

CHAPTER X.

THE HEAVEN-BORN GENERAL.

It is hard for Americans to realize that the French and Indian War was more costly to Great Britain than was the War of the American Revolution. As matter of fact, the British Government sent a larger total of soldiers and sailors, and spent more blood and treasure in defending the colonies and in wresting North America from the French, than in endeavouring to coerce the revolted colonies. Though in the various attempts at the reduction of Canada, no large armies like those of Burgoyne or Cornwallis were lost by surrender, yet the number of men slaughtered in siege and battle was greater, and the expeditions being in the wilderness were much more costly. To throw a bomb into the Niagara fort was like dropping a globe of silver; to fire canister, like scattering a Danæan shower of guineas; while every effective bullet required an outlay of pounds, as well as of shillings and pence.

Before the decision of the long controversy between Latin and Teutonic civilization in America, at the fall of Quebec, another terrible disaster, caused largely by British arrogance and contempt of American experience, remains to be recorded. This time it was

to be linked not with the name of Braddock or Loudon, but with that of Abercrombie.

Under the quickening touch of the master-hand of Pitt, who knew the topography of America, and had appointed the "young madman" Wolfe to supersede Loudon, Louisburg, Ticonderoga, and Fort Du Quesne were chosen as points of attack. Of the three expeditions planned, Abercrombie was chosen to lead that which was to move to Canada by the great waterway of Eastern New York.

We need not here repeat the oft-told story of the capture of Louisburg by Amherst and Wolfe; or that of the fall of Fort Du Quesne, which Washington named Pittsburg. Tremendous enthusiasm was kindled in the colonies at the news of these successes. In England, when the stands of French colours, after being carried through the streets of London and laid at the feet of King George, were hung up in St. Paul's Cathedral, the whole nation took fresh courage, and believed final victory near. The name of the dashing and spirited Wolfe was on every tongue; though the other heroes were not forgotten. In New England the names of the successful British leaders were made monumental in geography. Such places as Wolfboro, Amherst, Boscawen, and many others on the map, almost as numerous as the grains shaken from a pepper-box, testify to popular gratitude and enthusiasm.

A different story is that of Abercrombie's expedition. For the reduction of the French fortress on Lake Corlaer, or Champlain, the largest army ever

gathered on the continent was encamped on the shores of Lake George. Of the sixteen thousand men about three fifths were brilliantly uniformed British regulars. For the first time the pavonine dress of the bare-legged Highlanders was seen on large bodies of men on this side of the Atlantic. Among the American militia officers were Stark, Putnam, Bradstreet, and Rogers. The following of Sir William Johnson was three hundred Indians. In over one thousand boats, with banners and music, the host moved down the lake, making a superb pageant. In the first skirmish in the woods between Lake George and Ticonderoga, the gallant Lord Howe was killed. With Howe, fell the real head and leading mind of the expedition for the capture of Fort Carillon, or Ticonderoga. Without waiting for his artillery, which, being loaded on rafts, came more slowly, Abercrombie, on the morning of July 8, ordered an attack on the French abattis which had been made by Montcalm, two hundred yards in front of the fort itself.

This movement was against the advice of John Stark, who saw in the Frenchman's line of defence a solid breastwork of logs. He knew, also, that the trees, cut down and laid with their branches outward over the space of three hundred feet in front of the breastwork, would throw the attacking platoons and columns out of order. With Braddock-like contempt for a provincial captain's advice, Abercrombie, forgetting how the rude brushwood defence at Lake George had enabled the militia to repulse Dieskau's regulars, ignored the hints given by Stark. Taking

care to remain safely at the saw-mills, some distance in the rear, Abercrombie sent forward his men in four columns.

It was but a few minutes before all formations were hopelessly lost in the jungle of brushwood. When Highlanders, rangers, British, and Yankees were well entangled, sheets of fire issued from a line of heads behind the log breastwork, while the French artillery also played bloody havoc. Abercrombie, hearing of the initial disaster, left the saw-mills and made off with himself to the boat-landing; thence, issuing his orders for attacks on the left, the right, and the centre. For five hours, without flinching, the victims of military incompetence furnished food for French powder, and then broke into disorderly retreat. The whole army followed their commander, and, when at the boats, would have sunk them in their mad rush, but for the coolness and firmness of Colonel Bradstreet. It is said that the French found, stuck in the mud, five hundred pairs of shoes.

The Highlanders — old retainers of the Stuarts, but organized by Pitt to fight for the Guelphs — lost in this battle one half of their number. The total loss of the English was nearly two thousand men. Montcalm, the skilful soldier, covered himself with glory. The Indians under Johnson, being on the top of a hill, took no part in the fight, though active as spectators.

Abercrombie retreated to the site of Fort William Henry at the head of Lake George. The wildest rumours of the advancing victorious French army now prevailed at Albany and in the Valley; but Johnson

did much to allay fear and restore confidence by sending out the militia, doubling the guards, and garrisoning the forts and block-houses. Largely through his earnest appeals, in person, to Abercrombie, General Stanwix was sent with a large force to build a spacious fort at the one place where direct boat navigation between Schenectady and Oswego is interrupted. This portage of four miles — reduced to one mile by ditching and clearing out the streams — was between the Mohawk River and Wood Creek, and made a point of highest strategic importance. The fort — which was built and named Fort Stanwix — had afterward a notable military history.

From this point Colonel Bradstreet, having obtained by a bare majority in a council of war permission to attack Fort Frontenac, which for three years he had longed to do, set out with twenty-seven hundred militia, eleven hundred of whom were from New York. Johnson, who had sent Capt. Thomas Butler with forty-two Indians, received from him, under date of August 28, 1758, the joyful news of Bradstreet's complete victory, which, all considered, compensated for the disaster of Abercrombie. It cleared Lake Ontario of all French shipping, and was in relative influence and importance fully equal to Perry's victory on Lake Erie, over half a century later. None rejoiced more than the sons and grandsons of the victims of the Schenectady massacre of 1690, which had been instigated by Frontenac, after whom the fort had been named.

During this year Johnson was unusually active with

the Indians, in holding their loyalty to the British side or in maintaining their neutrality. Many gatherings were held at his own house. In the great council held at Easton, Penn., in October, 1758, five hundred Indians were present, including delegates from all the Six Nations, the Shawanese, Miamis, and Moheganders. The principal figure was Teedyuscung, who insisted on his people being treated with the same dignities accorded to the Iroquois. Indeed, if the explanation of the Delawares be accepted, they had, in times long before, and at the earnest request of the Indians both north and south of them, voluntarily and by solemn treaty assumed a subordinate position as warriors and refrained from war, in order to preserve peace, trade, and the general good of the whole community of red men. They claimed, however, that it was Iroquois overreaching in diplomacy and even downright treachery, that made them seem to "accept the petticoat" and become "squaws." It is certain that Teedyuscung made it the aim of his life to secure for his people the respect of the Iroquois and their equality with the proudest of the red men. The Easton council lasted nineteen days, and was productive of harmony both between the Indians and the whites, and among the varied tribes themselves. The one who contributed most to this gratifying success was not Johnson, but the honest German and Moravian, Christian Post, who from his home in the Wyoming Valley had made a journey and mission of peace, alone, among the tribes in the Ohio Valley.

When Sir Jeffrey Amherst reached America as commander-in-chief of the British forces, he came at once, with his four regiments at Albany, to reinforce Abercrombie. He found at Lake George, by the end of May, twelve thousand New York and New England militia. Johnson at once urged upon him the importance of capturing Niagara, the port between the two great lakes. Amherst agreed to the proposal, and warmly seconded it. In place of the stockade which the French from the time of La Salle had maintained, there was now a formidable fort. To Sir William Prideaux was assigned the work of reducing this Western stronghold; and Johnson, in order to assist him, called a council at Canajoharie to enlist the Mohawks, Senecas, and other Indians in the expedition. After the usual eloquence and expenditure of war-belts of wampum, Johnson led into the field seven hundred warriors, whose painted faces showed they were on the war-path. The Swegatchie braves also swelled this following, so that on arriving at Niagara he wrote to William Pitt, Oct. 24, 1760, that his Indian force numbered nine hundred and forty-three men.

By the 7th of July Prideaux with thirty-two hundred men, including Johnson's Indians, began siege operations. On the twelfth day he was killed in the trenches by the bursting of a shell from a coehorn mortar. This left the command to Johnson, who renewed operations with greater vigour, and by the 22d breached the wall sufficiently for assault.

While active in the trenches with hot shot, bombs,

and canister, Johnson did not forget to keep out his scouts and rangers. From them he learned that the French officer D'Aubrey was advancing to the relief of the garrison with twelve hundred men whom he had gathered from all the four French posts on the lakes. Leaving a force to continue the bombardment, Johnson marched out with infantry and grenadiers, having the Indians on his flanks, and attacked the advancing French with vigour. In this battle the Indians fought like genuine soldiers, and threw the French into disorder. Seeing this, the charge of the regulars and militia was made with such force and fury that in less than an hour the fight was over, and a splendid victory for the English was the result.

Returning to camp and trench, Johnson sent Major Harvey to Captain Pouchot, the French commander, to tell of the defeat of D'Aubrey, and to advise capitulation, especially while it was possible to restrain the Indians. Pouchot yielded; and the surrender of the whole force of over six hundred took place the next morning. Johnson wisely had ready an escort for the French prisoners, and not one of them lost his scalp or was rudely treated by the Iroquois. While the women and children were sent to Montreal, the men were marched by way of Oswego to New York, to fill English prisons. The manner in which Johnson restrained the savages was in marked contrast to the butcheries allowed, or only with great difficulty prevented, by the French under similar circumstances.

Johnson's victory at Niagara broke the chain of French forts along the great valleys and water-ways

from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to the delta of the Mississippi. One after another the French deserted the other forts, except Detroit; and General Stanwix at once occupied them or their ruins. Leaving Colonel Farquar at Niagara with a garrison of seven hundred men, Johnson came to Oswego, there meeting General Gage, who had been appointed to succeed Prideaux. Gage, perhaps irritated that the provincial fur-trader or "Heaven-born general" had, instead of himself, won the most brilliant of victories, refused to allow Johnson to advance and destroy the French forts at La Galette and Oswegatchie, or Ogdensburg. Finding that Gage, despite his advice and that of Amherst, meant to do nothing of importance until the next year, Johnson, after meeting the chief men of the Ottawa and Mississagey Indian tribes, returned home. He was now the most popular man in the province; while his name in England was joined with that of his fellow-tradesman, Clive, as a "Heaven-born general."

At his home Johnson learned that the French had at last abandoned Ticonderoga and Crown Point, but by concentrating at the northern end of Lake Champlain and fortifying their position, blocked the British advance to Montreal. Amherst was therefore obliged to rest for the winter; having first rebuilt the great fortresses, constructed Fort George near the site of old Fort William Henry, and cut a road from the New York lakes into the heart of New England. Critics of the over-cautious Amherst say he should have pushed on and helped Wolfe to conquer Quebec ear-

lier. However, after so many mistakes and disasters arising from rashness, such a man as Amherst was, perhaps, necessary. Wolfe, however, succeeded, and on the Plains of Abraham won America for Teutonic civilization, finding the path of glory a short one to the grave.

Montreal still remained to the French; and when, the winter over, it was resolved to attack this last stronghold from three points, Amherst with the main army assembled at Schenectady was to proceed by way of Oswego down the "ocean river" of Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence, General Murray was to ascend the river from Quebec, while Colonel Haviland was to advance by way of Lake Champlain. The colonial militia came in slowly; but by the 12th of June Amherst left Schenectady with twelve thousand men; while Johnson, arriving at Oswego July 25, led the first detachment of six hundred Iroquois fighting men. His influence was however so great that before embarking on Lake Ontario he had, from the tribes formerly neutral, won over seven hundred more warriors. He also sent runners with wampum belts to nine tribes of Indians living near Montreal. These, on his arrival at Fort Levi, at once declared their neutrality. It was thus from the danger of eight hundred hostile warriors, familiar with every square rod of land and water, that Amherst's army was saved. Passing through the dangerous Lachine Rapids with the loss of but forty-six men out of his ten thousand, he reached Montreal. So perfectly was the plan of campaign carried out, that Amherst and Murray ap-

peared on opposite sides of the city on the same day. Haldiman soon appeared from the south, and thus the three English columns became practically one army within twenty-four hours. The city surrendered on the 8th of September, 1760, and the French power in America fell.

So fully were the Indians kept in hand by Johnson, that no atrocities were committed by them, nor the enemy's people or country in any way harmed by their presence. In this campaign, in which the talents of Johnson shone with conspicuous brilliancy, his military career culminated.

The only French post of importance now remaining was Detroit. To carry out the terms of the capitulation, and to plant the red flag with the double cross in the remote Western posts, Captain Rogers, the celebrated ranger, was sent westward on the 12th of September. At Presque Isle, about a month later, Johnson's deputy, Croghan, and interpreter, Montour, with a force of Iroquois to serve as scouts, joined him. Passing safely through the country under the influence of Pontiac, having an interview with the great sachem on the site of Cleveland, they reached Detroit, November 29. There, in the presence of hundreds of Indians, heretofore the allies of France, the garrison marched out and laid down their arms; the great chief, Pontiac, being one of the witnesses of the memorable sight.