

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE have seen how the republicans failed in their efforts, in the New York Assembly, to procure the appointment of delegates to the second Continental Congress, to be convened at Philadelphia in May. Nothing was left for them to do but to appeal to the people. The General Committee of sixty members, many of them of the loyal majority in the assembly, yielding to the pressure of popular sentiment, called a meeting of the freeholders and freemen of the city at the Exchange, to take into consideration the election of delegates to a convention of representatives from such of the counties of the province as should adopt the measure, the sole object of such convention being the choice of proper persons to represent the colony in the Continental Congress.

This movement was opposed by the loyalists as disrespectful to the assembly, who had refused to appoint delegates ; but the people were now driven to a point where respect for authorities whose views were not in consonance with the spirit of liberty and free discussion, was almost unknown. They accordingly assembled in great numbers around the Liberty Pole on the 6th, bearing a banner, inscribed, "Constitutional Liberty," and marched in procession to the Exchange. The loyalists soon afterward appeared there in considerable numbers, headed by members of the council and the assembly, with officers of the army

and navy, expecting, no doubt, to overawe the republicans. At first there was confusion. This soon subsided, and the meeting proceeded with calmness and dignity to nominate eleven persons to represent the city in a provincial convention to be held in New York on the 20th, who were to be instructed to choose delegates to the Continental Congress.

On the following day the chairman of the Committee of Sixty gave notice of the proposed convention on the 20th to the chairmen of the committees of correspondence in the different counties, advising them to choose delegates to the same. There was a prompt response. In some of the counties the deputies were chosen by the committees of correspondence; in others by a convention of committees chosen in different parts of the county; in others the several towns chose each a delegate; in Orange county the freeholders made the choice, as in the election of assemblymen; and in the city of New York they were chosen by ward meetings. All of these produced at the convention a certificate of their election from proper authorities.

The convention assembled at the Exchange, in New York, on the 20th, and consisted of forty-two members.* Colonel Schuyler was at the head of the delegation from Albany, and took a leading part in the convention. Philip

* These were for the *City and County of New York*—Philip Livingston, John Alsop, James Duane, John Jay, Leonard Lispenard, Francis Lewis, Abraham Walton, Isaac Roosevelt, Alexander M'Dougall, and Abraham Brasher. For the *City and County of Albany*—Philip Schuyler, Abraham Tenbroeck, and Abraham Yates, jr. For *Ulster County*—Charles Dewitt, George Clinton, and Levi Paulding. For *Orange County*—A. Hawkes Hay, Henry Wisner, John Herring, Peter Clowes, Israel Seeley. For *Westchester County*—Lewis Morris, John Thomas, Robert Graham, Philip Van Courtlandt, Samuel Drake, Stephen Ward. For *Dutchess County*—Morris Graham, Robert R. Livingston, jr., Egbert Benson. For *Kings County*—Simon Boerum, Richard Stillwell, Theodorus Polhemus, Denice Denice, John Vanderbilt. For *Suffolk County*—William Floyd, Nathaniel Woodhull, Phineas Farring, Thomas Treadwell, John Sloss Hobart. For *Newtown and Flushing*—Jacob Blackwell, John Talman.

Livingston was chosen president of the convention, and John M'Kesson secretary. This was the first provincial convention in New York—the first positive expression of the doctrine of popular sovereignty in that province. They remained in session three days, and chose for delegates to the Continental Congress Philip Livingston, James Duane, John Alsop, John Jay, Simon Boerum, William Floyd, Henry Wisner, Philip Schuyler, George Clinton, Lewis Morris, Francis Lewis, and Robert R. Livingston, to whom were given full power, “or any five of them, to meet the delegates from other colonies, and to concert and determine upon such measures as shall be judged most effectual for the preservation and reestablishment of American rights and privileges, and for the restoration of harmony between Great Britain and her colonies.”

While this convention was in session intelligence of the bloodshed at Lexington was on its way, but did not reach New York until the day after the adjournment. It was then only a vague rumor, but, notwithstanding it was the Sabbath, the Sons of Liberty got together, and speedily unloaded two vessels that were about to sail for Boston with flour for the British troops. Towards evening they secured a large quantity of the public arms, took possession of the City Hall, and placed a guard of one hundred men at its door, and another hundred at the powder magazine, to keep these munitions of war for the use of the people.

On Monday, the 24th, Colonel Schuyler left for Albany in a sloop. Authentic intelligence from Boston had not yet reached New York. It came the following day, at two o'clock in the afternoon. Expresses were immediately sent up the Hudson by a sloop about to sail with a fair wind. Calms succeeded, and it was Friday, the 28th, before the confirmed intelligence reached the committee of

correspondence at Albany, and was spread by swift couriers over the Hudson and Mohawk vallies.

Colonel Schuyler was at his seat at Saratoga, when, late on Saturday, the news reached him. That evening he wrote as follows to his friend John Cruger, chairman of the assembly's committee of correspondence, who was preparing for a voyage to England on account of ill-health :

“Of course long ere this you have received the news from Boston. My heart bleeds as I view the horrors of civil war, but we have only left us the choice between such evils and slavery. For myself, I can say with Semprenius :

‘Heavens! can a Roman Senate long debate
Which of the two to choose, slavery or death!
No; let us arise at once,’ etc.

for we should be unworthy of our ancestors if we should tamely submit to an insolent and wicked ministry, and supinely wait for a gracious answer to a petition to the King, of which, as a member of the assembly who sent it, I am ashamed. I know there are difficulties in the way. The loyal and the timid in this province are many, yet I believe that when the question is fairly put, as it is really so put by this massacre in Massachusetts Bay, whether we shall be ruled by a military despotism, or fight for right and freedom? the great majority of the people will choose the latter. For my own part, much as I love peace—much as I love my domestic happiness and repose, and desire to see my countrymen enjoying the blessings flowing from undisturbed industry, I would rather see all these scattered to the winds for a time, and the sword of desolation go over the land, than to recede one line from the just and righteous position we have taken as freeborn subjects of Great Britain.

“I beg you, my dear sir, if your health shall permit when you arrive in England, to use all your influence there to convince the people and the rulers that we were never more determined to contend for our rights than at this moment—that we consider ourselves not *aggressors*, but *defenders*—and that he who believes that our late assembly truly represented the feelings and wishes of our people is greatly deceived. I have watched the course of the political currents for many months with great anxiety, and have been, for more than a year, fully convinced that unless Great Britain should be more just and wise than in times past, war was inevitable. It is now actually begun; and in the spirit of Joshua I say, I care not what others may do, ‘as for me and my house, we will serve our country.’”

On the following day Colonel Schuyler, as usual, attended public worship. The news from the east had already spread over the neighborhood.

“I well remember,” records an eye-witness, “notwithstanding my youth, the impressive manner with which, in my hearing, my father told my uncle that blood had been shed at Lexington! The startling intelligence spread like wild-fire among the congregation. The preacher’s voice was listened to with very little attention. After the morning discourse was finished and the people were dismissed, we gathered about General Philip Schuyler for further information. He was the oracle of our neighborhood. We looked up to him with a feeling of respect and affection. His popularity was unbounded; his views upon all subjects were considered sound, and his anticipations almost prophetic. On this occasion he confirmed the intelligence already received, and expressed his belief that an important crisis had arrived which must for ever separate us from the parent state.”*

The intelligence from the east came at a moment when the republicans of New York were powerfully stirred by local events. Sears, the great leader of the Liberty Boys, had been arrested for seditious words, because he had advised the people at a public meeting to arm themselves and prepare for conflict. He refused to give bail, and was on his way to prison, when his political friends took him from the officers and bore him in triumph through the town, preceded by a band of music and a banner. The royal government was powerless. The acting governor of the province and the mayor of the city had lost all control, coercive or persuasive. The Liberty Boys, with the emboldened Sears at their head, had closed the custom-house and laid an embargo upon vessels in the harbor.

All power was now in the hands of the people. A new committee of one hundred citizens were chosen in place of the Committee of Sixty, and it was resolved that a provincial congress ought speedily to be assembled, who should

* *The Sexagenary, or Reminiscences of the American Revolution*, page 20.

take the government into their own hands, provide for all contingencies that might arise, and prepare the province for defense against hostile invasion.

A circular letter was sent to the several county committees, proposing the election of deputies to a provincial congress to be held in the city of New York, its sessions to commence on the 21st of May. An address was drawn up to the Lord Mayor and common council of London, explanatory of the views of the republicans in America, setting forth their rights, and expressing their determination to maintain them. A military association was formed, under Samuel Broome ; and a paper, in the form of a league, to be signed by the people at large, was prepared, in which, after declaring their conviction of the necessity of union, they resolved "in the most solemn manner never to become slaves, and to associate, under all the ties of religion, honor, and love to their country, to adopt and endeavor to carry into execution whatever measures may be recommended by the Continental Congress, or resolved upon by the provincial convention, for the purpose of preserving their constitution and opposing the execution of the several arbitrary and oppressive acts of the British Parliament, until a reconciliation between Great Britain and America, on constitutional principles, which is most ardently desired, can be obtained."

Elections were speedily held throughout the province, in a manner nearly the same as in the preceding canvass and on Tuesday, the 23d day of May, about seventy of eighty-one delegates elected assembled at the Exchange, in New York, and organized a provincial congress by choosing Peter Van Brugh Livingston for president, Volkert P. Douw vice-president, and John M'Kesson and Robert Benson secretaries.

While the people of New York were thus moving in

the opening scene of the drama of the Revolution, events of the greatest moment had taken place elsewhere, having the same tendency. Even before the tragedies at Lexington and Concord, Patrick Henry had electrified the Virginia Assembly at Richmond with that great speech whose peroration was "*Give me liberty, or give me death!*" And before his prophecy, that "the next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!" was fulfilled, he had marched upon Williamsburg, the residence of the royal governor, and compelled him to make full restitution for powder belonging to the province, which had been secretly conveyed on board a British man-of-war lying in the York river. Already the patriots of Charleston and Savannah had seized the arms and ammunition of their respective provinces, and made their governors tremble for their personal safety; and as the intelligence of bloodshed went from colony to colony, steps were taken for the assembling of provincial congresses and abolishing royal rule. Before the middle of June, when the first real *battle* of the Revolution was fought on Breed's Hill, the inhabitants of all the colonies had virtually if not actually repudiated royal authority, and were controlled by that only just government which is based upon a righteous popular will.

Some aggressive enterprises were also undertaken by the republicans, the most important of which occurred in the province of New York, but not by its citizens.

"It has been proposed to us," wrote Joseph Warren, in behalf of the Massachusetts Committee of Safety, to the committee of New York, on the 30th of April, "to take possession of the fortress at Ticonderoga. We have a just sense of the importance of that fortification, and the usefulness of those fine cannon, mortars, and field-pieces which are there; but we would not, even upon this emergency, infringe upon the rights of our sister colony, New York. But we have desired the gen-

tleman who carries this letter to represent the matter to you, that you may give such orders as are agreeable to you."

The proposition alluded to by Warren was made by Benedict Arnold, a druggist and bookseller, of New Haven, Connecticut, and captain of one of the train-bands of that town. On hearing of the skirmish at Lexington, he had hastened to Cambridge with his company of volunteers. Before he left, a plan had been crudely formed by members of the Connecticut assembly, to attempt the surprise of the garrison and the capture of the fort at Ticonderoga, if on inquiry it should be deemed expedient. Of this Arnold had doubtless heard.

While the committee at Cambridge were waiting for an answer from New York, the Connecticut people had moved. One thousand dollars were advanced from the colonial treasury to defray the expenses of the expedition; not, however, by the open sanction of the assembly, but by its tacit consent. A committee of two persons was appointed to proceed to the frontier towns, to make inquiries and act as circumstances should dictate. They were joined by a few more in Connecticut. On their consulting Colonels Easton and Brown, at Pittsfield, in Western Massachusetts, these officers both agreed to join in the enterprise, and the latter immediately enlisted about forty of his regiment as volunteers. The whole party then went on to Bennington, the home of Ethan Allen, whose influence in the New Hampshire Grants was almost boundless. The Green Mountain Boys, as the train-bands were named, were ready to obey his call at a moment's warning. The enterprise suited Allen's nature and aspirations, and he joined the expedition with a strong corps. At twilight, on the 7th of May, the whole party halted at Castleton and held a council of war. Colonel Allen was appointed commander-

in-chief, Colonel Easton his lieutenant, and Colonel Seth Warner, of the Green Mountain Boys, the third in command.

Arnold, meanwhile, under the sanction of the Massachusetts committee and the consent of the Massachusetts Provincial Congress, had also been forming an expedition for the same purpose, and had procured for himself the chief command of it. He was commissioned a colonel by the Provincial Congress, furnished with means, and authorized to raise, in western Massachusetts, not more than four hundred men for the expedition. On reaching Stockbridge he was disappointed by finding another expedition already in the field. Engaging a few followers he hastened onward and joined the others at Castleton. Because of his commission, he claimed the right to chief command. His pretensions were disallowed. The Green Mountain Boys declared that they would shoulder their muskets and march home before they would follow any other man than Colonel Allen.

Arnold yielded, but with a bad grace. He joined the expedition as a volunteer, retaining his commission but having no command. With hasty steps they pressed forward, for they feared information of their movement might reach the fort. On the evening of the 9th of May they were on the shores of Lake Champlain, opposite the fortress; and at dawn the next morning the officers and eighty-three men were upon the beach at Ticonderoga, sheltered by the bluff on which stood the old grenadier's battery built by the French. They dared not wait for the arrival of the remainder of their comrades, for daylight might be fatal to the enterprise.

In the dim light of the early morning, Colonel Allen, with Arnold at his side, followed the lead of a lad who

well knew the intricacies of the fort, and went stealthily up the slope to the sally-port. The sentinel then snapped his fusee, and fled along the covered way to alarm the garrison. The invaders followed him closely, and were led by the frightened fugitive directly to the parade within. Ar-
ranging themselves in proper order, the New Englanders wakened the sleeping garrison with a tremendous shout, while the gallant leader of the Green Mountain Boys ascended a staircase to the chamber of Captain De Laplace, the commander, and beating the door with the handle of his heavy sword, he cried out, with stentorian voice, "I demand a surrender!"

De Laplace started from his bed, followed by his trembling wife, and opening the door saw and recognized Allen. "Your errand?" he boldly asked the intruder. Pointing to his men, Allen answered, "I order you to surrender immediately!" "By what authority do *you* demand it?" asked the indignant De Laplace. "The Great Jehovah and the Continental Congress," said Allen, with terrible emphasis, at the same time flourishing his broadsword over the head of the now terrified commander, and ordering him to be silent. Although the Continental Congress did not commence its session until several hours after this peremptory demand, and De Laplace doubted Allen's divine authority, while he knew that George was King "by the grace of God," he took counsel of necessity and surrendered to the republicans the fortress and its dependencies, and a large quantity of articles precisely such as the gathering armies of patriots needed. No less than one hundred and twenty iron cannon, fifty swivels, two mortars, a howitzer, a cohorn, a large quantity of ammunition and other stores, and a warehouse full of naval munitions, and abundant provisions, were the spoils of victory. Forty-eight men, wo-

men, and children, were sent prisoners of war to Hartford, in Connecticut.

Soon after the surrender was effected, Colonel Warner arrived with the remainder of the expedition, and on the 12th he took possession of Crown Point. Thus a handful of determined men, inexperienced in the art of war, accomplished in the space of three days what expedition after expedition had failed to do in the wars with the French ; and at the outset of the Revolution the Republicans had the advantage of the possession of Lake Champlain and the key to Canada.

Arnold now again claimed a right to chief command, but his pretensions were resisted as before. The semi-official committee from Connecticut, having the expedition in charge, formally installed Colonel Allen commander-in-chief of Ticonderoga and its dependencies, and authorized him to remain as such until he should receive further orders from the Connecticut Assembly or the Continental Congress. Arnold reluctantly yielded, sent a protest to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, from whom he had received his commission, and then went down the lake in command of a sort of amphibious expedition. We shall meet him frequently hereafter.

The second Continental Congress assembled in Carpenter's Hall on Wednesday, the 10th of May, 1775, when Peyton Randolph was unanimously chosen president, and Charles Thomson secretary. It was agreed that its sessions should be secret. On the 13th there was a representation present from all of the thirteen provinces.

Grave questions arose when the congress had assembled and were prepared for business. Whom did they represent ? and what might they do ? According to the terms of their appointment, this body was no more a legislative

one than the congress of 1774. It was composed of simple committees, met to consult on measures for the public good. No executive or even legislative powers had been delegated to any of these committees, and yet, by the common consent of the continent they were regarded as a governmental power. The nation, not yet crystallized into a confederacy, was menaced with imminent danger. The sovereign of the realm to which they belonged had declared them rebels. Clashing interests, geographical divisions, and sectional habits, made them an apparently heterogeneous people, difficult to be brought into social and political affinity.

Shall we confederate? Shall we legislate as well as deliberate? Shall we attempt the exercise of executive power? These were serious questions that arose in the minds of the deputies. They were soon answered by the faith of the people. The great body of the inhabitants of the colonies regarded the General Congress as the arbiter and director of public affairs for the whole continent in sympathy. The Provincial Congress of Massachusetts expressed this, when, seven days before the Continental Congress met, they prepared a communication to that body, saying: "The sudden exigency of our public affairs precluded the possibility of *waiting for your directions* in these important measures;" [raising and providing an army] and by asking for the direction and assistance of congress, and suggesting that an American army should be forthwith raised.

Colonel Schuyler left Albany for Philadelphia on the 9th of May, bearing to the committee at New York a letter from that of his own county, asking advice concerning the supplying with provisions troops from Connecticut in their expected attack upon Ticonderoga. He reached Philadelphia

on the 15th, and on the same day took his seat in congress with his colleagues. Franklin, convinced that reconciliation with Great Britain was next to impossible, had lately returned home, and was now in the congress with Samuel and John Adams, of Massachusetts, Jay and Livingston, of New York, Washington, Henry, and Lee, of Virginia, Rutledge, of South Carolina, and almost fifty other patriots of less note—the best men to be found in the colonies.

The congress, somewhat doubtful of their powers, moved cautiously. At the very beginning of this session a question of vital importance was propounded by the New York committee for their solution. Intelligence had arrived that British troops were about to be landed in that city to quiet the rebellion, in imitation of the armed occupancy of Boston the year before. An address had been presented to Lieutenant Governor Colden, which, after commenting upon passing events, requested him to use his influence with General Gage, to prohibit the landing of such troops as had been ordered to that station. Colden assured them that no troops were expected, and suggested that the rumor was put in circulation to justify the calling in of rebel troops from Connecticut, who had collected under Wooster, and were hovering upon the eastern borders of New York. This assurance was false, for troops soon arrived at Sandy Hook but were ordered to Boston.

Meanwhile the New York committee asked the advice of the congress as to their course in the event of the troops attempting to land. With "scrupulous timidity," as Edmund Burke said, the congress recommended the colony of New York to act on the defensive for the present, "so long as may be consistent with their safety and security; that the troops be permitted to remain in the barracks so long as

they behave peaceably and quietly, but that they be not suffered to erect fortifications, or take any steps for cutting off the communication between the town and country; and that if they commit hostilities or invade private property the inhabitants should defend themselves and their property, and repel force by force; that the warlike stores be removed from the town; that places of retreat, in case of necessity, be provided for the women and children of New York; and that a sufficient number of men be embodied and kept in constant readiness for protecting the inhabitants from insult and injury.”*

This course was doubtless thought to be expedient, but the advice embarrassed the action of the Provincial Congress of New York, who assembled a week later. It recognized the existing royal government in the province, with all its machinery of civil, military, and naval power. It also embarrassed the Continental Congress, for, three days afterward, intelligence reached them of the capture of Ticonderoga and Crown Point. What should be done? They had already resolved to send a humble petition to the King, and make overtures for a reconciliation. They had advised New York to submit conditionally to royal authority, but here was an overt act of rebellion—an actual beginning of offensive war. Must they disclaim it and lose the advantage gained?

An invasion of Canada had been thought of, and now the way for success seemed open. But, for a moment, the congress shrunk from the responsibility, and advised the committees of New York and Albany to remove the spoils taken at Ticonderoga to the head of Lake George, to prevent them from being recaptured by a force from Canada; and that “an exact inventory be taken of all

* Journals of Congress, May 5, 1775.

such cannon and stores, in order that they may be safely returned when the restoration of the former harmony between Great Britain and the colonies, so ardently wished for by the latter, shall render it prudent and consistent with the overruling law of self-preservation.”*

[On the 15th, the congress appointed Colonel Washington, Samuel Adams, and Thomas Lynch, a committee to consider what posts were necessary to occupy in the colony of New York, and agreed that on the following day the congress should “resolve itself into a committee of the whole to take into consideration the state of America.” The latter topic occupied the attention of that august body for many days. While a few among them desired political independence, the greater proportion only wished for reconciliation, for their attachment to *home*, as England was still called, was almost as strong as their love of liberty and sense of oppression. But every day brought them fresh reasons for believing a reconciliation to be doubtful, and every day they felt the necessity more and more of preparing for a conflict of arms. Taking counsel of prudence, they recommended vigorous preparations for war, while holding out to the mother country, with the hand of true affection, the olive branch of peace.

The Provincial Congress of New York met on the 22d of May. The political complexion of that body disappointed the people. The old leaven of Toryism that prevailed in the late colonial assembly was evidently a power in the new conclave. It appeared early in several minor acts, but most decidedly when John Morin Scott moved that as the colony of New York had not given such public testimonials of its cordial accession to the confederacy of the colonies as others had done, by approving of the acts

* Journals of Congress, May 18, 1775.

of the Continental Congress of 1774, "this congress do fully approve of the proceedings of said congress."* This motion met with decided opposition, and elicited a warm debate. It was this debate, on a subject where there could not be a diversity of sentiment among true patriots, that alarmed the republicans.

Doubtless during the few years preceding the kindling of the Revolution, and the earlier period of the contest, there were more active and influential friends of the crown in New York than in any other province. This was owing in part to its geographical and commercial position, but especially to the fact that there were several landed proprietors and wealthy families who naturally felt averse to a change in government, being sensible of greater security for their property under the existing state of things. These were loyal—not all, but a greater portion of them. The exposed situation of the province below the Highlands to attacks from the naval forces of Great Britain was another inducement to be cautious not to offend the government, if not to be actually friendly to the crown. Again, Sir William Johnson and his family, who had unbounded influence over the Indians in the Mohawk region and the interests of many settlers, were naturally loyalists, and for a long time after hostilities had commenced, Toryism strongly prevailed among the inhabitants west of Albany. It was less, probably, than it would have been had Sir William lived to bear rule there when the dispute resulted in blows. He died suddenly at Johnson Hall, in July, 1774, and the mantle of office, as Indian agent, fell upon his son-in-law and nephew, Guy Johnson, whose loyalty was equal to that of Sir William.

Such are some of the reasons why New York, in her

* Journals of the Provincial Congress, May 25, 1774.

representative assembly, moved so tardily to the music of rebellion when the war broke out. She has been taunted for that tardiness, but unjustly. The masses of her people were republican in sentiment from the beginning; and when, finally, Toryism was fairly crushed out of her provincial congress by the popular pressure, no state was more practically patriotic. With a population of only a little more than one hundred and sixty thousand, of whom thirty-two thousand five hundred were liable to do militia duty, New York furnished almost eighteen thousand sturdy soldiers for the Continental Army—over three thousand more than its quota called for by the Continental Congress.

The members of the Provincial Congress of New York subscribed to and recommended the *American Association*, organized by the first congress, and adopted measures to enforce its provisions. They also took into consideration the means for defense, and were earliest, on the motion of Gouverneur Morris, in recommending an emission of paper money by the General Congress for the whole continent, thus recognizing the confederation as complete and the congress as the supreme legislature. They also addressed a circular letter to the inhabitants of Canada, (translated into French by Paul Du Simitiere,) calling upon them to join those of their sister colonies in defense of their liberties and the rights of man.

The Continental Congress also issued an address to the inhabitants of Canada, for the same purpose, at the close of May. They had already, by a series of resolves, based upon a report of the committee of which Washington was chairman, recommended the colony of New York to proceed immediately to erect fortifications at the upper end of York Island and in the Hudson Highlands; to arm and train the militia of the province, that they might be ready

to act at a moment's warning ; recommended that troops be enlisted to serve during the remainder of the year ; and in every way to persevere the more vigorously in preparing for their defense, as it was very uncertain whether the earnest endeavors of the congress to accommodate the unhappy differences between Great Britain and the colonies, by conciliatory measures, would be successful.*

The Provincial Congress of New York acted promptly on these recommendations ; at the same time they evinced a most earnest desire for reconciliation. They appointed committees to view the various points near New York and on the Hudson thought to be eligible for fortifications, and they directed another committee to draft a plan for honorable reconciliation with Great Britain, in a spirit of mutual concession. They agreed that Colonel Philip Schuyler was the most suitable person in the colony to be recommended to the Continental Congress as a major general, and Richard Montgomery, Esq., as brigadier general ; and they wrote to their representatives in that Congress, saying : “ We pray you to use every effort for the compromising of this unnatural quarrel between the parent and child, and, if such terms as you may think best shall not be complied with, earnestly to labor, that at least some terms may be held up, whereby a treaty shall be set on foot to restore peace and harmony to our country, and spare the further effusion of human blood.”

“For many reasons,” wrote Councillor Smith to Colonel Schuyler, “I think the present the moment in which the greatest blessings may be secured to our country. The last hope of the ministry is to divide us. This is become impossible. We are then at the eve of a change of men, or a change of measures by the same men. The first is ruin to the ministers. They have no way of preventing it but by a change of measures. Could you wish for a better opportunity to negotiate ? You

* Journals of Congress, May 25, 1775..

have the ball at your feet. For heaven's sake don't slip so fair a prospect of gaining what you run the greatest risk of losing upon a change of men. I heard of Dr. Franklin's arrival with extreme anguish. He has connected himself with Lord Chatham. I dread this event and his influence upon your councils, if he aims *only*, as the great orator, I fear, does, at the destruction of the favorites and the support of our cause *only* as the instrument to effect it. If that lord was first minister, have you reason to believe that he means more than to exempt you from internal taxation?"

After suggesting what he deemed a feasible plan for reconciliation, embracing the idea of an American Parliament restricted in its operations to making revenue provisions, the writer continued :

"If something of this kind is not the result of your present councils, we shall purchase our redemption with blood and misery, for every nerve of administration will be strained to stand another year at least. And though I think we shall be free at last, yet why not now? Why not immediately? Why raise a military spirit that may furnish unmanageable adventurers on this side of the water unfriendly to a province in which you and I have something to lose. * * * For God's sake be slow. Guard against those who are interested in pushing matters to extremities for their personal safety or private interests. There may be among you those who look for salvation from the number of the obnoxious, as well as for elevation from a change of ministry. Your country wants nothing but a change of measures. I trust myself to your prudence and friendship in this distressing, critical hour. I commend you to the Fountain of Light."*

* Autograph letter, May 16, 1775.