

## CHAPTER VII.

While the colonists along the sea-board were beginning to realize the horrors of war, most of the frontier settlers were spectators for a while—not idle ones however. There was a restless anxiety which reached the log tenement of the most distant pioneer. Committees of vigilance, whose duty it was to gather information relative to the portending storm, and prepare for the defence of the settlements, were organized in Tryon county as early as 1774. A council of safety was chosen in Schoharie not long after.

At an early period of the difficulties, an effort was made by the Schoharie settlers to get the Indians in their neighborhood to remain quiet, and let the colonies settle their own quarrel with the mother country. A meeting was held for that purpose at the old council ground in Middleburgh. Brant with several Mohawk chiefs is said to have been present, on which occasion a Mrs. Richtmyer, living in the vicinity, acted as interpreter. The Indians agreed to remain neutral or join the Americans, says an old citizen who was present at the time; but they were too fond of war to remain inactive, while the British government was urging them at once to take up arms.

Previous to the Revolution, a small castle had been erected for the natives at Brakabeen,\* on the west bank of the Schoharie, several miles above Wilder hook, to which many of them removed from the latter place. Near it they had a burying ground.

A deputation from the Schoharie tribe were present in August,

\* Brakabeen is the German word for *rushes*, and obtained from the unusual quantity of that plant found along the banks of the river at that place.

1775, when several commissioners met the chiefs of the Six Nations at the German Flats; and it is believed they were at Albany, where a subsequent meeting was held the same year, for the same purpose. At the time the Indians left the Mohawk valley to follow the fortunes of the Johnsons, the Schoharie Indians, who survived a pestilence, except two or three families, imitated their example, leaving the council grounds and green graves of their fathers.

*Brown* says, that while the Indians were assembled to treat with the commissioners of the Indian department, a contagious disease—which he calls yellow-fever—broke out amongst them, which carried them off in great numbers. That the survivors superstitiously supposed the *Great Spirit* was angry with them for not serving their king, or for hesitating about entering his service; and that consequently they joined the royalists and went to Canada.

*Warree*, an old Cherokee squaw, said to have been 105 years old, usually called the mother of the Schoharies, who was living at Brakabeen at the beginning of hostilities, took the prevailing epidemic in 1775, and died with it. This good old squaw who was familiarly called *Granny Warree*, was the second wife of Schenevas, a Schoharie chief, after whom Schenevas creek in Otsego county, was called.\* For several years before her

\* *Brown's* pamphlet originates the name of this stream from the following circumstance: Two Indians, Schenevas and his son, were there in the winter on a hunt—a deep snow fell and they concluded to return home. After traveling some distance, they kindled a fire and tarried over night. The following morning they set forward on their journey, but the father became fatigued, and finally returned to the place from whence they had first started. The son, discovering his father had taken the back track, returned also, and found him seated by a fire which he had kindled. The son killed his father with a tomahawk, buried him in the snow and returned to Schoharie, since which time this stream has been called Schenevas creek.

At a personal interview, *Judge Brown* related the following tradition, which he believed true: A Schoharie chief named Schenevas, whom I suppose to have been the one killed at the Schenevas creek, was living in the lower part of Schoharie. His mother, an aged widow, was living with him. She was a quarrelsome old squaw—was very fretful, and often wished herself dead when in a fit of ill humor. Her son, getting out of patience with her, went to Lambert Sternberg and borrowed a shovel, with which he dug

death, she used to walk with *two canes*, a good example for the modern exquisite, while her hair, unconfined and white as the Alpine snow, floated loosely at the sport of the breeze. When she felt the prevailing malady stealing upon her, and witnessed its fatal effects upon many of her tribe, believing her days were numbered, she desired to be carried to the spot where her husband had died. She was universally beloved by the whole tribe, indeed by all the white citizens who knew her, and her request, although it subjected them to great inconvenience in their present difficulties, was readily complied with. She survived the journey but a day and two nights, and "was gathered to her fathers, to enter new hunting grounds." She was buried by her faithful warriors who had carried her the whole distance—fifteen or twenty miles—beside her departed husband, near the present residence of Mr. Collier.

It is a remarkable fact, that while a large part of the Schoharie Indians died of this contagious disease, not a single white citizen took it.

Who the first chosen council of safety were in Schoharie, I am unable to say. Johannes Ball, a thorough going Whig, was chairman of the committee from its organization to the end of the war. It consisted generally of six members, and underwent some changes to meet the exigencies of the times. The following persons it is believed were members in the course of the war: Joseph Borst, Joseph Becker, Peter Becker, Col. Peter Vrooman, who is said to have done most of the writing for the board, Lt. Col. Peter Zielie, Peter Swart, Wm. Zimmer of

a grave, in Sternberg's orchard. He then conducted his mother to it. *You have often wished yourself dead*, said he, *I have prepared your grave—you must die*. When she saw the open grave, and realized that she had been taken at her word, she was terrified and began to cry. The savage son told her she must not be a *baby*—that she was going to the *Great Spirit* who did not like babies. He then forced her into the grave—bade her lie down—and buried her alive. She struggled hard as the earth covered her, but, regardless of her entreaties, he stamped down the earth upon her, and closed up the grave. We could wish for poor human nature that those parental murders were mere fiction; but we have too much reason to believe them true—indeed history furnishes us with abundant evidence of inhuman atrocities in savage life.

Brakabeen, Wm. Dietz, Samuel Vrooman, Nicholas Sternberg, Adam Vrooman, George Warner of Cobelskill, and Jacob Zimmer of Foxes creek.

Mr. Ball, chairman of the Schoharie committee, had two sons, Peter and Mattice—who were both living in 1837, in the town of Sharon—who, with their father warmly espoused their country's cause; while another son, and his brother, Captain Jacob Ball—a leader among the tories at Beaverdam; and John Peter Ball, another relative, as warmly advocated that of the oppressor.

As appears by the ancient records preserved in the Secretary's office at Albany, a regiment of militia was organized for the "Schoharie and Duanesburgh districts," as the *fifteenth* regiment of New York militia, and commissions to its officers were issued and dated October 20, 1775. It was composed at first of only *three companies*, and as their members were not all well affected toward rebellion, and scattered over considerable territory, the reader will see their need of foreign assistance. The following is a list of officers to whom commissions were at first issued.

"Peter Vrooman, Col.; Peter W. Zielie, Lieut. Col.; Thomas Eckerson, Jr. 1st Maj.; Jost Becker, 2d Maj.; Lawrence Schoolcraft, Adjt.; Peter Ball, Qr. Master.

"*First Company*—George Mann, Capt.; Christian Stubragh, 1st Lieut.; John Dominick, 2d Lieut.; Jacob Snyder, Ensign.

"*Second Company*—Jacob Hager, Capt.; Martynus Van Slyck, 1st Lieut.; Johannes W. Bouck, 2d Lieut.; Johannes L. Lawyer, Ensign.

"*Third Company*—George Reichtmyer, Capt.; Johannes I. Lawyer, 1st Lieut.; Martynus W. Zielie, 2d Lieut.; Johannes Lawyer Bellinger, Ensign."

A small company of militia was afterwards organized in Cobelskill, under Capt. Christian Brown and Lieut. Jacob Borst, which was possibly attached to the Schoharie regiment.

On the 14th of June, 1776, I find by the Albany records, that Schoharie was represented in the "general committee chamber," by chairman Ball and Peter Becker, of the Schoharie council of safety. At a meeting of the New York State Committee of Safety, convened at Fishkill, October 9, 1776, the following resolution was adopted—

"*Resolved*, That the persons hereafter mentioned, be appointed to purchase at the cheapest rate, in their several counties, all the coarse woollen cloth, linsey woolsey, blankets, woollen hose, mittens, coarse linen, felt hats, and shoes fitting for soldiers; and that they have the linen made up into shirts." [The committee named for Albany county were]—"Capt. John A. Fonda, of the manor of Livingston; Peter Van Ness, of Claverack; Barent Van Beuren, of Kinderhook; Isaac V. Arnum, of Albany; Cors. Cuyler, of Schenectada; James McGee and Henry Quackenboss, of the manor of Rantselear; Anthony Van Bergen, of Cocsakie; Henry Oothout, of Katskill; and Johannes Ball, of Schoharie; and that the sum of 100 pounds be advanced to each of them for purchasing the above articles."

The following oath of allegiance was found among the papers of the late Chairman Ball—

"You shall swear by the holy evangelist of the Almighty God, to be a true subject to our continental resolve and Provincial Congress and committees, in this difficulty existing between Great Britain and America, and to answer upon such questions as you shall be examined in, so help you God.

"Derrick Laraway appeared and swore the above mentioned, before the chairman and committee, at Schoharie, and signed the association, on the 30th day of June, in the year 1776."

The following papers are copied from a record made by *Judge Swart* some years before his death. They were obtained through the politeness of the late Gen. Jacob Hager, and although they exhibit personal services, as they will throw some light on Schoharie affairs in the Revolution, I give them an insertion.

*"Names of the Persons that made resistance in 1777, against McDonald and his Party."*

The Hager Family.*	Peter Zielie, jr.	Storm Becker jr.
Peter Vrooman, [Col.]	Thomas Eckerson,	John H. Becker,
Jonas Vrooman,	Thomas Eckerson jr.	John I. Becker,
Peter Swart, [afterwards judge,]	[Maj.]	David Becker,
Peter A. Vrooman,	George Richtmyer,	Albertus Becker,
Peter Powlus Swart,	Cornelius Van Dyck,	Peter Zielie, [Lt. Col.]
Abraham Becker,	Tunis Eckerson,	Peter Van Slyck,
John A. Becker,	Cornelius Eckerson,	Martinus Zielie,
Storm A. Becker,	Hendrick Becker,	Peter Becker,
John Van Dyck,	John S. Becker,	Christian Richtmyer.

\* It is a fact worthy of note, that while members of almost every family of distinction in the Schoharie settlements were found in hostile array, as father

The preceding memorandum embraces few if any names of individuals north of the present limits of Middleburgh; although there were many patriots about Foxes creek, and the Schoharie valleys farther north, and not a few in the more distant settlements. The party named assembled at Middleburgh, and began fortifying the stone house of John Becker, afterwards picketed in, and occupied as the middle fort. The record of Swart thus continues:

"I was enrolled in the militia at sixteen years of age; [this was the lawful age for enrolling at that period] served as a private six months; then I was appointed a corporal—served in that capacity about one year; then I was appointed sergeant in Capt. Hager's company; 1778, I was appointed ensign in said company, in the room of John L. Lawyer; 1786, I was promoted to first major of the regiment; 1798, I was promoted to lieut. colonel com't; 1784 I was appointed justice of the peace without my knowledge; 1796 I was appointed one of the judges of the county, which office I have resigned 1818; 1798 I was elected a member of assembly; the next election I was solicited to stand again as a candidate, which I utterly refused; 1806 I was elected a member of Congress. I was afterwards again requested to stand as a candidate for Congress, which I refused; when John Gebhard, Judge Shepard, and Boyd were candidates for Congress. Gebhard and Shepard met with their friends at the Court House for one of them to give way; no arrangement could be made; they both signed a written declaration to give way in case I would accept a nomination, which I also refused. 1816 I was elected a senator. At the expiration of my time I was again requested to stand a candidate for the senate, which I also refused. I never craved or requested an office.

"I was one of the first that signed the compact and association. 1776 I turned out to Stone Arabia to check the progress of the enemy and Tories. In the fall of the same year, I turned out to Albany, from thence to Fort Edward, from thence to Johnstown, to check the enemy. 1777, in the spring, I turned out to Harpersfield, from thence to the Delaware to take up disaffected, from there home. Three days home, I went down the Hellenbergh to take Tories; after we had together about twenty-five of them, went to Albany and delivered them in jail. A few days afterwards went to Harpersfield; from thence to Charlotte river to take

against son, brother against brother, &c., all the members of the *Hager* family at once united with those who were unfurling to the winds of Heaven, the stars and stripes of freedom. From the number of Beckers on this list, we may reasonably suppose that few of that name were Tories.

McDonald, and send him to jail. In August 1777, was one of the thirty-two that made a stand to oppose McDonald and his party. I was one of the two that risked our lives to crowd through the Tories' guns to go to Albany for assistance; was taken prisoner by the Indians and Tories; the same evening I made my escape.\* I was one of the six councillors that went from the stone house across Schoharie creek into the woods in a cave, to consult what measures to adopt—secrecy at that time was the best policy.† Did not McDonald and his party come down as far as my house, and there encamp till next day, and destroy every thing? I had left home. The same day McDonald and his party were defeated and fled into the woods, and went off to Canada, and about twenty-six from Brakabeen went with him. What would have been the result if our small party had made no resistance, and had tamely submitted? McDonald would have marched through Schoharie, and in all probability reached Albany. What was the consequence as far as he came down? Was not the farm of Adam Crysler confiscated? Also the farm of Adam Bouck and brothers? Also the farm of Frederick Bouck? Also the farm of Bastian Becker? Also the farm of John Brown? Also the farm of Hendrick Mattice? Also the farm of Nicholas Mattice, and a number of others that were indicted? And a number more that had joined McDonald and fired on our men.”

Peter and Mattice Ball, as their father was chairman of committee, were subjected to much arduous duty, and consequently were often pressed into unexpected service. *Peter Ball* related to the author the following melancholy incident. He had been sent to Ticonderoga with a sleigh load of stores for the army, during the winter preceding Burgoyne's campaign. While returning, in company with other sleighs which had been there for the same purpose, the horses attached to one of them, which was driven by a boy and contained *six soldiers*, took fright at the sound of a drum in one of the sleighs. They were driving upon ice at the time, and if I mistake not, they were on the Hudson,

\* Swart and his neighbor, Ephraim Vrooman, were sent to Albany for aid, by Col. Vrooman, and started on foot, supposed the day before Col. Harper did, and arrived there almost as soon. They were detained on their way, by coming unexpectedly upon a party of armed royalists; but finally escaped from them and pursued their journey.

† The stone house to which he alludes, was that of John Becker, afterwards fortified as the middle fort. The cave, or place of concealment, formerly called “the committee hole,” was on the opposite side of the river from Middleburgh, in a ravine between the mountains.

near Saratoga. When the horses started, one of the men took the reins from the boy, who jumped out and escaped; but the soldiers and horses broke through the ice and were all drowned. Ball assisted in recovering the bodies of the soldiers, and conveyed them to Albany in his sleigh.

Once he carried a load of powder in a wagon to Lake George; three other loads went at the same time, and all were guarded by military from Albany. On two other occasions, he was sent to Fort Edward with flour from Schoharie, and was pressed to take loads from there to Lake George. On those occasions he had to lie out nights, and suffered from cold.

Chairman Ball resided about half a mile north of the stone church in Schoharie, known, when fortified in the Revolution, as the Lower Fort. His son, Wilhelmus Ball, now resides on the same ground. Peter Ball once playfully remarked to the author, that his father had *nine* children by his first wife, and only *ten* by his second.

Several anecdotes of interest are told of Chairman Ball. His neighbor, George Mann, who was a captain of militia, kept a public house where Cornelius Vrooman now lives, and warmly advocated royalty. His house was made the rallying point for Tories and Indians in the year 1776 and early part of '77, to consider the past and plan future operations. The individuals of this stamp who usually met there, neither liked Johannes Ball nor his politics. It was therefore thought best to get him out of the way if possible: indeed, it was afterwards asserted and confidently believed, that *five hundred* guineas were offered by an agent of the king for his destruction. David Ogeyonda, a subtle Schoharie warrior, who had a hut on the lands of Adam Vrooman, and who had been for some time active for the Tories, doing the duties of a runner, spy, &c., was to be the instrument of his death. Ball was to be invited to the house of Mann, under the pretence of having important business to transact with him, or some one else, when David was to provoke him to a quarrel, and thus have a plausible pretext to kill him. Hostilities had not yet gone so far in Schoharie, that either party felt justified in imbruing their

hands in the blood of an old neighbor, without the show of cause. Ball went to the house of Mann, at the appointed time, taking the precaution to go armed with a brace of loaded pistols. He found that the business was of little importance, but that the Indian, David, was determined to quarrel with him. As the savage not unfrequently seized the handle of a long knife worn in his girdle, he suspected his motive and made good his escape; keeping a chair with one hand between his enemy and himself until he reached the door, while the other hand rested upon a pistol. This transaction took place but a short time previous to the death of this Indian, as will appear hereafter.

It had been the usual custom for ministers of the gospel, to remember the king in their prayers on the Sabbath, previous to the commencement of difficulties. One Sunday, as Chairman Ball was leaving the stone church, just before the outbreak of hostilities, when the excitement of stifled feeling was scarcely controlled, he said to one of his Whig neighbors, who was standing so near o'd domine Schuyler that the latter could hear the remark, "the domine does not dare to pray for *King George* any more, and for *Congress* he will not pray." Schuyler usually preached in Low Dutch at Middleburgh, and in German at Schoharie.

Col. Peter Vrooman, one of the Schoharie committee, was a major of militia before the revolution. He was a captain in the French war, and assisted in erecting fortifications at Oswego. If not as energetic as some officers, he was far from being as pusillanimous as represented in the *Annals of Tryon County*, or *Stone's Life of Brant*. The old soldiers who served under him, represent him as having been a bold and determined man, and his conduct on several occasions during the war, gave good evidence of that fact. He was very much respected in the county, and is said to have been *nineteen years* a member of either the senate or assembly of New York. An attempt was made to take him prisoner during the war. A liberal reward had been offered for his apprehension. A meeting of the council of safety was to take place at his house, and supposing he would remain at home, several of the enemy had secreted themselves, intending

to secure his person when the rest of the committee retired. The snow was deep and the enemy expected an easy conquest; but it became necessary for him to leave home with his guests, and the intentions of the foe were thwarted.

In 1776, a plan was devised by Governor Tryon, aided by the Mayor of New York, to seize the person of Gen. Washington; some of whose guard were in the plot: but the design of the enemy was seasonably discovered, and those who were conniving with the enemy, executed.—*Bancroft's Washington*.

In the fall of 1776, Congress sent Dr. Franklin, Silas Dean and Arthur Lee as commissioners to the court of France for aid: and also resolved to build a *navy*.

The year 1776 closed without any thing remarkable occurring to disturb, unusually, the peace of the frontier settlements. After the Declaration of Independence, events transpired in other places, involving the safety of the republic. In August, the whole of Long Island fell into the hands of the enemy, and in September, the city of New York followed the same fate.\*

\*The masterly retreat of Gen. Washington with his army across the East river from Brooklyn to New York, is thus related by Major, afterwards Col. Benjamin Tallmadge, in his military journal: "In the face of many difficulties, the Commander-in-chief so arranged his business, that on the evening of the 29th, [Aug.] by 10 o'clock, the troops began to retire from the lines in such a manner that no chasm was made in the line, but as one regiment left their station on guard, the remaining troops moved to the right and left, and filled up the vacancies, while Gen. Washington took his station at the ferry, and superintended the embarkation of the troops. It was one of the most anxious, busy nights that I ever recollect, and being the third in which hardly any of us had closed our eyes to sleep, we were all greatly fatigued. As the dawn of the next day approached, those of us who remained in the trenches became very anxious for our own safety, at which time there were several regiments still on duty. At this time a very dense fog began to rise, and it seemed to settle in a peculiar manner over both encampments. I recollect this peculiar, providential occurrence perfectly well, and so very dense was the atmosphere, that I could scarcely discern a man at six yards distance. When the sun rose we had just received orders to leave the lines, but before we reached the ferry, the Commander-in-chief sent one of his aids to order the regiment back to its former station. Col. Chester immediately faced about and returned to the lines, where we tarried until the sun had risen, but the fog remained as dense as ever. Finally, the second order arrived for the regiment to retire, and we very joyfully bid those trenches a

I shall have repeatedly to speak of the difficulty the Americans experienced in procuring a supply of the munitions of war. The following anecdote will show that it extended to small concerns. In the early part of the contest, *gun-flints* were so scarce, that troops while performing the manual exercise, substituted wooden ones for those of silx. While James Williamson was on duty one moonlight night in 1776, on Long Island off Gardiner's Island, as piquet guard, he saw an armed barge approaching the shore near him from one of the British ships off the Island. He instantly raised his piece and cocked it, when, to his chagrin, he found it had a wooden flint in the lock. The men in the barge, who were sufficiently near to see the leveled musket, ignorant of its harmless condition, shifted their course without attempting to land.—*James Williamson.*

The defeat of the Americans on Long Island and the loss of New York, were succeeded by a catalogue of disasters, which tended to make the royalists more bold, and greatly to dishearten the Americans. Several hundred houses were destroyed in New York by fire, soon after the British took that city. In November, Forts Washington and Lee, situated nearly opposite each other on

long adieu. When we reached Brooklyn ferry the boats had not returned from their last trip, but they very soon appeared and took the whole regiment over to New York; and I think I saw Gen. Washington on the ferry stairs when I stepped into one of the last boats that received the troops. I left my horse tied to a post at the ferry.

“The troops having all safely reached New York, and the fog continuing as thick as ever, I began to think of my favorite horse, and requested leave to return and bring him off. Having obtained permission, I called for a crew of volunteers to go with me, and guiding the boat myself, I obtained my horse and got off some distance into the river before the enemy appeared in Brooklyn. As soon as they reached the ferry, we were saluted merrily from their musketry and finally by their field pieces, but we returned in safety. In the history of warfare, I do not recollect a more fortunate retreat. After all, the providential appearance of the fog saved a part of our army from being captured, and myself, for certain, among others who formed the rear guard. Gen. Washington has never received the credit which was due to him for this wise and most fortunate measure. When the enemy had taken possession of the heights opposite to the city, they commenced firing from the artillery, and the fleet pretty soon were in motion to take possession of those waters; had this been done a little earlier, this division of our army must inevitably have fallen into their hands.”

the banks of the Hudson, about ten miles above New York, which commanded the river, fell into the hands of the enemy: the former after a most gallant defence, and the latter by being abandoned; and the Commander-in-chief, unable to oppose a superior force, retreated into New Jersey. By the fall of Fort Washington, says the diary of Col. Tallmadge, "we lost about *three thousand* men, a great part of whom *perished in prison by severe usage, sickness, &c.*" While a dark pall seemed spreading around the cause of Liberty, Gen. Howe issued a proclamation offering pardon to all who would submit to royal authority. The prospects looked so gloomy, that many of the best citizens of New Jersey were induced to sacrifice their feelings—abandon Freedom's cause, and claim British protection. Gen. Washington, with the remains of his army, was obliged to retreat over the Delaware; about which time the British gained possession of Rhode Island. The sagacious commander, who had seen his troops repeatedly in retreat before a well fed and well clothed enemy, not only observed their numbers fast lessening by desertion, but also the necessity of staying the tide of that enemy's success, and rolling back the cloud which seemed ready to burst and obscure the light of Liberty forever. He resolved to hazard all in one bold effort, and on Christmas night he crossed the Delaware at Trenton, surprised a body of Hessian soldiers—took nearly a thousand prisoners, and recrossed the river in safety, with the loss of only nine men.

On the 2d of January, 1777, the main body of the British army under Cornwallis, who had hastened on from New York after the capture of the Hessians, marched to attack the Americans. They encamped near Trenton at night, intending to commence an action in the morning, when Washington, knowing the comparative weakness of his famished troops, conceived and executed another bold project. After renewing his fires, he left his encampment about midnight, and by a circuitous route gained the rear of the enemy—pushed on to Princeton, near which place he met and defeated a body of them, and again took several hundred prisoners. The enemy finding himself out-generaled, retreated to New

Brunswick, and the American army went into winter quarters at Morristown, New Jersey. The brilliant victories of Trenton and Princeton, while they tended with magnetic power to raise the drooping spirits of the patriot band—in fact, of the whole American people—won for their great leader the appellation of the *American Fabius*. Few can realize at this day, the importance of those victories to the American arms. For months, a series of disasters had attended them, and the stoutest hearts were beginning to yield to despair. The great and good Washington led forth to conquest on those occasions, a half-naked, famished troop of heroes, who, under similar circumstances, would have followed no other leader.

Reader! would you realize the sufferings of that little band of patriots, who remained willing to follow the fortunes of your bleeeing country, in the darkest hour of her adversity?—and by so doing arrive at a more just estimate of the value of that liberty you now enjoy? Imagine yourself on some of the coldest nights of winter, when the wintry winds are moaning around you, and the stars are looking coldly from the blue vault above, seated by the road side where is passing in silence a body of armed men, fatigued, disheartened, ragged, barefooted, faint from want of food, and many with limbs frozen from exposure:—and on the morrow, go trace their footsteps o'er the frozen ground by *their own blood*; then tell me if you can guard with too much watchfulness—or look with favor upon any attempt to mar that liberty?

The proverbial caution and prudence of General Washington, were perhaps evinced in nothing more visibly during the war, than in his general orders to avoid the ill will or needless suffering of the citizens. When his cold and wearied troops encamped the night after the battle of Princeton, as has been stated by an officer who was present, his orders contained this unusual requisition—“*not to burn the stone walls!*”—tacitly implying, that they might, on that one occasion, *burn rail fences*, which are said to have been burned with impunity.

The enemy having matured his plans during the winter, began

to move early in the summer of 1777, and expected to make an easy conquest of the whole colony of New York. Gen. Burgoyne left Crown Point with such an army as he had vauntingly declared in the British Parliament, he could lead from Maine to Georgia; and with it one of the best trains of artillery ever seen in America. He was to push his way to Albany along the Hudson. Colonel St. Leger, with a large body of British, Tories and Indians, left Oswego about the same time, intending to pillage the beautiful valley of the Mohawk, and rest himself after his work of destruction, at Albany. Sir Henry Clinton, whose well fed troops had been basking in some of the smiles and some of the frowns of the New York *fair*, after doing what mischief he pleased along the romantic shores of the Hudson, was to offer his services and compliments in person to the citizens of Albany. And lastly Captain McDonald, a noted Tory leader—a Scotchman who had been living for a time on Charlotte river, with a body of several hundred royalists and Indians, was making his way down through the Schoharie settlements, intending to meet the trio already named, and revel with them in “the beauty and booty” of Albany.

This was a most trying period for New York. To meet and repel the several attacks, appeared to some of the most patriotic a matter of impossibility—but with a firm reliance on the God of battles for success, they buckled on their armor, and resolved to try. Most of the published accounts erroneously make the irruption of McDonald and his legions at a later date.

Some of the Schoharie militia were called into service on several occasions in the latter part of the year 1776, and early part of 1777. *Mattice Ball* said he was under Capt. Hager in the enterprise which Judge Swart alludes to, as having taken place in the spring of 1777. The party were volunteers, and proceeded to Loonenburg, now Athens, to arrest Col. James Huetson, who was marshaling Tories. They were in search of him thirteen days, a part of which time they levied a tax upon his poultry yard, and ate up his chickens. After securing him and some twenty other genial spirits, they delivered them to the military department at Albany for safe keeping. Huetson was afterwards hung.

I have remarked briefly, that members of families in Schoharie were found entertaining different opinions respecting the belligerent attitude of England and her colonies, and consequently were in hostile array. Capt. Jacob Ball, mentioned as the brother of Johannes Ball, raised a company of 63 royalists at the Beaverdam and in Duanesburgh and went to Canada, accompanied by several relatives. George Mann, another captain of militia to whom we have alluded, on being ordered out with his company to oppose the enemy, openly declared himself friendly to the royal power. Adam Crysler and his brothers, with several other individuals, who were men of no little influence residing in the south part of the Schoharie settlement, also sided with royalty. The example of several respectable officers and other individuals of reputation, as may be inferred, augured no good for the welfare of that community, as the prudent knew full well that "*a house divided against itself,*" like Franklin's empty bag, "*could not stand alone.*"

As appears by an affidavit of *William Johnston, jr.*, made July 16, 1777, which I find on the journal of the New York council of safety, Joseph Brant had then, with some eighty warriors, commenced his marauding enterprises on the settlements at Unadilla; by appropriating their cattle, sheep and swine to his own benefit. To obtain satisfaction for those cattle, and 'if possible get the Indians to remain neutral in the approaching contest, in the latter part of June, 1777, Gen. Herkimer, with three hundred and eighty of the Tryon county militia, proceeded to Unadilla, (an Indian settlement on the Susquehanna,) to hold an interview with Brant. That celebrated chief, then at Oquago, was sent for by Gen. Herkimer, and arrived on the 27th, after the Americans had been there about eight days in waiting.

Colonel John Harper, who attended Gen. Herkimer at this time, made an affidavit on the 16th of July following the interview, showing the principal grievances of which the Indians complained, as also the fact *that they were in covenant with the king, whose belts were yet lodged among them,* and whose service they intended to enter. The instrument farther testified, that

Brant, instead of returning to Oswego, as he had informed Gen. Herkimer was his intention; had remained in the neighborhood, on the withdrawal of the American militia, and was preparing to destroy the frontier settlements.

The following particulars relating to the interview between Gen. Herkimer and Brant, were obtained from the venerable patriot, *Joseph Wagner*, of Fort Plain. He states that at the first meeting of Gen. Herkimer with Brant, the latter was attended by three other chiefs, William Johnson, a son of Sir William Johnson by Molly Brant, which son was killed at the battle of Oriskany the same year, Pool, a smart looking fellow with curly hair, supposed part indian and part negro, and a short dark skinned Indian, the four encircled by a body-guard of some twenty noble looking warriors.

When in his presence, Brant rather haughtily asked Gen. Herkimer the object of his visit, which was readily made known; but seeing so many attendants, the chief suspected the interview was sought for another purpose. Said Brant to Herkimer, *I have five hundred warriors at my command, and can in an instant destroy you and your party; but we are old neighbors and friends, and I will not do it.* Col. Cox, a smart officer who accompanied Gen. Herkimer, exchanged several sarcastic expressions with Brant, which served not a little to irritate him and his followers. The two had had a quarrel a few years previous, about lands around the upper Indian castle. Provoked to anger, Brant asked Cox *if he was not the son-in-law of old George Klock?* Yes! replied Cox in a tone of malignity, *and what is that to you, you d—d Indian?* At the close of this dialogue Brant's guard ran off to their camp, firing several guns, and making the hills echo back their savage yells. Gen. Herkimer then assured Brant that he intended his visit for one of a pacific nature, and urged him to prevent their moving to hostilities. A word from that chief hushed the tempest of human passion, which but an instant before had threatened to deluge the valley with blood; the parties, however, were too heated to proceed with the business which convened them. Said Brant, addressing Gen. Herkimer,

*it is needless to multiply words at this time, I will meet you here at precisely 9 o'clock to-morrow morning.* The parties then separated to occupy their former position in camp.

From what had transpired, I presume Gen. Herkimer did not feel wholly secure in his person; for early on the following morning he called on Mr. Wagner, then an active young soldier of his party, and taking him aside, asked him *if he could keep a secret.* When assured in the affirmative, he informed Wagner that he wished him to select three other persons, who, with himself should be in readiness at a given signal, to shoot Brant and the other three chiefs, *if the interview about to take place did not end amicably.* In case of the least hostile movement on their part, the chiefs were to be sacrificed. Wagner selected Abraham and George Herkimer, nephews of Gen. Herkimer, and a third person name now forgotten. Col. Stone, speaking of this transaction in the *Life of Brant*, not aware of its having been dictated by the circumstances as any arrangement of *caution*, which should reflect credibly on the prudence of Gen. Herkimer, thus comments on it—"There is something so revolting—so rank and foul—in this project of meditated treachery, that it is difficult to reconcile it with the known character of Gen. Herkimer." In another place he adds, "A betrayal of his [Herkimer's] confidence, under those circumstances, would have brought a stain upon the character of the provincials, which all the waters of the Mohawk could not have washed away." Difficult indeed would it be *if necessary*, to reconcile this affair with the honorable life of the brave Herkimer, but such is not the case, and I have presented this whole matter solely to correct an impression conveyed in the life of Brant, which reflects ignobly on the character of that officer. The whole proceeding was only one of *precaution*, and had it been otherwise would have been executed, as ample opportunity was afforded Wagner and his accomplices, to assassinate the chiefs. Col. Stone quotes the manuscript of my informant as authority for what he states, but there is some *mistake* in the matter, as Wagner assured the writer he never had furnished a manuscript account of the affair to any one.

With the arrangement of circumspection on the part of Gen. Herkimer, as stated above, the parties held their interview on the 28th of June; the last convention of the kind held in New York. Brant was the first to speak: said he—“*Gen Herkimer, I now fully comprehend the object of your visit, but you are too late, I am already engaged to serve the king. We are old friends and I can do no less than let you return home unmolested, although you are entirely within my power.*” After a little more conversation, in which the parties agreed to separate amicably, the conference ended, at which time Gen. Herkimer presented to Brant seven or eight fat cattle that had but just arrived, owing to obstructions on the outlet of Otsego Lake, down which stream they were driven or transported. For three days previous to the arrival of the cattle, the Americans were on very short allowance.

Whether Brant had five hundred men at his command may be doubted; Col. Harper has given their number as about one hundred and thirty-seven—possibly there were foes in concealment unknown to that officer. The Americans retraced their steps to the Mohawk valley, and scarcely had they set out, when the Indians began to repeat their depredations on the patriotic citizens in the neighborhood. Brant soon after fell back to Oquago, to strengthen his numbers, and prepare to act in concert with St. Leger.

After the war Brant visited the Mohawk valley, at which time Mr. Wagner conversed with him about the treaty at Unadilla. On being assured by my informant that he was in readiness at the second interview to shot him down, that chief expressed much surprise that Gen. Herkimer had taken such precaution.

Among the papers of Chairman Ball I find the following :

“Schoharie, July 7th, 1777, in Committee Chamber first *Resolved*, that all the persons between the ages of sixteen and fifty years, from the dwelling house of Christian Shaffer and to northward in Schoharie, are to bring their arms and accoutrements when they come to the meeting at either of the two churches in

Fountain Town and Foxes Town,\* on Sunday or any other day when kept; and if any of them shall neglect in bringing their arms and accoutrements to either of the churches, shall forfeit and pay the sum of *three shillings*, New York currency, into the hands of Mr. Johannes Ball, for the use of paying the cost for the district of Schoharie; or if any person shall not pay the said sum as aforesaid, it shall be lawful for Mr. Johannes Ball to give a warrant directed to a sergeant or corporal, and levy the same on the offender's goods and chattels, and also the costs thereof.

"And the persons inhabiting from the dwelling of Baltus Krysler to the said Christian Shaffer, are to bring their arms, &c. to the church in Weiser's Town, as they are ordered to [in] Foxes Town; and if neglected to pay the same to Mr. Johannes Becker, and be put in execution by him as ordered by Mr. Ball aforesaid.

"And persons southward from Baltus Krysler's are to be armed when [they] come to any meeting that may be kept in Brakabeen, and if neglected, to pay the fines to Mr. William Zimmer, and to be put by him in execution as beforementioned, and for the use as aforesaid.

"N. B. Their resolve in Fountain Town Church is to be paid to Mr. Johannes Lawyer, and to be put by him in execution as within mentioned, and for the use as aforesaid; and George Warner is appointed to see [that] the inhabitants of Cobelskill bring their arms when [they] come to meeting there, and put this resolve in execution as within mentioned, and for the use aforesaid.

"Secondly, Resolved, that four watches are to be kept in Schoharie every night from this time constant: the first is to be kept at the dwelling house of Capt. George Mann, and under his command, and in his absence the next in command; the inhabitants from Christian Shaffer's dwelling house and to northward, are to be under Capt. Mann's command for the watch to consist of *eight men*. The second is to be kept at the dwelling house of Mr. Hendrick P. Becker, and under the command of Capt. George Richtmyer, and in his absence the next officer in command: the inhabitants from Hendrick Tansen's house and so northward to Christian Shaffer's, are under the command of this second watch, and to consist of *six men*. The third is to be kept at the dwelling house of Mr. Johannes Feak, and under the command of Lieut. Martynus Van Slyck, and in his absence the next officer in command; the inhabitants from Baltus Krysler's dwelling house and so northward to Hendrick Tansen's are under the command of this third watch, and to consist of *six men*. And the fourth is to be kept by the inhabitants from Baltus Krysler's and so southward, at the dwelling house of Mr. Hendrick Hager under the command of Capt. Jacob Hager, in his absence the next officer in command;

"The former a Lutheran church then standing a little distance east of the Court House, and the latter the stone edifice erected by the Dutch church, and still standing one mile north of the Court House.

and this watch is to consist of *six men*. Every person or persons neglecting to serve on such or either of such watches aforementioned, shall for every neglect pay and forfeit the sum of *twelve shillings* for the use of the district of Schoharie."

At an early stage of difficulties, the little settlement at Harpersfield, which was greatly exposed to savage inroads, organized a committee of vigilance, of which Isaac Patchin was chairman. This settlement was within the limits of Tryon county. In view of the enemy's proximity, Mr. Patchin wrote to the State Council of Safety, on the 4th of July, 1777, as follows :

" Gentlemen—The late irruptions and hostilities committed at Tunadilla, by Joseph Brant, with a party of Indians and Tories, have so alarmed the well-affected inhabitants of this and the neighboring settlements, who are now the entire frontier of this state, that except your honors doth afford us immediate protection, we shall be obliged to leave our settlements to save our lives and families; especially as there is not a man on the outside of us, but such as have taken protection of Brant, and many of them have threatened our destruction in a short time, the particular circumstances of which Col. Harper, (who will wait on your honors,) can give you a full account of, by whom we hope for your protection, in what manner to conduct ourselves."

On the 8th July, William Harper wrote the Albany council from Cherry Valley, also within Tryon county, stating the exposed condition of that place, and the rumor of the enemy's nearness under Brant. The committee to which was referred the correspondence of Isaac Patchin and Wm. Harper, introduced several resolutions to the council of safety on the 17th July; in which they recommended raising two companies of rangers, to serve on the frontiers of Tryon, Ulster, and Albany counties, under the command of John Harper and James Clyde, as captains, and Alexander Harper and John Campbell as lieutenants. Lt. Harper, as soon as twenty-five men were enlisted by Col. John Harper as recruiting officer, was to take charge of them and repair to a post of danger.

In the *correspondence of the Provincial Congress of New York*, I find the following :

*Schoharie Committee Chamber, July 17, 1777.*

" Gentlemen—The late advantage gained over us by the ene-

my, has such effect upon numbers here, that many we thought steady friends to the state seem to draw back; our state therefore, is deplorable; all our frontiers [frontier settlers] except those that are to take protection from the enemy, are gone, so that we are entirely open to the Indians and Tories, which we expect every hour to come to this settlement: part of our militia is at Fort Edward; the few that are here many of them, are unwilling to take up arms to defend themselves, as they are not able to stand against so great a number of declared enemies, who speak openly without any reserve. Therefore, if your honors do not grant us immediate relief, of about five hundred men to help defend us, we must either fall a prey to the enemy, or take protection also. For further particulars we refer you to the bearer, Col. Wills, in whom we confide to give you a true account of our state and situation, and of the back settlements, as he is well acquainted with them. We beg that your honors will be pleased to send us an answer by the bearer. We remain,

Your honors' most obed't humble servants.

Signed by order of the committee.

JOHANNES BALL, *Chairman.*

The above letter was read in Council, at their afternoon session, on Saturday, July 19th, and after some discussion it was referred to *Messrs. Jay, Platt, and R. R. Livingston*. On the 22d, the Council wrote "*To the Chairman of the Committee of Schoharie,*" as follows:

"*Kingston, July 22, 1777.*

"Gentlemen: It greatly astonishes this Council that the settlement of Schoharie, which has always been considered as firmly and spiritedly attached to the American cause, should be panic-struck upon the least appearance of danger. Can you conceive that our liberties can possibly be redeemed from that vassalage which our implacable foes are, with unrelenting cruelty, framing for us, without some danger and some vigorous efforts on our part? To expect that Providence, however righteous our cause, will, without a vigorous use of those means which it has put in our power, interpose in our behalf, is truly to expect that God will work miracles for us, when those means, well improved, will afford sufficient security to our inestimable rights. It is your bounden duty, if you wish for the smiles of Heaven in favor of the public cause in which you are so deeply interested, to acquit yourselves like men. A few worthless Indians, and a set of villains, who have basely deserted their country, are all the enemies you have to fear.

"We have good reason to believe that the greatest and most deserving part of the Six Nations are well disposed toward us. This Council is exerting itself to secure you against danger, and only

wish you would second their efforts. Tryon county is a frontier to your settlement; in that county Fort Schuyler is a respectable fortress, properly garrisoned. Major General Schuyler has sent up a part of a regiment as a further reinforcement. We have authorized Colonel Harper to raise and embody two hundred men for covering and protecting the inhabitants, and have formed such a disposition of the militia of the county of Tryon for alternate relieves as we hope will tend effectually to secure you.

"If any proclamations or protections should be offered you by the enemy, by all means reject them. From the woful experience of those who have fallen within their influence in other parts of the country, we have the highest reasons to believe that your acceptance of those tenders of friendship, should they be made, will render your misery and slavery unavoidable.

"In further attention to the cause of your settlement and Tryon county, we have this morning sent Mr. Robert Livingston to Gen. Washington. He is authorized to concert with his Excellency the most effectual measures for putting the western frontiers of this state in all possible security.

"In the mean time we expect much from your public virtue; that it will induce you to apprehend and send to us the disaffected among you; that it will lead you to the most effectual means of securing your property from the depredations of a weak but insidious foe; and that it will teach you the impropriety of deserting your habitations, and keep you in continual readiness to repel the assaults of the enemies of the liberty of your country. We write to the general committee of the county of Albany, to give you all the countenance, assistance, and support in their power."

The following is part of a letter from the same body, under the same date, to the Albany Committee.

"Gentlemen—The great depression of spirits of the inhabitants of Tryon county, and the settlers of Schoharie, give this Council much uneasiness, as it exposes them to the depredations of an enemy whom they might otherwise despise.

"We hope that your committee will not be wanting to support the drooping spirits of the western inhabitants in general, and particularly of those within your county. We have great reason to fear the breaking up of the settlement of Schoharie, unless our exertions be seconded by your efforts. You well know that such an event on the frontiers will not only be attended with infinite mischief to the inhabitants, but will furnish cause for discouragement to the country in general. Every means should therefore be tried to prevent it.

"This Council are earnestly solicitous to put the western frontiers of this state in a situation as respectable as possible; and though they conceive the enemy's strength to consist principally in those exaggerations which result from the threats of our internal

foes, and the fears of our friends; yet as those may be productive of real mischief, they would endeavor by every means in their power to prevent the evil. Your known exertions in the public cause will not permit them to doubt of your straining every nerve to second their endeavors," &c., &c.

The reader will observe that in the letter to the Schoharie committee, the state council, in speaking of the foe to which the Schoharie settlement was exposed, consisted only of a few worthless Indians and Tories; and that they believed the Six Nations, as a whole, were well affected towards the republicans. This, however, as the result showed, was not the fact—as the principal warriors of four of the Six Nations had already taken up the British hatchet, and were led on by a formidable number of *royalists*. They also spoke of Tryon county as the *frontier* of Schoharie—the whole being well protected by the garrison of *Fort Schuyler*, generally known as Fort Stanwix. This part of the letter discovers the ignorance of the council of the true geography of the frontier settlements; as that fort was situated at least 100 miles northwest of Schoharie, while the enemies of the latter were expected from a southwest direction, from whence they usually approached. In that direction were the settlements of Unadilla, Harpersfield and Wyoming, either of which could be avoided; but the two former were early broken up and their well disposed inhabitants driven in upon less exposed communities—while the fate of the latter is too well known to be commented on here. The truth is, that, as an old soldier (*James Williamson*) of Fort Schuyler once observed to the writer, that fortress did not answer the purposes for which it was intended in the revolution, as the enemy could, and did pass round it in every direction to the frontier settlements—the unbroken forest concealing their approach, until, *as if by magic*, they appeared at the very dwellings of the pioneers.

On the 22d of July, the chairman of the Albany committee wrote to Gen. Schuyler as follows—

“Hon. Sir—Colo. Vrooman and two other gentlemen from Schoharie, are now with us, and represent the distress their part of the county is driven to.

“Threats, they hourly receive; their persons and property are

exposed to imminent danger: nearly one-half of the people heretofore well disposed, have laid down their arms, and propose to side with the enemy. All which change has taken its origin from the desertion of Ticonderoga, the unprecedented loss of which, we are afraid, will be followed by a revolt of more than one-half of the northern part of this county. We therefore beg leave to suggest whether it would not be advisable to detain one or two companies of continental troops, which are expected here; to be sent that way for a few days, which we suppose might bring the greater part again to a sense of their duty."

On the 24th of July, the chairman of the Albany committee wrote to the council of safety as follows—

Gentlemen—Yours of the 22d instant is now before us, recommending us to use our utmost influence to revive the drooping spirits of the inhabitants of this and Tryon county. A duty so essential as this, has long since been our principal object, by following the example you have recommended to us; but upon the whole, gentlemen, they are only words upon which we have long played, and we earnestly hope they may be realized in such a manner as that the usual confidence the people of this and Tryon county have in our board, may not depreciate in the eyes of the public, on which head we beg leave to remark, that your sanguine expectations of Col. Harper's rangers will by no means answer the purpose. The gentleman undoubtedly has abilities, and will exert himself; but when this matter is held up in a more clear view, it will appear that every man, almost, in this and Tryon county, adapted for the ranging service, is engaged in the continental, occasioned by the amazing bounty that has been given; and on the other hand, the necessary men employed in various branches attending an army, together with the constant drain of militia, though but few in number, occasioned by the above circumstance, are still necessitated to discharge their duty to their country, all which point out to you the impracticability of the plan. After considering these particulars, (which we believe have not been sufficiently suggested by the honorable the council,) we conceive it will be impossible to collect any more men on the proposed plan, by reason that their pay and encouragement is not adequate to the times. If the foregoing difficulties have any weight, you may judge that no essential service can be expected from the rangers, nor can have any weight with the people to the westward.

"We enclose you a copy of a letter by us sent to Gen. Schuyler, from which you will perceive the distressed situation the people of Schoharie are in."

On the 25th of July, Mr. Livingston returned from his conference with the Commander-in-chief, and reported that his excel-

lency had already ordered Gen. Glover's division of the army to march to the relief of Tryon county; and a letter was immediately dispatched to the committee of that county, informing them that Glover's brigade had marched to Albany, there to receive directions from Gen. Schuyler, then in command of the northern army. The latter officer, in a letter to the Albany committee, dated Moses Creek, four miles below Fort Edward, July 24th, after speaking of the gloomy aspect of military affairs in that quarter, the desertion of New England troops, &c., thus adds:

"Happy I should still be, in some degree, if I could close the melancholy tale here; but every letter I receive from the county of Tryon, advises me that the inhabitants of it will lay down their arms, unless I support them with continental troops. From what I have said you will see the impossibility of my complying with their request. The district of Schoharie has also pointedly intimated, that unless continental troops are sent there, they will also submit to the enemy. Should it be asked what line of conduct I mean to hold amidst this variety of difficulties and distress, I would answer, *to dispute every inch of ground with Gen. Burgoyne, and retard his descent into the country as long as possible*, without the least hopes of being able to prevent his ultimately reaching Albany, unless I am reinforced from Gen. Washington, or by a respectable body of the militia. The former I am advised I am not to have, and whence to procure the latter I know not. I must therefore look up to you; but though I am under the fullest conviction that you will readily afford me every aid in your power, yet I fear it cannot be much.

"In this situation you will be pleased to permit me to observe, that I think the council of safety ought to press Gen. Washington for an immediate reinforcement of at least fifteen hundred good continental troops. Those of our own state, if possible, if not from any of the southern colonies; one thousand to reinforce me, the remainder to be sent to Tryon county."

In the same letter Gen. Schuyler expressed his fears that should Burgoyne be able to penetrate to Albany, the force approaching the Mohawk under Col. St. Ledger would be able to meet him there; in which case if Gen. Howe pressed up the river, Gen. Washington would either be put between two fires, or compelled to file off into New England. He however trusted such a result might not be realized, and hoped the freedom of his sentiments *would not be thought to rise from a principle which would disgrace a soldier*. He added, "I assure you they do not;

and I hope my countrymen will never have occasion to blush for me, whatever may be the event of this campaign."

The Council of Safety, in reply to the Albany Committee's letter of the 24th, responded on the 27th of July as follows:—  
"Gentlemen—Your letter of the 24th inst. has just been received and laid before the council. It was not by words alone that the council expects the drooping spirits of the inhabitants of Tryon county should be revived, nor do they know any other way of realizing those expectations than by vigorous exertions.

"It is highly unreasonable to expect that the militia of other states or additional detachments from the continental army should be sent to Tryon or Schoharie, when their own exertions, with the aid already afforded, would secure them. Harper's rangers are not the only measures taken for their support; a third part of the militia is ordered to be embodied, and the council will provide for their pay. But if when their all is at stake, they should think the wages too little, and from such degenerate, mercenary principles refuse to march, they will merit the distinction to which their want of courage and public spirit will expose them.

"It is by example, not speeches, that the council wish they may be encouraged. They expect the county of Albany will exert itself; that their leading men on other occasions, will not be backward now; that they will march with the militia, and animate the body of the people by their perseverance, spirit and patriotism. If the salvation of such a cause be not sufficient to induce us to such actions, future generations may with propriety say that we did not deserve to be free. If malcontents among you are fomenting divisions or encouraging a revolt, they ought to be immediately apprehended, and it is presumed you have sufficient strength at least for the purpose of internal government. If a few dispirited people are permitted to lay down their arms, and with impunity, not only to disobey orders, but to say they will side with the enemy, government has become base and feeble indeed. Your powers are equal to all these exigences, and the council hope you will exert them. That large drafts of men have been made from the militia is a fact not to be denied; but it is equally true that their number is still very respectable, and if they please, very formidable. In short, there is reason to fear that the panic and irresolution which seems to prevail in the western district, will, by being introduced into the history of the present glorious contest, injure the reputation which this state has justly acquired by its strenuous and noble exertions in the common cause of America.

"P. S. We have the best assurances that Gen. Glover, with his brigade, is sent up to reinforce the northern department; and we flatter ourselves that Major General Schuyler will, as he finds himself reinforced, cause troops to file off for the defence of the

western frontiers. To facilitate this, we have written pressingly to the Governor of Connecticut for aid."

The following extract of a letter from Col. Gansevoort to Col. Van Schaick, dated Fort Schuyler, July 28th, will show one of the earliest of those tragedies which crimsoned the frontier forest of New York.

"Dear Sir—Yesterday, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, our garrison was alarmed with the firing of four guns. A party of men was instantly dispatched to the place where the guns were fired, which was in the edge of the woods, about five hundred yards from the fort; but they were too late. The villains were fled, after having shot three girls who were out picking raspberries, two of whom were lying scalped and tomahawked; one dead and the other expiring, who died in about half an hour after she was brought home. The third had two balls through her shoulder, but made out to make her escape. Her wounds are not thought dangerous: by the best discoveries we have made, there were four Indians who perpetrated these murders.

"I had four men with arms just passed that place, but these mercenaries of Britain come not to fight, but to lie in wait to murder; and it is equally the same to them, if they can get a scalp, whether it is from a soldier or an innocent babe."

Instead of Gen. Schuyler's affording the western settlements any relief after having been reinforced by Glover's brigade, we find him, under date of August 1st, writing from Saratoga to the New York council as follows:

"I have desired Col. Van Schaick to apply for all the militia of Schoharie, Duanesburgh, Schenectada and Tryon county, that can be collected; but I foresee that nothing will be effected, unless a committee of your body is deputed to repair to Albany." [Those militia were intended to reinforce the northern army.]

Let us take a hasty glance at the progress of the enemy's campaign in the summer of 1777; when he hoped by one energetic blow, to separate the New England from the Middle states. Col. St. Leger, checked in his progress down the Mohawk, by a bloody battle with the Tryon county militia, at Oriskany, on the morning of August 6th, under the brave old Herkimer, in which some of his men performed prodigies of valor; and a timely sortie from Fort Schuyler by troops under Col. Willet—finding his Indians deserting him—Col. Gansevoort unwilling to surrender—

and a body of troops under Gen. Arnold advancing to raise the siege of that fortress—was obliged to make good his retreat to Canada. Gen. Burgoyne, after contesting the ground for some time, and meeting with repeated defeats—seeing his Indian allies deserting him from a dislike to Morgan's rifle-men, and his own retreat cut off, surrendered his army to Gen. Gates, who had succeeded Schuyler, as prisoners of war. Gen. Vaughan, with a body of troops from the army of Sir Henry Clinton, after ascending the Hudson as far as Kingston, and reducing that flourishing village to ashes, learning that Gov. Clinton was marching to oppose him, fell back down the river.

It remains for us to follow the footsteps of McDonald. At this unsettled period, *when no forts had been erected in the Schoharie settlements to which the timid might flee for safety*, confusion, for want of union, was manifest among the courageous.\*

Under date of August 9th, the Albany committee wrote to the council of safety as follows :

" We inclose you a copy of a letter just now received from the committee of Schenectada. You will perceive by its contents, that a reinforcement is called for in that quarter. It gives us pain to inform you that it is out of the power of this county to send them any. The depredations committed by the tories is of the worst consequences, as it effectually prevents the militia from joining the army pursuant to Gen. Ten Broeck's request ; each part calls for more help to assist themselves. A Captain Mann, of the militia of Schoharie has collected a number of Indians and tories ; declares himself a friend to King George, and threatens destruction to all who do not lay down their arms or take protection from our enemies. In order to support our friends in that quarter, a force should be sent to them. This is needless to attempt, as a reason is assigned why no force can be had.

" In yours of the 27th ult., you desire that every nerve may be exerted ; this has been done, though without the desired effect. Our army to the northward, we have already informed you, does not appear adequate to repel the force supposed to be coming against them," &c., &c.

The above letter, and one from Gen. Schuyler, dated at Still-

\* In the *Annals of Tryon County*, the invasion of McDonald is erroneously set down as having occurred in 1778. Campbell also states that three forts had been erected in Schoharie the fall before. The forts were erected at the time he states ; but not, however, until after McDonald's visit.

water, August 6th, were received by the state council on the 11th: from the latter, I take the following extract :

“General Ten Broeck has ordered out the whole of the militia; but I fear very few will march, and that most of them will behave as the Schoharie and Schenectada militia have done. How that is, you will see by the inclosed, which are copies of letters I have this morning received.” [What the conduct alluded to was, does not appear on the journal of the council, but we may suppose they refused to march until some provision was made for the protection of their own families against the common foe.]

On the afternoon of Monday, the 11th, Benjamin Bartholomew, from Schoharie, was admitted to the council chamber, and informed the council in substance :

“That a certain man at Schoharie was collecting a party in favor of the enemy: had dispirited the inhabitants; that the few resolutely well affected were escaping from thence privately.” [That body then drafted the following letter to Gov. Clinton:] “Sir—The council have received advice, that one Captain Mann is collecting a force in Schoharie, and has prevailed upon the inhabitants, through fear, to take part with him, and even to take up arms against us. As this must expose the frontiers of Ulster and Albany counties, and the flame may possibly extend further, if not instantly checked—

“They would suggest to your Excellency the propriety of sending a party under the command of an active and intelligent officer, by the way of Woodstock or Catskill, who may fall upon the party, arouse the spirits of our friends, and give the Indians such an impression of our activity, as will render them cautious of opposing us. Perhaps about two hundred men might be spared for this purpose from the garrison in the Highlands, and, if necessary, they might again be reinstated by other militia. The council submit this plan to your Excellency, and if it should be approved, doubt not but that it will be carried instantly into execution, since secrecy and expedition will ensure its success.”

On the 11th, the Albany committee, in a letter to the council, speaking of their apprehensions for the northern army and the ultimate fate of Albany, and the meritorious conduct of Gen. Herkimer, after he was severely wounded, in refusing for hours to leave the Oriskany battle field, thus observe :

“The people of Schoharie have informed us that they will be obliged to lay down their arms. The militia that could be collected in this county have been sent to the army: they have been long

in service, and seeing no prospect of relief, intend soon to return and remove their families to a place of greater safety."

Gov. Clinton addressed the president of the council from New Windsor, on the 11th of August, as follows :

" Sir—I wrote this morning to Colo. Pawling, advising him of the conduct of Capt. Mann, of the Schoharie militia, mentioned in the letter of the committee of Albany, a copy of which you sent me. I am apprehensive, that unless he and his party are speedily routed they will become formidable and dangerous neighbors to our western frontiers. I therefore proposed to Colo. Pawling, in the letter I addressed to him this morning, the propriety of embodying a party of men out of his regiment, under an active officer, for this purpose, and directed him to call on your Honorable House for their advice and assistance on this occasion, which, should they agree with me in sentiment, they will please to afford him.

" It is clearly my opinion, that it is essential to the public safety to have this business executed with dispatch and effectually. That fellow, without doubt, acts under the encouragement and by the advice of the enemy ; and even though he should not attempt to commit hostilities on the inhabitants of the western frontiers, the very deterring of the militia from marching to the aid of the northern army alone is a capital mischief ; besides suffering such an atrocious and open offender to pass with impunity, would, in point of example, be extremely impolitic. It may be necessary to exercise a good deal of prudence with respect to the Indians who are with Capt. Mann, the management of which I must submit to the council."

The next day, his excellency again addressed the president of the council, as follows :

*" New Windsor, 12th Aug't, 1777.*

" Dear sir—On the receipt of a letter yesterday morning from General Scott, enclosing a copy of a letter from the committee of Albany, to your honble. board, containing the same intelligence respecting Capt. Mann, mentioned in your letter of the 11th inst.. just now delivered me, I immediately wrote to Colonel Pawling on that subject, pointing out the propriety of destroying Mann and his party by a sudden exertion, with a detachment of the militia under an active officer, and desiring him, if he thought it practicable, to set about it immediately ; and in that case to call upon the council for their advice and aid. This morning I addressed a letter to your honorable board on the same subject, by which you will observe my sentiments coincide exactly with the council's on this occasion. I dare not however, at present, venture to take any of the continental troops from the garrison in the Highlands for this business.

"The designs of the enemy under General Howe, are yet uncertain; the garrison not over strong; and should any unlucky accident happen in that quarter, in the absence of troops, which might be drawn from thence for this expedition, I would be greatly and perhaps deservedly censured. If the militia are to be employed, they can be much easier and more expeditiously had in the neighborhood of Kingston and Marbletown, than by marching them up from the fort.

"Major Pawling was charged with my letter to council, and left my house this morning for Kingston. I mentioned this scheme to him, and he expressed a strong desire to command the party, to which I consented, provided a party proper for him to command should be ordered out on this occasion. I know him to be possessed of prudence as well as spirit."