

THE BATTLE OF ORISKANY.

THE DEFENCE OF THE MOHAWK VALLEY. THE LEAGUE OF ST. STANWIX—ONE OF THE HARDEST FOUGHT BATTLES OF THE REVOLUTION—GANSVOORT, HERKIMER, WILLET AND ARNOLD.

In July, 1777, the position of the patriot forces in the State of New York had become one of pressing peril. The British had been in the possession of the enemy; in three cohorts there was neither order nor government; Tryon County prayed for assistance; in Westchester the militia were caring for their own defence. "Menaced," says Bancroft, "from the Susquehanna to Lake Champlain, and on every part of the Hudson, New-York became the battle-field for the life of the young Republic." The demands made upon Washington for succor were such as he found it impossible to comply with. He had already conceded to the Northern Department more than his share of men and supplies. He had the country to guard from the Hudson to Maryland. He however ordered Arnold to the North, and also Lincoln, who was popular with the Eastern soldiers, and a brigade of Continental troops under Glover. He wrote to Schuyler who apprehended the advance of Burgoyne "never to despair." He promised that Arnold should go to the relief of Fort Stanwix; and to the Council of New-York he predicted that the success of Burgoyne would be temporary.

To add to the difficulties of the situation, the British were employing the Indian warriors of the Mohawk Valley in considerable numbers. About one thousand braves had joined the white brigade of St. Leger. Advancing from Montreal by the way of Oswego he encountered at the division of the waters of the St. Lawrence and the Hudson a fortress garrisoned by six or seven hundred men under Lieut.-Col. Gansevoort. Information was received that Herkimer and the militia of Tryon County were marching to their relief. The investing forces numbered some 1700 men, including a large number of Mohawk Indians under Brandt, and of American Tories under Sir William Johnson and the well-known Butler. Active hostilities were commenced on the 4th of August, and continued on the 5th. Herkimer, who had with him Thomas Spencer, a faithful sachem of the Oneidas, crossed the Mohawk at the present site of Utica, and on the 5th encamped at Oriskany, near the present village of Whitesboro. From this point Gen. Herkimer sent messages to announce to Col. Gansevoort his approach, and to concert measures of cooperation. St. Leger, who was in possession of the same information, sent forward a detachment under Sir John Johnson, with all Brandt's Indians, to intercept his progress. The savage commander laid an ambush of his warriors when within six miles of the fort. Into this ambuscade the van of the American forces carelessly entered front and flank. They were attacked with great fierceness, but falling back to a better position, the patriot troops repulsed the fight. All accounts concur in describing the action as severely contested. Gen. Herkimer was severely wounded by a musket ball, which killed his horse and shattered his own leg. He remained on the ground, however, and gave his orders to the end, seated upon his saddle, which had been removed from his horse, and "smoking his old clay pipe." A heavy thunderstorm enabled the little band, by interrupting the battle, to attain a more favorable position.

At one period the Indians were sweeping before the persistent attacks of the patriot army, when a band of Tories, dispatched by St. Leger, came to the relief of these allies. Fort Stanwix or Schuyler it is to be noticed, was at this time without a flag; but the garrison had information of the enemy which had been adopted by the Continental Congress, and the brave defenders manufactured a banner as best they might out of their shirts and bits of scarlet and blue cloth, so that before sunset on the 2d of August, the stars and stripes were floating over top of the bastions.

Gen. Gansevoort had received information from Gen. Herkimer that he intended, on hearing the signals, to cut his way to the fort through the enemy's camp, and destroy it, making a sortie at the same time. The detachment, consisting of two hundred and fifty men, half of New-York and half of Massachusetts, under the command of Lieut.-Col. Marinus Willett, made a sally in the direction of Oriskany. They took with them an iron three-pounder. Rain was falling copiously at the moment, but it ceased before Willett's little band left the fort. The daring courage of the leader had been proved upon previous occasions, and was nobly displayed upon this. The British, who were in possession of the fort, were passing through the quarters of the "Yorkers," the rangers and the savages, they captured Sir John Johnson's papers, five British flags, other plunder and four prisoners. So suddenly was Sir John's camp assaulted that he had not time to put on his coat. He fled across the river to the temporary camp of St. Leger. The party of Willett returned to the fort with twenty-one wagon loads of spoil, and the Americans did not lose a man. The five British colors were raised in full view of the enemy below the unfringed American standard, and the garrison, mounting the parapets, gave three rousing cheers. For this exploit Congress presented to Col. Willett an elegant sword.

Meanwhile the battle between the main bodies was renewed at Oriskany. The struggle is said to have been terrible, and, in consequence of the presence of the Indians, to have been marked by peculiar brutality and cruelty. Of Herkimer's forces it is stated that over a fourth were killed outright, while the Tories and Indians suffered still more severely. The combatants, it is stated, "leaped upon each other with the fierceness of tigers and fought hand to hand with bayonets and knives." The conflict lasted for six hours, and it was the bloodiest encounter in proportion to the numbers engaged, that occurred during the war. Nor could either party claim a decided victory. The patriots remained masters of the field, but the fort was not then relieved. Gen. Herkimer was taken to his residence below the Little Falls on the Mohawk, where he died ten days afterwards. His death is said to have been occasioned by the unskillful treatment of his surgeon. After his leg had been amputated Col. Willett called to see him, and found him sitting up in bed, cheerful and smoking his pipe. The Surgeon was drunk; the blood continued to flow from the limb, and no other surgeon was at hand. The General soon became convinced that his end was near. He called for his Bible, read aloud the thirty-eighth Psalm, closed the book, sank back upon his pillow and expired. Stone, in writing of him, said: "Ifocrates died like a philosopher, and Rossignol like an unbelieving sentimentalist, Gen. Herkimer died like a Christian hero."

The loss of life at the battle of Oriskany is differently stated. St. Leger wrote to Burgoyne that "four hundred patriots" lay dead on the field, among the number of whom were almost all the principal movers of the rebellion in that county. The British also claimed to have taken two hundred prisoners. Dr. Thatcher, in his "Military Journal," records the American loss as "one hundred and sixty killed and a great number wounded." The Indians lost seventy men with several chiefs.

After the battle the siege of the fort went on. No correct information of the event had been received there. St. Leger endeavored by diplomacy and by representation of the horrors which would follow a prolonged resistance to persuade the garrison to capitulate. To one of these overtures Gansevoort replied in writing that he would defend the fort to the last extremity. Meantime Col. Willett, with Lieut. Stockwell, made his way to the headquarters of Gen. Schuyler, in quest of reinforcements and supplies. Gen. Arnold, with the Massachusetts brigade of Gen. Learned, advanced toward the fort. He sent forward a Tory prisoner under sentence of death with instructions to proceed to the fort, and, if he was not relieved, to give up the place. It is expected that the officers or companies will take the same course when they meet. This sum of money will amount to several thousand dollars.

NATIONAL, NOT AMERICAN. The Vice-President of the National Bank Note Company denied in yesterday's TRIBUNE that the company had dismissed any employees who were members of the National Guard. In THE TRIBUNE'S first edition the name of the American Bank Note Company appeared by mistake for that of the National Bank Note Company.

INSPECTOR BANTA ASKS TO BE INVESTIGATED. Jacob J. Banta, Inspector of Weights and Measures for the First District, submitted yesterday his resignation to the charges made against him. He denies

ENFORCING THE EXCISE LAW.

HOW THE POLICE RULES ARE RECEIVED. DISSATISFACTION OF LIQUOR DEALERS PLAINLY EXPRESSED—PLANS OF THE SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRIME.

The promulgation of the police orders under the Excise Law has created no little excitement among dealers and saloon-keepers. Every preparation had been made to meet the inn and hotel requirements, but few persons appeared to know of the clause in the new law limiting the hours for doing business. The order declaring it a misdemeanor to offer for sale, sell, give away or otherwise dispose of any kind of liquor, beer or ale between the hours of 1 and 5 a. m., is regarded as particularly severe. A large dealer in the vicinity of Washington Market in conversation with a TRIBUNE reporter yesterday, said that if enforced it would ruin his business. The bulk of trade in the saloons of that part of the city was transacted between 11 o'clock and 12 o'clock, and the taverns and saloons in the Bowery and the larger establishments above Fifth-street, any of the proprietors express a determination to keep open as usual on Sunday, and to test the legality of their arrests. Mr. Grody, a beer-dealer on Christopher-st., takes a more conservative view and said: "It is folly for the liquor dealers to agitate this matter. The law is imperative and should be obeyed. The proper way is to comply faithfully with its provisions, close on Sundays, and let the people, who are thus deprived of their liquor, attend to the agitation, and it will bring a more speedy relief. The remedy will be found in the time comes for electing a new body of City Council members and the voters are united on this point, and only those who can prove themselves friendly to a repeal of the present law need expect their support."

The Liquor Dealers' Protective Association and the Brewers' Association will be invoked to take prompt action on the subject of the enforcement of the new law, and some of the members will urge that society aid be extended to the defence of those who may suffer prosecution, and to test that clause of the law which restricts the hours of trade. Some of the more intelligent dealers hold that it is clearly illegal and unconstitutional to single out a particular branch of trade, and limit the hours in which business can be transacted, while all other trades are free to trade as they desire and observe Sunday as they please.

Nearly 200 applications for licenses were made yesterday at the Excise Department, and more than \$12,000 were received. Commissioner Morton, who is the only member of the Board in town said: "We are issuing no ale and beer licenses at present, but are furnishing receipts for the money paid in, showing that the applicants have complied to that extent with the provisions of the law. This course was decided upon because we did not deem it advisable to grant licenses pending the decision of this point by Judge Smith. We do not pretend to say that because a person applies for a license and obtains a receipt for his money, it entitles him to conduct business under that receipt. It is only a receipt for his money, and he is bound to obey the law, and to pay the penalty of 7,000 dollars in this city, only 1,750 elsewhere, in case he fails to do so. The law is clear and unambiguous, and it is our duty to enforce it as it is. 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