

Life of General Philip Schuyler

CHAPTER FIVE

Failure of the Expedition Against Canada New England Hostility to Schuyler The Efforts of Gates to Supplant Him

IN THE SPRING OF 1776, the expedition against Canada came to its disastrous and inevitable end.

After the death of Montgomery, Arnold maintained the siege of Quebec through the winter, enduring, with his reduced and heroic band, extreme sufferings from exposure and hunger.

Schuyler's correspondence contains constant references to his anxiety concerning the expedition and his efforts to assist it.

During the winter, communication was difficult and rare through the intervening wilderness of snowbound forest.

In response to repeated prayers from Schuyler for men and money, the Congress at Philadelphia could only pass resolutions: "That General Schuyler be directed to take any further measures for supplying the army in Canada with provisions which his prudence may suggest, in which Congress placed the highest confidence."

And again, "That General Schuyler be desired to take care that the army in Canada be regularly and effectually supplied with necessaries."

Such were the barren replies to his urgent requests at the time that he was writing to Washington.

"Our military chest is exhausted and we are deeply involved in debt."

"Ten thousand pounds will hardly pay what I am personally bound for on the public account."

To forward supplies to Quebec during the winter was a physical impossibility.

Money was what Arnold wanted, that he might purchase necessaries where he was.

Congress failed to furnish it, and Schuyler sent his own to the full extent of his resources.

He realized more than anyone what must be the wants and privations of the army, and suffered acutely from his inability to afford sufficient relief.

In April, Arnold was succeeded in command by Wooster.

He and Schuyler, between whom the New York and New England prejudices had caused a breach, were not then on good terms.

But Schuyler wrote him: "Whatever my sentiments are with regard to our private disputes, I assure you that I very sincerely pity your situation."

At last, the fresh troops and the money which Schuyler had long and urgently begged from Congress began to arrive in the north and were forwarded by him to Canada.

They reached Quebec in May.

But it was in vain.

Fleets had arrived from England with an army of thirteen thousand men.

General Carleton found himself at the head of an overwhelming force, and there was nothing left for the Americans but retreat.

This was conducted with great skill by General Sullivan, and the army might have been brought home with small loss.

But camp sickness attacked the troops with great virulence, and was soon followed by an outbreak of smallpox.

By the time the army reached Crown Point in June, many had died of disease, and half of the remainder were ill.

The camp was a hospital, in which the able bodied were all needed to care for their unfortunate companions.

The failure of the expedition against Canada was due to the simple cause that the invaders were inferior in strength to the British.

Montgomery, Arnold, Wooster, Sullivan and their troops had shown the greatest intrepidity and endurance.

But the storming party which attacked the great fortress of Quebec on that winter night in 1775 was quite inadequate in numbers for such an enterprise.

The small force of men which held General Carleton and his garrison as prisoners within their walls throughout the winter accomplished a great feat in doing so much.

The American re-enforcements sent in May were outnumbered two to one by the new troops received by the enemy.

The colonies were as yet too little united and organized to conduct effectively an aggressive foreign campaign.

Men and money could be raised to repel invasion, but not to carry on war outside the country.

These circumstances were not understood at the time, and great disappointment followed the joy over Montgomery's early victories.

The losses had fallen chiefly on western New England, whence had come most of the troops engaged.

The soldiers who had resented Schuyler's military discipline at Ticonderoga, who had given Montgomery such trouble and had finally left him in the lurch at Montreal in the autumn of 1775, had returned home, justifying themselves by accusing their commanders of tyranny.

When the sick arrived at their homes after the retreat in the spring, they had real sufferings enough to relate.

But these were incident to a soldier's life, aggravated by the special difficulties of a campaign in the wilderness.

But the prejudice already existing against Schuyler made it easy to fasten upon him responsibility for every evil.

It was openly and widely stated that he was at heart a Tory and had neglected the expedition with the secret desire of seeing it fail.

Of the vague reports which were spread to Schuyler's discredit a sample occurs in a letter of Walter Livingston written in May, 1776.

"Last Saturday evening, arrived in town Captain Sheldon, from Salisbury, Connecticut, who advises that upon his return from Hartford on Friday evening, he found the people greatly alarmed by an account that a formidable conspiracy was carrying on by the Tories in this quarter, upon which he mounted his horse and proceeded toward Albany, till he came into Noble Town, where it was said that some person in King's District had pretended that he could make some important discoveries of the designs of the Tories, if the persons to whom he communicated it would inviolably keep his name a secret, which was done, as is said upon oath."

"Upon which he told them that General Schuyler, the committee of Albany and many others were in the Tory interest."

"That it was in the design of the general to draw all the provisions out of the country, up to the lakes, and there to betray them into the hands of the enemy and that the people in that part of the country were greatly alarmed and had sent to General Washington and Governor Trumbull to acquaint them of the affair."

Meetings were held in western Massachusetts and Connecticut in which attacks were made upon the general of the northern department, and the Committee of Berkshire forwarded to Washington definite accusations against him of disloyalty.

The commander-in-chief forwarded the papers to Schuyler with the words: "From these you will readily discover the insidious diabolical acts and schemes carrying on by the Tories and friends of Government to raise distrust, dissensions and divisions amongst us."

"Having the utmost confidence in your integrity, and the most incontestable proofs of your great attachment to our common country and its interests, I could not but look upon the charges against you with an eye of disbelief, and sentiments of detestation and abhorrence, nor should I have troubled you with the matter had I not been informed that copies were sent to different committees, and to Governor Trumbull, which I conceived would get abroad, and that you, should you hear of my being furnished with them, would consider my suppressing them as an evidence of my belief, or at best, my doubt of the charges."

"While this was only report," replied Schuyler, "I treated it with contempt, without taking notice of it, but it is now become a duty I owe myself and my country to detect the scoundrels, and the only means of doing this is by requesting that an immediate inquiry be made into the matter, when I trust, it will evidently appear that it was a scheme more calculated to ruin me than to disunite and create jealousies in the friends of America."

"Your Excellency will, therefore, please to order a court of inquiry, the soonest possible, for I cannot sit easy under such an infamous imputation, as on this extensive continent numbers of the most respectable characters may not know what your Excellency and Congress do of my principles and exertions in the common cause."

And to Congress he wrote: "I have requested my general for an inquiry to be made into my conduct."

"His soul is above the meanness of suspicion, for his feelings are the most delicate, and although his opinion does me the most ample justice, yet it is a most natural wish that my innocence should be made as public as the charge against me, which has been industriously propagated, and ere this has probably reached every quarter of that country to the preservation of which my all is devoted."

But Washington declined to order the court of inquiry because, as he said, "the charges appeared so uncertain, vague and incredible that there is nothing to found proceedings on, were there the most distant necessity, for the scrutiny."

But these accusations, unjustifiable as they were, spread far, and were very injurious to Schuyler.

Even such a man as Robert Morris could write from Philadelphia to Gates:

"Is it possible that a man who writes so well and expresses such anxiety for the cause of his country as General Schuyler does, I say is it possible that he can be sacrificing the interest of that country to his ambition or avarice."

"I sincerely hope it is not so."

"But such insinuations are dropped."

"Not only was Schuyler accused of neglecting the troops in Canada with the secret object of insuring their defeat, but his enemies went so far as to spread the calumny that he had embezzled the moneys sent to his care for the army."

In May, Jonathan Trumbull, Jr., thus referred to these accusations:

"You have doubtless been informed of the Tory designs and reports spreading in the country respecting the combination which is said to have extended so far as to include many respectable characters, not excluding yours."

"I have this day heard from Connecticut, and am happy to find these reports have not had their designed effect there."

"If once our confidence in each other is destroyed, we are fatally wounded."

In June, General Israel Putnam wrote to Schuyler.

"I have lately received letters from several Committees in which they say they are now confident of your great zeal and attachment to your country, and are

convinced that the late reports were raised by people notoriously inimical to this country, and that it was done with a view of dividing us."

It is not difficult to imagine the feelings of Schuyler on being the object of such accusations.

He made many efforts to discover the identity of his accusers, and having traced, as he thought, some guilt to one Mr. Blackden of Salisbury, Connecticut, he complained to the Committee of that town, and received from Joshua Porter, its chairman, the following curious though hardly satisfactory answer.

"If Mr. Blackden really believes you have detained the hard money which was sent to you to forward to Canada, and if he has publicly charged you with detaining the same, in this case we think, as you intimate, it is his duty to support the charge, and if it cannot be supported, the reproach must recoil upon himself, or those who have led him to believe the calumny although, as you confess to believe of us, we should be equally willing to assist in the detection of a public robber."

"And of a calumniator, yet permit us to say it would give us the greatest uneasiness to think, that an officer of your honor's rank and elevated station should lose the confidence of the public, who have so long relied upon your great abilities and inclination to serve them."

"And though surmises to the prejudice of your honor's character have been as common, as we hope they were groundless, yet we cannot cease to wish that your good services may continue to merit the just applause and respect of your country, as conscious rectitude should never be dismayed, or discouraged, with the poet's assertion that:

'On eagles' wings immortal scandals fly.'

'While virtuous actions are but born to die.'

The difficulties in the northern department would have been adjusted and time would have given the New England men a better appreciation of Schuyler's character had not the selfish intrigues of General Gates kept up a campaign of suspicion and dislike, in which Gates played the same part toward Schuyler

that Lee played toward Washington.

Gates had been an officer in the British army during the French and Indian War, attaining the rank of major, and after that war had settled on a plantation in Virginia.

In 1775, he offered his services to Congress, and was appointed adjutant - general, with the rank of brigadier.

Of small military capacity, vain and unscrupulous, he had been seeking advancement in Philadelphia through the favor of delegates in Congress.

In the displacement of Schuyler he saw a chance to obtain an independent command in the north, and he was untiring in his efforts to convince Congress that a change should be made there.

The objection of the New England men to serve under a Dutch general from New York, and the unpopularity among them of Schuyler's military discipline had been known to the New England delegates in Congress.

They were active and powerful at Philadelphia, and their chief, John Adams, was chairman of the board of war and in a position to carry out their designs.

That they should have wished for a change of commanders in the northern department is not to be placed to their discredit.

It was a question of judgment.

But that they should have chosen Gates as their candidate and should have allowed themselves to become the tools of his intrigue, was a mistake which time was to disclose very fully.

Schuyler stood too high and his influence in the province of New York was too great for an immediate or complete displacement.

If a new commander of the northern department were needed, the recommendation of Washington would naturally have been sought.

But his known regard for Schuyler made it necessary to act in another way.

Without consulting the Commander-in-Chief, the New England delegates procured the appointment of Gates as a major-general, and a little later his nomination as commander of the army "in Canada."

This was to be the entering wedge which would lead to the higher and coveted command.

At this time Sullivan was at the head of the Canadian army, the retreat of which he had conducted with great credit.

He did not deserve to be superseded, and when he heard that Gates, who had hitherto been a brigadier-general, was placed in command over him, he justly considered it an aspersion on his conduct.

"I should not have the least objection," Sullivan wrote to Schuyler, "to being commanded by General Gates."

"I have no personal objection to him, and would willingly have served under him had he in the first instance held a commission superior to the one Congress was pleased to honor me with."

"But this not being the case, and the procedure so strong an implication against my conduct, I must beg leave to quit this department with my family and baggage, as I cannot with honor act in future, and shall, as soon as possible, repair to Congress and petition for leave to resign my commission."

When Sullivan took formal leave of his officers they presented him with an address expressive of their admiration for his services, to which were attached the valued names of Hazen, Stark, Poor, Antill and St. Clair.

Thus, the party in Congress opposed to Schuyler began their campaign against him by the injury of a deserving officer who had nothing to do with the quarrel.

On the 25th of June, Schuyler heard of the appointment of Gates to the command of the army in Canada and, unsuspecting of the intrigue which was proceeding, wrote him cordially to hasten up to Albany.

"That we may advise together on the most eligible methods to be pursued to prevent an increase of our misfortunes in this unlucky quarter."

"Be so good as to take a bed with me, that whilst you remain here we may be together as much as possible."

Gates arrived, much pleased with his instructions, which gave him full and independent powers, but all qualified by the words which limited their operation to the army "in Canada."

He was much crest fallen, therefore, when, at Albany, he found that his army was no longer "in Canada," but in New York and consequently under the command of Schuyler.

Mindful, however, of the party in Congress at his back, he soon recovered his equanimity and proceeded to assert himself.

Among other proceedings, he introduced to Schuyler a Mr. Avery, of Massachusetts, and Avery immediately made a formal demand upon Schuyler for money to conduct the commissary-general's department in Albany.

Schuyler, much surprised, informed him that Walter Livingston was commissary of the northern department, and that, while in Albany, Avery must consider himself subordinate to Livingston.

The latter's "great family connections in this country", added Schuyler, "have enabled him to carry on the service when others could not."

And of this he gave instances.

Gates could find no reply to make and left the room with Avery.

But hardly outside he declared to Avery that as soon as they reached the army he would make him commissary.

This remark was overheard and repeated to Schuyler, who saw that an issue was made which should be settled at once.

For Gates to make such an appointment was to declare himself independent of Schuyler in New York.

Schuyler recalled Gates, and the whole matter of the latter's powers was gone over between them.

Schuyler made a complete statement of the issue in a letter to Washington, which, being shown to Gates, was accepted by him as accurate.

"If Congress," wrote Schuyler, "intended that General Gates should command the northern army, wherever it may be, as he assures me they did, it ought to have been signified to me, and I should then have immediately resigned the command to him, but until such intention is properly conveyed to me, I never can."

"I must therefore entreat your Excellency to lay this letter before Congress, that they may clearly and explicitly signify their intentions, to avert the dangers and evils that may arise from a disputed command, for after what General Gates has said, the line must be clearly drawn."

When this letter was received from Washington by Congress, that body speedily declared "that Major-General Gates be informed that it was the intention of Congress to give him the command of the troops while in Canada, but that they had no design to invest him with a command superior to General Schuyler while the troops should be on this side of Canada."

This decision and the apparent acquiescence in it by Gates set at rest the suspicions of Schuyler, and he wrote to the President of Congress on the 17th of July.

"When gentlemen act with candor to each other, a difference in opinion will seldom be attended with any disagreeable consequences."

"I am happy, sir, that I can assure you that the most perfect good understanding exists between General Gates and me, insomuch that it gives him pain that I was under the necessity of quitting the army to repair here at this critical juncture."

“You will please to assure Congress that I am deeply impressed with the necessity of mutual confidence among all its officers, and that I shall never neglect any measure that may have a tendency to so desirable an end.”

“I have seen, with the deepest affliction, the unhappy jealousy which reigned in the Northern Army occasioned by colonial distinctions both injurious to the cause of America and disgraceful to the authors of them.”

And to Washington he wrote:

"It gives me a very sincere and a heartfelt pleasure that I can declare that difference in opinion between General Gates and me has been simply such, unattended with that little jealousy which would have reflected disgrace upon both."

“Be assured, sir, that the most perfect harmony subsists between us, and that I shall, by every attention to General Gates, strictly cultivate it, as well to increase my own felicity as to promote the public service.”

How different was the attitude of Gates is shown by his correspondence, which discloses a definite scheme to supplant his superior officer.

And the party which he had formed on his behalf continued their campaign of misrepresentation and abuse.

Governor Trumbull of Connecticut, writing to Williams, said:

"It is justly to be expected that General Gates is discontented with his situation, finding himself limited and removed from the command, to be a wretched spectator of the ruin of the army, without power of attempting to save them."

And the Governor's son Joseph wrote to Gates:

"I find you are in a cursed situation."

“Your authority at an end, and commanded by a person who will be willing to have you knocked in the head, as General Montgomery was, if he can have the money chest in his power.”

Elbridge Gerry, of the New England delegation in Congress, wrote him:

"We want very much to see you with the sole command of the northern department, but hope you will not relinquish your exertions until a favorable opportunity shall effect it."

Some members of Congress, knowing what was going on, tried to dissuade Gates from his course.

Among these were Charles Carroll and Samuel Chase, both of whom had visited the northern department in the spring, and as Commissioners of Congress had examined personally into all its affairs.

Carroll wrote to Gates urging him to put away his prejudice against Schuyler, as he knew him to be "an active and deserving officer."

Chase recommended him to place "the most unreserved and unlimited confidence in Schuyler."

At this time Schuyler was still in ignorance of Gates's character, and wrote to him in August:

"I find the jealousies with respect to me have not yet subsided in the country."

"I am informed that some committees at the eastward, in this and the adjacent States, are trying me."

"I wish Congress may at last comply with my entreaties, and order an inquiry on the many charges made against me, that I may not any longer be insulted."

"I assure you that I am sincerely tired of abuse, that I will let my enemies arrive at the completion of their wishes, by retiring as soon as I shall have been tried, and attempt to serve my injured country in some other way, where envy and detraction have no temptation to follow me."

In July, while the disputed question of command was still unsettled, Schuyler preserved a friendly relation with Gates, and the two generals journeyed northward together to visit the army just returning from Canada.

John Trumbull, afterwards the distinguished artist, was an officer in the suite of Gates, and has left a graphic account of what he saw.

General Gates, he says, landed at Albany in the evening, and "proceeded immediately to visit General Schuyler, whom we found with his family, just seated at supper."

"I was very much struck with the elegant style of everything I saw."

"We here learned the news of fresh disasters in Canada, and the next morning, accompanied by General Schuyler, we departed on horseback for Skeensborough."

"The road as far as Saratoga was good, thence to Fort Edward tolerable, but from that to the head of Lake Champlain, bad as possible, and not a bridge over any of the small streams and brooks which fall into Wood Creek."

"From Skeensborough we proceeded with all diligence by water to Ticonderoga, where we learned that the troops driven from Canada were beginning to arrive at Crown Point."

"The two generals went forward to that place without delay, leaving me with orders to examine the ground on the east side of the lake."

"The next morning I went forward to Crown Point, where I rejoined my general, and there saw, in all its horrors, the calamities of unsuccessful war."

"Early in May, re-enforcements from England had reached Quebec, and our troops were of course obliged to retire."

"They were constantly harassed in their retreat and, in addition, the smallpox, in its most virulent and deadly form, had made its appearance among them."

General Thomas died of this loathsome disease at Chambly, and the command devolved on General Sullivan, who conducted this calamitous retreat in an admirable manner, but was driven from post to post until he reached St. John's, at the northern extremity of Lake Champlain.

At that time no road existed on either side of the lake, and the only communication with Albany and the southern country was by its waters.

General Sullivan having secured all the vessels and boats at St. John's and destroyed all which were not necessary for the conveyance of his troops, by this means effectually prevented the immediate advance and pursuit of the enemy.

Thus the wretched remnant of the army reached Crown Point in safety, but it is difficult to conceive a state of much deeper misery.

The boats were leaky and without awnings.

The sick, being laid upon their bottoms without straw, were soon drenched in the filthy water of that peculiarly stagnant muddy lake, exposed to the burning sun of the month of July, with no sustenance but raw salt pork, which was often rancid, and hard biscuit or unbaked flour.

No drink was available but the vile water of the lake, modified perhaps, but not corrected by bad rum, and scarcely any medicine.

"My first duty, upon my arrival at Crown Point, was to procure a return of the number and condition of the troops."

"I found them dispersed, some few in tents, some in sheds, and more under the shelter of miserable bush huts, so totally disorganized by the death or sickness of officers that the distinction of regiments and corps was in a great degree lost."

"I was driven to the necessity of great personal examination, and I can truly say that I did not look into a tent or hut in which I did not find either a dead or a dying man."

"I can scarcely imagine any more disastrous scene, except the retreat of Bonapart from Moscow, that probably was the very acme of human misery."

"I found the whole number of officers and men to be five thousand two hundred, and the sick who required the attentions of a hospital were two thousand eight hundred, so that when they were sent off with the number of

men necessary to row them to the hospital, which had been established at the south end of Lake George, a distance of fifty miles, there would remain but the shadow of an army.”

“Crown Point was not tenable by such a wreck, and we were ordered to fall back upon Ticonderoga immediately.”

In face of the situation which Schuyler found at Crown Point, he had to consider, first of all, the means of caring for and saving the sick, and of preventing the spread of disease in the army already present and among the troops which were on their way to join and re-enforce that army.

He called a council of all the higher officers, and with their approval ordered that those ill with contagious diseases should be sent to Fort George, where a hospital was immediately established, and that the army with the rest of the sick should abandon Crown Point and take post at Ticonderoga at the head of the lake.

Crown Point was a low and insalubrious situation without buildings to protect the troops either sick or well, and now so tainted by disease that to bring reinforcements there was, in the words of Gates, only to add one hospital to another.

It was also a place far inferior to Ticonderoga in strength.

The latter fortress was on high ground with barracks, accessible for supplies and the strongest natural position in the country.

The course pursued by Schuyler appeared then, and was proved by its results to be, the wisest under the circumstances.

But some of the lesser officers at Crown Point, all New England men, held a council of their own in which they passed resolutions declaring that the abandonment of the post left the lake open to the enemy, was dangerous to the New England colonies and contrary to the orders of Congress.

They ignored entirely the infected condition of the place and the other reasons which had governed the decision of their superior officers in the previous council.

This remonstrance was sent by its signers to officers in Washington's army.

It was by them considered without any hearing of the real reasons which caused the abandonment of Crown Point, and resulted in a vote of censure of that action.

Washington was led by this one-sided presentation of the case to express his disapproval of the removal of the troops to Ticonderoga.

Schuyler was naturally indignant at this treatment.

He, Gates, Arnold and the other general officers of the northern army, being on the spot and knowing all the facts, had agreed upon a course of action as in their opinion the best.

Now councils of inferior officers were allowed to sit in judgment upon their superiors and to pass votes of censure upon them.

In any regularly organized army such conduct would subject the offenders to court martial and punishment.

It was destructive of every notion of discipline and order.

Schuyler wrote to Congress several times, urgently requesting a court of inquiry into his own conduct.

Congress not granting his request, on the 14th of September he sent in a formal resignation, at the same time stating that it was not to elude any inquiry Congress might be pleased to make.

"On the contrary," he said, "it is a duty I owe to myself, to my family and to the respectable Congress of this State, by whose recommendation, unsolicited by me, Congress, I believe, was induced to honor me with a command, that I should exculpate myself from the many odious charges with which the country resounds to my prejudice."

"I trust I shall be able fully to do it, to the confusion of my enemies and their abettors."

“But, aggrieved as I am, my countrymen will find that I shall not be influenced by any unbecoming resentment, but that I will steadily persevere to fulfil the duties of a good citizen, and try to promote the weal of my native country by every effort in my power.”

Schuyler's resignation and request for a court of inquiry were answered on the 2nd of October by the following resolution:

"That the President write to General Schuyler and inform him that Congress cannot consent, during the present situation of their affairs, to accept of his resignation, but request that he continue the command that he now holds."

“That he be assured that the aspersions which his enemies have thrown out against his character have had no influence upon the minds of the members of this house who are fully satisfied of his attachment to the cause of freedom, and are willing to bear their testimony of the many services which he has rendered to his country.”

“That, in order effectually to put calumny to silence, they will, at any early day, appoint a committee of their own body to inquire fully into his conduct, which they trust will establish his reputation in the opinion of all good men.”

A complimentary resolution was not what Schuyler wanted.

He felt that a court of inquiry to review and pass upon his official acts was due to him after his own repeated requests and the publicity of the attacks against him.

He felt the mortification of an honorable man accused of ill conduct who is denied the opportunity to vindicate himself.

But worse was to follow.

The party in Congress opposed to him succeeded in getting a committee appointed to investigate the affairs of the northern department, which was directed to confer, not with Schuyler, but with Gates, his inferior in command.

Schuyler must indeed have been possessed of more than ordinary patience to endure without anger treatment so unprecedented.

"I have suffered such brutal outrage from Congress," he wrote to General Scott, "that every gentleman who has ever honored me with his friendship ought to blush for me if I did not resent it."

"The treatment I have experienced puts it out of my power to hold any office, the appointment to which must be made by Congress."

"A late instance of their conduct towards me is equally replete with brutality and folly."

"They have sent up a committee to confer with my inferior officer upon what is proper to be done in this department, and resolved that they will not consent to my resignation."

To Robert R. Livingston, he wrote.

"Will you believe that Mr. Clymer and Mr. Stockton were ordered to repair to Ticonderoga to confer with General Gates?"

"They arrived here on Friday evening, dined and supped with me yesterday, but have not opened their lips on any public business that is to be transacted with my inferior officer under my very nose."

"A more brutal insult could not be offered, an insult which I will not bear with impunity from any body of men on earth."

Resolved to bring about the inquiry which he desired to clear his character, Schuyler requested permission of Congress to repair to Philadelphia, and received from the President in November an answer saying:

"The situation of the northern army being at this juncture extremely critical, and your services in that department of the highest use and importance, the Congress wish for a continuance of your influence and abilities on behalf of your country."

"They have, however, agreeably to your request, consented that you should repair to this city whenever, in your opinion, the service will admit of your absence."

Earnestly as Schuyler wished to make the journey to Philadelphia and to set himself right there, the projected visit was postponed from month to month by public business.

He wrote to Congress in December:

"Much as I wish to do myself the honor to pay my respects to Congress, yet so much is to be done here, and no other general officer in the department, that it would not be prudent for me to quit it in this conjuncture."

"I am closely engaged," he wrote to George Clinton in January, "in preparation for the next campaign, and shall hope that if we can be furnished with men, cannon and ammunition, that the enemy will not be able to penetrate by the north."

Washington conducting his great campaign in New Jersey, needed reinforcements, and Schuyler sent Gates to him with a large portion of the northern army.

Gates joined Washington in the dark days before the famous crossing of the Delaware.

Not liking the outlook, inconsiderate of the great commander who then needed the assistance of every man in his little army, Gates got permission to repair to Philadelphia.

Washington's army, with the regiments Gates had brought from Ticonderoga, endured the hardships and reaped the laurels of Trenton and Princeton.

But Gates meanwhile was pursuing a campaign of another sort amidst the ease and comfort of Philadelphia.

February and March were spent in strengthening his position with the New England delegation, in working upon their prejudice against Schuyler, in ingratiating himself with whomsoever might prove useful.

He had been in command at Ticonderoga at the time of Arnold's gallant fight against Carleton on the lakes, which so intimidated the British commander that he had retired without attacking the fort.

The merit which belonged to Arnold, Gates boastfully claimed for himself.

When Congress earnestly requested him to resume the office of adjutant-general in the newly organized army, he replied with scorn and not without insolence to President Hancock:

"I had last year the honor to command in the second post in America, and had the good fortune to prevent the enemy from making their so much wished for junction with General Howe."

"After this, to be expected to dwindle again to the adjutant general requires more philosophy on my part and something more than words on yours."

With the assistance of the active New England delegation, which controlled the Board of War, Gates made a strong party determined to procure his appointment to independent command in the northern department.

The difficulty was to set aside General Schuyler.

They had already done all they could to make his post unpleasant, and had succeeded in disgusting him with public employment.

But they were only a party.

The Congress as a whole had always sustained Schuyler when a clear issue was brought before it.

He had offered to resign in the autumn of 1775, and had been requested urgently not to do so.

It was but a few months ago that his written resignation was in the hands of Congress who had refused to accept it with assurances of respect and appreciation.

Something must be done to make him resign again, and this time the resignation must be accepted.

The occasion for a concerted attack was found in a letter written to Congress by Schuyler on the 4th of February.

At the time of its reception it attracted no notice, but on the 15th of March it was brought before Congress as important business, and the Gates party was present in force to obtain the desired action upon it.

Schuyler's letter had been on general subjects concerning his department, but it referred also to two special matters: the dismissal of a medical director in the northern department, and the conduct of Joseph Trumbull of Connecticut, a Commissary-General, toward himself.

When Schuyler first took command at Ticonderoga there was a great deal of sickness among the men, and no provision for physicians or medicines.

At his request, Dr. Samuel Stringer of Albany volunteered for the service and supplied a quantity of medicines at his own risk.

His patriotic services were beyond question.

Schuyler secured his reimbursement for his outlay and caused his appointment as medical director.

Stringer continued to render faithful service and was particularly valuable among the sick at Crown Point and Fort George after the disastrous return from Canada.

Schuyler had seen his work and believed that he deserved every recognition that his country could bestow.

He was, therefore, much surprised and annoyed when a notice of dismissal from his post, without any given reasons, was received from Philadelphia by Dr. Stringer.

The physician appealed to him in vain.

Who procured the dismissal and the grounds for it do not appear.

Schuyler felt sincere sympathy for the man who seemed to be treated with undeserved harshness, and under the circumstances his reference to this matter in the letter to Congress does not seem very reprehensible.

His words were:

"As Dr. Stringer had my recommendation to the office he has sustained, perhaps it was a compliment due to me that I should have been advised of the reasons for his dismissal."

The second sentence in the letter which seemed to the Gates party so offensive related to a New England man, Colonel John Trumbull, whose description of the camp at Crown Point has been quoted.

He was on the best terms with Schuyler, and Schuyler had the kindest feelings toward him.

But his brother Joseph, Commissary-General, was an outspoken and well-known enemy.

The enmity could be borne, but lately it had taken a form particularly galling to a man of Schuyler's sense of honor.

On the first of January he had written to Congress:

"Last evening I was informed that amongst the letters lately intercepted by the enemy was one from Colonel Trumbull, the Commissary-General, in which he insinuated that I had secreted his brother Colonel John Trumbull's commission as Adjutant-General."

"If it be true that he has asserted such a thing I shall expect from Congress that justice which is due to me."

"The commission was never sent, at least never received by me, and if it had been, is there the least probability that I would secrete it, after having recommended Colonel John Trumbull to the office as an active, discreet and sensible officer?"

That a Commissary-General in the army should accuse him of secreting a commission issued by Congress seemed to Schuyler to be a matter for Congress to investigate.

Moreover, the continual attacks of this sort were wearing out his patience.

Congress would not assist him by appointing a court of inquiry which might silence the slanders which continually beset him.

In this instance he looked to it for a vindication.

Having received no reply on this subject for more than a month, he then, in his letter of February 4th, enclosed the accusing letter of Trumbull, and added the following words:

"I perceived by some of the resolutions that my letter of the 30th December continued to the 1st of January was received by Congress."

"I was in hopes some notice would have been taken of the odious suspicion contained in Mr. Commissary Trumbull's intercepted letter to the Hon. W. Williams, Esq."

"I really feel myself deeply chagrined on the occasion."

"I am incapable of the meanness he suspects me of, and I confidently expected that Congress would have done me that justice which it was in their power to give and which, I humbly conceive, they ought to have done."

These remarks regarding Dr. Stringer and Commissary Trumbull afforded the substance of the charges which the Gates party made against Schuyler.

In a loosely constructed body like the Congress, with seldom more than a bare quorum present, a small but determined minority may often carry through a preconcerted measure which a majority of the whole would never have approved.

At this time the New York delegation was not present in Philadelphia, and the enemies of Schuyler succeeded in passing the following resolutions, which they felt sure would bring about the desired resignation:

"RESOLVED, That as Congress proceeded to the dismissal of Doctor Stringer, upon reasons satisfactory to themselves, General Schuyler ought to have known it to be his duty to have acquiesced therein."

"That the suggestion in General Schuyler's letter to Congress, that it was a compliment due to him to have advised him of the reasons of Dr. Stringer's dismissal, is highly derogatory to the honor of Congress, and that the President be desired to acquaint General Schuyler that it is expected his letters, for the future, be written in a style more suitable to the dignity of the representative body of these free and independent states, and to his own character as their officer."

"RESOLVED, that it is altogether improper and inconsistent with the dignity of this Congress to interfere in disputes subsisting among the officers of the army, which ought to be settled, unless they can be otherwise accommodated, in a court martial, agreeably to the rules of the army, and that the expression in General Schuyler's letter of the 4th of February, that he confidently expected Congress would have done him that justice, which it was in their power to give, and which he humbly conceives they ought to have done, were, to say the least, ill advised and highly indecent."

Soon after the passage of these resolutions, General Gates was directed to repair immediately to Ticonderoga to take the command there, and to employ under him such of the French officers, as he thought proper, and Major-General St. Clair was ordered to Ticonderoga, there to serve under General Gates.

Such orders virtually if not officially placed Gates at the head of the northern department.

He left Philadelphia highly elated at the results of the winter's work.

Schuyler duly received the resolutions of reprimand and soon after heard of Gates's appointment.

The resolutions, in their severity, seemed to him so entirely out of proportion to any indiscretion he might have committed in his letter to Congress, and the appointment of Gates to independent command within his own department so unjust and insulting a reflection upon him, that he felt that he must go to Philadelphia to face his accusers and to settle his own future in regard to public employment.

If he deserved such treatment his resignation must be given and accepted.

If he did not deserve it, the resolutions must be expunged from the journals of Congress and he must be reinstated in undisputed command of his department.

He proceeded at once to Kingston, where the New York convention was in session, and explained his situation to the members.

They appointed him a delegate to the Continental Congress, with William Duer, and also directed their other delegates, Philip Livingston and James Duane to go to Philadelphia and take their seats.

When Schuyler arrived in Philadelphia, in April, he found it extremely difficult to ascertain the identity of his opponents.

From the members in general he met with a very cordial reception, and those whom he believed to be against him alleged, as he wrote to his secretary, Colonel Varick:

"That there were no complaints against me, and that they have never believed in any of the malicious reports propagated to my disadvantage."

"They have, however, gone too far, and all that stands on their journals injurious to me must be expunged or I quit the service."

A committee was appointed, consisting of one delegate from each State, Messrs. Thornton, Lovell, Ellery, Wolcott, Duer, Elmer, Clymer, Sykes, W. Smith, Page, Burke, Hayward and Brownson.

Before this committee the whole story of Schuyler's military command from the beginning was threshed over.

When the report was made to Congress on the 22d of May, it was

"RESOLVED, That Albany, Ticonderoga, Fort Stanwix and their dependencies be henceforward considered as forming the northern department, and that Major-General Schuyler be directed forthwith to proceed to the northern department and to take command there."

Then Congress withdrew its resolutions of censure by informing him officially that they "now entertain the same favorable sentiments concerning him that they had entertained before that letter (of February 4th) had been received."

At the same time his financial accounts with the Government were examined by the Board of Treasury, which discharged him "of all demands of the United States against him."

A more complete vindication of his official career, and a more mortifying defeat for the Gates party could hardly have been devised.

An honest attempt to replace Schuyler by a man against whom there was no sectional prejudice and who had greater military experience would have deserved respect even from Schuyler's friends.

But that Gates was a small man, an inferior military officer, and a self-seeking schemer, he was himself to show conclusively.

He left Philadelphia under orders, which he had sought eagerly and which were perfectly distinct, to take command at Ticonderoga.

Everyone knew that an invasion from Canada might take place at any time, and consequently that the officer in command at Ticonderoga would have enough to do there in making preparations for it.

But Gates arrived in Albany in the middle of April, and in that town, where he had no command, made himself at home.

Not a step was taken toward Ticonderoga.

The mails to the fort were infrequent and precarious.

From Albany he could keep up his campaign in Congress much more conveniently, and there he remained directing the movements and arguments of his friends.

On May 1st Lovell of the New England delegation wrote him:

"The affairs to the northeast are in a critical situation, for the State of New York in particular."

"Disaffection, as you see, is greatly prevalent, and those who profess well to our cause judge and say that there is but one single man who can keep their subjects united against the common enemy, and that he stands in our books as commander-in-chief in the northern department."

"That his presence is absolutely necessary in his home quarters for their immediate succor and service, as well as that of the United States necessarily connected, that if he returns, he is a general without an army or military chest, and 'why is he thus disgraced?'"

"If you are not confined to Ticonderoga you entirely destroy the idea of their chief to whom they profess devotion unbounded."

"How this matter will be untangled, I cannot now exactly determine, but I expect not entirely agreeable to your sentiments."

"Why," replied Gates, "when the argument in support of General Schuyler's command was imposed upon Congress, did not you, or somebody, say the second post upon this continent next campaign will be at or near Peekskill."

"There General Schuyler ought to go and command."

"That will be the curb in the mouth of the New York Tories and the enemy's army."

"He will then, be near the convention, and in the center of the colony, and have a military chest and all the insignia of office."

"This command in honor could not be refused without owning there is something more alluring than command to General Schuyler, by fixing him at Albany."

"By urging this matter home, you would have proved the man."

"He would have resigned all command, have accepted the government of New York, and been fixed to a station where he must do good, and which

could not interfere with, or prevent, any arrangement Congress have made, or may hereafter make.”

“Unhappy State!”

“That has but one man in it who can fix the wavering minds of its inhabitants to the side of freedom.”

“How could you sit patiently and uncontradicted suffer such impertinence to be crammed down your throats?”

“If General Schuyler is solely to possess all power, all the intelligence, and that particular favorite, the military chest, and constantly reside at Albany, I cannot, with any peace of mind, serve at Ticonderoga.”

In such style did this great general address his political supporters.

He belonged to that type of English soldier who considered all men not born in England and bred in her army as necessarily inferior to himself.

Washington was no exception and came in for his share of disrespect.

Gates took the time from his Philadelphia correspondence to send an aide-de-camp to Washington at Morristown to ask for a supply of tents.

Washington replied that his army needed all the tents they had, and suggested that the northern army, being stationary, could be protected in huts.

Gates wrote back:

"Refusing this army what you have not in your power to bestow, is one thing, but saying this army has not the same necessities as the southern armies, is another.”

“I can assure your Excellency the northward requires tents as much as any service I ever saw.”

Then to his friend Lovell he insinuated that Washington was actuated by sectional motives:

"Either I am exceedingly dull or unreasonably jealous, if I do not discover by the style and tenor of the letters from Morristown how little I have to expect from thence."

"Generals are so far like parsons they are all for christening their own child first, but let an impartial moderating power decide between us, and do not suffer southern prejudice to weigh heavier in the balance than the northern."

Lovell gave signs of being fatigued by this correspondence, and on the 22d of May brought that to an end, together with Gates's hopes, by informing him that:

"Misconception of past resolves and consequent jealousies have produced a definition of the northern department, and General Schuyler is ordered to take command of it."

Gates's anger was great and freely expressed to all who would listen.

Colonel Wilkinson, of his staff, who, like his chief, held the pen of a ready writer, wrote from Ticonderoga:

"The maneuvers of Congress really baffle my penetration, by no stretch of ingenuity can I discern the motives of their late conduct, they have injured themselves, they have insulted you, and by so doing have been guilty of the foulest ingratitude."

"How base, how pitiful, or how little deserving the name is that public power which individual consequence can intimidate or bribe to its purpose."

"It can surely never sustain, unless ashamed of virtue, the just indignation of injured honesty."

"No, my general, every satisfaction which justice demands, with every submission which pleases vanity, you will, you must, you shall, sooner or later receive."

After all, what had Congress done?

It had simply declared that Schuyler's conduct in office had been without reproach and reaffirmed him in his command of the northern department.

Gates's appointment to the command of Ticonderoga under Schuyler remained in force.

His opportunity to display his military abilities, to be in the forefront of a great campaign, to render distinguished services to the State, was assured.

It was common talk that Burgoyne was to lead a great attack upon New York from Canada, and that such an attack was imminent.

He himself had lately written to Lovell:

"Nothing is more certain than that the enemy must first possess that single rock before they can penetrate the country."

"It is foolish in the extreme to believe the enemy, this year, can form any attack from the northward but by Ticonderoga."

And yet that post of honor, which must bear the brunt of attack, was left to take care of itself during the two months that he spent in Albany writing letters to his political friends in Philadelphia."

And now, that the matter was settled, that Schuyler was to remain at the head of the northern department, and that he was to have command of the great fortress at the gateway of the country, what was his obvious duty and interest?

Plainly, to repair to his post, to apply all his skill to making it impregnable, and to make a reputation in defending it in the approaching struggle.

Such was the course natural to a soldier.

Instead he sulked, applied to Schuyler for leave of absence and hastened to Philadelphia.

On the 18th of June, Roger Sherman, delegate from Connecticut, informed Congress that General Gates was waiting at the door for admittance.

"For what purpose?" inquired William Paca.

"To communicate intelligence of importance," replied Sherman.

Being admitted, Gates took a seat, and of the ensuing scene a lively description is given by William Duer:

"The intelligence he communicated was that the Indians were extremely friendly, much delighted with seeing French officers in our service, and other commonplace stuff, which at present I cannot recollect."

"Having thus gone through the ostensible part of the plan, he took out of his pocket some scraps of papers containing a narrative of his birth, parentage, and education, life, character, and behavior."

"He informed the House that he had quitted an easy and happy life to enter their service, from a pure zeal for the liberties of America, that he had strenuously exerted himself in its defense."

"That in some time in May last he was appointed to a command in the northern department, and a few days since, without having given any cause of offence, without accusation, without trial, without hearing, without notice, he had received a resolution by which he was in a most disgraceful manner superseded in his command."

"Here his oration became warm, and contained many reflections upon Congress, and malicious insinuations against Mr. Duane, whose name he mentioned, and related some conversation which he said had passed between him and that gentleman on his way to Albany."

"Then Mr. Duane rose, and, addressing himself to the President, hoped that the General would observe order, and cease any personal applications, as he could not, in Congress, enter into any controversy with him on the subject of any former conversation."

“Mr. Paca caught the fire, and immediately moved that the General be ordered to withdraw.”

“I seconded the motion, observing that the conduct of the General was unbecoming the House to endure, and himself to be guilty of.”

“Mr. Jerry Dyson, Mr. Sherman and some others of his eastern friends rose, and endeavored to palliate his conduct and to oppose his withdrawing.”

“On this Mr. Middleton, Mr. Burke, Colonel Harrison and two or three others arose, and there was a general clamor in the House that he should immediately withdraw.”

“All this while the General stood upon the floor, and interposed several times in the debates which arose on this subject, however, the clamor increasing, he withdrew.”

“A debate then ensued concerning the propriety of the General's conduct, and that of the members who, contrary to the rules of Parliament, contended for the propriety of his staying after a motion had been made and seconded that he should withdraw.”

“The want of candor in Mr. Sherman, who asked for his admittance on the pretense of his giving the House intelligence, was much inveighed against, but he bore it all with a true Connecticut stoicism.”

“Congress at length came to the determination that General Gates should not again be admitted to the floor, but that he should be informed that Congress was ready and willing to hear, by way of memorial, any grievances which he had to complain of.”

“Here this matter ended.”

“Not, as you will observe, to his credit or advantage.”

“It is impossible for me to give you an idea of the unhappy figure which General Gates made on this occasion.”

“His manner was ungracious, and totally devoid of all dignity.”

“His delivery incoherent and interrupted with frequent chasms, in which he was peering over his scattered notes, and the tenor of his discourse was a compound of vanity, folly and rudeness.”

“I can assure you that notwithstanding his conduct has been such as to have eradicated from my mind every sentiment of respect and esteem for him, I felt for him as a man, and for the honor of human nature wished him to withdraw before he had plunged himself into utter contempt.”