

Arnold and His Jewish Aids at West Point

Last Chapter of the Treason Story: the Arrest and Trial of the Jewish Major: Strange Testimony: Subsequent Public Opinion

AFTER General Washington had delivered the reprimand to Benedict Arnold, he proceeded at once to make good the intimation which he had given the unhappy officer—"I will myself furnish you, as far as may be in my power, with opportunities of regaining the esteem of your country." It was late in July, 1780 that General Washington had learned of the British plan to march to Newport and attack re-enforcements of the American cause before they could land and entrench themselves. Washington therefore decided to harry the British and perhaps prevent the attack by crossing the Hudson and marching down the east shore to menace New York, the British headquarters.

It was the last day of July, and General Washington was personally seeing the last division over at King's Ferry, when Benedict Arnold appeared. It is true that he had been wounded, it is also true that his accounts had not been allowed by Congress; but his wound was the fortune of war, and the delay in allowing his accounts was due to his already acquired reputation for shady dealing in money matters, neither of which justified him in betraying his country, but both of which might have stimulated him to recover the status he had so early lost.

It was thus that Benedict Arnold appeared before George Washington, that last day of July, 1780—a man whom Congress rightly distrusted, a man who had just been rightly reprimanded, a man whose fellow officers looked at him askance.

The Fateful Choice of West Point

YET it was to such a man that Washington made good his word. The army was on the way to New York to attack the British. As Arnold rode up, General Washington said to him, "You are to command the left wing, the post of honor."

Those who were present report that, at Washington's words, Arnold's countenance fell. The magnanimity of the First American meant nothing to him. The opportunity to retrieve his good name had somehow lost its value.

So patent was Arnold's disappointment, that Washington asked him to ride to headquarters and await him there. At headquarters Arnold disclosed to Washington's aid, Colonel Tilghman, that his desire was not for a command in the army but for the command of West Point. West Point was then but a post up the Hudson River, far outside the zone of important fighting, and certainly the last place it was thought the intrepid Arnold would desire to be. The inconsistency between Arnold's desire for action and West Point's lack of action, struck General Washington very forcibly. He had offered Arnold a chance to rehabilitate his reputation; Arnold hung back, asking for a place where no distinctive service could then be rendered.

Now let the reader take note of this fact: it may be important, it may be unimportant; it may have some bearing on Benedict Arnold's action, it may have none; but the fact nevertheless is this: The Forage Master, that is, the quartermaster at West Point, was Colonel Isaac Franks, a member of the same family which we have been considering in these articles. This Colonel Isaac Franks, we are informed by the Jewish records which make a great deal of the fact, was once confidential aid-de-camp to General Washington, though for what reason the relationship was dissolved we are not informed.

Two Jewish Franks With Arnold

THE reader will recall that the narrative of Benedict Arnold has already included two members of the Franks family—David, of Philadelphia, and David Solesbury Franks, who came down from Montreal.

The third Franks is now in view—Colonel Isaac Franks. He is in charge of supplies at the post of West Point. It is to West Point that Benedict Arnold wishes to go, even though General Washington is offering him the post of honor in the forward movement which the Continental Army is about to make. It is the last day of July, 1780.

On August 3, General Washington gave Arnold his orders and allowed him to proceed to take command of West Point. Accompanying him, of course, was Colonel David Solesbury Franks, his aid-de-camp, whose testimony had been so useful at the court-martial. There were then two Franks at West Point—Colonel D. S. Franks, aid to the commandant, and Colonel Isaac Franks, in charge of supplying the post.

It appears that Arnold had already been in communication with the enemy and had asked for the command at West Point, not for any of the reasons he alleged to General Washington, but because he had

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already chosen it as the gateway through which he was to let the British through into the weakened American territory. For two months, Arnold had been writing to "Anderson," or John André. He had been reaching out toward the enemy for a longer time than that, and had at length requested that a man equal to himself be appointed to negotiate with him. Major John André, adjutant general of the British Army in America, was chosen as one of rank sufficiently high to deal with Arnold. They had already come into touch with each other before Arnold asked General Washington for the post at West Point. And André, as we have previously seen, knew the Franks.

Apologists for Arnold have said that the reason he showed so deep a disappointment when General Washington offered him the command of the left wing of the army, was that he had never expected such magnanimous treatment, and for the moment was conscience-stricken that he had gone so far with the enemy when his own country offered him such fine prospects. If that were the true state of Arnold's mind, he need only have taken command of the left wing, or, having been committed to take West Point, he need only have gone there and performed his soldierly duty.

The history and personality of Major John André, who completed the negotiations with Arnold, and lost his life as a spy, while Arnold lived long as a traitor, have been the object of much interest and research. His descent is obscure. His parentage was known as "Swiss-French." It is thought that the first André came into England in the train of a Jewish family. André himself had those accomplishments which were most highly prized in the society of the day. In any event, of Jewish or non-Jewish descent, he was a far finer character than Benedict Arnold.

Government Action and a Bit of Jewish Comedy

ON ARNOLD'S staff at West Point, besides the two Jewish Franks—Isaac and David—there was Lieutenant Colonel Richard Varick. This Varick was a wise young fellow who preferred to have as little as possible to do with Arnold's affairs. He refused to take any responsibility connected with Arnold's dealings with money or goods. For some apparently good reason, which will not be difficult for the reader to surmise, Varick adopted the strict policy of keeping his hands off all supplies. Thus it was left to Major Franks to attend all such matters, to which he was apparently nothing loath. In fact, Major Franks even looked after General Arnold's private cupboard.

Not to delay longer over details, suffice it to say that on September 22, 1780, less than two months after assuming command at West Point, the treason of Benedict Arnold was accomplished. One more day, and it was discovered and foiled.

Instant inquiry was made to detect accomplices. Major Franks is placed under arrest. David Franks, of Philadelphia, is arrested. It may or may not be significant, but it is nevertheless a fact, that upon the accomplishment of Arnold's treason the authorities ordered that the two Jews, David Franks and David Solesbury Franks, be put under arrest.

The experience of David Franks adds a bit of Jewish comedy to this serious scene. It appears that he still has influence to save him from severe treatment and to gain him time. On the occasion of his previous arrest in 1778, Benedict Arnold was commander of the city of Philadelphia and David Solesbury Franks was on Arnold's staff, and if Arnold and Franks could concoct a scheme of profiteering off the closed stores of the city, it was probably not beyond them to see that the elder David Franks received favor in his case. At least, as the reader of previous articles knows, David Franks went free, although caught in the act of communicating with the enemy.

But this time there is no Benedict Arnold to help him, and his nephew like himself is under arrest because of Arnold's treason. Yet the Philadelphia Jew

discloses a marvelous facility of playing horse with the law.

He remained in jail until October 6, and then, strange to relate, he is given two weeks to get within the enemy's lines. Investigation somehow has been stopped; prosecution has been sidetracked. But David found 14 days too brief a time to wind up his affairs, and he petitions for an extension of time. It is denied. Then when one week of the time had passed, Franks asks for a pass to New York for himself, daughter, man-servant and two maid-servants; this is refused and passes are authorized for himself, daughter and one maid-servant "provided she be an indented servant." But David does not use these passes. He applies again for an extension of time on account of an "indisposition of body." Thus, by keeping officials busy with his evasions and his counter-suggestions the record finds him still in Philadelphia on November 18, a month after he was supposed to be out of the country.

He makes application for another pass. The Council obediently sends him one, the secretary making this observation in his note: "The Council are much surprised that you still remain in this city, and hope that you will immediately depart this state, agreeable to their late order, otherwise measures will be taken to compel you to comply with the same."

A Common Jewish Stratagem—Stalling for Time

DOES David go? He does not. He writes an extremely polite letter. Incidentally he gives a hint of what may be keeping him. In his letter to the Council he says:

"Being apprehensive that a report raised and circulated that I had depreciated the currency by purchase of specie may have given rise to prejudice against me with the Honorable Council..."

More than likely this is precisely what David was doing. It was done later by another Jew in American history, Judah P. Benjamin, and it was done everywhere by Jews during the recent war. With David's racial itch for money and his disloyalty to the American cause, there was probably sound foundation for the report.

And then, in the last line of his letter, he finds fault with his pass, and asks for another. All this time, of course, he is gaining time, and is fulfilling his purpose with regard to the specie.

This, by the way, is a common Jewish stratagem. It is very much observed in lawsuits. The non-Jew can always be depended on to desire justice and humanity, and these traits are systematically played upon. The non-Jew is also inclined to take men's word at its face value, which is also a trait which can be used to his hurt. If, for example, in a business transaction which is to be consummated a week hence, the non-Jew could absolutely fortify himself if he had the slightest suspicion of sharp dealing, it is to the advantage of the Jew who tries to "do" him to give him his word as to exactly what steps will be taken a week hence at the final settlement. If the non-Jew believes that word, he is quieted for a week. He does nothing. He rests implicitly on the given word. Then the morning comes, and the dishonest Jew steps up without warning and drives through ruthlessly to a tricky gain. This is so common that thousands who have been tricked by it have told the full details. Keep the Gentile so busy, or satisfy him so fully, that he will not bother—that's the strategy. David knew it even in his day, and it was ancient then.

Franks' Opinion of Arnold's Accomplice

HIS request for a new pass is refused. But still he does not go. Finally, an aroused Council sends him notice to be gone by the next day. And then he goes, but not, we may well believe, until he had done all he intended to do. David is delightfully Jewish and the Council are naively Gentile.

Up at West Point other matters are proceeding. When General Washington arrived and heard the startling news he asked Colonel Varick to walk with him. He spoke to the young officer most considerately, told him he did not question his loyalty, but under the circumstances he would ask him to consider himself under arrest. It was very like Washington to do this, to make the arrest himself, gently. There is no record, however, that a like courtesy was shown the Jewish Major David Solesbury Franks. Washington probably remembered him as the witness for Arnold in the case which led to Arnold's court-martial and reprimand.

On that frontier post (as West Point then was) there were no witnesses. Franks and Varick were confronted with the necessity of testifying for each other. That is, the Jewish major was his own representative in court and practically his own witness.