates with any definite plan of campaign, or to trace to his orders any important movement.

On the contrary, he obstructed Arnold as much as he could, and at decisive moments was complaining and arguing to no purpose.

The two battles were fought on the part of the Americans according to no plan but that of attacking the enemy whenever he moved.

Arnold, Morgan and Lincoln were partisan leaders, acting on the spur of the moment, agreeing among themselves and assisting each other, but under direction of no single authority.

Arnold, indeed, had been deprived of all command by Gates, and was no more than a private citizen when he led the impetuous and decisive charge on Fraser's line at the second battle of Freeman's Farm.

It is certain that Schuyler's intimate knowledge of the country where the battles were fought, his energy of character, his readiness to work with and for his fellow officers, his confidential relations with Lincoln, Morgan and Arnold would have made him a more useful man than Gates at the head of the northern army.

After Burgoyne had been defeated by Morgan and Arnold with their unorganized but hardy followers, Gates first appeared as a real commander-in-chief and carried out very well the part of a generous and magnanimous victor.

Schuyler, in his retirement at Albany, was kept informed of the course of events at Saratoga by his friends in the army.

"I am chagrined to the soul," wrote Henry Brockholst Livingston, in September, "when I think that another person is to reap the fruits of your labors."

"The candid and impartial will, however, bestow the honor where it is due."

“And although the ungrateful and envious are making use of every art to ruin you in the esteem of your countrymen, I flatter myself you will rise superior to them all and receive the thanks of your country for those services of which it is at present unmindful.”

During the military operations the British burned to the ground Schuyler's fine country house, with its barns, granaries and stables, which had been the result of many years of economy and industry.

The news of this personal disaster reached him at Albany at the same time as that of the American victory.

"The event that has taken place," he wrote to Colonel Varick, "makes the heavy loss I have sustained sit quite easy on me.”

“Britain will probably see how fruitless her attempts to enslave us will be.”

“I set out today.”

At Saratoga he was introduced to Burgoyne.

The latter afterwards described the meeting in a speech before the House of Commons:

"I expressed to General Schuyler my regret at the event which had happened, and the reasons which had occasioned it.”

“He desired me to think no more of it, saying that the occasion justified it, according to the rules of war.”

“He did more.”

“He sent his aide-de-camp to conduct me to Albany, in order, as he expressed it, to procure me better quarters than a stranger might be able to find.”

“This gentleman conducted me to a very elegant house, and, to my great surprise, presented me to Mrs. Schuyler and her family, and in this General's house I remained during my whole stay at Albany, with a table of more than twenty covers for me and my friends, and every other possible demonstration of hospitality.”

The wife of the German General Riedesel, who with two children had accompanied her husband through the campaign, left an interesting account of these events.

"In the passage through the American camp," she said, "I observed, with great satisfaction, that no one cast at us scornful glances.”

“On the contrary, they all greeted me, even showing compassion on their countenances at seeing a mother with her little children in such a situation.”

“I confess that I feared to come into the enemy's camp, as the thing was so entirely new to me.”

“When I approached the tents, a noble looking man came toward me, took the children out of the wagon, embraced and kissed them, and then with tears in his eyes, helped me also to alight.”

“‘You tremble’, he said to me, ‘fear nothing.’”

“‘No’, replied I, ‘for you are so kind and have been so tender toward my children, that it has inspired me with courage.’”

“He then led me to the tent of General Gates, with whom I found Generals Burgoyne and Phillips, who were upon an extremely friendly footing with him.”

“Burgoyne said to me, 'You may now dismiss all your apprehensions, for your sufferings are at an end.'”

“All the generals remained to dine with General Gates.”

“The man who had received me so kindly came up and said to me, 'It may be embarrassing to you to dine with all these gentlemen, come now with your children

into my tent, where I will give you, it is true, a frugal meal, but one that will be accompanied by the best of wishes.'"

"You are certainly," answered I, "a husband and a father, since you show me so much kindness."

"I then learned that he was the American General Schuyler."

"He entertained me with excellent smoked tongue, beef steaks, potatoes, good butter and bread."

"Never have I eaten a better meal."

"I was content."

"As soon as we had finished dinner, he invited me to take up my residence at his house, which was situated in Albany, and told me that General Burgoyne would also be there. "

"The day after this we arrived at Albany, where we had so often longed to be."

"But we came not, as we supposed we should, as victors."

"We were, nevertheless, received in the most friendly manner by the good General Schuyler, and by his wife and daughters, who showed us the most marked courtesy, as also General Burgoyne, although he had without any necessity, it was said, caused their magnificently built houses to be burned."

"But they treated us as people who knew how to forget their own losses in the misfortunes of others."

"Even General Burgoyne was deeply moved at their magnanimity, and said to General Schuyler, 'Is it to me, who have done you so much injury, that you show so much kindness?'"

"That is the fate of war," replied the brave man."

"Let us say no more about it."

De Chastellux tells the following anecdote of Burgoyne's visit to the Schuylers.

"The British commander was well received by Mrs. Schuyler, and lodged in the best apartment in the house."

"An excellent supper was served him in the evening, the honors of which were done with so much grace that he was affected even to tears, and said with a deep sigh, 'Indeed, this is doing too much for a man who has ravaged their lands and burned their dwellings.'"

"The next morning he was reminded of his misfortunes by an incident that would have amused anyone else."

"His bed was prepared in a large room, but as he had a numerous suite, or family, several mattresses were spread on the floor for some officers to sleep near him."

"Schuyler's second son, a little fellow about nine years old, very arch and forward, but very amiable, was running all the morning about the house."

"Opening the door of the saloon, he burst out laughing on seeing all the English collected, and shut it after him, exclaiming, 'You are all my prisoners!'"

"This innocent cruelty rendered them more melancholy than before."

John Trumbull, in his painting of the surrender of Burgoyne for the rotunda of the Capitol at Washington, represents Schuyler as standing in citizen's dress among his countrymen in continental uniform.

To continue his military services and finally to receive the sword of the enemy were privileges which unfortunate circumstances had taken from him.

But Trumbull portrayed truly the judgment of his time and of posterity in placing Schuyler, the patriot, in the forefront of that great scene which his faithful and unselfish labors had done so much to make possible.

After the events at Saratoga, Schuyler applied for a court martial to investigate his conduct during the war, and especially his relation to the evacuation of Ticonderoga, of which his enemies had been able to make so fatal a use.

In December, 1777, he wrote to Congress:

"When a man of sentiment laboring under odious and injurious suspicions has in prospect a period which promises to afford him relief and restore quiet to his mind, it is natural that he should anxiously wish for its arrival."

"The conviction of a good and a clear conscience leaves not a doubt in my mind that the result of the inquiry into my conduct will have that effect and restore me to the full confidence of such of my honest countrymen as have been led away by popular clamor, and that I shall stand confessed the sincere and affectionate friend of my country."

"Congress will therefore pardon me if I am importunate on this subject."

"I have suffered so much in public life that it cannot create surprise if I anxiously wish to retire and pay that attention to my private affairs, which the losses I have sustained by the enemy and the derangement occasioned by devoting all my time to the duties of my offices have occasioned, and yet the impropriety of resigning them before the inquiry has taken place or the committee reported my innocence, is too striking to need dwelling on."

Congress procrastinated, and it was not until the following year that his repeated requests were granted.

The court martial acquitted him on every count, and in December, 1778, Congress approved the verdict "with the highest honor."

Schuyler then sent in his resignation as Major-General, whereupon John Jay wrote him in March, 1779, from Philadelphia:

"Congress has refused to accept your resignation."

“Twelve States were represented.”

“New England and Pennsylvania against you.”

“The delegates of the latter are new men and not free from the influence of the former.”

“From New York south you have fast friends.”

“Were I in your situation I should not hesitate a moment to continue in the service.”

“I have the best authority to assure you that the Commander-in-Chief wishes you to retain your commission.”

“The propriety of your resignation is now out of the question.”

“Those laws of honor which might have required it are satisfied.”

“Are you certain they do not demand a contrary conduct?”

“You have talents to render you conspicuous in the field, and address to conciliate the affections of those who may now wish you ill.”

“Both these circumstances are of worth to your family, and, independent of public considerations, argue forcibly for the army.”

“Gather laurels for the sake of your country and your children.”

“You can leave them a sufficient share of property.”

“Leave them also the reputation of being descended from an incontestably great man.”

“A man who, uninfluenced by the ingratitude of his country, was unremitting in his exertions to promote her happiness.”

"You have hitherto been no stranger to these sentiments, and therefore I forbear to enlarge."

But Schuyler felt that there were other directions in which he could exert a useful patriotism, and he pressed his resignation, which was accepted the next April.

While the court martial was still in session, he had been elected a delegate to the Continental Congress.

He refused to take his seat while charges were pending against him, but after his acquittal he did so, and rendered constant service at Philadelphia.

During the remainder of the war public business made continual demands.

Washington depended upon him for finding and forwarding provisions for the army.

An occupation to which he devoted a great deal of time, and in which he was often obliged to pledge his private credit.

Negotiations with the Indian tribes and the disordered condition of the New York frontier required his frequent presence in Albany.

In May, 1780, when at Washington's camp, at Morristown, he was recalled by the following letter from Colonel Morgan Lewis:

"Sir John Johnson, we are credibly informed, is in force at Jesup's Creek."

"A universal consternation has seized the frontier inhabitants, and upwards of one hundred and fifty persons, heretofore esteemed good Whigs, imagining themselves neglected, and fearing the resentment of the enemy, have, within these three days, gone off and joined them."

"All Tryon County is on the move to Schenectady, which, in a few days more, must be our western frontier."

“Threats are thrown out against Saratoga, and it is the prevailing opinion, an attempt will be made to destroy it.”

“The strength of the country would be quite sufficient to render this banditti truly despicable could it be exerted.”

“The spirit of the people is good, but we are destitute of the means of subsisting them, not having provision for even our artificers and laborers.”

“Your knowledge of the resources of the country, and influence with the ruling powers will be of great service in this critical juncture, and I confess my apprehensions for those unfortunate people who lie exposed and unprotected are greatly alleviated in the reflection that nothing in your power will be left unessayed.”

Schuyler's activity against the Tories and their Indian allies who worried the western frontier was of such effect, that in 1781, they made a determined effort to capture him.

A band of Tories, Canadians and Indians surrounded and broke into his house.

The railing of the stairway still bears the mark of a tomahawk thrown by a savage at Miss Margaret Schuyler as she ran through the hall with her little sister in her arms.

Schuyler collected his family in an upper room, and by keeping up a musketry fire from the window, and by calling out orders, as if to a rescuing party, he succeeded in frightening the raiders, who fled with the family silver.

Washington wrote to congratulate him on his escape, which "was attended by the flattering circumstance of being effected entirely by your own presence of mind."

When, in May, 1781, Robert Morris had consented to undertake the charge of the continental finances, he applied to Schuyler for his assistance.

It is a station, wrote Morris, "that makes me tremble when I think of it, and which nothing could tempt me to accept but a gleam of hope that my exertions may

possibly retrieve this poor distressed country from the ruin with which it is now threatened merely for want of system and economy in expending and vigour in raising the public monies.”

“Pressed by all my friends, acquaintances and fellow citizens, and still more pressed by the necessity, the absolute necessity of a change in our monied systems to work salvation, I have yielded and taken a load on my shoulders which it is not possible to get clear of without the faithful support and assistance of those good citizens, who not only wish but will promote the service of their country.”

“In this light I now make application to you, sir, whose abilities I know and whose zeal I have every reason to believe.”

To this appeal Schuyler responded with his usual patriotic energy, and later on Morris wrote him:

"I am happy to find your exertions so cheerfully and usefully extended to the public service."