

CHAPTER VII.

THE troops destined for the expedition against Niagara and Frontenac, under Governor Shirley, and against Crown Point, under General Johnson, were ordered to assemble at Albany. The call for volunteers and levies had been cheerfully responded to, and the larger portion of the number summoned were at Albany at the close of June. Those who were to be led by Shirley consisted of certain regiments of regulars furnished by New England, New York, and New Jersey, and a band of Indian auxiliaries. Those who were to follow Johnson consisted chiefly of militia regiments, comprising between five and six thousand men, supplied by New England and New York.

Johnson's lieutenant was Phineas Lyman, of Connecticut, then thirty-nine years of age, who had served his province faithfully in a legislative capacity, and by its authority was commissioned a major-general. He reached Albany with his own regiment at about the middle of June. There he was joined by the eight New York companies, (among which was that of Captain Schuyler,) and three hundred Mohawks, under Hendrick; and with an energy and skill which, in comparison with Johnson, entitled him to the post of chief commander, he arranged the expedition. Johnson, meanwhile, was collecting artillery, boats, and military stores, but so great was the delay that the provincials became tired of inaction and very discontented.

Shirley, meanwhile, had arrived, and taken up his line of march through the Mohawk valley for Oswego.

To prevent the discontented troops from desertion, General Lyman moved up the Hudson, through its rich and beautiful valley, then covered with a forest, where now the smiles of cultivation are seen on every side. It was during the hot days of July, and the troops made short marches. They were five days in making a journey of a little more than fifty miles to a point on the Hudson known as the "great carrying place," in allusion to the isthmus of twenty-five miles between that river and Lake Champlain, which connects the peninsula of New England with the continent, over which the dusky warriors of Canada sometimes carried their canoes when they penetrated the country of the Iroquois. There, on the bank of the river, General Nicholson, who commanded an expedition against Canada in the summer of 1711, built a rude stockade, and upon its site General Lyman, while waiting for General Johnson, employed his troops in the erection of quite a strong timber and earth fortification, of irregular quadrangular form, with bastions at three of the angles, and the fourth resting upon the high bank of the river. The ramparts were sixteen feet in height, and twenty-two feet in thickness, and upon these the general mounted six cannon. One of its sides was protected by a creek, the other by the Hudson river ; and in front of the other two sides a deep fosse was excavated. On the whole it was a strong and well-built fortification, and, in honor of the commander, it was called Fort Lyman. But Johnson, who was ever ready to bend the supple knee to the power from which he might receive honors and emoluments, afterward ungenerously named it Fort Edward, in honor of the Duke of York, grandson of the reigning sovereign, and brother of

the prince who, a few years later, became King George the Third.

On the 8th of August Johnson left Albany with the artillery and stores ; also the New York troops under Lieutenant Colonel William Cockroft, (Captain Schuyler's chief,) and a few of the Connecticut troops left behind by General Lyman. He reached Fort Edward on the 14th, and there, a week later, he held a council of war, to determine what route should be taken to Crown Point. It was unanimously decided that by the way of the Lake of the Holy Sacrament, as Lake George was then called, appeared to them the most eligible, and that they would proceed immediately in that direction.

While these preparations for the campaign in the north were in progress, Braddock was on his way toward Fort Du Quesne, and the eastern expedition, under General Winslow, had performed its mission. Winslow had sailed from Boston toward the close of May with three thousand men, and at the head of the Bay of Fundy, where he landed, was joined by Colonel Monckton, with three hundred British regulars from a neighboring English garrison. There Monckton, Winslow's superior, took the chief command, and in June had conquered the country and placed the whole region under martial rule. So far good, according to the ethics of war, but the cruel sequel deserves, as it has received, universal reprobation. The English decided upon the total destruction of the French settlements in all Acadie, and under the plea that they would be likely to aid their brethren in Canada, that innocent and happy people were seized in their homes, their churches and their fields, conveyed on board the British fleet, without regard to the sanctities of the family relations or the claims of gentle woman and helpless childhood, and borne away. Families

were thus separated for ever ; and to compel those who had escaped the hand of ruthless violence, and fled to the woods for safety, to surrender to the invader, their growing crops and garnered food were totally destroyed, and starvation or captivity were the dreadful alternatives offered to them. The Acadians were completely peeled. Those who were carried away became helpless beggars in the English colonies, to die heart-broken in strange lands. In one short month, their paradise, into which no Satan had ever before intruded, was changed to a desert of despair, and a happy, unoffending people, were crushed into the dust.

Braddock, with about two thousand men, left the Potomac at Cumberland toward the middle of June, and made his weary way over the Alleghanies to attack Fort Du Quesne. His force was composed of British regulars and American provincials ; and young Washington had consented to become his aid, with the rank of colonel. To him was given the command of the provincials. Anxious to reach his destination before the garrison could receive reinforcements, Braddock made forced marches with twelve hundred men, leaving Colonel Dunbar, his second in command, to follow with the remainder and the wagons.

Braddock was a bigoted disciplinarian of the European school, and he spurned the advice of Colonel Washington, when he ventured to propose methods, dictated by experience, to meet the Indians in their native forests. He would listen to no suggestions, especially from a provincial officer, and on the 9th of July, at about mid-day, while marching in fancied security, just after crossing the Monongahela, he fell into an ambuscade. Dusky warriors arose from the ravines and behind the huge forest trees on every side, and poured terrible storms of bullets and arrows upon his doomed army. Even then, had Braddock been willing to

shape his tactics to the exigencies of the moment, his army might have been saved and perhaps victorious, but he obstinately persisted in maneuvering according to European rules, while his troops were falling around him in scores. For three hours a deadly conflict raged in the forest. The slain covered the ground. Every mounted officer but Washington was killed or maimed, and finally the really brave Braddock fell mortally wounded. Washington remained unhurt, took the chief command, rallied the provincials, and gallantly covered the retreat of the regulars, who fled when their general fell. The enemy did not follow, and the remnant of the army was saved. Braddock was carried off the field, and a week afterward he died. Then, by torch-light, Colonel Washington read the impressive funeral service of the Anglican Church over his body, and it was buried beneath a road, where the Indians might not discover and desecrate it. The flying troops were received by Colonel Dunbar, and Washington, with the southern provincials, went back to Virginia. Thus ended in utter defeat an expedition to which all others of the campaign were secondary.

The expedition against Niagara and Frontenac, under the personal guidance of General Shirley, although not so disastrous as that under Braddock, was equally unsuccessful. The main body of Shirley's troops were not assembled at Oswego, the point of general rendezvous for an attack on these forts, until late in August. Shirley was informed of Braddock's defeat while on his march through the upper Mohawk valley, and the intelligence spread consternation throughout the army. Many of the boatmen and sledge men, hired to transport provisions and stores to Oswego, began to desert; and the Indians, also alarmed, showed signs of serious defection. Much time was consumed in

efforts to conciliate and reassure them, for, as on all occasions, the savages were unwilling to remain with what appeared to them the weaker party. Many bands of Indians fell off, and when, on the 21st of August, Shirley arrived at Oswego, his forces was so much reduced by desertion, and the fidelity of the Indians was so insecure, that he hesitated about proceeding further. He finally moved forward, but a succession of heavy rains so damaged his munitions of war that he abandoned the expedition, and leaving Colonel Mercer, with a garrison of seven hundred men, at Oswego, instructed to build two additional forts for the defense of that station, he marched the remainder of the army back to Albany.

The alarming intelligence of Braddock's disaster and the failure of Shirley somewhat dispirited the troops under Johnson, and a feeling generally prevailed that the expedition against the French at Crown Point would also prove an utter failure. But the New England people had entered into this scheme for expelling the French from Lake Champlain with a great deal of earnestness, their borders being peculiarly exposed to incursions from the north while Crown Point was in possession of the enemy. For this reason the troops at Fort Edward, who were chiefly from the East, were ready to press forward.

Leaving a sufficient garrison to hold Fort Edward, Johnson set out on the 26th of August, with the main body of the army, for the Lake of the Holy Sacrament, a distance of about seventeen miles, and arrived at its head on the evening of the 28th. With the same loyalty that caused him to change the name of Fort Lyman to that of Fort Edward, Johnson now called the beautiful sheet of water, upon whose margin he stood, Lake George, "not" he said "in simple honor of his majesty, but to assert his undoubted

dominion here." "I found," he said, "a mere wilderness ; never was house or fort erected here before." He at once commenced a clearing for a camp of five thousand men, but, with strange indolence or lack of sagacity, not a spade or pick was employed in making intrenchments. There his camp lay, with the open lake on one side and the sheltering forest on the other, completely exposed to the attacks of a vigilant and stealthy enemy.

Slowly wagon after wagon brought artillery, boats, and stores to that camp, while the soldiers spent day after day in utter idleness, notwithstanding Indian scouts brought the intelligence that a party of French and savages were erecting a fort at Ticonderoga, twelve miles further into the country of the English than the post against which this expedition was pressing. This intelligence startled Johnson, and he resolved to construct a rude fort at the head of the lake, and then, with part of his troops, proceed in bateaux to its foot, march over through the forest, and take possession of Ticonderoga before the enemy could complete their works, rest there until joined by the remainder of his forces, and then attack Crown Point.

Johnson was leisurely preparing for this movement, when scouts brought intelligence that the enemy in considerable numbers were pushing through the forests from South Bay, an expansion of the narrow part of Lake Champlain near Whitehall. The report was true. A force of almost two thousand men, consisting of French regulars, Canadians, and Indians, under the Baron Dieskau, an able and experienced general, was advancing toward the English settlements. He had arrived at Quebec in the spring, with about two thousand regulars, and intended to go up the St. Lawrence and Lake Ontario, capture Oswego, and hold in awe the whole Iroquois confederacy. Information of John-

son's expedition against Crown Point caused him to change his plan, and with a part of his troops to go up Lake Champlain to assist in the defense of Fort St. Frederick. He waited there for the approach of Johnson until, wearied with inaction, he determined to press forward and meet his enemy. With the vigilance of an accomplished disciplinarian, he made himself acquainted with the condition and movements of his opponents ; and when he arrived at South Bay he resolved to cut a road through the woods in the direction of Fort Edward, attack and capture the garrison there, and then, with quick movement, fall upon Johnson's exposed camp at the head of Lake George. This accomplished, he intended to turn southward, desolate Albany and Schenectada, and cut off all communication with Oswego. Dieskau believed his plan could be accomplished with comparative ease, and under this impression he moved forward.

Sunday, the 7th of September, was a beautiful day. The sun shone in splendor upon the provincial camp that lay upon the rising ground at the head of Lake George ; and when the sermons for the day were over, the soldiers sauntered listlessly in the shade along the margin of the forest, and the Mohawk braves forgot to be vigilant under the influence of the feeling of security that prevailed. The scouts were out upon the mountains and in the ravines, but no alarm disturbed the quiet of the camp, and the sun went down that night as it had gone down many nights before, leaving an unwise general to sleep in fancied safety, without a battery or a trench for defense.

The evening wore away and the camp-fires were burning feebly, when, at midnight or past, scouts came in hot haste to the general's tent to inform him that the woods between South Bay and Fort Edward were swarming with

French and Indian warriors. Johnson immediately sent swift couriers first to Fort Edward, and then to New England and to the authorities of his own province, with information of his peril and a call for help. Massachusetts was the first to respond, by raising, in addition to her troops already in the field, several hundred more. But before they could reach the scene of danger all danger was past.

On the morning of the 8th, General Johnson called a council of war, and as the enemy were seen making their way in the direction of Fort Edward, it was resolved to send a detachment of a thousand men to the relief of the garrison there. Colonel Ephraim Williams, of Massachusetts, was chosen to command the relief corps, and he was joined by Hendrick and two hundred of his Mohawk warriors. At nine o'clock in the morning they started in the direction of Fort Edward.

Meanwhile the cowardice or extreme caution of the Indians with Dieskau foiled that general. Full three hundred of them were discontented warriors of the Six Nations, who had emigrated to Canada, and the other three hundred were Abenakes. The Iroquois, as they approached Fort Edward, heard that there were cannon upon its ramparts. They had learned to dread that destructive engine, and refused to attack the fort. The Abenakes joined in the refusal, but all agreed to attack the unfortified camp at the head of the lake. Dieskau, therefore, turned his face in that direction. His scouts soon brought him intelligence of the advancing troops under Williams, and his whole force was placed in ambuscade, according to Indian custom.

Williams, unsuspecting of danger, had marched about three miles from the camp, when his party fell into the ambush, which was in crescent form. French and Indians

rose upon them on every side, and poured deadly volleys upon the bewildered provincials and Mohawks. Hendrick, who was advanced in years and quite corpulent, was the only man on horseback. He had shrewdly remarked in the morning, when told of the number of the detachment, "If they are to fight, they are too few; if they are to be killed, they are too many." And he had objected to the proposition of making three divisions, saying, as he put three sticks together, "Unite them and you can not break them; take them one by one, and you can break them easily." Johnson, guided by the opinion of Hendrick, ordered the whole detachment to march in one body.

Hendrick fell almost at the first fire, and his braves turned back upon the advancing provincials. Williams mounted a rock for the purpose of reconnoitering, when he, too, fell mortally wounded. The slaughter soon became dreadful, and the surviving provincials and Indians, under the general command of Lieutenant Colonel Whiting, of New Haven, retreated in good order toward the camp, frequently delivering galling fires upon the pursuers. As they drew near the camp, their retreat was covered by a party of three hundred men, under Lieutenant Colonel Cole, sent out by General Johnson for the purpose.

When Johnson heard the din of battle in the forest, and its sounds approaching nearer and nearer, he was aroused to a sense of real danger, and at once ordered breastworks of trees to be raised. At the same time some field pieces that had been sent from Fort Edward were placed in battery, and some heavy cannon and a howitzer, intended for use at Crown Point that were lying upon the shore of the lake, were dragged up the bank and placed upon the rude breastwork. These hasty preparations for

defense were scarcely finished when the fugitives appeared with the enemy in hot pursuit.

It had been Dieskau's plan to rush forward suddenly, and enter the camp with the flying provincials, but when within a short distance of the breastworks, his Indians, from rising ground, saw the cannon, they halted. The Canadians also faltered. The Baron, with his regulars, after brief hesitation, rushed forward to attack the center of the camp, where he was received with severe volleys of musketry. He had hoped for aid in this assault from the Canadians and Indians, whom he had placed on his flanks, but they were shy, and a bombshell from the howitzer, and a heavy fire of grape shot from the larger cannon, under the direction of Captain Eyre, of the engineer corps of Braddock's army, soon caused the two wings to flee. And yet, for more than four hours did Dieskau and his regulars, with no other weapon than the musket, sustain the severe conflict. Three times the baron was wounded, but he would not retire, and nearly all of his brave men perished. Resolved on death or victory, he ordered his servant to place his military dress near him. Faint with fatigue and loss of blood, he sat upon a stump in the midst of the leaden storm. At length the provincials, leaping over the breastworks, put the shattered enemy to flight. Dieskau remained, unable to flee; and as a provincial soldier who discovered him approached, he put his hand in his pocket to offer him his watch as a bribe to allow him to escape. Believing the baron to be feeling for his pistol, the provincial shot him severely in the hip, and in that condition he was made prisoner and carried into the American camp, where General Johnson also lay wounded in the fleshy part of his thigh, from a ball sent in the beginning of the action. The battle, during the whole conflict, was

conducted by General Lyman, and the credit of the victory properly belonged to that brave and energetic man.

Hendrick's Indians wished to pursue the fugitives and take revenge for the loss of their leader, and Lyman strongly recommended pursuit. Had that course been taken, no doubt the whole body of the enemy might have been slain or made prisoners. But Johnson, with his usual indecision, refused permission to pursue, and the best fruits of the victory were lost.

Just at evening the fugitives were met and attacked by a party of two hundred men, under Captain M'Ginnis, a mere lad, from New Hampshire. The enemy fled in dismay, but the young leader was killed at the moment of his victory. The Americans lost on that day about two hundred and sixteen killed and ninety-six wounded.* The loss of the French and their allies was much greater. The French major-general was killed; also St. Pierre, to whom Washington carried a letter from Dinwiddie. He commanded the Indians in this engagement.

General Lyman, with much vehemence, urged General Johnson to push forward immediately and take possession of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, a matter of easy accomplishment while the French were panic stricken by the disasters at Lake George. But Johnson, having none of the qualities of a good general, did not know how to profit by success. General Shirley and the authorities of New Eng-

* The muster roll of the following companies that were in Johnson's army at that time, are preserved in the archives of the State of New York:

CAPTAINS.		Officers.	Rank and File.
Philip John Schuyler's company,	Albany,	3.....	89
Edmund Matthews'	"	3.....	97
Isaac Corsa's	Westchester,	—.....	95
Pieter Vanderburgh's	Dutchess,	3.....	78
William M'Ginnis's	Schenectada,	3.....	89
Samuel Dimock's	Seabrook, Ct.,	3.....	97
John Slap's	Dunham, Ct.,	3.....	97
Street Hall's	Wallingford, Ct.,	3.....	97

land, and even a council of war of his own army, urged him to advance, but in vain. He pleaded his expectation of being shortly attacked by a more formidable force with artillery; and he spent the whole autumn in his camp, employing the men, under the direction of Captain Eyre, in the useless labor of building a fort there, to which, when completed, he gave the name of William Henry, in honor of two English princes. It was an irregular quadrangle of about three hundred feet on each side. It was commenced in September and completed by the close of November. Johnson then placed six hundred New York troops in the fort as a garrison, disbanded the New England militia, and returned to his home amid the barbarians of the Mohawk valley, to await the rewards which he was certain to receive through the influence of friends at court and the ungenerous maxims of military ethics which then prevailed. He was careful not to divide the honors of the event. With a meanness paralleled only by his own incapacity, he did not even mention, in his report to the Lords of Trade, the name of General Lyman, the real leader in the victory. And it was immediately after the battle that, with evident jealousy of Lyman, he sought to hide his name in oblivion by changing the name of Fort Lyman to that of Fort Edward. The imperial government, elated by this, the only cheering event in the disastrous campaign of the year, created Johnson a baronet and gave him twenty thousand dollars wherewith to support the dignity of the title.* The honor and the emolument were unworthily bestowed. They were given to an avaricious and immoral man and unskillful gen-

* The appointment was thus announced in the *London Gazette* :

“ WHITEHALL, November 18, 1755.

“ The King has been pleased to grant unto William Johnson, of New York, America, Esquire, and his heirs male the dignity of a baronet of Great Britain.

eral, while another, pure, and noble, and brave, was suffered to go unnoticed, either by his general or by the King whom he served.

We have no record of the special part (if any) which Captain Schuyler and his company performed in the battle at Lake George. Two or three days after the engagement, he set out for Albany charged with special duties which were particularly pleasing to him. One from his general was to make arrangements for the reception of the French prisoners at Albany ; and the other was the more pleasing commission of his affections, to marry one to whom he had been for some time affianced. That marriage, as we have already observed, was solemnized on the 17th of September, nine days after the battle. For a week the young soldier was allowed to remain with his bride in the enjoyment of nuptial festivities, in which, no doubt, the best elements of society in Albany participated. Then he repaired to the camp at Lake George, and remained there until the dismissal of the New England troops, a few weeks later, when he was employed in the important service of making Fort Edward a safe *dépôt* of military stores.

The wounded Baron Dieskau, and his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant Colonel Bernier, of the Royal Swedish regiment, arrived in Albany during Captain Schuyler's bridal festivities, and at once received his personal attentions. The captain was almost the only officer in Johnson's army who could speak French fluently, and as Dieskau could not speak English, they had become quite intimate at headquarters before Schuyler left for Albany. The number of French prisoners including the Baron was twenty-nine. Twenty-one of them were sent to Fort Edward by General Johnson on the 15th, to be joined by six others there in a *batteau* voyage down the Hudson under a proper guard.

Dieskau and Bernier followed the next day. The latter was slightly wounded, the former seriously. He was carried on a litter to Fort Edward, and from there to Albany in a batteau.

Dieskau was a brave old Saxon, and always acted according to the motto on his arms "BOLDNESS WINS." He had been a great favorite with the celebrated Marshal Saxe, with whom he had long served, and by whom he was made the executor of that great soldier's last will. He had come to Canada with Vaudreuil, (lately appointed governor general of that province,) in the spring of 1755, as commander-in-chief of all the French forces in America. He had expected, as Burgoyne, twenty years later, boasted he should, to eat his Christmas dinner a conqueror in Albany. He was there long before Christmas, a prisoner, with wounds which caused his death at Surenne, in France, on the 8th of September, 1767.

Like Burgoyne, Dieskau experienced the most generous hospitality in Albany, and at the hands of the same man—Philip Schuyler. Before leaving his mother and his bride for the northern camp, Captain Schuyler made ample provisions for the prisoners, and especially for the Baron and his aide-de-camp; and he enjoined his family to do all in their power, during his absence, to alleviate the sufferings of the brave and unfortunate old general. How well his injunctions were heeded, and how gratefully the kind attentions of his family were accepted by the prisoners, the following letter, written in French, by Dieskau's aide-de-camp to Captain Schuyler, fully attests:

"ALBANY, October 5, 1755.

"I have received, sir, and dear friend, the letter which you have done me the honor to write to me from your camp. It is full of politeness and sentiment. As to the portion intended particularly for me, I am truly

sensible; and I should esteem myself infinitely happy to be able to give you some marks of my gratitude, and of the esteem and friendship which are due to you.

"I have read the letter to the Baron Dieskau. It has confirmed him in the good opinion of you which, you know, he has reason to entertain. He is still as when you left him—still suffering, and uncertain how his wounds will end at last. He charges me to pray you, in his behalf, to present his compliments to Mr. Johnson, and to assure him of the extent of his gratitude to him.* His greatest desire is to be able to write to him himself. I pray you add to the Baron's wishes my very humble respects.

"One can add nothing to the politeness of Madame, your mother, and Madame, your wife. Every day there comes from them, to the Baron, fruits and other rare sweets, which are of great service to him. He orders me, on this subject, to express to you all that he owes to the attentions of these ladies. If it was permitted me to go out, I should already have been often to present to them his respects and mine.

"The Baron has been much pleased to learn by your letter that General Johnson esteems you, and gives you marks of his consideration and goodness. If he shall have the happiness to be restored to health, and to see your General again, he will himself be the proclaimer of all the good words which should be said of you, and which in justice he owes you, for the trouble and care that you have had for him.

"I pray you, my dear Captain, to say many things to Engineer Eyre on the part of the Baron and myself. For the good will I bear you, I wish you might secure his particular friendship. He is an officer of distinction, and if you love the trade of war seek his instructions. We knew him long before we saw him, because of his merits and reputation, and the Baron, who is a connoisseur in these things, has a great regard for him. To facilitate your access to him, say to him that the Baron prays him to extend to you the friendship he bears for himself.

"I do not know yet when, if at all, we will go to New York; but if we are ever there, give us news of you, I pray you; and if you shall ever come there, you know beforehand how much pleasure it will give the Baron to see you, and to renew his sentiments of friendship. As for me, I owe too much to yours, not to seek every means to merit your friendship. I have the honor to be, my dear captain, your very humble and very obedient servant,
"BERNIER."

"Salute, I pray you, on my part, Colonel Cole, and all those gentlemen by whom I have the honor to be known."†

* General Johnson lent the Baron fifty guineas when he left Lake George for Albany.

† Translation of autograph letter.