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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

While General Clinton was thus displaying his peculiar tactics, the French armament consisting of seven ships of the line some frigates and a number of transports having on board 6000 troops under the Count de Rochambeau arrived at Rhode Island on the 10th of July; the fleet was commanded by the Chevalier de Ternay, and amongst other matters it bore a commission to General Washington appointing him a Lieut. General of France. This opportune reinforcement elevated the hopes of the Congress and its adherents: new levies were ordered and furnished with alacrity for Washington's army, and as the arrival of the French fleet gave them a temporary naval superiority, a movement on New York was determined on by the French and American Generals; but the arrival of six ships of the line from England placed the superiority in the hands of Admiral Arbuthnot, who, with Sir H. Clinton, proposed to attack the French fleet and army at Rhode Island. But this plan was frustrated in the first place by the advance of Washington's army to King's Bridge, and secondly because the British Admiral and General could not agree, both being equally incapable. With the preponderance of force on the side of the English no difficulty could have been encountered in the destruction of the French fleet and the possible capture of the army, but in the hands of men like Arbuthnot such advantages were totally neutralized by want of the necessary knowledge to render them available. It was fortunate that a more capable commander in the West Indies had so severely handled the fleet commanded by the Count de Guichen as to render a junction with M. de Ternay impossible, or they would have shut up Clinton and Arbuthnot at New York and compelled them to surrender; both dolts were indebted to Admiral Rodney for deliverance.

The failure of the co-operation of the French fleet under Count de Guichen made it necessary that Washington and Rochambeau should settle a plan of campaign by which the evacuation of New York might be effected, and in order to concert this design an interview took place between them at Hartford Connecticut.

While this business was in progress a transaction occurred which has marked the character of this contest and tarnished the honor of every individual engaged therein. While history is written the treason of Benedict Arnold will be handed down to posterity as the most singular instance on record of moral obtuseness and political tergiversation, and the most difficult for which to assign a satisfactory reason. An obscure individual—the vehemence of Arnold's character led him to achieve distinction by being the foremost to strike a blow at the authority of his lawful Sovereign—an apothecary in a country village his previous conduct and surroundings were not of a character to inspire respect or confidence, and when after the famous skirmish at Concord he raised a company of brave trained volunteers the authorities of his native village refused to entrust him with the ammunition and equipments necessary for the corps which were at length supplied by compulsion; yet his daring bravery and undoubted military capacity raised him within a period of two years to the highest rank in the rebel army. A man of pleasing appearance, consummate tact, subtle, insinuating and thoroughly unscrupulous, Benedict Arnold might have hoped to attain the highest honors which Congress could bestow, and yet without sufficient cause shown he jeopardised all for an inferior position and the scorn of his new associates—his own plea of repentance for treason is mere folly—his hopes of gain in any part of the transaction were perfectly futile—he relinquished honor and profit for poverty and obscurity, and his governing motive for so doing cannot be ascertained by any rule of reason or common sense.

After the evacuation of Philadelphia by the British troops General Arnold was appointed to command the garrison that took possession of it. Early in 1779, under the

feigned name of Gustavus, he opened a secret correspondence with Sir Henry Clinton, who committed the matter and its conduct to Major Andre, then his aid-de-camp and afterwards his Adjutant General. From the commencement of the correspondence considerable doubt existed as to who Gustavus really was, and some considerable time elapsed before it was ascertained that Arnold, under that *non de plume*, had given precise and important information to the British General. The moment was favorable for some decisive movement which should terminate the contest; a large majority of the people of the revolted Colonies were desirous of accommodating the quarrel and reuniting with Great Britain on conditions of strict union and dependence. Their resources were exhausted—the paper money issued by the usurping Congress, always really worthless and only sustained by laws and the bayonet at a nominal value, was now rapidly approximating to its ultimate value. The ranks of the rebel army were recruited with children whose services for nine months were bought for \$1500 a piece—ill paid, ill clad, ill fed and brutally treated, regiment after regiment rose in mutiny which could not be checked by rope or scourge, and neither precaution nor severity could prevent desertion or restrict plundering although officers were empowered to punish summarily with death or the lash the crime of desertion or theft, and although more than one officer executed this fearful power with savage brutality even to the beheading of the corpse, such examples had no effect on a force hovering on the verge of dissolution.

On the 3rd of August Arnold was appointed to the command of West Point and its dependencies on the Hudson River, and as the American army had expended three years labor and Congress \$3,000,000 on the works it was esteemed the Gibraltar of the continent, as well as the depot of all the valuable stores and munitions of war belonging to the United States. Sir Henry Clinton had found out, or some body had persuaded him, of the importance of the posts on the Hudson and the consequences sure to arise to the American people from the command