

## CHAPTER XIV.

On the morning of October 18th, Col. Vrooman, collecting what troops could be spared from the three forts, pursued the retreating foe. He hung upon his rear all the way to the Mohawk valley, and by a timely movement circumscribed his burning footsteps.—*Jacob Becker, Nicholas Warner, and David Zeh.*

The fire and smoke of the burning buildings in the lower part of Schoharie, fifteen or twenty miles distant, were distinctly seen at the residence of Cornelius Putman, on the Schoharie, about a mile from its junction with the Mohawk.—*Peter, a son of Cornelius Putman, who lives on the paternal farm.*

On the following morning, Victor, a son of Cornelius Putman, and Garret, a son of Cornelius Newkirk, proceeded on horseback from the vicinity of Fort Hunter in the direction of Schoharie, to discover the cause of the light seen the previous afternoon, and learn if a foe was approaching the Mohawk. They fell in with the enemy's advance on the *Oak Ridge*, a few miles from their last encampment, retreated, were hotly pursued, and Newkirk made captive. The timely return of his companion, however, who borrowed a horse of William Hall, a pioneer settler, (having been obliged to abandon his own,) enabled several families in the neighborhood to make good their escape, or guard against surprise and capture.

At this period dwellings had been erected by Richard Hoff and Marcus Hand, on the west side of the Schoharie, some four miles from Fort Hunter, in the present town of Glen. Those houses were plundered and burnt by the Indians under Brant. The family of Hoff escaped captivity by flight, and Hand was in Florida at the time.

Cornelius Putman removed his family into the woods, and secreted a part of his most valuable effects before the enemy appeared in sight. His neighbors, Cornelius and John Newkirk, brothers, who lived on the east side of the river, also secreted a part of their property, and their families escaped, except William, a son of the latter, and three or four slaves, who had lingered a little too long at the house, and were captured. The enemy did not fire any buildings in the valley, until they had been there some time. Putman, after securing his effects, secreted himself, with a loaded gun, near his house, and saw the first Indian enter upon his premises. He went into the barn and brought out his arms full of tobacco (most of the farmers then raised a patch of the plant) which he laid down and began twisting into suitable hanks; and as often as made, thrust into his blanket above the belt which encircled his waist. Putman several times drew up his gun to fire on the Indian, but when he reflected that he would doubtless be pursued, and his flight might lead not only to his own, but to the death of his family, and the destruction or plunder of his concealed property, he desisted from firing. From his retreat, however, he watched the motions of the enemy for hours. A party entered his house, and among the spoils brought from the cellar a keeler full of eggs, which they took to the kitchen, a little building detached from the dwelling, where they made a fire, boiled, and divided them. He saw them rob his bee-hives, and a part of the robbers sit down and feast upon the dainty product of the insect's labor. Soon after this a gun was fired, which was the signal for applying the incendiary torch, and one of the party, in Putman's presence, after swinging a fire-brand several times over his head until it blazed, applied it to the well-filled barns which were soon in flames. The house was set on fire, and several of the party fired their guns into a number of stacks and barracks of grain near, and all were soon reduced to a heap of ruins. The dwellings and out-buildings of the Newkirk's were also set on fire at the given signal, and soon shared the same fate.—*Peter Putman, Ab'm V., son of Victor Putman, and John, son of Marcus Hand.*

The family of Putman had crossed the river, and with the Newkirk families was on its way to Fort Hunter, when the enemy in a body appeared in sight, at which time several hundred of the Indians and tories were seen riding Schoharie horses. The fugitives then concealed themselves in the woods, at which place the ashes blown from John Newkirk's barn and barracks, completely covered them. Putman, very fortunately, had a large stack of peas out of sight from his house, which escaped the conflagration, and enabled him, by an exchange of peas for rye, which he made at Claverack, to provide his family with bread the next season. On the west side of the river, a little distance above Putman, dwelt Harmanus and Peter H. Mabee, brothers. A short time previous to this invasion they had removed to Rotterdam. Many of their effects were left in their dwellings, which, with their well-filled barns and barracks, shared the same fate as those of their neighbors. One of the Mabees had seven large fat hogs, in a pen near the house, which were all killed by the enemy, and left in the pen. They were killed with a pitchfork taken from Putman's barn, being all stabbed with it between the eyes. Putman had several large hogs in a pen, which he let out before the enemy arrived. They were yet round the pen when the first Indian appeared, but had fortunately found a place of concealment before the destructives were ready to slay them.—*Peter Putman.*

The citizens of Cadaughrity built temporary huts next day, and erected log dwellings soon after, in which they passed the winter. Leaving the Schoharie valley the enemy entered that of the Mohawk. They avoided Fort Hunter, from which they were fired upon, approaching no nearer to it in a body, than the present residence of Richard Hudson, distant half a mile or more. At the latter place there resided a German named Schrembling, who, although a tory, chanced to be outside of his house, and being unknown, was killed and scalped; his family were however left undisturbed. The enemy, after taking a few women and children prisoners, among whom were Mrs. Peter Martin, (whose husband was then a merchant in Quebec,) proceeded up the Mo-

hawk. Soon after the invasion of Johnson, a small block-house was erected on the land of Cornelius Putman, which was also under the management of Capt. Tremper.—*Peter Putman.*

At Martin's, the Indians obtained a two horse iron-shod wagon, a vehicle rarely seen in those days, and a horse which, with a pack-horse, was harnessed before it. Mrs. Martin and her two boys, Barney and Jeremiah, after seeing their house burnt and all their property destroyed, were put into the wagon with several scullions and a quantity of baggage; among which were a few pans of honey from Putman's. The party proceeded up the valley as far as the present residence of George J. E. Lasher, (just below the Nose, and known on the Erie canal as the Willow Basin,) where they encamped for the night; plundering and burning all the whig dwellings which had escaped former visitations of a similar character. The road was so bad at that time, that the enemy found it very difficult to get along with the wagon, and finally abandoned it near the present village of Fultonville. It was unloaded, filled with rails from an adjoining fence, and set on fire; the iron-work was afterwards recovered. Jeremiah Martin, then only four or five years old, was eating honey in the wagon unconscious of danger, and on leaving it, was literally covered with the vegetable nectar from head to foot. The prisoners, around whom was placed a guard of British soldiers to prevent the Canadian Indians from murdering them, suffered from the cold that night, and the following morning, Johnson, learning that troops were on their way from Albany and Schenectada to attack him, gave Mrs. Martin and her children permission to return, which liberty was gratefully received; they were, however, plundered of some of their clothing—*Jeremiah Martin.*

On the evening of the 18th, Gen. Robert Van Rensselaer of Claverack, with a body of the Claverack, Albany and Schenectada militia, and about two hundred Oneida Indians under Col. John Harper, in pursuit of the enemy, encamped on the hill near the Stanton place, in the present town of Florida, perhaps fifteen miles east of Johnson's encampment.—*John Ostrom, who was a*

*soldier present.\** Learning at this place that Fort Paris in Stone Arabia, about twenty miles north-west from the American camp, was to be attacked the following morning, Gen. Van Rensselaer sent a note to Col. John Brown, its gallant commander, to turn out and head the enemy at nine o'clock, and he would fall upon their rear. Sir John passed along the foot of the mountain and crossed the river on the morning of the 19th, at Keator's rift, near Spraker's Basin, and leaving the river above the Nose, a large part of his forces marched towards Stone Arabia. Col. Brown, a braver man than whom bore not a commission in the continental service, left his little fortress and led his men to attack the foe. After marching some distance from the fort, he thought it possible he might be killed or captured, and lest the letter of Gen. Van Rensselaer should fall into the hands of the enemy, he dispatched a messenger with it to the fort. As this letter could not afterwards be found at the fort, it was conjectured, that possibly the bearer had acted the *traitor*, and borne it directly to the enemy, as the greater part of his forces united soon after the firing began between Brown and the advance.—*Jacob Becker.*

Gen. Van Rensselaer, who had an effective force nearly double that of the enemy, put his army in motion at the moon's rising. Near Fort Hunter, where he arrived before day-light and was joined by the Schoharie militia: the wrong road was taken for some little distance, when Gen. V. R. uttered expressions his officers thought unbecoming his station. The American commander arrived at Keator's rift soon after the enemy had passed it, but instead of crossing the river and seconding the movement of Col. Brown as he had agreed, and as a brave and prudent officer would have done, he remained upon the south side, where news was brought him by a fugitive from Brown's command, that the latter officer, with many of his men, was slain. Fort Paris was three miles north of the Mohawk, and yet Brown met the enemy nearly two-thirds of the way to the river, where the contest began. Overpowered by numbers he continued the conflict, slowly re-

\* Col. Stone erroneously states the place of Van Rensselaer's encampment, on the night in question, to have been at Van Epps's.

treating, expecting every moment to hear the firing in the enemy's rear—but in vain. And contesting the ground inch by inch for some distance, he at length fell a martyr to freedom, and his blood, with that of more than thirty of his brave followers dyed the fertile fields of Stone Arabia. What loss the enemy sustained in this engagement is unknown, but as they were better sheltered by fences and trees than were the Americans, and were enabled to outflank, and had nearly surrounded them when Brown fell, it is supposed their loss was not as great.—*John Ostrom, and Jacob Becker.*

The following particulars, in addition to those above, were obtained in November, 1843, from Maj. *Joseph Spraker*, of Palatine. Col. Brown left Fort Paris (so called after Maj. Paris,) a little distance north of where the Stone Arabia churches now stand, on the morning of his death, with a body of levies and militia; and as he passed Fort Keyser, a little stockade, at which a small stone dwelling was inclosed—perhaps a mile south of Fort Paris, and about two miles distant from the river—he was joined by a few militiamen there assembled, making his effective force from 150 to 200 men. He met the enemy nearly half way from Fort Keyser to the river. They were discovered on the opposite side of a field which contained some under-brush, and which was partly skirted by a forest. As the Indians were observed behind a fence on the opposite side of the field, Capt. Casselman remonstrated with Brown against his leaving the covert of the fence; but the hero, less prudent on this occasion than usual, ordered his men into the field, and they had hardly begun to cross it, before a deadly fire was opened upon them; which was returned with spirit but far less effect, owing to the more exposed condition of the Americans. Brown maintained his position for a time, but seeing the Indians gaining his flank, he ordered a retreat; about which time, (nearly 10 o'clock, A. M.,) he received a musket ball through the breast. The enemy pressed on in such overpowering numbers, as to render it impossible for his men to bear off his body, and the brave colonel was left to his fate.

At the fall of their commander, some of the Americans fled to-

ward the Mohawk, and others north into the forest. Two of them took refuge in the dwelling of the late Judge Jacob Eacker, in the hope of defending themselves, but the house was surrounded by a party of Indians, who set it on fire, and laughed at the shrieks of its inmates who perished in the flames.

None of the citizens who were not in the battle, it is believed, were either killed or captured, they having gained one of the two forts, or sought safety in the woods.

John Zielie, a captain of militia, had charge of Fort Keyser on that day. Geo. Spraker, father of informant, and John Waffle, elderly men, Joseph and Conrad Spraker, William Waffle, Warner Dygert, and possibly one or two other young men, were all who were ready to aid Capt. Z. in the defence of his little fortress, when the British regulars passed near it in column, soon after Brown's engagement. It might easily have fallen into their hands, had they known the number of its defenders. The few men in it were, however, at the port holes, each with his gun and a hat full of cartridges by his side, although its commandant restrained their firing from motives of policy. Informant had two older brothers under Col. Brown, who effected their escape after he fell.

Soon after the enemy were out of sight, the four young men named, proceeded in the direction the firing had been heard, and leaping a fence into the fatal field, Joseph Spraker stood beside the mangled remains of the brave, ill-fated Brown. His scalp had been taken off so as completely to remove all the hair on his head: this was unusual, as only the crown scalp was commonly taken, but knowing his distinction and prowess, we may justly infer the red man's motive. He was stripped of every article of his clothing, except a ruffled shirt. The four young militiamen took the body of their fallen chief, and bore it in their arms to Fort Keyser. The remains of the soldiers who fell in this battle were all buried in one pit, and Col. Brown with them, but a day or two after it was opened and his remains removed to a place of interment near the churches. Col. Brown was of middling stature, with dark eyes and a fine military countenance: he usually

wore glasses. He was agreeable and urbane in his manners, but possessed a spirit when in danger, fearless as the dashing cataract. He fell deeply lamented by his numerous friends, and the few silver-haired heroes of his acquaintance who still survive, are enthusiastic in his praise.

Col. Brown was a native of Massachusetts, and was born Oct. 19th, 1744. On the 19th day of Oct., 1836, *fifty-six years after his death*, arrangements having been made for the occasion, a monument was erected over his remains in the presence of a large assemblage of respectable citizens of the county, convened to honor the ashes of a hero. The monument was reared at the expense of Henry Brown, Esq., of Berkshire, Mass., a son of the warrior, who, I regret to add, has since deceased. The following is the monumental inscription :

“ In Memory of Col. John Brown,  
who was killed in battle on the 19 day of October, 1780,  
at Palatine, in the county of Montgomery,  
Æ. 36.”

After the ceremony of raising the monument, a sermon was preached by the Rev. Abraham Van Horne, of Caughnawaga, and a very patriotic address delivered by G. L. Roof, Esq., of Canajoharie : portions of which I have been kindly furnished by the author. The following is an extract from that address :

“ Col. Brown fell in battle on the 19th day of October, 1780 ; the very day he reached the age of *thirty-six*, so that the anniversary of his birth was also the day of his death. But though he fell thus early in life, and before he had filled the measure of his fame, yet his deeds of bravery and patriotism will not be forgotten by posterity ; and the name of Brown will, for ages to come, be held in grateful remembrance. His was that bravery, that quailed not before tyranny, and that feared not death. His was that patriotism that nerves the arm of the warrior battling for the liberties of his country, and leads him on to the performance of deeds of glory.”

The forces of Col. Johnson, a part of which had crossed the river near Caughnawaga, destroyed all the Whig property, not only on the south, but on the north side, from Fort Hunter to the Nose : and in several instances where dwellings had been burned

by the Indians under his command in May, and temporary ones rebuilt, they were also consumed. Of the latter number was that of Barney Wemple. After his dwelling was burnt in May, he went to Tribe's Hill, tore down a tory dwelling, and erected it upon the ruins of his former one.—*Rynier Gardinier*.\* After Brown fell, the enemy, scattered in small bodies, were to be seen in every direction plundering and burning the settlements in Stone Arabia. In the afternoon, Gen. Van Rensselaer, after being warmly censured for his delay by Col. Harper and several other officers, crossed the river at Fort Plain, and began the pursuit in earnest. The enemy were overtaken on the north side of the river above St. Johnsville, near a stockade and block-house at Klock's, just before night, and a smart brush took place between the British troops and the Americans under Col. Duboise; in which, several

\* On the morning of the day on which the Stone Arabian battle was fought Fred. H. Dockstader, who lived on the "Sand Flats" in the present town of Mohawk, having seen the fires along the river, concealed his family and personal effects in the woods, and then approached the Mohawk valley to gain a view of passing events; thinking the enemy would confine their movements to the river settlements. As he was about to gain the desired position, he was surprised to see a party of Indians approaching him. He walk boldly up, and addressing them with confidence assured them he was their friend, and on his way to meet them. They proceeded with him to his house, and after laying him under contribution in the way of plunder, left him and his buildings unharmed. Before leaving, they took several of his horses, one of which was a favorite, although he dared not protest against their taking it. This party of the enemy burned the house of F. H. Dockstader's brother, within sight of his own, and left a war club in a conspicuous place; as much as to say, we will kill the proprietor if we can catch him.

A pleasing incident occurred at Dockstader's, illustrative of the red man's character. One of the Indians caught a colt that had never been rode, and with his belt and some cords made a kind of bridle which he put upon its head. The colt stood still until the Indian mounted with a bundle of plunder in one hand and his rifle in the other, seemingly delighted with his new master; but as soon as he had made ready to set forward, and struck his heels against the animal, it dashed onward and reared several times, sending the Indian heels over head upon the ground in one direction, and his rifle and duds in another. Thus rid of his load, the colt stopped and looked back to witness the plight of the rider. The rest of the Indians laughed as though their sides would split, and Dockstader, who dared not laugh, expected to see the Indian rise and shoot the animal; but instead of doing so, he sullenly gained his feet—picked up his portable wealth, and moved off amid the merry jeers of his companions.—*Henry F., son of Fred. H. Dockstader.*

on each side were killed or wounded. Johnson was compelled to retreat to a peninsula in the river, where he encamped with his men much wearied. His situation was such that he could have been taken with ease. Col. Duboise, with a body of levies, took a station above him to prevent his proceeding up the river; Gen. Van Rensselaer, with the main army, below: while Col. Harper, with the Oneida Indians, gained a position on the south side of the river, nearly opposite. The general gave express orders that the attack should be renewed by the troops under his own immediate command, at the rising of the moon, some hour in the night. Instead, however, of encamping on the ground from which the enemy had been driven, as a brave officer would have done, he fell back down the river and encamped three miles distant. The troops under Duboise and Harper could hardly be restrained from commencing the attack long before the moon arose; but when it did, they waited with almost breathless anxiety to hear the rattle of Van Rensselaer's musketry. The enemy, who encamped on lands owned by the late Judge Jacob G. Klock, spiked their cannon, which was there abandoned; and soon after the moon appeared, began to move forward to a fording place just above the residence of Nathan Christie, and not far from their encampment. Many were the denunciations made by the men under Duboise and Harper against Van Rensselaer, when they found he did not begin the attack, and had given strict orders that their commanders should not. They openly stigmatised the general as a *coward* and *traitor*; but when several hours had elapsed, and he had not yet made his appearance, a murmur of discontent pervaded all. Harper and Duboise were compelled to see the troops under Johnson and Brant ford the river and pass off *unmolested*, or disobey the orders of their commander, when they could, *unaided*, have given them most advantageous battle. Had those brave colonels, at the moment the enemy were in the river, taken the responsibility of disobeying their commander as Murphy had done three days before, and commenced the attack in front and rear, the consequences must have been very fatal to the retreating army, and the death of Col. Brown and his men promptly revenged.—*Jacob Becker, a Schoharie militiaman.*

Garret Newkirk, the prisoner who was captured on his way to Schoharie, effected his escape the second night after, and returned home unmolested. As if to cap the climax of Gen. Van Rensselaer's management, he had sent an express to Fort Schuyler; from whence, Capt. Walter Vrooman\* (the same mentioned as being at the Johnstown fort in May preceding,) was dispatched with a company of fifty men to Oneida lake, to destroy the enemy's concealed boats. Col. Johnson, informed of the movement, as supposed, through the treachery of one of Vrooman's men, surprised and captured the entire command.

It was confidently asserted in the American army, that some relationship by marriage existed between Gen. Van Rensselaer and Sir John Johnson, which induced the former to favor the escape of the latter.—*Becker and Ostrom.*

The Americans took two nine pounders from Schenectada, which were left at Fort Plain. So much dallying took place on the part of the commanding officer, that the enemy, although pursued some distance on the south side of the river, were not prevented from making their escape. At a small block-house and

\* Soon after Capt. Vrooman, who was a large muscular man, (as brave as strong,) was taken, an Indian, claiming him as his prisoner, fastened to his shoulders a heavy pack, which he compelled him to carry. Those Indian packs were usually made of striped linsey petticoats, stolen from frontier settlers: such was the one, filled with plunder made in Stone Arabia, imposed on Capt. Vrooman. He had not borne it far, before he was observed by Col. Johnson, who enquired why he carried it? He replied that an Indian had placed it upon him. The colonel then drew his sword and severed its fastenings. In a short time, the owner of the pack, who was in the rear at the time it fell, came up, and in anger replaced it, with a threat of death if he did not continue to carry it. It had been restored but a little while, when Sir John again observed the American captain (who was a fine specimen of the early Dutch,) under the ungainly load, and once more cut its bands; placing a guard around him to prevent his receiving any injury or insult from the red warrior. In a few minutes, the latter reappeared with uplifted tomahawk, threatening vengeance; but finding his approach to the prisoner prevented by bristling bayonets, he sullenly fell back: he, however, continued to watch for a favorable opportunity all the way to Canada, to execute his threat. While crossing a rapid stream on a log shortly after, this Indian fell off with his pack on, and would have been drowned, but for the timely aid of his comrades. On arriving at Montreal, Capt. Vrooman was incarcerated in prison and did not see the sun again for two long years.—*Volkert Voorhees.*

stockade between Fort Plain and Fort Herkimer, called Fort Windecker, after a German, near whose house it was erected, (which house stood just above Crouse's Lock, on the Erie Canal,) seven men and a boy killed an Indian and took nine prisoners, several of whom, worn out with constant exertions, purposely surrendered. They stated that if the Americans had followed up their advantages, Johnson and most of his men must have been captured. Forty or fifty horses belonging to citizens of Schoharie were recovered, and either taken back by the soldiers at this time, or reclaimed in the Mohawk valley the following winter, by some half a dozen men who went from Schoharie on purpose.—*Jacob Becker and David Zeh.*

In the pursuit of Johnson from Schoharie, the militia being deficient in knapsacks, carried bread on poles. Holes being made in the loaves, a pole was passed through several, and borne between two soldiers, who also added a loaf at each end.—*Mattice Ball.*

In the summer of 1843, I obtained from John Ostrom, a worthy citizen of Glen, some additional particulars relating to this invasion. Mr. Ostrom was a militiaman under Gen. Van Rensselaer, in the pursuit of Sir John Johnson. When the Americans arrived at the Nose, on the enemy's trail in the morning, Col. Brown was then engaged with the latter not two miles distant, and they heard the firing, but made no attempt to cross the river where the enemy had crossed. When the skirmish took place between Col. DuBoise and Col. Johnson, the reason assigned by Gen. Van Rensselaer, for not following up the success gained, and leading his men to the attack, was, its being so near night. Henry Ostrom, a captain of militia, from the vicinity of Albany, and father of informant, to whose company the latter was attached; surprised at the indifference of the general, asked him if he did not intend to prosecute the attack. He replied that it was so near night his men would not march. Capt. Ostrom, still remonstrating with his commander, for what he considered a neglect of duty, finally received orders to lead his own men forward; which he did with promptness, to the surprise of the general, who, having

mistaken his mettle, countermanded the order after the company had proceeded several rods. Why Van Rensselaer chose to fall back down the river *three miles to encamp*, remains among the mysteries of the past.

Capt. Duncan, an officer under Sir John Johnson, in this invasion, returned after the war closed to the residence of his father, situated a few miles from Schenectada. His return having been kept private for a little time, he invited in several of his former acquaintances, some of whom he had opposed in arms, of which number was Capt. Ostrom. On this occasion he informed his guests, while speaking of Johnson's invasion now under consideration, that after the skirmish with Col. Duboise, the British officers held a consultation, at which it was agreed to surrender the whole army, worn out with fatigues as it was, *prisoners of war*; but that General Van Rensselaer *did not give them a chance*. Capt. Duncan finding himself kindly treated by his old neighbors, remained in the state.

But to return to the Schoharie valley which we left in ruins. Fearing an invasion, considerable grain had been stacked in the woods and by-places remote from dwellings the preceding harvest, in the hope that if he did appear, *possibly* those stacks might escape the fire-brand. Andrew Loucks had two stacks thus concealed, as had also Chairman Ball, which were not burnt. Loucks had very fortunately let out his hogs to live on acorns, and they, too, were spared. Some individuals lost at this time from eight to ten horses, comparatively few of which were recovered. Mr. Ball lost nine.—*Andrew Loucks and Peter Ball*.

On his return to the Middle fort, Col. Vrooman found himself once more its lawful commander, Maj. Woolsey having taken French leave during his absence. Col. Vrooman was often from home on public business during the winter months of the war; and sometime after the destruction of Schoharie—being a member of the state legislature, he went to Poughkeepsie, where it was about to convene. Among other members, Col. Vrooman was an invited guest at an evening party. On his arrival at the place of mirth, almost the first person who caught his eye was

Maj. Woolsey. He laid off his loose clothing, and very soon after sought an interview with his *military friend*, but to his surprise, he found the latter had suddenly left the house; nor did he reappear that night. Recollecting their last interview near the magazine, he possibly did not care about meeting the Dutch colonel.—*Angelica Vrooman*.

Where now stands the dwelling, so long known as *Spraker's Tavern* on the Mohawk turnpike, stood a small house in the Revolution owned by one of the Tribes' Hill Bowens, and occupied by John Van Loan—whose politics were of a suspicious character. On a certain occasion, two tories, *Albert Van De Warken*, and a man named *Frazee* entered the settlement in the character of *spies*, and were traced to the dwelling of Van Loan; where they were concealed in the daytime. A small party of patriots having assembled under Capt. John Zielie for the occasion, approached the house one evening to kill or capture the emissaries of the enemy; and discovered them through a window at supper. Becoming apprised by some means of the proximity of armed men, the spies found means to leave the house and flee to a barrack of hay, which stood between that and the hill. Around the barrack Capt. Zielie stationed his men to prevent the escape of the fugitives, and await the return of day. As light began to dawn, the rascals sprang from their concealment and ran at the top of their speed. Frazee, in attempting to pass Adam Empie, a soldier present, was thrust through with a bayonet and killed; while his comrade, more fortunate, although a volley of bullets whistled around him, fled up the mountain and escaped.

The tory dwelling above mentioned, was burnt by the enemy under Sir John Johnson, who crossed the river a few rods below it, on the morning Col. Brown fell; from what motive is unknown.—*Joseph Spraker*.

When the war of the Revolution commenced, three brothers, William, John, and Philip Cryslar, who lived in new Dorchach; with their brother Adam, who lived in Schoharie, took up arms with the foes of their country, and went to Canada in 1777. As it began to be doubted by many of the tories in 1780, whether

Britain could subdue the states, Philip, whose family still lived in New Dorlach, and who desired to remove it to Canada, had a party assigned him near Harpersfield to aid in its removal. It is supposed they arrived near the settlement a day or two before the army reached Schoharie; and were concealed until Seth's Henry and possibly some others met them in an appointed place, and communicated intelligence of the proceedings in Schoharie, that the movement of Crysler's destructives should not precede the general irruption. However that may be, it is certain Seth's Henry, who was at the burning of Schoharie, was on the following day also of the hostile party in New Dorlach.

The enemy, consisting of eighteen Indians and three Tories, made their appearance just after noon at the dwelling of Michael Merckley,\* where Hiram Sexton now resides. Merckley was at this time a widower. His family consisted of three daughters, three sons, and a lad named Fox. The daughters were all young women; one was married to Christopher Merckley, and lived in Rhinebeck, a small settlement a few miles from New Dorlach—the other two were at home. The oldest son had gone to Canada three years before, the second was then at Schoharie, and the youngest, a lad about thirteen years old, and Fox, a boy near his age, were also at home. Frederick, a brother of Michael Merckley, then resided less than a mile east of the latter. He had an only daughter named Catharine, who by repute was the *fairest* young lady in the Schoharie settlements. He also had several sons. Christian, (from whom some of these particulars were obtained) about seventeen years old, who was then at home; Martin, a younger brother, who had been sent to his uncle Martin's about noon of that day to borrow a currier's knife, and possibly one or two others. On arriving at Merckley's, the enemy captured his two daughters, the two boys, and their cousin Martin who chanced still to be there.

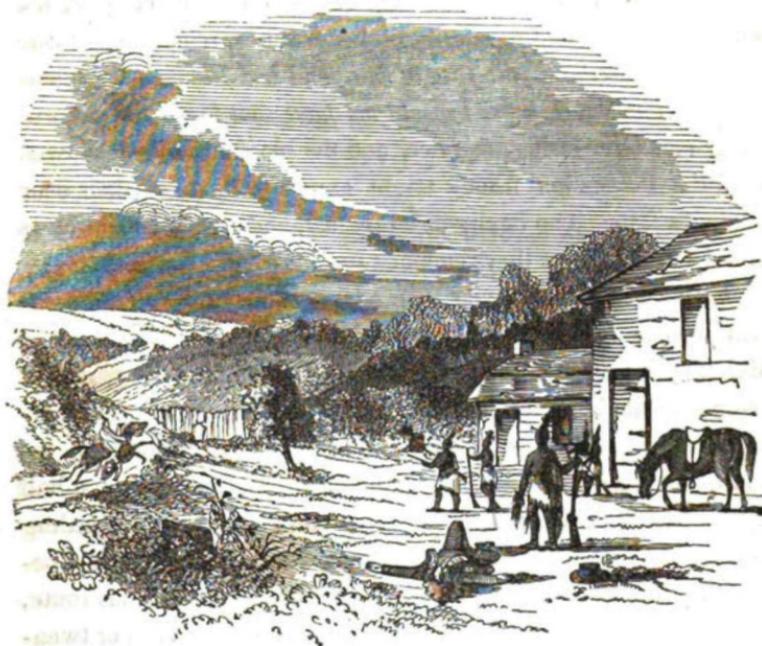
About three-fourths of a mile west of Michael Merckley, then resided Bastian France, where his son Henry now resides, a little distance from the road, which ran much as it does at the pre-

\*This name was formerly written *Mercle*, and pronounced *Meride*.

sent day. As the country was new, however, it was shaded more by trees, and not bounded by fences as at present. Mr. France had eight children. His two oldest sons, young men, had gone to Schoharie on the 17th, to learn how matters stood in that valley, and were in the Lower fort when the enemy passed it. Christopher, the oldest of those brothers, (who was the first white child born in the town of Seward,) and Miss Catharine Merckley, had plighted hymenial vows, *and were to have been married two weeks from the day of her death.* Four other sons were at home—John, fourteen years old, Henry, thirteen, and two younger: and two daughters—Betsey, a young lady of seventeen, and a little girl perhaps ten years of age. At the road, near the residence of France, resided Henry Haines, a tory. West creek, a tributary of Cobelskill, passed near his house, and on this he had erected a small grist-mill—the first erected in the town of Seward. Philip Hoffman, an old gentleman, lived not far from Haines, where Klock now resides.

Mr. Merckley, at whose house the Indians first appeared, had been to visit his married daughter at Rhinebeck settlement, as had also Catharine Merckley and Betsey France, all on horseback. Mr. Merckley returned home but a little in advance of the girls, and approaching his house he discovered the Indians about the door, but conscious of his kind feelings towards them, and zeal in the royal cause, while in the act of dismounting from his horse with perfect unconcern, he was shot down, killed, and scalped. It was at his house, it will be remembered, the party were harbored who captured his neighbor, William Hynds, and family, the preceding July. When the girls approached his mill, Haines came out, and addressing Catharine, enquired, "*What is the news?*" The reply was, "*Betsey will tell you; I am in a great hurry to get home.*" Miss France had reined up just above the mill, to cross the creek, between the road and her father's dwelling, as her beautiful companion rode forward, evidently excited from some cause, to meet her impending fate. Possibly she had heard the gun fired at her uncle, and anticipated danger. She had but little more than a mile to go after parting with her

young friend. The road, by a bend from Haines' mill, swept along the verge of a rise of ground on the north side of West creek, leaving the flats southwest of the road. The ground is elevated in front of the Merckley place, and just beyond it the road turns off, nearly east, towards Hynds ville. Miss Merckley was ri-



#### MURDER OF CATHARINE MERCKLEY.

ding a noble gray horse, and as she drew near her uncle's dwelling she saw the Indians and Tories about the door, several of whom called on her to stop; but her eye, no doubt, caught a view of the mangled remains of her uncle, and instead of reining, she urged her horse up the acclivity at a quick gallop. At the instant she was opposite to him, Seth's Henry leveled his rifle and fired at her, and as she did not immediately fall, he snatched a rifle from the hands of another Indian and fired again. The horse, as though conscious of danger, and the value of his burden, increased his speed, but the fatal messenger had done its errand—the lovely victim pitched forward and fell to the earth, writhing in the agonies of death.

She was shot through the body evidently by the first bullet, as it had passed in at the right side. She survived but a few minutes, and expired clasping her hands firmly upon the wound. The tragic death of this young lady, so justly celebrated for her personal charms, was witnessed from the house by her brother and cousins. Her murderer, as he tore off her bleeding scalp, struck with the beauty and regularity of her features, remarked—“*She was too handsome a pale face to kill, and had I known the squaw had such long black hair, I would not have shot her.*” The horse ran home, after losing his rider, and the bloody saddle shadowed forth the tidings her friends might expect to hear, of their dear relative's fate. The family instantly fled, and secreted themselves in the woods, where they remained until the following day.

Bastian France, who was then advanced in life, and quite infirm, was in his chamber making shoes. Hearing the firing at Merckley's, he came down and told his family (his wife was then visiting at the house of Haines near by) he felt alarmed and taking his gun, said he would go through the woods south of his house and learn the cause of disturbance. He had not gone half way to Merckley's, when he discovered several Indians proceeding directly to his own dwelling. Knowing he could not reach it before they did, he resolved to proceed on foot, by a circuitous route, to the lower Schoharie fort for assistance, distant eighteen or twenty miles, and return as soon as possible. He arrived there late in the evening, greatly fatigued, and found that all the troops which could be spared were preparing to follow the enemy to the Mohawk. It was late the following day when he again arrived at his own dwelling.

Two Indians reached the residence of France in advance of their fellows, at which time the children were standing on the stoop looking for the cause of alarm. As they approached the house, a large watch-dog ran out and attacked them, which one halted to shoot. The other approached the children and led out John and Henry, the two oldest boys at home, towards a pile of wood to be killed. As the Indian who had shot the dog came up, John was handed over to him by his captor to be murdered for the

British value of his scalp. The Indian aimed a blow with his tomahawk at his head, which the latter warded off with his arm. As the second blow which brought him to the ground was raised, Henry saw the other children running off, and followed them. Seeing his captor start in pursuit, lest he should be shot down, he sprang round a corner of the house and stood still. The Indian turned the corner and took him, with the other children, back to the stoop.

Without waiting to scalp the victim, the Indian who had felled John, left him and ran across the creek to the house of Hoffman, but the latter with his wife, having heard the gun which was fired at France's dog, took seasonable alarm, fled into the woods and escaped. As the children returned to the door with their captor, some half a dozen more of the enemy arrived; and proceeding to the cellar, helped themselves to several pies, and such other food as it contained, which they took up stairs, placed on a table in the centre of a room and greedily devoured. Mrs. France hearing the noise, hastened home to protect her children or share their fate, just as the Indians were surrounding the table. When Henry was taken back, he went to his wounded brother, who could still sit up, and attempted to raise him on his feet; but he was unable to stand. Henry then told him to crawl under the oven where the dog usually had slept, but the hatchet had done its bidding, and he was too weak. When his mother arrived at the house and beheld the situation of her dying son, who was then past speech, her maternal sympathy was aroused. Her little daughter, crying, clung to her knees and besought her to *save John from the cruel Indians*; and she in tears entreated them to carry him into the house, or spare him from further injury. This they refused to do, but promised not to harm her other children.

While his captor was eating, Henry was compelled to stand near him, by whom he was closely eyed. Twice he walked to the door, and on turning round, observed the stealthy eye of the red man fixed upon him and he walked back; he thus lulled the suspicion of his keeper, and the third time he reached the door, perceiving he was not watched, he sprang out of the house, ran

round it and fled towards the woods. When about twenty rods distant, he looked back and saw several Indians turn a corner of the house, and instantly falling to the ground he was gratified to observe, that as they scattered in pursuit, none started in the direction he had taken. From behind some old logs he watched their motions, and as soon as they had returned to the dwelling, he gained the adjoining woods in safety.

A few minutes after Henry had eluded the vigilance of his new master, the Indian who had gone to Hoffman's returned, was quite angry because the former had escaped, and instantly dispatched and scalped John. Philip Crysler lived in the direction of Hoffman, and when the murderer returned, the former, disguised as an Indian, came with him. He was not known to the family at the time, although they observed he had *blue eyes*, (the eyes and hair of a blooded Indian are almost invariably black,) but they afterwards learned from a sister of Crysler, that his wife, hearing the gun fired at the dog of France, told her husband to put on his Indian dress, run over and save the France family by all means, as she was under such great obligations to them. They had almost wholly supported herself and family for *three years*. To the counsels of the *blue-eyed Indian*, as Crysler was called, the party reluctantly yielded; and leaving the rest of the family and most of their effects undisturbed, soon after withdrew. The Indian who had been foiled by Henry, seemed most dissatisfied; and snatching a brand of fire he ran to the barn and thrust it into the hay. Another Indian drew it out and threw it away, but some coals must have remained, as the barn and its contents were soon after in flames. Two large barracks, each an hundred feet in circumference, standing near the barn, were also consumed. Two of the Indians at the house of France could speak Low Dutch; Mrs. France begged of them to intercede for the lives of her offspring.

The invaders went as far west as the dwelling of Haines, capturing several of his slaves. Haines went to Canada himself at a subsequent period. As soon as the Indians were out of sight, Mrs. France carried the body of her murdered son into the house, his warm blood trickling upon her feet; and then, with Betsey and three younger children, concealed herself in the woods.

Henry France, after gaining the forest back of his father's house, ran, by a circuitous route, towards the dwelling of William Spurnhuyer, who resided not far from Christian Merckley. In the mean time, the enemy, with their plunder, accompanied by the family of Crysler, after burning the dwelling and barn of Michael Merckley, set forward on their journey. On arriving at the house of Spurnhuyer, who had gone with his family to a place of greater security but a day or two before, they made a halt. Spurnhuyer had left a young heifer near the dwelling, which was shot to serve the party for food. When the gun was fired at the animal, young France was not in sight, though near, but was running directly toward that place, and supposing it fired at himself, changed his course, nor did he know at what the gun was discharged, until the return of Martin Merckley, some time after. Thus had this lad a third time escaped the tomahawk. He then went back and secreted himself, about sun-down, near the creek, a few rods from his father's dwelling. He had been but a short time in this place when Mrs. Haines, who was going past with a milk-pail, discovered him in the bushes, and told him where he could find his mother. Procuring blankets at the house the weeping group returned to sleep in the woods, fearing a visit from the bears and wolves less than they did that of the armed savage. The family lived in the woods until the third day following their disaster, when they went to Schoharie.

Spurnhuyer's house, after being plundered, was set on fire, and, with his barn consumed. The invaders had proceeded only a mile or two from the settlement, when the two boys cried to return. The executioner of the party halted with them, and soon after overtook his comrades with their bloody scalps. Berkley, a tory present, from the vicinity of Albany, told the Misses Merckley that their brother and young Fox would not have been killed had they not cried. Indians never fancy crying children. It was not known in New Dorlach that those boys were killed, until a year or two afterwards, when the fact was communicated by a letter from the Merckley girls to their friends. Persons who visited the spot near the mountain south of their father's, designated as the

place where the boys were murdered, found bones scattered over the ground, wild beasts having no doubt eaten the flesh that once covered them. The party journeyed directly to Canada by the usual southwestern route, and as the weather was then cold, the suffering of the prisoners was very severe. They were greatly straightened for food on the way, and putrid horse-flesh, fortunately found in the path, was considered a luxury, and doubtless saved some of them from starving. Martin Merckley was compelled to run the gantlet, and was beaten and buffeted a great distance. Prisoners captured in the spring or fall, when the Indians were congregated in villages, usually suffered more than those taken in midsummer. As the Merckley girls were then orphans, and their father's personal property all destroyed, they accepted offers of marriage, and both remained in Canada.

On the day following their massacre, the remains of John France were buried by Henry Haines, Sen., and those of Mr. Merckley and his charming neice, by Mr. Haines, Michael Frimire, and Christopher France, Miss M.'s intended husband. Sad, indeed, must have been the feelings of the young lover, while performing this most melancholy duty. Few were the witnesses present; no funeral knell told the distant neighbor that death was abroad; the ceremony was brief and informal. No long procession followed those mangled corpses to measured steps, preceded by the man of God in sacerdotal robes; yet one there was whose sorrowing came from the heart. A few rough boards were laid in the "narrow house" which had been hastily dug a little distance east of where they had fallen, and blooming youth and parental age were placed side by side in it, and quickly buried. A few years ago their remains were taken up, placed in a coffin, and funeral services performed over them; after which they were deposited in the family burying ground, on the Frederick Merckley place, where a marble slab may now be seen with the following inscription:

"In Memory of Catharine Marcley and Michael Marcley,  
who was [were] killed by the Indians, Oct. 18, 1780."

Nothing on the stone indicates their ages or consanguinity: she

was about 18 ; and her uncle, probably, 45 or 50 years old. After young France was engaged to Miss Merckley, he gave her, agreeable to custom, a pair of silver shoe-buckles. These Seth's Henry left upon her feet, and they were returned to the lover.

It has been a mystery to many in Schoharie that Michael Merckley, who was the avowed friend of royalty, should thus have been killed, his property destroyed, and his family broken up. The following circumstance reveals the secret. A short time previous to the Revolution, a daughter of Philip Crysler (then in her *teens*) was living in the family of one Barnhard, in the capacity of a hired girl. While there, a son of Michael Merckley several times visited her, about which time she became *gravis*. This fact coming to the knowledge of her parents, they desired her to fix paternity on young Merckley and compel a marriage. She was taken before Judge Brown, then a justice of the peace, who, having previously been apprized of all the circumstances in the case, told the girl the nature of an oath, the criminality of its being falsely rendered, and what the future consequences might be. He then administered the oath, and the *honors* of paternity were awarded Barnhard. This affair caused a lasting hatred between the two families ; and when Crysler obtained the direction of a party of Indians, there can remain little doubt but what some of them were found willing, in anticipation of plunder, to share his prejudices and gratify his savage propensities ; for such we must call the inclinations of those who joined the enemy, went to Canada, and *from choice* came back *repeatedly*, to imbrue their hands in the blood of their former neighbors and relatives.

Many of the settlers, tories as well as whigs, concealed their effects in the war ; and it is said that Philip Crysler had concealed part of his. As old Mr. Hoffman and his wife were inoffensive people, and did not meddle with politics, it was supposed from the attempt to kill them at the time of his removal, and of their massacre the next season, that it was in consequence of the fact, that a girl, who had once lived with Hoffman, had discovered and appropriated to her own use, some of the hidden property of Crysler. Trifling circumstances were construed into plausible pre-

texts too often in the Revolution—as, in fact, they will be, from the nature of things, in all civil wars—for the perpetration of the most heinous and revolting cruelties. The reason is obvious: when all laws are disregarded and set at defiance, the baser passions of the human breast triumph over virtue and social order; and crime—

“ Stalks abroad at noonday,  
Nor does she cease at midnight to destroy.\*”

Nothing of importance transpired in the Schoharie valley that year, after the invasion of Sir John Johnson. The loss at that time to the citizens seems almost incalculable. Of the *one hundred and thirty-four* buildings, said by Judge Brown to have been burned in Schoharie county during the war, the greater part were consumed at this time. Among all the houses burnt in the county, I do not remember to have heard of a single log tenement: the citizens were comfortably situated in good framed dwellings, with large barns (which the Dutch are celebrated for erecting) abundantly filled. Schoharie had constantly supplied not only her own citizens and soldiers with wheat, but had furnished large quantities for the support of American troops at other stations: but now, by the most rigid economy, the remaining supply could hardly have been expected to subsist the citizens until new crops returned. Some families were compelled to take up temporary residences abroad, while others set about erecting such dwellings as their crippled means would allow. That the destruction of the Schoharie settlements that season was properly considered in other colonies at the time, the following extract of a letter from President Madison, dated at Philadelphia, Nov. 14, 1780, (which I find in the Albany Evening Journal of Nov. 30, 1841,) will clearly show. After alluding to the difficulty of procuring supplies of wheat and flour for the Army, he adds:

“ The inroads of the enemy on the frontiers of New York have

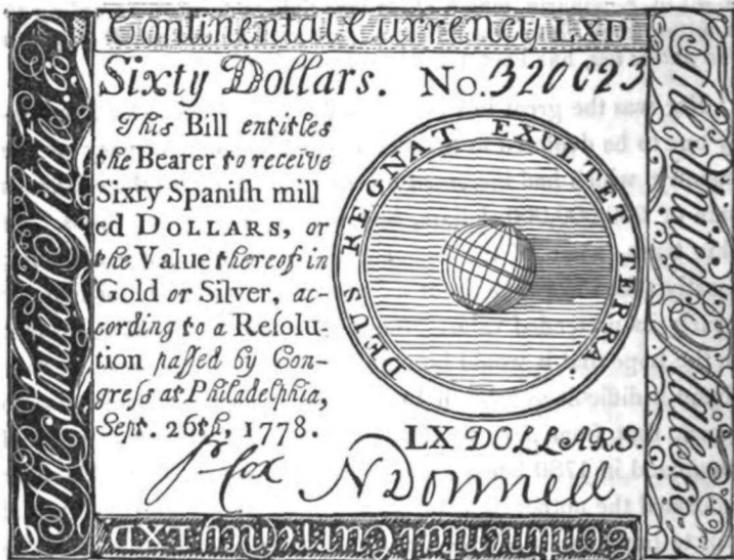
\* The occurrences which took place in New Dorlach were told the author in 1837, by Henry, son of Bastian France; the wife of Tunis Vrooman, and daughter of Ernest Fretz; Henry, a son of Wm. Hynds, and Christian, a son of Fred. Merckley, corroborated by others.

been most fatal to us in this respect. They have almost totally ruined that fine wheat country, which was able, and from the energy of their government, was likely to supply magazines of flour, both to the main army and the northwestern posts. The settlement of Schoharie, which alone was able to furnish, according to a letter from Gen. Washington, *eighty thousand bushels of grain for public use*, has been totally laid in ashes."

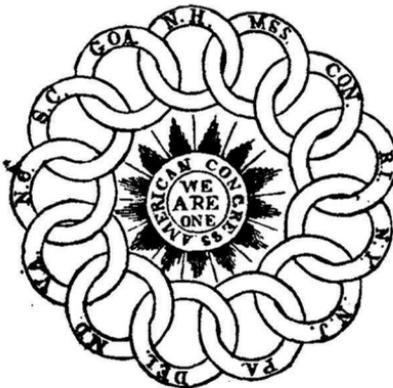
Nor was the great loss of grain, dwellings, stock, &c., the only one to be deplored in Schoharie. The paper currency of the country, which had increased by the year 1780 to the enormous sum of 200,000,000 dollars, had become nearly worthless. Of this trash, some of the Schoharie farmers had large amounts; mostly taken in payment for the products of the soil, for quite or nearly its pretended value. Some who had been holding on to it in the hope that it would become more valuable, or because they found it difficult as a leech to shake off, had the mortification to learn, that from *fifty to sixty dollars* continental money would command in 1780 but *one single dollar* in specie. An old soldier informed the author, that he once sent an *eight dollar* continental bill to buy a quart of cider, and received a *two dollar bill*, Rhode Island currency, in change. At a later period, an officer of his acquaintance once paid *seventy dollars* of continental money for a *single mug of flip*. At the close of the war, it could hardly have been considered of any value, except for cigar or lamp-lighters.

To give the reader an idea of the currency of which I have so often spoken, I give the facsimile of a continental note, and the vignettes of others. In selecting mottos for vignettes, care was taken to get brief Latin sentences, which should be characteristic of the position of this country with England; and would be most likely to stimulate patriotic sentiments and enlist the feelings of Americans in the popular cause. The significant devices on the bills generally proved an index to the sentiments prevailing at their date. The back of the notes contained the amount of the same, with the name and residence of the printers, and some simple device, as that of a leaf, a vine, or an Indian bow. The latter appears on the back of the note, from which the following cut

was engraved. Some of the continental notes contained water-marks, only to be seen by holding them up to the light. Many of the vignettes also contained a colored mark of some kind.



The vignette of this bill is the emblem of a globe surrounded by the motto—"THE LORD REIGNS, LET THE EARTH REJOICE." A quotation from the Psalms of David, showing the confidence of the states in the God of battles.



This device, a circular chain, bearing on each link the name of a state, is an admirable emblem of their union, and implies that while it remains unbroken, no foreign power can destroy its central government. This note, *Two Thirds of a Dollar*, is dated Feb. 17, 1776, and in a device upon the back is the commendable caution, "*Mind your business.*"



This is the vignette of a *Six Dollar Note*, dated Feb. 17, 1776. It represents a beaver gnawing a tree. This sagacious animal constructs its dams and dwellings, by cutting down trees with its teeth: a slow but sure process. The motto over it is—"BY PERSEVERING." Saying in effect to the colonists: persist and your labors shall be crowned with success.



This is the vignette of a *Five Dollar Note*, of New York currency, dated March 5, 1776. It represents a candlestick with *thirteen* burners, to denote the number of states. The motto signifies, "ONE FIRE AND TO THE SAME PURPOSE." Implying that the states were all alive to a sense of their just rights.



Here is the vignette of a *Five Dollar Note*, dated May 9, 1776. It shows a thorn tree, with a hand grasping it. The motto says—"SUSTAIN OR ABSTAIN." This device, at that period, represents the colonies as saying in effect to Great Britain, *Pass laws to protect, or none to affect us.*



This device, a contest between an eagle and a stork, is from a *Three Dollar Note*, dated July 22, 1776. The stork represents the colonies struggling against the superior force of the mother country. The motto encourages by saying—"THE RESULT IS UNCERTAIN."



Here is the vignette of an *Eight Dollar Note*, also dated July 22, 1776. It contains a harp, surrounded by the motto, "LARGE THINGS ARE CONSONANT WITH SMALL ONES." As the strings of a harp must all be in tune to give music; so the states, with diversified interests and opinions, must be guided by wisdom to unite and harmonize them for the general good.



This device, on a *Half Dollar Note*, dated Aug. 13, 1776, is a most interesting and significant one. It is that of a hand planting a young tree. Its motto—"FOR POSTERITY," shows the duty of practising *disinterested benevolence*; in struggling to establish a government which will extend its greatest benefits to future generations.



The vignette of this note for *Four Dollars*, dated Jan. 14, 1779, represents a swine encountering a spear; and demanding, as he received it, "DEATH, OR LIFE WITH DECENCY."



This note for *Eighty Dollars* is also dated Jan. 14, 1779, and bears the device of a majestic oak tree. Around it are the words, "IT SHALL FLOURISH THROUGH AGES OF AGES." Prophetic allusion is here made to the establishment and perpetuity of a republican government. Heaven grant the prediction may be fully verified, and that the worms of faction may ever die before reaching the

roots of *liberty's tree*: planted by oppression and nourished by the best blood of the land.



This little device, which appears on a note for *One Shilling*, New York currency, dated Aug. 13, 1776, (on which are the words, "'Tis death to counterfeit,") is truly expressive. It represents incense rising from an altar, and over it

the motto—"NOT WITHOUT GOD."

Many important events transpired in the United States, in 1780, to hearten or dispirit the American patriot. On the 13th day of May, Charleston, S. C., then in the command of Gen. Lincoln, fell into the hands of the British with nearly five thousand men, and four hundred cannon. In June 5000 men under Gen. Kniphausen, entered New-Jersey, and committed many acts of violence. On the 10th day of July, Admiral M. de Ternay sent by the French government, with seventeen armed vessels and several transports, arrived at Newport, R. I., bringing six thousand French troops, under the Count de Rochambeau, to aid us in our struggle for freedom. The arrival of these *allies* was greeted by the citizens with every demonstration of joy. On the 16th of August, the American army under the command of Gen. Gates met the British at Camden, one hundred and twenty miles north-west of Charleston, S. C., under Lord Cornwallis; at which meeting the *laurels of Saratoga* were transformed for the American commander, to *drooping willows*. Gates, with his militia, retreated before the successful British troops, while the brave Gen. De Kalb, second in command, with a body of Continental troops who shared his spirit, withstood the repeated assaults of the whole British army until he fell covered with wounds and glory. Congress *resolved* at the time to erect a monument to the memory of this noble German at Annapolis, which has not yet been done.

In September, an attempt was made by Gen. Benedict Arnold to surrender the fortress of West Point by *treachery*, to Sir Henry Clinton, which transaction with its interesting details, will be found in another part of this work, under a sketch of the life of David Williams, one of the captors of Maj. Andre.