

BURGOYNE'S SURRENDER

CRITICISMS OF HIS CONDUCT FROM GERMAN SOURCES.

GEN. RIEDESEL'S OPINION OF HIS GENERALSHIP—THE DESPERATE SITUATION OF THE BRITISH ARMY—THE BARONESS VON RIEDESEL AND HER CHILDREN—THE SURRENDER.

DRESDEN, Jan. 22.—For nearly a month after his defeat at Bennington Burgoyne remained in the neighborhood of Fort Edward and the line of the Battenkill. The time was employed in bringing up stores and in transporting boats from Lake Champlain and Lake George. On the 13th of September, 1777, the army crossed the Hudson at Schuylerville, and abandoned its line of communications to make a bold stroke for Albany and a junction with Sir William Howe. A hundred and eighty boats, which had been hauled across the carries, attended the march of the army, whose left flank rested on the Hudson. These boats carried one month's provisions. "Now we went to work again at our dear salt pork and flour," writes a German officer. "Dear friends, do not despise these royal dishes, which really cost a royal price then and there, for the transportation from England must have been not a little expensive. Pork at noon, pork at night, pork cold, pork warm. Friends! although with your green peas and stuffed crabs you would have looked with loathing at our pork, yet pork was to us a lordly dish, without which we should have starved; and had we afterward had pork enough, our ill-luck might not have brought us to Boston." Meanwhile, the Americans, encouraged by the victory at Bennington, were pouring into Gates's camp at Stillwater. They were without uniforms, but were for the most part well armed with the rifles and fowling pieces they had constantly used since boyhood. It was reported to Burgoyne on the 7th of September that there were 14,000 or 15,000 of them. There was no alternative, however, but to attack them or to abandon the campaign, and the orders Burgoyne had received were explicit. His army set out on its southward march in three columns. The right was under Brig.-Gen. Frazer, the dashing commander of the light troops. The centre was commanded by Burgoyne himself, and the left, near the Hudson, by Riedesel. The British army advanced slowly, repairing roads and bridges. The rate of march barely averaged two miles a day. On the afternoon of the 19th of September Burgoyne's central division was sharply attacked on Freeman's Farm, north of Stillwater. The English, with a few guns, occupied a clearing. The Americans had no artillery. The fight lasted all the afternoon, and was conducted on both sides with great valor. Toward nightfall, Riedesel, with seven companies of German infantry and two cannon, advanced to Burgoyne's assistance and attacked the right flank of the Americans, pouring in grape shot. The English rallied and charged, and the Americans fell back, carrying off their wounded and about 100 prisoners. They had lost about 320 men in the battle, and the British not far from twice that number. The latter retained possession of the ground, and may, therefore, fairly claim a victory; but it was a barren victory, which they were never able to follow up. On the 20th Burgoyne began to intrench his position. His chance of success henceforth lay in co-operation from the southward—a help which never came.

Baroness Riedesel had accompanied the army on its march. She had been encouraged, she says, when they crossed the Hudson, at hearing Gen. Burgoyne say that Englishmen never retreat. Her distrust had been excited, however, by finding that the officers' wives with the army knew of all expeditions which were planned, and she remembered that in Prince Ferdinand's army in the Seven Years' War everything was kept very secret. But now the Americans knew all plans beforehand, and expected the English wherever they went. We must not place too much reliance, however, on the lively Baroness, where her prejudices can come in to modify her judgment. She greatly disliked Gen. Burgoyne. Frau von Riedesel was an eye-witness of the battle of the 19th of September, trembling at every shot for the safety of her husband. Three wounded officers were brought into the house where she lodged, and one of them, the nephew of people who had been kind to her in England, died in the next room to her while undergoing an operation. The Baroness could hear his last sighs through the thin partition. The condition of the army was fast becoming critical. Provisions were terribly dear. Uniforms and clothing were torn on the bushes, and soaked with camping on the damp ground, and new were not to be had at any price. The only message which Burgoyne received from Howe or Clinton arrived on the 21st of September. Clinton announced his intention of attacking Fort Montgomery on the 10th of October. This might prove but a tardy succor. On the 4th of October one-third was cut off from the soldiers' rations. Desertions had become frequent, in spite of severe punishments; even the death penalty did not prevent them. Skirmishes were of frequent occurrence. The weather was frightfully hot, and the army was wasting away in inaction. On the 4th of October, the day on which the men were put on short rations, Gen. Burgoyne called a council of war. Gens. Phillips, Riedesel, and Frazer were present. Burgoyne proposed to them to leave the neighborhood of the river and try to turn the American left flank. Eight hundred men were to be left to guard the boats and stores; the rest of the army was to take part in the expedition. It was objected that the roads and the position of the Americans were both unknown, that three or four days would be necessary to turn the American flank, and that during all this time the stores must be left under a feeble guard. No conclusion was reached on the 4th, and a second council was called for the evening of the 5th. At this council Riedesel declared his opinion that the army was in such a condition that unless the enemy could be reached and forced to fight a decisive action in one day it would be better to fall back across the Hudson and wait behind the Battenkill for Gen. Clinton's approach. Here the army could not be cut off from Fort George. Frazer agreed with Riedesel. Phillips would give no decided opinion, and Burgoyne, loath to retreat, declared he would make a reconnoissance on the 7th, and that if this should show that the enemy was not to be successfully attacked, he would fall back.

On the 6th of October, 1777, four days' rations were served out, and on the 7th, about 10 in the morning, 1,500 men marched out for the reconnoissance with eight brass cannon and two howitzers. All four Generals were with the party, which was made up from all the regiments in the army. They advanced into a clearing about three-quarters of a mile from the American left flank—a wretched position, according to Riedesel, where they could see nothing of the enemy. Here it was determined to await an attack, and Brig.-Gen. Frazer undertook to carry off the forage from the two barns in the neighborhood. Small detachments of the enemy appeared from time to time, and the party "amused themselves" by firing cannon at them, until suddenly the fire of musketry was heard on the left, and presently Ackland's grenadiers came running in, leaving their commander wounded behind them. The German left flank was thus uncovered, and Speth, who commanded it, sent some of the men to form an angle to protect it. This was accomplished with the help of the British artillery. Presently, however, Frazer, in command of the right wing, was mortally wounded. He was carried from the field and his men thrown into some confusion. Speth and the Germans, now exposed on both flanks, were ordered to retreat, and came off in good order, though hard pressed, but all the cannon were left behind, the horses having been shot, and most of the artillerymen killed or wounded. Lieut.-Col. Breymann held a small redoubt on the extreme right of the position of the army. His corps had been reduced by the losses sustained at Bennington and on the 19th of September to about 500 men, and 300 of these had made part of the reconnoissance, and were now driven back with the rest of the soldiers of that party into the large redoubt of the right wing. The part of the British line which connected Breymann's redoubt with the main position was also cleared of men. The Americans made their way through this gap in the line, Breymann and his 200 men were attacked in flank and rear, the Lieutenant-Colonel was shot dead, and the men were put to flight or taken prisoners. Lieut.-Col. Speth, going with a small force to retake Breymann's redoubt, lost his way in the night and was led by a treacherous guide into the hands of the

Americans. Such, at least, is Riedesel's account of this part of the action. According to Bancroft, that part of the line between the great redoubt of the right flank and Breymann's position was stormed by a Massachusetts regiment under John Brooks. In any case the loss of this work on the extreme right was fatal to the continued maintenance of Burgoyne's position. The Americans had failed in their attempt on the main redoubt of the British right wing, though this had been attacked with great fury. The Militia fought on this day with desperate valor, and had the advantage of superior numbers, but was without a competent General. Neither Gates nor Lincoln appeared on the field. Benedict Arnold, who had no proper command, fought with his usual reckless courage, but had not the talent of a strategist. He was severely wounded in the capture of Breymann's redoubt.

Nothing was left for Burgoyne's army but to retreat. Promptitude might perhaps still have secured its escape, but on every side were disorder and delay. Early in the morning of the 8th of October, 1777, the British and Germans were drawn together on the heights that overlook the Hudson. Here, on the evening of that day, Gen. Frazer was buried in a spot which he had himself chosen as his last resting-place. He had been brought, mortally wounded, into the house occupied by Baroness Riedesel, with whose husband he had served in the Seven Years' War. He had lingered through the night, knowing well that his hours were numbered. He had cursed the ambition which had brought him to his end, and found words of pity for his commanding General and for the wife he left behind. So crowded was the house that the Baroness had to remove her children into the passageway that they might not cry out and disturb the dying man. His corpse lay all day in their room. As his staff and the General officers of the Army gathered about his grave, the Americans, ignorant of their purpose, directed artillery against them. Thus, with the hostile cannon firing his last salute, the gallant leader of the light troops was laid to rest. At 10 o'clock on the night of the 8th the army set out northward. Riedesel commanded the head of the column. The hospital, with its 800 inmates, was left behind. The boats, with what remained of stores, made their way slowly up stream. The watch-fires were left burning to deceive the vigilance of the Americans. The British army made but a short march that night, and then halted until the following afternoon. By that time the Americans had strongly occupied the east bank of the Hudson. On the evening of the 9th the British occupied the village of Saratoga, and next morning forded the Fishkill and encamped on rising ground in the angle between that stream and the Hudson. Thus, from the evening of the 7th, to the morning of the 10th, Burgoyne, to whom time was of capital importance, had retreated but a little over eight miles. At the camp north of the Fishkill Burgoyne halted again and never resumed his march. Col. Southland was sent forward to build a bridge across the Hudson at Fort Edward, but was presently recalled. At daybreak on the 11th a brigade of Americans made a dash across the Fishkill, seized all the boats and much of the stores, took a few prisoners, and retreated before a brisk fire of grape shot. On the afternoon of the 12th a council of war was held, and it was decided, on Riedesel's proposal, to make a last attempt at retreat, abandoning the baggage, fording the Hudson four miles below Fort Edward, and making through the woods for Fort George. As it appeared that rations had not been given out to the troops, the movement was postponed until late in the evening. At 10 o'clock Riedesel sent word to Burgoyne that all was ready, but was answered that it was too late to undertake anything. Thus was the last chance thrown away, for on the next morning the army was completely surrounded. Only five days' provisions were left. Another council was called, and Burgoyne, taking the whole responsibility of the disaster, proposed to capitulate. Riedesel thanked Burgoyne for his declaration, which made it clear to all that he (Riedesel) had had no share in planning the movements of the army, and he called on the English officers present to bear witness to this. For his own justification he drew up a memorandum of the events of the campaign and had it signed by the superior German officers. After a negotiation which lasted several days it was agreed that Gen. Burgoyne's army should march out of its camp with the honors of war, stack its arms and march to Boston, whence it should be shipped to Great Britain in English ships, on condition of not serving again during the war. The negotiations were in danger of being broken off on the 16th, on which day Burgoyne was told by a deserter of a rumor that Clinton had forced the forts of the Highlands and was advancing to his relief. Burgoyne thereupon sent a dilatory message to Gates, who, in reply, insisted on surrender within an hour. He assured the British General that the Americans outnumbered his soldiers four to one. Burgoyne then signed the articles of surrender, under which 5,791 men were included. It is stated by Riedesel that not more than 4,000 of these were fit for duty. The number of Germans surrendering is set down by Belknap at 2,431 men, and of Germans killed, wounded, and missing down to Oct. 6 at 1,122. The total loss of the British and their mercenaries in killed, wounded, prisoners, and deserters during the campaign, including those lost in St. Leger's expedition to the Mohawk and those who surrendered on terms at Saratoga, was not far from 10,000.

The days that preceded the surrender had been days of confusion. Baroness Riedesel says that on the evening of the 9th of October, in Saratoga, when they had marched but half an hour during the day, she asked Major-Gen. Phillips why they were not moving on while it was yet time. The General admired her resolution and wished she were in command of the army. The same lady relates that Burgoyne spent half of that critical night drinking and making merry with his mistress. The army was given over to misery and disorder. On the 10th the Baroness fed more than 30 officers from her private stores. These were at last exhausted, and the lady, in her indignation, called on the Adjutant-General, who happened to come in her way, to report to Burgoyne the destitution of officers wounded in the service. The Commander-in-Chief took this in good part, came to her in person, thanked her for reminding him of his duty, and gave orders that provisions should be distributed. The Baroness believed that Burgoyne never in his heart forgave her interference. It seems to me from the writings of both that spite lay rather in her bosom and her husband's than in his. The memorandum which Gen. Riedesel wrote and caused to be signed by his officers immediately after the surrender is a long impeachment of Burgoyne, and sets forth the evil consequences of his not consulting the writer, or of not executing the latter's plans promptly. It is clear that Riedesel held Burgoyne responsible for the misfortunes of the army, misfortunes which he himself took so deeply to heart that his health and spirits were for a long time seriously affected. Before leaving America, in the Spring of 1778, Burgoyne wrote to the Duke of Brunswick, praising Riedesel's intelligence and the manner in which he executed the orders of his superior. Upon this Riedesel wrote a most friendly letter to Burgoyne, thanking him in his own name and that of his officers for the kindness which he had shown to them while under his command. "If good fortune did not crown your labors," he continues, "we know well that it was not your fault, and that this army was the victim of the reverses of war." This solitary expression of confidence is not to be reconciled with what Riedesel says at other times and in other places. The military memorandum above mentioned, published in the Baroness's book, is sufficient proof of this. In the same spirit are conceived Riedesel's comments on Burgoyne's report of the campaign. These comments, which were addressed to the Duke of Brunswick and his countrymen, are dated Cambridge, April 8, 1778, a little more than a month later than the letter above quoted. They complain explicitly that Gen. Burgoyne, while speaking highly of Riedesel himself, passes lightly over the services of his troops. The German General's complaints in this respect seem to be but slightly justified by Burgoyne's report.

We must return to the Baroness. On the afternoon of the 10th of October, 1777, the Americans began to fire again on the British army. Frau von Riedesel took refuge in a cellar, where she spent the night sitting on the ground, while her children slept with their heads in her lap. In the morning, the firing having taken another direction, the energetic lady ordered everybody out of the cellar and had it thoroughly cleaned. The cellar was in three parts, and some order was brought about by assigning one part to the severely wounded, one to the women, and the third, nearest the entrance, to all other persons. These arrangements were hardly completed when the firing began again. Eleven cannon balls went through the house above them. There were five officers' wives in the cellar, but how many other women and children the Baroness does not tell us. In the course of the day the husband of one of the ladies was brought in with his arm shot off at the shoulder. He lingered through the night and died toward morning. Another lady had already lost her husband during the campaign. The Baroness's husband did not fall, though she

was in mortal anxiety for Gen. von Riedesel. She was much afraid that in case of a desperate attempt at a retreat she might be left behind, and had one of her husband's horses kept ever ready to carry her off with the army. Three wounded officers in the cellar had promised her that each of them would take one of the children on his horse. Riedesel would willingly have sent his wife to the American camp for safety, but she refused to go. Several officers had intrusted their valuables to her keeping, and these occasioned her much anxiety. Water was very scarce. The American riflemen would not allow any man to bring it from the river, but a soldier's wife was found to undertake the task, and came off safely, the Americans respecting her sex. The Baroness busied herself with the wounded, made tea and coffee for them, and shared with them the meals which her cook, an invaluable fellow, provided. Six days did they spend in this horrible place, fetid with the smell of festering wounds, and came out only to go into captivity. The adventures of the Brunswickers after their surrender and during the time that they were held as prisoners will form the subject of my next letter. E. J. L.