

Life of General Philip Schuyler

CHAPTER THREE

A Visit to England

Home and Business Life

Member of the Provincial Assembly

The Revolution

Appointed Major-General

ON RETIRING FROM MILITARY SERVICE, Schuyler settled down at The Flatts with his young wife and children and devoted himself to his private business.

But from this pleasant life, he was soon called away by a new and interesting adventure.

Colonel Bradstreet had another campaign on hand in 1760, against the Indian allies of the French in the west.

His health was poor and he had accounts with the government covering several years which gave him much anxiety.

In this difficulty he turned to his young friend Schuyler.

"Your zeal, punctuality and strict honesty in his Majesty's service," he wrote, "under my direction, for several years past, are sufficient proofs that I can't leave my public accounts and papers in a more faithful hand than yours to be settled."

"Should any accident happen to me this campaign, wherefore that I may provide against it and that a faithful account may be rendered to the public of all the public money that I have received since the war, I now deliver to you, all my public accounts and vouchers, and do hereby empower you to settle them, with whomsoever may be appointed for that purpose, either in America or England."

The difficulty of concluding such business satisfactorily in the province determined Schuyler to go to London.

A visit to Europe was a rare experience for a young provincial in those days and this one was destined to be adventurous and improving.

It was in February, 1761, that he sailed in a packet called the "General Wall."

His mathematical tastes were applied at once to a study of navigation, and soon after, the captain dying, the proficiency he had acquired resulted in his being requested by passengers and crew to assume the command.

Schuyler was then but twenty-eight years of age, but experience had given him the habit of authority and of self-reliance.

He navigated the vessel successfully until the coast of Europe was near.

Although the war was over in America, it was still raging between England and France, and the "General Wall" was captured by a French privateer which put a lieutenant and prize crew aboard.

Schuyler's knowledge of French now stood him in good stead, and he had become on friendly terms with his captor, when, as the privateer and prize were approaching a French port, they were both taken by an English frigate.

Thus Schuyler reached London in safety with his papers.

This visit to England could not fail to be inspiring to a young man of so progressive a nature.

The affairs of Colonel Bradstreet were settled permanently with the War Office, and his agent was complimented on their businesslike presentation.

This done, Schuyler turned his attention to a study of various products which the colonies habitually imported from England and which he hoped could be produced as well at home.

Among these were hemp and flax, the cultivation of which was soon going on at Saratoga.

The subject of canals interested him deeply and then began his lifelong belief in their importance to America.

In the pursuit of these practical investigations he established friendly relations with several scientific Englishmen with whom he afterwards corresponded and who caused his election as a member of the Society of Arts in London.

The voyage home was uneventful, but as the little sloop which took him up the Hudson arrived opposite Albany, his eye met an unfamiliar and very pleasing sight.

A new house had been in contemplation, and during Schuyler's absence in Europe, a number of carpenters attracted to Albany by the war were left idle.

Bradstreet advised Mrs. Schuyler to take advantage of the rare opportunity afforded by this abundance of skilled labor.

The result was the large house in the English colonial style which Schuyler observed on the side of the hill about half a mile south of Albany.

This house, a landmark for many years until the town grew up around it, proved a hospitable home for which travelers looked as they ascended the river, which still stands in perfect preservation as a testimony to the architectural taste and the thorough workmanship of the time.

The principal guest chamber was on the second story on the left hand side.

There slept Lafayette and Lauzun, and Burgoyne after his surrender.

The pleasure often given by the hospitality of this house, in those days of hard and difficult travelling, is well shown by an extract from the journal of the Marquis de Chastellux, written at the close of the Revolution.

"It was a difficult question to know where I should cross the Hudson River the next day, for I was told it was neither sufficiently frozen to pass over on the ice, nor free enough from flakes to venture it in a boat."

"I was only twenty miles from Albany, so that after a continued journey through a forest of fir trees, I arrived at one o'clock on the banks of the Hudson."

“There, a handsome house half way up the bank opposite the ferry seemed to attract attention and to invite strangers to stop at General Schuyler's, who is the proprietor as well as architect.”

“I had recommendations to him from all quarters, but particularly from General Washington and Mrs. Carter.”

“Besides, I had given the rendezvous there to Colonel Hamilton, who had just married another of his daughters, and was preceded by the Vicomte de Noailles and the Comte de Damas, who I knew were arrived the night before.”

“The sole difficulty therefore consisted in passing the river.”

“While the boat was making its way with difficulty through the flakes of ice, which we were obliged to break as we advanced, Mr. Lynch, who is not indifferent about a good dinner, contemplated General Schuyler's house and mournfully said to me: 'I am sure the Vicomte and Damas are now at table, where they have good cheer and good company, while we are here kicking our heels, in hopes of getting this evening to some wretched ale-house.'”

“I partook a little of his anxiety, but diverted myself by assuring him that they saw us from the windows, that I even distinguished the Vicomte de Noailles who was looking at us through a telescope, and that he was going to send somebody to conduct us on our landing to that excellent house, where we should find dinner ready to come on table.”

“I even pretended that a sledge I had seen descending towards the river was designed for us.”

“As chance would have it, never was conjecture more just.”

The first person we saw on shore was the Chevalier de Manduit, who was waiting for us with the General's sledge, into which we quickly stepped and were conveyed in an instant into a handsome drawing room, near a good fire, with Mr. Schuyler, his wife and daughters.”

“While we were warming ourselves, dinner was served, to which everyone did honor, as well as to the madeira, which was excellent, and made us completely forget the rigor of the season and the fatigue of the journey.”

The beneficial effects of the conquest of Canada upon the prospects of the province of New York were immediately realized.

The ever-threatening war clouds in the north were replaced by a clear sky.

In the west, the Indian Confederacy now stood alone, no longer holding a dangerous balance of power, no longer the object of an incessant diplomacy.

Face to face with a superior race of men, their fate was already sealed.

Then began the westward movement of emigration which, taking on a tremendous impetus after the Revolution, never ceased to send its armies to the conquest of nature and savagery.

It was at the beginning of this new sense of possible prosperity and expansion, of enterprise and speculation, that Schuyler returned from England, and he threw himself with enthusiasm into the work.

From a utilitarian point of view, no man knew better the physical geography of the province.

Already the Mohawk Valley was familiar to him, and the lands to the westward as far as Oswego had been often traversed.

To the north, his experience in the French War had made known to him the character of the country about Lakes George and Champlain.

Through his mother, he inherited about nine thousand acres in the manor of Cortlandt.

His wife had a share of Claverack.

He had interests in the Van Rensselaer property in Columbia County, and made purchases in addition to some inheritance in Dutchess County.

Schuyler was at home in the forest and familiar with its signs.

The soil where flourished the sugar maple and the chestnut, was chosen in preference to that where the birch reared its white shafts among the hemlocks and the pines.

The clear spring and running stream had their element of value, and he recognized the dormant wealth in the waterfall's store of power.

His judgment in matters of land and colonization soon became considered the best in the province and was sought by the governors, Sir Henry Moore and Tryon, and by such men as William Smith, Jr., Philip Livingston, and James Duane.

In sales and leases in the Hudson River manors his advice was constantly asked.

His knowledge of the Indian character, of previous cessions of territory, of the tribal rights in the land, was continually called into requisition in new purchases and conflicting claims.

In the summer of 1766, Sir Henry Moore left his wife and daughters with Mrs. Schuyler in Albany, while he and Schuyler journeyed together up the Mohawk Valley and purchased large tracts from the Indians for Sir Henry himself and for his friend, Lord Holland, the father of Charles James Fox.

A long standing controversy over their boundaries between John Van Rensselaer of Claverack and the second proprietor of the Livingston manor had caused a painful estrangement between their families.

The genial William Smith, Jr., had met the two hostile old men one day in New York as they chanced to pass each other opposite his office.

He had invited them in together, had induced them to talk over their dispute and, as he hoped, had brought about an understanding between them.

But a return to their homes on the Hudson River seemed to bring about a return to the old animosity.

It was Philip Schuyler, in whose judgment on such subjects both the old men had entire confidence, who finally settled the boundary and brought about a reconciliation.

Schuyler's most valuable property, which he developed with the utmost industry and intelligence, was the Saratoga patent.

No longer in danger of midnight attack and conflagration, this estate grew in beauty and productiveness from year to year.

A sawmill, erected under his supervision, and managed by men of his own training, converted the forest trees into boards and shingles.

The woods were succeeded by fields of grain.

A schooner and two sloops built by Schuyler carried the lumber and agricultural produce to market at New York, whence they returned laden with manufactured articles for use and for sale.

In those days when the subdivision of labor was yet impossible, Schuyler was at once boat builder, farmer, lumber and grain merchant, military agent of the government and real estate expert.

At Saratoga were tried novel experiments in agriculture, notably the cultivation of flax and hemp.

In 1767, a large house was built there, on the bank of Fish Creek, and this became the summer home of the family.

The point of prosperity and productiveness to which Schuyler brought the estate is indicated in a letter written in 1775, by Reverend Cotton Mather Smith, chaplain of a Connecticut regiment, to his wife.

"I have been absent from camp for eleven days, General Schuyler having wished me (as possessing some little skill in surgery) to accompany his wife's young relative, who was grievously wounded a short while ago."

"We had a very hard journey through the wilderness carrying the poor boy on a litter, but after four days we arrived safely at Schuyler's Town."

“At Schuyler’s Town is the General’s country seat, and there, Madam Schuyler, who is hospitable and handsome (but not so courtly in her ways as someone I know), entertained us finely.”

“Leaving our charge with her and remaining only over twenty-four hours, to give our horses rest, we returned to the fort.”

“I was greatly interested to see the settlement at which General Schuyler has labored for several years.”

“Herein he has sought to manufacture and to teach the manufacture of those things which the colonies most need.”

“Here he has erected saw-mills and smiths and buildings wherein wool and flax may be spun and wove in large quantities, and near-by are great fields where men and women were cultivating flax.”

During the years which preceded the Revolution, Schuyler was employed in various public affairs, of which the principal was the great quarrel between New York and New England regarding their boundaries.

This conflict did much to embitter the existing intercolonial prejudices.

It was a serious obstacle to union in the beginning of the Revolution, and Schuyler's official connection with it necessarily involved an unpopularity with New England men which had unpleasant consequences.

The old claim of New Netherland to all the land west of the Connecticut River was reluctantly abandoned by Stuyvesant, and in his time a commission fixed the boundary line at twenty miles to the east of the Hudson.

This arrangement settled the matter as far as Connecticut and Massachusetts were concerned.

But New Hampshire did not yet exist as a separate colony.

Consequently New York claimed that the twenty mile line stopped at Massachusetts and asserted that all the country north of that colony and west of the line of the Connecticut River belonged to her.

New Hampshire denied this, and claimed that the twenty mile line ran northward indefinitely and gave her possession of what is now Vermont.

Governor Wentworth issued patents to settlers in the disputed territory which thus became known as the Hampshire Grants.

After the French war, when the danger of invasion was removed, settlers arrived in the Grants in considerable numbers, receiving their patents from Governor Wentworth, and the town of Bennington was founded.

Governor Colden of New York protested.

The matter was laid before the King, who, in 1764, gave judgment for New York.

Wentworth accepted the result, and the settlers would have done the same, but unfortunately the governor of New York claimed that not only he had jurisdiction, but that all the patents issued by Wentworth were void.

The settlers were told that they must abandon or repurchase their lands, and in default, these were in many cases assigned to New Yorkers.

This unjust and unwise proceeding provoked an armed rebellion among the people of the Grants, in which they were supported by New England.

New Yorkers who tried to take possession of lands were resisted with bloodshed.

A state of civil war existed up to the Revolution, and the dispute was never settled until Vermont was admitted to the Union as a State in 1791.

Although Schuyler had little to do with the rights and wrongs of the case, the responsibility for which belonged to Government House in New York, his position as a member of the commission on the boundaries, his authority as colonel of militia to whom was confided the preservation of order in the northern part of the province, marked him as a champion of the cause of New York.

His name became identified in the Hampshire Grants and to some degree in New England with proceedings rightly regarded as unjust and tyrannical.

The deeply rooted prejudice of the New England men against a Dutchman was thus supplemented by animosity and suspicion.

As we shall see, the result was unfortunate for Schuyler when called to command New England troops.

In 1768, when thirty-five years of age, Colonel Schuyler was elected a member of the provincial assembly.

This body was small in numbers, was chosen by freeholders only, and sat for seven years.

Consequently, its seats were the object of a lively competition.

Schuyler had been rather reluctant to take this step.

His extensive and growing interests in the northern part of the province absorbed his attention.

The hospitalities of his houses at Albany and Saratoga, where judges and lawyers on circuit, distinguished travelers and many relatives were constantly stopping, furnished him with sufficient society.

But the times were troubled and a number of influential men urged him to take an active part in politics, not a few of whom, like Sir William Johnson, were afterwards to regret the presence of so powerful an opponent.

When Schuyler took his seat in the last Assembly of the province of New York, the preliminary skirmish between the British Ministry and the colonies had been fought and won.

At the time of the passage of the Stamp Act in 1765, the Colonial Assembly had a good majority of the popular party and were able to make a strong stand against the enforcement of the Act.

In this opposition, the support given by all ranks of the people was nearly unanimous.

The educated classes say plainly that the principle involved in the Act was contrary to their hereditary rights as Englishmen and they opposed it with the reasonable determination of free and intelligent men.

John Cruger, Robert. R. Livingston, Philip Livingston, William Bayard and Leonard Lispenard represented the province in the Stamp Act Congress which met in New York and on behalf of nine colonies sent to England their Declaration of Rights and Petition to the King.

The merchants struck a telling blow at British trade by ceasing their importations.

The lower classes of the people were well instructed on the issues by the addresses and leadership of Alexander Macdougall, William Livingston and John Morin Scott.

The resolution not to receive the stamps was so strong, the riotous demonstrations of the patriot organization called the Sons of Liberty were so threatening, that neither Governor Moore nor General Gage dared to take any decisive steps.

Not knowing what to do with the packages of stamps, the presence of which in any building invited the torch, the governor ordered them placed on board the British ship "Coventry," then lying in the harbor.

But Archibald Kennedy, its commander, who had married Miss Watts and through her owned a beautiful house on Broadway opposite the Bowling Green and much other property in the city, had too much regard for his own interests to take the risk of receiving them.

Reasonable resistance and popular force defeated the Stamp Act.

The ministry despised the former and resolved to crush the latter.

During this struggle the province of New York hardly abated its loyalty to the King or its desire for continued union with the mother country.

The quarrel had been with the ministry, and that over, the people were glad to forgive and forget.

However, there were some men who saw deeply into the significance of what had passed, who anticipated a renewal of the struggle and began to speak of independence.

Among these was the bold and eloquent lawyer, John Morin Scott, whose addresses had instructed and aroused the meetings of the Sons of Liberty.

His shrewd political insight deduced from the circumstances of the present the facts of ten years later.

"If the interest of the mother country and her colonies," he said in 1765, "cannot be made to coincide, if the same constitution cannot take place in both, if the welfare of the mother country necessarily requires a sacrifice of the most valuable natural rights of the colonies, their right of making their own laws and disposing of their own property by representatives of their own choosing, then the connection between them ought to cease, and sooner or later it must inevitably cease."

"The English government cannot long act toward a part of its dominions upon principles diametrically opposed to its own, without losing itself in the slavery it would impose upon the colonies, or teaching them to throw it off and assert its freedom."

The next step of the British Ministry was to place a military force in New York sufficiently strong to insure the success of their new projects of taxation.

The appearance of the soldiery aroused the old animosities and renewed the conflicts between them and the Sons of Liberty.

The Assembly which had successfully opposed the Stamp Act was now instructed by Governor Moore to vote the money for the maintenance of the military force which had been sent to crush the liberties of its constituents.

Its persistent refusal was followed by prorogation.

This new evidence of intended tyranny drew prophetic words from the pen of William Livingston, which voiced the sense of power and self-reliance in the colonies which had been growing steadily since the French War.

"Courage, Americans!"

He wrote in 1767.

"Liberty, religion and science are on the wing to these shores."

"The finger of God points out a mighty empire to your sons."

"The savages of the wilderness were never expelled to make room for idolaters and slaves."

"The land we possess is the gift of heaven to our fathers, and divine providence seems to have decreed it to our latest posterity."

"The day dawns in which the foundation of this mighty empire is to be laid, by the establishment of a regular American Constitution."

"All that has been done hitherto seems to be little beside the collection of materials for this glorious fabric."

"Tis time to put them together."

"The transfer of the European family is so vast, and our growth so swift, that before seven years roll over our heads the first stone must be laid."

While such clear-sighted patriots as Scott and William Livingston could look clearly into the future, the people in general mistook a truce for a peace.

Sir Henry Moore's conciliatory attitude induced a reaction toward loyalty, and when Schuyler took his seat in the Assembly in 1768, he found the Royalist party, led by the de Lanceys, in control.

In this assembly, New York was represented by James de Lancey, Philip Livingston, Jacob Walton, James Jauncey, Isaac Low, John Cruger, and John Alsop.

From Westchester, came Frederick Philipse, from the borough of Westchester, John de Lancey, from Ulster county, George Clinton.

Schuyler's old friend "Brom," Abraham Ten Broeck, represented the manor of Rensselaerwyck.

Peter R. Livingston, that of Livingston, and Pierre Van Cortlandt, that of Cortlandt.

Schuyler and Clinton were new members, both destined to long and distinguished careers.

Now, and throughout the Revolution, we see them working in unison, for the independence of their country, but that attained, and in the face of new problems, they will be found in hostile camps.

From the beginning of the dissensions between the mother country and the colonies, Schuyler had arranged himself distinctly on the American side.

He was present at the great dinner in New York given to celebrate the repeal of the Stamp Act, and he accompanied the Sons of Liberty to Trinity Church to hear the congratulatory address delivered by Dr. Auchmuty.

From 1768 to 1774, the records of the Assembly show him to have been active in all matters pertaining to the industrial and commercial welfare of the colony, taking frequent part in debate, and asserting the rights of the province in the fitful but never-ending quarrel with the ministry in England.

Of the patriotic resolutions introduced into the Assembly, some of the boldest were drafted by him, and it was at his suggestion that Edmund Burke was appointed the agent of New York in England.

The frequent conflicts between the soldiery and the people, the imprisonment of Alexander Macdougall, kept alive the fires of discord which were to burst into flame with the tax on tea in 1774.

The impatience of the colonists under the tyrannical assumptions of the English Ministry, and at the same time their sentiment of conscious strength, are curiously exemplified in the following anecdote.

Robert Livingston, the second son of the founder of the manor, was then a hale old man of eighty-five years of age, still wearing the wig, knee breeches, and large-skirted coat of a previous generation.

He was conversing one day in the year 1773, in the library at Clermont, with his son, Judge Robert R. Livingston, his grandson, Robert R. Livingston, the future Chancellor, and Richard Montgomery, when he exclaimed:

" It is intolerable that a continent like America should be governed by a little island, three thousand miles away."

"America must and will be independent."

"My son, you will not live to see it, Montgomery, you may, and Robert, addressing his grandson, you will."

Judge Livingston died soon after, and it was on the eve of the Declaration of Independence that Montgomery fell gloriously at Quebec.

The prophecy was fulfilled when the young Robert served with Jefferson, Franklin, Sherman, and Adams on the committee appointed by the continental congress to draft the Declaration.

On the great questions of the time, public opinion in New York divided the people into three parties.

There were the Sons of Liberty, representing the loudest, if not the sincerest patriotism, advocating extreme measures, under the leadership of Scott, Macdougall, Sears, and Lamb.

They prevented by force the landing of the tea, and it was at their great meeting in " The Fields," where Alexander Hamilton made his maiden speech.

At the other extreme were the Tories, disposed to submit to any measures which seemed good to the ministry of Great Britain.

Between these two stood a party considerable in wealth and influence, led by substantial merchants and able lawyers, having more at stake and being

more conservative than the Sons of Liberty, while excelling the Tories in attachment to their adopted country and in independence of character.

This party, soon to become the bone and sinew of the Revolution, remained, up to the Declaration of Independence, sincerely desirous of a reconciliation with Great Britain, but determined not to accept it at the expense of legitimate rights.

The New York assembly, containing a majority of Tories, became less and less representative as matters advanced.

The vote of thanks to the merchants for their non-importation agreement, the motion to appoint delegates to the continental congress, every patriotic movement, was defeated by the same majority, while in the minority were always recorded the names of Schuyler, Van Cortlandt, Clinton, Ten Broeck, and Livingston.

In the spring of 1774, Governor Tryon departed for England to give personal information to the ministry of the situation in the colonies.

During his absence, the executive office was held by Lieutenant Governor Cadwallader Colden, "Old Caddy," as William Smith called him, a strong Tory.

Colden kept Tryon informed of events in New York.

"Colonel Schuyler and Clinton hold forth in the opposition," he wrote in February, 1775.

A little later he mentions de Lancey and Wilkins as the strong men on the Royalist side, but Wilkins, he thought, was the only one who could hold his own in debate with Schuyler and Clinton.

In April, he writes: "Our Assembly have pursued a plan of conduct which I hope will be satisfactory to his Majesty and his ministers."

"They have sent a petition to the King, a memorial to the Lords, and a remonstrance to the Commons, all expressed, especially the petition to the King, in a very moderate, decent style."

“I am persuaded that it will give you some concern, sir, to hear that Colonel Schuyler, Ten Broeck, and Livingston made a violent opposition in the House to these measures, and have made it evident throughout the sessions that they wished to bring this colony into all the dangerous and extravagant schemes which disgrace too many of the sister colonies.”

“They openly espoused the cause of the last congress, and strove hard to have delegates appointed by the House for that which is to be held in May.”

“They are now gone home to get that done by the election of the people which they could not effect in the House.”

In 1774, New York was represented in the continental congress by Philip Livingston, John Alsop, Isaac Low, James Duane, and John Jay, who had been chosen by the Committee of Fifty-one.

In 1775, a provincial convention was held to choose delegates who added to the previous list, George Clinton, Francis Lewis, Lewis Morris, Robert R. Livingston, and Philip Schuyler.

On the morning of Monday, April 24th, Schuyler left New York in one of his sloops for Albany.

The same afternoon, the news of the battle of Lexington reached New York.

A sloop was dispatched at once to convey the intelligence to Albany, but it was four days on its journey, and it was not until Saturday that Schuyler received it at his country seat at Saratoga.

That evening, he wrote to John Cruger, who was preparing for a voyage to England on account of ill health, a letter which well expressed the sentiments with which he viewed this great crisis in his country's history:

"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 Sempronius, Heavens, I can a Roman Senate long debate which of the two to choose, slavery or death!”

“No, let us arise at once, 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 own 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 free-born 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.”

The next day Schuyler attended church in Albany, where the news from New England absorbed all attention.

"I well remember," records an eye-witness, "the impressive manner with which, in my hearing, my father told my uncle that blood had been shed in Lexington."

The startling intelligence spread like wildfire 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, the people gathered about Philip Schuyler for further information.

He was the oracle of their neighborhood.

They 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 forever separate the colonies from the parent state.

In April, after the battle of Lexington, was organized the Provincial Congress, which superseded the old Royal Assembly and formed the new government of New York.

It is interesting to observe the conservative nature of this Assembly, and, in the midst of a revolution, its wise dread of the consequences of revolution.

These men were no lovers of change.

If they rebelled, it was against their will.

As late as the end of June, 1775, they wrote to the New York representatives in the continental congress at Philadelphia:

"Deeply impressed with the importance, the utility and necessity of an accommodation with our parent state, and conscious that the best service that we can render to the present and all future generations must consist in promoting it."

"We have labored without intermission to point out such moderate terms as may tend to reconcile the unhappy differences which threaten the whole empire with destruction."

"We must now repeat to you the common and just observation that contests for liberty, fostered in their infancy by the virtuous and wise, become sources of power to wicked and designing men."

"Whence it follows that such controversies as we are now engaged in frequently end in the demolition of those rights and privileges which they are instituted to defend."

"We pray you, therefore, to use every effort for the compromising of this unnatural quarrel between the parent and child, and if such terms as you 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."

"So that, if even at the last our well-meant endeavors shall fail of effect, we may stand fair and unrepachable by our own consciences, in the last solemn appeal to the God of Battles."

The last solemn appeal was soon forced upon them, and the provincial assembly of New York was requested by the continental congress to name one of the major-generals and one of the brigadier-generals who should lead the forces of the new nation in its coming struggle.

It was in the following letter that the assembly unanimously recommended Philip Schuyler to be major-general, and Richard Montgomery to be brigadier-general.

"We take the liberty for the present to furnish you with our sentiments on the appointment of a major and a brigadier-general and submit them to your superior wisdom either for use or concealment."

“Courage, prudence, readiness in expedients, nice perception, sound judgment, and great attention.”

“These are a few of the natural qualities which appear to us to be proper.”

“To these ought to be added an extensive acquaintance with the sciences, particularly the various branches of mathematic knowledge, long practice in the military art, and above all a knowledge of mankind.”

“On a general in America, fortune also should bestow her gifts, that he may rather communicate luster to his dignities than receive it, and that his country, in his property, his kindred and connections may have sure pledges that he will faithfully perform the duties of his high office and readily lay down his power when the general weal requires it.”

“Since we cannot do all that we wish, we will go as far towards it as we can, and therefore you will not be surprised to hear that we are unanimous in the choice of Colonel Philip Schuyler and Captain Richard Montgomery to the offices of major and brigadier-generals.”

“If we knew how to recommend them to your notice more strongly than by telling you, that after considering the qualifications above stated, these gentlemen were approved of without a single dissent, our regard to the public service would certainly lead us to do it in the most forcible terms.”

“Nor will we enter into a minute detail of the characters and situations of two gentlemen with whom our delegates cannot but be acquainted.”

“In a word, we warmly recommend them, because we have no doubts that their appointment will give general satisfaction.”

It was inevitable that the colony should seek the military services of Richard Montgomery and should give him a high rank in its new army.

Formerly a captain in the British service and a man of the highest character, he did not need his connection with the Livingston family to recommend him for a position for which no one was better fitted.

But in the choice of a major-general, the provincial assembly had a different and more difficult problem.

This officer should have military capacity and experience, but he must be more than a soldier.

He must be an organizer of men.

A provider of food and arms.

An executive head of a new and now all important branch of the government.

War existed, and generals were appointed, but the army was to be raised, clothed, armed and fed.

Here was a vast and trying business necessarily placed on the shoulders of military leaders in a country where no ready machinery existed for providing the ways and means.

As we look over the names of men who then, and for a decade afterwards, took the lead in New York, we can hardly find one whom the Assembly might have considered in competition with Schuyler.

George Clinton had as yet neither military experience nor the influence of family and business connections.

The Van Rensselaer, Livingston and Van Cortlandt families furnished good officers, but none who had seen service and none who attained positions of the first responsibility.

Men in the province of New York who afterwards rose to high, and some to the highest, distinction in statesmanship and diplomacy, men like Robert R. and Philip Livingston, James Duane, John Jay, and Gouverneur Morris, were not adapted for such an office as major general in the Continental army.

Schuyler was chosen at once and unanimously because many circumstances pointed to him as preeminently fitted.

He had an honorable military record, like Washington and Putnam, in the French and Indian War.

He had not only seen fighting, but as commissary in the English army, he had learned the business of supplying and transporting the munitions of war in a country almost without roads.

Von Moltke has said that geography was a principal element in military art.

This saying was never more true than in its application to our revolutionary campaigns.

And in the geography of his native province Schuyler's knowledge was unrivalled.

In his fondness for solving mathematical problems, in his navigation of the "General Wall" across the ocean, in the building of his mills and the development of his lands, he had shown that adaptability to circumstances and that fertility in expedients which the Assembly had considered essential in their general.

The wealth which he had inherited, and still more, that which he had acquired, his extensive influence and family connections were recognized as additional recommendations in a man whose public career hitherto had given every proof of enlightened patriotism.

Such were the qualifications which caused the choice of Schuyler as the major-general appointed by New York.

But there were circumstances, not then apparent, which were destined to interfere with his success and happiness in the work which he undertook for his country.

The rheumatic gout of his youth was an ever present menace and would attack him again when he needed all his strength.

He was of Dutch descent, and a man identified with the New York side of the quarrel over the Hampshire Grants.

These latter circumstances were sure to excite the prejudice and mistrust of New England troops.