

CHAPTER VIII.

GOVERNOR SHIRLEY, the successor of Braddock as commander-in-chief of the British forces in America, was a splendid theorist, but knew very little about war practically. He had pursued the profession of the law with indifferent success, until, upon the tide of politics, he was borne into office, and by great self-reliance, industry, and assurance, he gained a commanding position in the colonies. At a convention of colonial governors held at New York in December, 1755, he submitted a plan of a campaign for 1756, which was adopted by the convention and approved by the home government. It was proposed to employ ten thousand men in an attack upon Crown Point, six thousand in an expedition against Fort Niagara, three thousand against Fort Du Quesne, and two thousand to menace Quebec, by crossing the wilderness by way of the Kennebec and Chaudière rivers, over which Arnold marched nineteen years later. Shirley's plan also contemplated the expulsion of the French from Toronto and Frontenac, on the north shore of Lake Ontario, and to take possession of that great inland sea, and cut off Montreal and Quebec from the interior posts of Niagara, Du Quesne, Detroit, Michillimackinac, and those on the waters of the Mississippi.

The British government had resolved to declare war against France, and to prosecute the campaign with vigor. Extensive preparations were accordingly made. Shirley, who had offended Lieutenant-Governor De Lancey and his

friends by not inviting them to the grand council in New York, became a victim to their intrigues. Through their representations the blame of Braddock's defeat, and other disasters of the campaign of 1755, were laid upon the shoulders of Shirley, and a strong party in England, irritated thereby, caused him to be superseded in that office.

The successor of Shirley was the Earl of Loudoun, a man totally unfit for any command whatever. He was indolent and ever unready, and his conduct in the administration of military affairs in America justified the comparison made by a gentlemen in conversation with Dr. Franklin, who said his lordship "reminded him of St. George upon the tavern signs—always on horseback but never gets forward." General Abercrombie was his lieutenant, who, not at all remarkable for skill and forethought, was nevertheless a better officer than his superior.

England did not proclaim open hostility to France until the middle of May, 1756, but her ships of war, with no justification but a pirate's right, founded upon might, not only despoiled French commerce, but in opposition to the righteous declaration of Frederick of Prussia, that "free ships make free goods"—that by the law of nations the property of an enemy can not be taken from on board the ships of a friend—forbade neutral vessels to carry merchandise belonging to her antagonist, and seized it when so carried. Thus, under cover of a legal representation made to the King in 1753, by the eminent Murray, (afterward Lord Mansfield,) the British government commenced that system of warfare upon the commerce of neutrals which became a chief cause of the last war for American independence sixty years afterward.

Spring had passed and summer had begun before Lou-

doun was ready to sail for America. Abercrombie, with some regulars, departed toward the close of April, and arrived at New York early in June. There he lingered for some time and then ascended the Hudson to Albany, where he met Shirley and received information of the exposed condition of Oswego, and the general alarm of the country on account of the depredations of the Indians. There, also, was General Winslow, with seven thousand men, whom he had been commissioned by Shirley to lead against Crown Point, and who were anxious to press forward, for the whole frontier was menaced by the French and Indians. But instead of acting promptly for the public good, Abercrombie took his ease; instead of stimulating the patriotism of the provincials, he cast fire-brands among the troops and the people by asserting the right of the regular officers to command those of the provincial army of the same rank, and insisting upon the propriety of quartering the soldiers upon the inhabitants. These assumptions caused serious disputes and mutual dislikes. "Go back again," said Sybrant Van Schaick, the mayor of Albany, to the troops, when he became utterly disgusted with them; "go back, for we can defend our frontiers ourselves." But Abercrombie would not allow them to move backward or forward, but with at least ten thousand men, regulars and provincials, he lay in supineness at Albany, waiting for the Earl of Loudoun and casting up useless fortifications.*

Meanwhile an active officer had been performing signal

* Fort Frederick, built in 1746, when Cornelius Schuylcr was mayor of Albany, was in excellent condition, though quite an inefficient fortification. Kalm described it, in 1748, as "a great building of stone, surrounded with high and thick walls." A drawing of it before me shows it to have been quadrangular, with bastions, and apparently very strong. Its position was a bad one, as there were several hills westward of it that completely commanded it.

service in the interior with a handful of men. It was Colonel John Bradstreet, who, ten years earlier, was lieutenant-governor of St. John's, Newfoundland. Shirley had perceived the great importance of keeping open a communication with Oswego, where an English garrison was maintained. For this purpose forty companies of boatmen were placed under the command of Bradstreet. With these, and about two hundred provincial troops, he penetrated the country toward Oswego at the close of spring, suffering many hardships on the way. He went up the Mohawk to the site of Fort Stanwix, which he assisted in building two years afterward. Then he crossed a portage to Wood creek, and passed through Oneida Lake to the Oswego river. After leaving the lake he found vigilant enemies, for the French and Indians were hovering around the fort at Oswego with the intention of making it a prey. But Bradstreet, cautious and brave, made his way to the fort, and placed in it provisions and stores for five thousand men for six months.

Captain Schuyler, whose industry, judgment, and faithfulness in the performance of his duties at Fort Edward during the preceding winter, had won for him the warmest esteem of Shirley, accompanied Bradstreet as commissary, on the strong recommendation of the commanding general; and thus commenced that intimate relationship which existed between Bradstreet and Schuyler while they both lived. The latter was only twenty-three years of age when this expedition was undertaken, but his knowledge of the country, obtained in his previous hunting and trading excursions, made him a most valuable aid. He shared with the common soldiers and the batteau-men the perils and privations of the campaign; and when, on the 3d of July, as Bradstreet and his party were just commencing their

march from Oswego to Albany, they were attacked by a party of French regulars, Canadians, and Indians, nine miles up the Oswego river, he displayed an intrepidity and humanity creditable alike to a soldier and a true man. He was one of eight men who, with Bradstreet at their head, reached a small island in the river, and drove thirty of the enemy from it. One of them, a French Canadian, was too badly wounded to flee, and as a batteau-man was about to dispatch him with a tomahawk, Captain Schuyler interposed and saved his life. Just then forty of the enemy returned to the attack. Bradstreet and his party had been reinforced by six men, and the French and Indians were received so warmly that they were compelled to flee. A few minutes afterward seventy of the enemy appeared upon the shore, and at the same time six more of Bradstreet's men joined him. For a while the contest was warm and the result doubtful. The enemy poured a cross fire upon Bradstreet, and twelve of his followers were wounded. The French were finally compelled to retire, for the third time, and did not renew the attack.

About four hundred of the enemy were now seen approaching the river on the north side, a mile above, with the apparent intention of crossing and surrounding the provincials. Bradstreet immediately quitted the island, and at the head of two hundred and fifty men marched up to confront them.

Owing to accident, there was only one batteau at the island when Bradstreet resolved to leave it, and it was hardly sufficient to carry his party over. The wounded Canadian begged to be taken in, but was refused. "Then throw me into the river," he cried, "and not leave me here to perish with hunger and thirst." The heart of Captain Schuyler was touched by the poor fellow's appeal, and handing his

weapons and coat to a companion-in-arms, he bore the wounded man to the water, swam with him across the deep channel, and placed him in the care of Dr. Kirkland with the approbation of Bradstreet. The man recovered ; and when, in 1775, Schuyler, as commander-in-chief of the northern army, sent a proclamation into Canada inviting the French inhabitants to join the patriots, that soldier was living near Chamblée, and gladly enlisted under the banner of Ethan Allen, that he might see and thank the preserver of his life. His wish was gratified, and he made himself known to Schuyler in his tent at *Isle aux Noix*.

Captain Schuyler joined Bradstreet and his party as soon as his wounded prisoner was in the hands of the surgeon, and he was in the severe engagement which occurred in a swamp half an hour afterward. The enemy had crossed the river in considerable numbers. Bradstreet attacked them boldly, and drove them from their skulking places in the swamp to the bank of the river, leaving them the alternative of captivity or the perils of the flood. Many of them rushed into the river and were drowned, and others were slain. In this engagement the provincials lost twenty killed and twenty-four wounded. Of the enemy full a hundred perished by weapon and flood, and others escaped to the forests. "This repulse," said a letter-writer of the time, "will doubtless check the incursions of the French, shake their Indian interest, strengthen our own, and secure our future convoys in their passage to Oswego."

Bradstreet was soon afterward joined by some of Shirley's grenadiers on their way to the fort, and also by two hundred men from the garrison. Thus reinforced he would have gone in quest of the main body of the French, who were eastward upon the shore of Lake Ontario, but exces-

sive rains prevented. He made his way back to Albany with his command, where he arrived on the 13th of July, and communicated to Abercrombie the important intelligence that a French army was on its way to attack Oswego. But, notwithstanding the way was opened, and Colonel Webb, with the forty-ninth regiment, was ordered to hold himself in readiness to march to its defense, nothing was done. Abercrombie kept his ten thousand men at Albany until the arrival of the Earl of Loudoun, at the close of July. His lordship appeared to require rest after a sloop voyage from New York of one hundred and sixty miles, and he, too, loitered in Albany, until want of employment and close quarters in hot weather generated disease in the camp and caused universal dissatisfaction in the army.

While these inefficient commanders were wasting time and energy at Albany, and producing great irritation by giving superior command over the provincials to the regular officers, and treating the former with contempt, the more active French were accomplishing their designs. The Marquis de Montcalm, a field-marshal of France, and an active officer, had succeeded Dieskau in the supreme command. He visited Ticonderoga in July, obtained accurate information of the strength of the forces and the weakness of the commanders at Albany, and immediately hastened to Montreal to collect troops for an expedition against Oswego. He assembled about five thousand Frenchmen, Canadians, and Indians at Frontenac, (now Kingston, in Upper Canada,) and with these, and thirty pieces of cannon, he crossed Lake Ontario, and landed within a few miles of Oswego early in August. On the 11th he appeared before Fort Ontario, on the east side of the river, and demanded the surrender of the garrison. Their commander, Colonel Mercer, refused compliance. Montcalm commenced a regular

seige, and at midnight of the 12th he opened his trenches. After a brave resistance, Mercer spiked his cannon and retreated to Fort Oswego, on the opposite side of the river. Montcalm's guns were immediately brought to bear upon that old fortification. Colonel Mercer was killed, and on the 14th the garrison, sixteen hundred in number, surrendered. Among the prisoners was Colonel Peter Schuyler, of New Jersey, mentioned in Philip's letter on page 69. He was released on parole. Forty-five of the garrison had been slain, and the remainder, except some officers, were sent down the St. Lawrence, prisoners of war. The post, with all its cannon, vessels of war, ammunition, and stores, fell into the hands of the French. The forts were demolished, and the whole country of the Six Nations was laid open to the incursions of the enemy. Oswego was left a solitude ; and Colonel Webb, who had advanced as far as the Oneida portage, informed of the fact, fled to Albany, terror giving speed to his movements.

The sluggish blood of Loudoun was somewhat stirred by these events. It was caused only by the excitement of feverish alarm, however. He had troops enough to have conquered Canada in that single campaign, under an efficient leader, but they were leashed to his unreadiness and incapacity. After loitering at Albany a few weeks longer, recalling the troops on their way toward Ticonderoga, and uttering ungenerous and wicked complaints against the provincials, expecting therewith to cover his own imbecility, he dismissed them to their homes, and ordered the regulars into winter quarters. A thousand of them went to New York, where he opened afresh the bitter controversy of the colonists with the home government by demanding quarters for his troops. When Mayor Cruger, in the name of the people, demurred at the demand made for free quarters for the

officers, Loudoun uttered a coarse oath, and said, "If you do not billet my officers upon free quarters this day, I'll order here all the troops in North America under my command, and billet them myself upon the city." Loudoun spoke by authority, for an order in council, after more than half a century of recommendation from the Board of Trade, was passed in July, 1756, establishing a rule, without limitation, that troops might be kept in the colonies and quartered on them at pleasure, without the consent of the colonial Legislatures. This order, virtually establishing a standing army in the colonies, to be maintained, in a great measure, by the people, was the magnetic touch that gave vitality to that sentiment of resistance which soon sounded the tocsin of revolution. The authorities of New York yielded temporarily to Loudoun's demand, under a silent but most solemn protest.

Military operations, under Loudoun's administration, were quite as inefficient elsewhere as in the province of New York. Washington was at the head of fifteen hundred volunteers and drafted militia, but was made powerless by official interference; and the only important achievement on the part of the English during the year, excepting the operations of Bradstreet, was the severe chastisement of the Delawares in Western Pennsylvania, by some provincial troops, under Colonel John Armstrong, of that province. The chief rendezvous of the Indians, near the Kittanning mountains, thirty-five miles from Fort Du Quesne, was assailed by Armstrong and his party, with whom was Captain (afterward general) Hugh Mercer of Virginia, on the night of the 8th of September. The leading chief of the savages was killed, the town was destroyed, and the offending Delawares were completely humbled. Thus ended the campaign of 1756. The French still held

in possession almost all of the territory in dispute and the most important of their military posts.

Captain Schuyler was so thoroughly disgusted with the military operations of the year that he left the service at the end of the campaign, and remained in private life during the stirring events in northern New York in 1757. Yet he was not an indifferent nor an idle spectator. Between himself and Colonel Bradstreet there was a strong attachment, and Captain Schuyler was frequently employed as counselor, and sometimes as efficient actor in providing supplies for the army. He had also become a favorite with Sir William Johnson, and it is believed that the baronet offered him the position of a deputy superintendent of Indian affairs, when, in the spring of 1757, Sir William expected to take the field with Mohawk warriors.

Loudon called a military council at Boston in January, 1757. It assembled on the 19th, when his Lordship proposed to confine the operations of that year to an expedition against Louisburg, and to a defense of the northern frontiers. The northern colonies, and especially those of New England, were disappointed. Their favorite scheme was the expulsion of the French from Lake Champlain, and, if possible, from the territory south of the St. Lawrence. The New England representatives in the council urged the importance of such a result, but in vain. Loudon was imperious, and had very little respect for the opinions of any provincial. Wiser and better men than he acquiesced in his plans, but deplored the poverty of his judgment and his lack of executive force. But the general ardor of the colonists was not abated, and the call for troops was so promptly responded to, that at the opening of summer more than six thousand provincials were in arms. Much might have been done toward wiping out the

disgrace of the previous year, had efficient men been at the head of civil affairs in England, and a good general controlled military operations in America. The silly Duke of Newcastle, who was ignorant of the fact that Cape Breton, on which the fortress of Louisburg was situated, was an island, was the prime minister of England. He read Loudoun's dispatches "with great attention and satisfaction," and praised his "great diligence and ability," while Loudoun himself was doing all in his power to disgust the colonists by laying an embargo upon all ships in North American ports, preventing the exportation of wheat, and, as was alleged, sharing in the enormous profits of the contractors who supplied the army and navy with flour.

Loudoun resolved to go to Louisburg in person. He ordered Colonel Boquet to watch the frontiers of the Carolinas ; gave General Stanwix control of the western theater of war, with about two thousand troops ; and making General Webb his second in command, sent him, with six thousand men, to defend the frontiers of New York and keep the French from Forts William Henry and Edward.

After impressing four hundred men at New York, Loudoun sailed for Halifax on the 20th of June. He arrived at his destination ten days afterward, and found himself at the head of a well-appointed army of ten thousand men, with a fleet of sixteen ships of the line and several frigates. With his usual procrastination he laid out a parade at Halifax, planted a vegetable garden for the use of his armament, exercised his troops in mock battles, and thus consumed the precious summer months. His officers, among whom was Charles Lee, afterward a major-general in the continental army under Washington, became mortified and exasperated ; and Major General Lord Charles Hay expressed his contempt so loudly as to be arrested.

He said that the commander-in-chief was "keeping the courage of his Majesty's soldiers at bay, and expending the nation's wealth in planting cabbages, when they ought to have been fighting the enemies of their king and country in reality."

August came, and Loudoun was about to sail for Louisburg, when he was informed that the French had one more ship than he, and a reinforcement in the garrison. This alarmed his lordship, and he changed the plan of the campaign and sailed for New York, to be met on the way by intelligence of disasters on Lake George and the failure of all his weak plans.

The vigilant and active Montcalm had again carried away trophies of victory from the English. The French partisans in the field were vigilant, active, and brave. Marin, who in 1745 desolated Saratoga, was upon the war-path with Canadians and Indians. Early in the summer, with two hundred men, he penetrated almost to Fort Edward, and his savage allies carried back to Ticonderoga the scalps of forty provincials. Meanwhile Montcalm was preparing a powerful armament at Ticonderoga. Toward the close of July he was at the foot of Lake George with more than eight thousand men, (of whom almost two thousand were Indians,) and a train of artillery, and proceeded to besiege Fort William Henry, at the head of the lake, then garrisoned by five hundred men, under Colonel Munro, a brave English officer, who was supported by an intrenched camp inclosing nearly two thousand provincial soldiers.

Montcalm appeared before Fort William Henry on the 2d of August, and planted a battery of nine cannon and two mortars, and then demanded a surrender. Colonel Munro, confident of efficient aid from Colonel Webb, then

at Fort Edward with four thousand men, and to whom he had sent an express on the approach of Montcalm, promptly refused. But that confidence in his commanding general was sadly misplaced. For six days Montcalm continued the siege, and every hour Munro expected aid from Fort Edward, for expresses, at great peril to the riders, were sent to General Webb daily. But no reinforcements were sent. Even Sir William Johnson, who had obtained Webb's reluctant consent to hasten toward Lake George, and had proceeded several miles with a corps of provincials and Putnam's Rangers, was ordered back. Nothing was sent to Munro but a letter filled with exaggerations and advice to surrender. This fell into Montcalm's hands just as he was about to raise the siege and retire. He then made a peremptory demand for a surrender, at the same time sending Webb's letter in to Munro. That brave officer still hesitated, notwithstanding half his cannon were useless and his ammunition was exhausted. But he was compelled to yield. Montcalm made honorable terms, for he respected a brave soldier. The English were to depart under an escort, on a pledge not to serve against the French during the next eighteen months. To insure the fulfillment of the capitulation on the part of the victors, Montcalm called the Indian leaders into council and obtained their acquiescence. The garrison marched out on the 9th of August and retired to their intrenched camp, where the ruins of Fort George may now be seen, and the French took possession. That night was one of anxiety for the captives. From English suttlers the Indians procured liquor. Intoxication followed. Their passions were inflamed, and in the morning, when the prisoners on parole departed for Fort Edward, the savages fell upon them to plunder and destroy. The French could not restrain them, and in

great confusion and terror the survivors fled to Fort Edward. The fort and all its appendages were laid in ruins, and for nearly a hundred years nothing marked its site but the remains of its intrenchments. Now an immense hotel occupies the ground, and thousands spend the summer months there in gayety, unconscious of the sanguinary associations that cluster around the locality.

Webb was undoubtedly a coward. When Fort William Henry fell he sent his own baggage to a place of safety far down the Hudson, and would have retreated to the Highlands had not young Lord Howe, who arrived at Fort Edward on the 7th, persuaded him that he and his command were in no immediate danger. And Loudoun, utterly confused, proposed to encamp on Long Island, two hundred miles from Lake George, "for the defense of the continent."

The position of affairs in America now alarmed the English people. The government of the aristocracy had paralyzed the energies of the whole empire, and both America and England were humbled by the events of the summer of 1757. "We are undone," said Chesterfield, "at home by our increasing expenses ; abroad by ill-luck and incapacity." In America there was much irritation. Thoroughly imbued with democratic ideas, and knowing their competency, unaided by royal troops, to assert and maintain their rights, they regarded the interference of the home government, in their quarrel with the French, as an impediment to their success. Some of the royal governors were rapacious, others were incompetent, and all were distinguished by a haughty demeanor toward the colonists, highly offensive to their just dignity as freemen. They demanded money as a master would command the service of his slave ; and the arrogant assumption of superiority

by the English officers disgusted the provincial officers and troops, and often cooled the ardor of whole regiments of brave Americans.

The people of England yearned for a change in the administration of public affairs, and the popular will at length prevailed. William Pitt, by far the ablest statesman England had yet produced, was called to the position of prime minister in June, 1757, after a struggle of eleven weeks, during which time the realm had no ministry. "Give me your confidence," said Pitt to the King, "and I will deserve it." "Deserve my confidence," the King replied, "and you shall have it."

Pitt knew that it was the voice of the people that had called him to the head of affairs, and for the welfare of that people and the realm, he wrought. Patriotism, energy, and good judgment marked every movement of his administration, especially in measures for prosecuting the war in America. He could not hear from Loudoun, or know what he was about, so he recalled him, and gave the chief command in America to Abercrombie. Relying upon the spontaneous patriotism of the colonists, he obtained the King's order that every provincial officer, of no higher rank than colonel, should have equal command with the British, according to dates of commission. Instead of demanding aid from the colonies, he issued a letter to the several governments, asking them to raise and clothe twenty thousand men. He promised, in the name of the Parliament, to furnish arms, tents, and provisions for them; and also to reimburse the several colonies all the money they should expend in raising and clothing the levies. He arranged such an admirable militia system for home defense, that a large number of the troops of the domestic standing army could be spared for foreign service. A large naval arma-

ment, for American waters, was prepared and placed under the command of Admiral Boscawen ; and twelve thousand additional English troops were allotted for service in America.

The liberal offers of the minister and the generous preparations of strength had a magical effect in the colonies. New England alone raised fifteen thousand men ; New York furnished about three thousand ; New Jersey one thousand ; Pennsylvania about three thousand, and Virginia over two thousand. Royal American troops, as they were called, organized in the Carolinas, were ordered to the North, and when, in May, 1758, Abercrombie took formal command of the army, he found fifty thousand men, regulars and provincials, at his disposal—a number greater than the whole male population in the French dominions in America at that time.

The scheme for the campaign of 1758 was extensive. Shirley's plan of 1756 was revived, and its general outlines were adopted. Three points of assault—Louisburg, Ticonderoga, and Fort Du Quesne—were designated, and ample preparations were made for powerful operations against them. Upon Louisburg the first blow was to be struck, and General Jeffrey Amherst, a man of good judgment and discretion, was appointed to the command of a land force of more than twelve thousand men, destined for that enterprise. These were to be borne by the fleet of Admiral Boscawen. Abercrombie, assisted by Lord Howe, whom Pitt had chosen as “the soul of the enterprise,” was to lead an army by way of Albany to attack the French on Lake Champlain, while General Joseph Forbes was commissioned to lead another army over the Alleghany mountains to capture Fort Du Quesne.

The first of these expeditions was very successful, and

gave encouragement to the actors in the others. Boscawen arrived at Halifax with his fleet of forty armed vessels, and the land forces under Amherst, early in May. General Wolfe, a young man but thirty-one years of age, but who had already won imperishable laurels in the army, was Amherst's lieutenant. He, too, like Howe with Abercrombie, was chosen to be the active spirit of the enterprise, and well did he acquit himself on this occasion and afterward.

The expedition left Halifax on the 28th of May, and on the 8th of June the troops landed, without encountering much opposition, on the shore of Gabarus bay, near the city of Louisburg. Their appearance was unexpected to the French, who, in alarm, fled from their outposts and retired within the fortress. The attack upon that fortress and the French shipping soon commenced, and the contest, in various forms, continued for fifty days. The French made a vigorous resistance, but were finally compelled to yield, when nearly all the shipping in the harbor was destroyed. The fort, town, and the island of Cape Breton, on which they stood, with the adjoining island of St. John, (now Prince Edward,) and their dependencies, were surrendered to the English by capitulation on the 26th of July. Five thousand prisoners were the immediate results of the triumph, and the spoils consisted of a large quantity of munitions of war. The English, by this victory, became masters of the eastern coast from their own possessions almost to the mouth of the St. Lawrence; and when Louisburg fell the French dominion in America began to wane. From that moment its decline was continuous and rapid.

Quebec had been included in the scheme of conquest. Its reduction was to follow that of Louisburg; but when the victory at the latter was accomplished, the season was

too far advanced to attempt Quebec. Indeed, disasters on Lake Champlain, which we shall presently consider, caused the reception of a message by Amherst which called him in that direction rather than to the more northern field of operations.