

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE atrocities in the Wyoming Valley at the mid-summer of 1778 aroused the fiercest indignation, and the following year General Sullivan was sent into the heart of the country of the Six Nations, to chastise and humble them. He collected troops in the valley, and on the last day of July he marched up the Susquehanna, with about a thousand soldiers. At Tioga Point he met General James Clinton, who came down from the Mohawk, with about sixteen hundred men, and on the 29th of August, the combined forces fell upon a body of Indian and Tory savages at Chemung (now Elmira), and dispersed them. Sullivan then pushed forward with vigor, and penetrated the country watered by the Genesee river, the favorite abiding-place of the Senecas. He there plied the weapons of destruction with fearful activity. In the course of three weeks he destroyed forty Indian villages and a vast amount of food growing in the fields and orchards. He burnt their grain already stored for winter, cut down their fruit-trees, laid waste their productive gardens, made ashes of their dwellings, drove the inhabitants into the forests to starve, overturned their altars, trampled upon the graves of their ancestors, and a beautiful and well-watered domain, just rising from a wilderness state to a level with the most productive regions of civilization, was utterly desolated. The savages were awed for the moment, but were not crushed. The reaction bore bitter fruit the next year.

In Virginia and the Carolinas war was carried on, with varying fortunes, during 1779. Marauding British parties plundered and destroyed New England towns, and ravaged points along the coasts, while the Americans, under General Wayne, wrested from the enemy the strong post at Stony Point, and its dependencies, on the Hudson River. It was one of the most brilliant exploits of the war.

During the following year there were stirring events within the bounds of the Northern Department. The exasperated Indians began depredations early in April. They attacked the frontier settlements, and extended their operations to Minisink, in Orange county. These were followed by evidences of an impending storm of invasion. A prisoner, from Montreal, brought news, at the close of April, that extensive preparations were a-making in Canada for invading New York. In May information was received that Sir John Johnson was moving from Lake Champlain toward Johnstown, with a considerable force, and that Brant was marching on Canajoharie with a body of savages. It was said that the disaffected people were ready to rise and join the invaders.

These rumors caused wide-spread alarm. They were true. Sir John landed at Crown Point, with Tories, a few regulars and Indians, and, pushing up the valley of the Sacondaga, appeared near Johnstown on the 21st of May. His forces, divided, poured into the lower Mohawk valley, and along a line of ten miles, from Tribes' Hill, upward, they plundered, murdered and destroyed. Every man capable of bearing arms was killed. Meanwhile Sir John had recovered a quantity of treasure and plate, near his baronial hall, which a faithful slave had buried in 1776. This being the chief object of his expedition, he retraced

his steps, followed some distance by militia under Colonels Van Schaick, Vrooman and Harper. This incursion, and atrocities which soon after followed, caused the flight of hundreds of people from the Mohawk valley to Schenectady and Albany, and, for a while, the former was a frontier town.

Upon the first alarm, Governor Clinton, at Kingston, hastened forward to Fort George, with such troops as he could rally, and ordered others from Vermont to meet him at Ticonderoga. With these he pushed on to Crown Point, but Sir John was beyond his reach.

The movement of Brant was deferred for a while, and late in July he made a feigned attack upon Fort Schuyler. General Van Rensselaer, then at Stone Arabia, hastened to its relief, when Brant proceeded to fall upon the Canajoharie settlements early in August, which were the real objects of his expedition. These were mercilessly desolated. At the same time a branch of the expedition destroyed twenty houses on the Norman's Kill, in Albany county. Troops were immediately sent from Albany to protect the Mohawk valley and adjacent settlements. For a while, there was tranquillity, and the harvests were gathered.

Some Continental troops were sent for the protection of the frontiers, but these were insufficient. Marauding parties kept the inhabitants in a state of continual alarm. An extra session of the legislature of New York was convened at Poughkeepsie, on the 7th of September. The Governor laid before them the public wants ; and, at the close of the month, they authorized him to call out such number of the militia as he might think proper. Brigadier-general James Clinton was assigned to the command at Albany, and was authorized to call upon Generals Ten Broeck and Van Rensselaer for assistance from their brigades.

During the winter and spring of 1780, General Schuyler's time was occupied with divided duties between Congress hall, in Philadelphia, and the camp at Morristown, where Washington had his head-quarters. He was the Commander-in-chief's most trusted counsellor and friend, to whom, alone, of all his compatriots, the latter, in closing his letters, frequently used the endearing words, "your affectionate," etc. At Morristown, where he spent much of the spring of 1780, he had his quarters at a modest house, where he enjoyed the company of his wife and daughter, Eliza, the latter a charming girl, about twenty-two years of age. Mrs. Washington was at head-quarters at that time, and she, with the wives of several of the officers in the camp, made a most agreeable society.*

* Colonel Alexander Hamilton was then a member of Washington's military family. He renewed his acquaintance with Miss Schuyler, became smitten with her charms, and a betrothal followed. His evenings were usually spent with her at her father's quarters. An interesting incident connected with these visits was related to me more than twenty years ago by Judge Ford, then owner of the house at Morristown which had been Washington's head-quarters, who was then a lad about fourteen years of age. He was a favorite with Hamilton, who, by permission of the Chief, would give him the countersign, that he might continue play at the village after the sentinels were posted for the night. On one of these occasions, he was returning home at nine o'clock in the evening, and had passed the sentinel, when he recognized the voice of Colonel Hamilton in reply to the soldier's question of "Who comes there?" He waited for the colonel to come up. Hamilton advanced to the point of the presented bayonet, to give the countersign, but had quite forgotten it. "He had spent the evening with Miss Schuyler," said Judge Ford, "and thoughts of her had undoubtedly expelled the countersign from his head."

The soldier-lover was embarrassed. He tried to summon the word from its hiding-place, but, like the faithful sentinel, who knew Hamilton, it was immovable. Just then he recognized young Ford, in the gloom. "Aye, Master Ford, is that you?" he said, in an undertone; and, stepping aside, he called the lad to him, drew his ear to his lips, and whispered, "Give me the countersign." He did so, and Hamilton, stepping in front of the soldier, delivered it. The sentinel, suspecting

Schuyler was in continual correspondence with vigilant friends in the Northern Department, who communicated every important fact in current events so accurately that he was enabled to give Washington and the Continental Congress the most useful information. He also employed, at his own expense, one or two persons in Canada to send him information of the movements of the enemy, and thereby he was enabled to give the public authorities the earliest warnings of impending danger.

At length the aspect of affairs became so threatening in the Northern Department, that, in June, he left Philadelphia for Albany, stopping on the way at Kingston, where the legislature of New York was in session. There he was detained a few days in giving them his counsel concerning measures for meeting the exigencies of a menaced invasion from Canada and from the West, of which he had been apprised, and of which the hostilities of the Indians, already begun, were the precursors. That invasion, however, was postponed until the autumn, when Schuyler, from his home at Saratoga, gave Governor Clinton timely warning.

On the 1st of October, Schuyler wrote to the Governor that he was satisfied that an invasion by way of Lake Champlain would speedily be begun. This was followed by a petition from Tryon County for relief from an attack from the westward, as it was ascertained that a considerable force, under Sir John Johnson, Colonel Butler, and Brant, had left Niagara, and were heading toward Oneida lake.

the colonel was testing his fidelity, kept his bayonet unmoved. "I have given the countersign; why do you not shoulder your musket?" Hamilton asked. "Will that do, colonel?" asked the sentinel. "It will for this time," said Hamilton; "let me pass." The soldier reluctantly obeyed the illegal command.

Meanwhile a thousand men, regulars, Tories and Indians, under Major Carleton of the British army, came up Lake Champlain, from St. John's, in eight vessels, and landed at South Bay, and on the 10th of October suddenly appeared before Fort Anne, and demanded its surrender. The weak garrison could not defend it, and it was given up, and burned. Carleton sent marauding and incendiary parties as far as Fort Edward, while he pushed on toward Fort George. On the 11th he demanded the surrender of that fort. It was given up and destroyed, and the garrisons of both posts were sent to the vessels on the lake. Another part of Carleton's expedition went through the forests, from Crown Point, to attack Schenectady, under the lead of a Tory citizen of that place, but proceeded no further than the settlement at Ballston, which they desolated. At about the same time another expedition set out from Canada, and fell upon the upper settlements of the Connecticut valley. All of these expeditions from Canada avoided doing injury to the people of the New Hampshire Grants, who, since their representative convention held at Windsor, at the beginning of 1777,* had been, through their leaders, coquetting with the British authorities in Canada, and inspiring them with a hope of detaching these patriots from their allegiance to the United States.

In the meantime the invading force from Niagara, almost a thousand strong, crossed over from Oneida Lake to the Susquehanna valley, and proceeded in the direction of the Schoharie settlements, then defended by three forts, distinguished as the Upper, Middle, and Lower. The object was the destruction of these settlements. They

* See page 186.

began their work on the morning of the 17th of October, and completed their dreadful task early in the afternoon. They unsuccessfully attacked the Middle and Lower forts, and after finishing their destructive work they withdrew and proceeded down the valley toward the Mohawk.

When intelligence of this western invasion reached Governor Clinton, he ordered General Robert Van Rensselaer to rally a sufficient force to pursue or confront the enemy. That officer acted promptly, and on the morning of October 18th he marched from Schenectady, at the same time sending couriers to Colonel John Brown,* at Fort Paris, in the Stone Arabia settlement, and to Colonel DuBois, at Fort Plain, further down the Mohawk, announcing his approach, with directions to keep the invaders in check. Whether Brown received the message, or not, is unknown. He attacked the invaders on the 19th, about a mile from the present village of Palatine Bridge, and had a severe skirmish with them, in which himself and thirty of his men were killed. The remainder fled to Fort Plain, at which place Van Rensselaer arrived about an hour after the combat. He pushed on in pursuit of the enemy, who were plundering and burning as they marched, and overtook them at about sunset, when an irregular firing began. It was kept up until dark, with loss to the marauders. The pursuit was continued the next day, but when Van Rensselaer reached Fort Herkimer, not far from Little Falls, he lost sight of the fugitives' trail. Sir John, having lost his baggage and artillery, had gone around to the south of Fort Herkimer, and made a precipitate march to Oswego. Governor Clinton had come up, and taken the chief command. He ordered pursuit, but it was soon abandoned, as hopeless.

* See page 330.

In this invasion full two hundred dwellings were burned, and one hundred and fifty thousand bushels of wheat and a large quantity of other grain and forage, with a great amount of other property, were destroyed.

Schuyler, by his vigilance and timely warnings, had saved the inhabitants from much distress. He was in continual correspondence with the Governor and military authorities, from his home at Saratoga, and offered freely for the public use whatever he possessed and was needed. "All my cattle fit for the knife," he wrote to Governor Clinton, at Albany, on the 20th of October, "are already killed, and I have sent to try and collect some more, but I fear a supply will arrive too late to push a party in pursuit of the enemy who were at Ballston. I have, however, sent to Fort Edward on the subject, but with little hopes that any will move from thence." And when the Governor returned to Poughkeepsie, after the invasion had ceased, Schuyler kept him fully informed of every important event in northern and western New York.*

At about this time the movements of the leaders in Vermont, of whom Ethan and Ira Allen were most conspicuous, excited grave suspicion of their loyalty, because of their secret correspondence with the enemy. So early as at the beginning of June, the Congress had appointed a committee to visit the Grants, and also declared the proceedings of the Vermont people subversive of the public peace and the welfare of the United States, and required the inhabitants to abstain from all acts of authority, civil or military, until a decision should be made con-

* A minute history of the events here drawn in brief outlines, may be found in a superbly-printed volume, entitled "The Northern Invasion," prepared from original papers, with an introduction and notes by Dr. Franklin B. Hough.

cerning the claims to separate and independent jurisdiction in matters of State government.

The Governor of New York was perplexed by the movement. He suspected a combination against his State, and, in a letter to James Duane, from Poughkeepsie, on the 29th of October, he intimated that, in the event of a certain contingency, the New York delegates would be withdrawn from Congress, "and the resources of the State, which have hitherto been so lavishly afforded to the Continent, be withheld for the defence of New York." He called the serious attention of Washington to the subject. The conduct of Ethan Allen was especially censured, and his motives suspected; and the Commander-in-chief issued orders to General Schuyler to arrest him, in the event of certain contingencies.* The latter shared in Clinton's apprehensions, and, on the 31st of October, he wrote to the Governor, saying:

"The conduct of some people to the eastward is alarmingly mysterious. A flag, under pretext of settling a cartel with Vermont, has been on the Grants. Allen has disbanded his militia, and the enemy, in number upward of sixteen hundred, are rapidly advancing toward us. The night before last they were at Putnam's Point. Entreat General Washington for more Continental troops, and let me beg of your Excellency to hasten up here."

The conclusion of the whole matter may be stated in few words, in the light of subsequent history. The shrewd diplomats of Vermont were working for a twofold object,

* So early as the middle of July, General Schuyler had sent two of his trusty friends, Messrs. Cuyler and Lansing (the latter, for several years, his military clerk), to Vermont, to ascertain, if possible, a correct account of the movements of Ethan Allen for some time before. They went to Bennington, put themselves in communication with proper persons there, but obtained no information derogatory to the patriotism of all his movements. Schuyler's letter of instruction to these inquirers was dated at Saratoga, the 12th of July, 1780, and their report bears date, at Albany, the 26th of July.

namely, to keep back the British and to induce Congress to admit the independence of their domain as a State of the Union, according to the ideas of State sovereignty then prevalent. In 1781, after the ratification of the *Articles of Confederation*, the Congress offered to admit it, with a considerable curtailment of its boundaries. The people refused to come in on such terms, and for ten years they remained outside of the Union. Finally, in the spring of 1791, Vermont became a member of the Union, the Congress having offered to relinquish all claims to lands in or jurisdiction over the State, on the payment of \$30,000.

From the beginning to the end of the controversy between the Grants and New York and the Congress, Schuyler had been one of the most judicious and vigilant observers of the drift of public opinion in that region, and he had exerted his influence in every way to have justice accorded to the inhabitants of that domain. His correspondence on the subject with leading men was extensive, wise and conciliatory. With General Stark and his son, Major Stark, he was in frequent epistolary as well as personal communication, respecting the movements in Vermont; and his views shaped those of Washington on the subject, for the latter deferred to the judgment of Schuyler. In one of his letters to Schuyler, he wrote:

“I have received your favor of the 25th of January, inclosing the copy of your letter of the 22d of October to Major Stark, which, agreeably to your desire, I return by this conveyance. The arguments and reflections respecting the dispute of the Vermontese, made use of in that letter, appear so just and politic as to be particularly calculated to heal the unhappy disturbances, and produce a reconciliation. This is one of the many proofs you have given of your ardent desire to put a period to internal contention, and unite all the jarring interests in prosecuting the great common cause of America.” *

* Autograph Letter, dated Philadelphia, February 6, 1782.

Already General Schuyler had received many proofs of the appreciation of his generous services and his nobility of character from the people of the Grants, expressed in cordial terms,* and at the same time he maintained the warmest esteem of those who were in political opposition to them, as an honest man and beneficent and righteous peace-maker.

The intention of the invasions from the north and west, just noticed, was evidently to divert attention from more important movements on the Hudson river, where General Arnold was about to consummate the foul act of treason which he had been contemplating for several months, in the betrayal of the post at West Point, and its dependencies, into the hands of Sir Henry Clinton. That these invasions were undertaken simultaneously, and for a purpose more important than appeared on the surface, many circumstances make evident. Among these is a letter written to Minister Germain from Governor Haldimand, in Canada, on the 17th of September, in which he mentioned two expeditions as about to set out from that province for the invasion of New York. This was about a month before the betrayal was to take place. Neither expedition was sufficiently

* On the 26th of September, 1781, David Avery wrote to General Schuyler, from Bennington, in behalf of himself and others, concerning the establishment of a seminary of learning at that place, as follows :

“ Induced by your character as a gentleman of liberal sentiments, as a lover of human kind, and as a lover of science, the Trustees of Clio Hall beg leave to address you in favor of an infant institution of learning, upon which, it is imagined, greatly depends the happiness and ornament of this rough and rude part of the country.”

After mentioning the efforts which had already been made for the object, the organization of a Board of Trustees, and what had already been done, Mr. Avery said : “ The object of this address is, therefore, sir, humbly to request your patronage to young Clio Hall, which looks up to you with respect and honor.”—*Autograph Letter.*

strong to inspire any hope of making a permanent conquest.

The story of Arnold's treason is too familiar to historical readers to need repetition here. I will only notice a few preliminary events more immediately connected with the subject of this memoir.

When the British evacuated Philadelphia, in the spring of 1778, Arnold, whose wounded leg was not healed, was made military governor of that city. He lived extravagantly, became involved in debt, and was charged with financial irregularities in the public service, for the benefit of his own purse. He associated freely with the leading families of Philadelphia, among whom were many Tories, and he married the daughter of one of these—Edward Shippen—a beautiful girl, eighteen years of age. This marriage created uneasiness among many patriots, but Arnold's services had been too zealous, and his devotion to the cause too earnest, to allow any real suspicion of his unfaithfulness to have a permanent lodgment in the public mind.

Arnold's irregularities finally led the President and Council of Pennsylvania to prefer charges against him of fraud in the management of the public service. These charges were laid before Congress, and that body handed the whole matter over to Washington, for adjudication before a military tribunal. These proceedings chafed and greatly irritated Arnold, who declared that he was the victim of a faction. Delays followed, which he regarded as the results of subterfuges on the part of his enemies. It was not until December, 1779, that he was brought to trial. There he made an elaborate defence, in which he recited his many services, solemnly asserted his innocence of the

crimes charged against him, and as solemnly proclaimed his patriotic attachment to his country and zealous devotion to its cause. He had then been eight months engaged in secret correspondence with the enemies of that country, and was prepared, if not resolved, to embrace the first opportunity to desert and destroy it. He was found guilty of two of four charges, and sentenced to a simple reprimand by the Commander-in-chief. This was done by Washington in as delicate a manner as possible; but Arnold, who expected a triumphant acquittal, was so exasperated that he seems to have sought an immediate opportunity for revenge, at all hazards.

From that moment, Arnold's correspondence with the enemy was more active, and more definite in its object. He knew that West Point was an object of covetous desire to Sir Henry Clinton, and, through correspondence with Major André, the baronet's adjutant-general, he made preliminary arrangements for betraying that post into Sir Henry's hands. At the same time he was making the loudest professions (after a season of sullenness) of his patriotism, and expressed an ardent desire to again enter the military service in defence of his bleeding country. General Schuyler, who had suffered from the schemes of factions, and had never had the least occasion for doubting Arnold's attachment to the cause, sympathized with him, and had faith in the sincerity of his declarations. Indeed, he had stood by Arnold in all his trials, as the latter had stood by Schuyler. To the latter, therefore, Arnold looked for aid as an innocent helper in the important preliminary steps in his infamous scheme. He knew how implicitly Washington confided in Schuyler's judgment and patriotism, and to him, therefore, he made the first overtures for

reinstatement in the army. On the 25th of May, 1780, he wrote as follows to Schuyler:

“ I have not had the pleasure of receiving a line from you since your arrival at camp, and know not who is to have the command on the North river. If General Heath joins the army, as I am informed he intends, that post will, of course, I suppose, fall under his command, unless some other arrangement is made, agreeable to him.

“ When I requested leave of absence, of his Excellency General Washington, for the summer, it was under the idea that it would be a very inactive campaign, and that my services would be of little consequence, as my wounds made it very painful for me to walk or ride. The prospect now seems to be altered, and there is a probability of an active campaign, in which, though attended with pain and difficulty, I wish to render my country any service in my power; and, with the advice of my friends, am determined to join the army, of which I beg you will do me the favor to acquaint his Excellency General Washington, that I may be included in any arrangement that may be made.”*

Arnold addressed similar letters to Robert R. Livingston and other friends in Congress, and he prevailed upon that gentleman to write to Washington and suggest the expediency of giving the writer the command of West Point. Schuyler, then in camp, joined his recommendations to those of Livingston. Arnold afterward had what seemed to be informal interviews with Washington, in camp, and the latter, as unsuspecting as Schuyler, gave the command of West Point to the blossoming traitor. Then he made his head-quarters at the house of Beverly Robinson (yet standing), opposite West Point. Early in August, and a little more than a month later, he perfected his treasonable arrangements. That treason was discovered before it was fairly ripe, and the traitor, escaping to the British lines in New York, there received the reward for his infamy.

The sixth year of the war (1780), like the fifth, was marked by varying fortunes for the struggling colonists. Sir Henry Clinton went to the Southern States early in

* Autograph Letter.

the year, with an army and fleet, and captured the city of Charleston, South Carolina, after a siege of three months. His chief lieutenants were Lords Cornwallis and Rawdon. These went out from the conquered city, with powerful forces, and overran the State. Equally powerful forces, led by Gates, DeKalb, and partisans like Marion and Sumter, opposed them, and on several occasions warm battles were fought. The extreme cruelties and other unwise conduct of the British leaders, aroused a tempest of patriotic indignation which expelled them from the State, or nearly so, the following year. In the north, meanwhile, no very important military events occurred, excepting the arrival, at Newport, Rhode Island, at midsummer, of a powerful French fleet, bearing six thousand land troops, under the Count de Rochambeau. They came to help the struggling Americans.

At the close of the year, England had spent a vast amount of blood and treasure in vain efforts to subjugate a free people, and had involved herself in war with France, Spain and Holland.