

**ADDRESSES ON THE BATTLE OF
BENNINGTON, AND THE LIFE AND
SERVICES OF COL. SETH
WARNER, DELIVERED BEFORE THE
LEGISLATURE OF VERMONT, IN
MONTPELIER, OCTOBER 20, 1848**

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Addresses on the Battle of Bennington, and the Life and Services of Col. Seth Warner, Delivered Before the Legislature of Vermont, in Montpelier, October 20, 1848 by George Frederick Houghton & James Davie Butler

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GEORGE FREDERICK HOUGHTON & JAMES DAVIE BUTLER

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ADDRESSES
ON
THE BATTLE OF BENNINGTON,

AND

THE LIFE AND SERVICES OF COL. SETH WARNER;

Delivered before the Legislature of Vermont,

IN MONTPELIER, OCTOBER 30, 1848,

BY

JAMES DAVIE BUTLER,

AND

GEORGE FREDERICK HOUGHTON.

Published by Order of the Legislature.

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1849.

The following Resolution was adopted by the two Houses of the Legislature of Vermont, on Monday, the 23d of October, 1848 :

" Resolved, by the Senate and House of Representatives :

That the Secretary of the Senate and the Clerk of the House of Representatives be directed to request of the Rev. JAMES D. BUTLER and Mr. GEORGE F. HOUGHTON a copy of their able and interesting Addresses prepared for delivery before the "Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society," and pronounced before the members of the two Houses, in the Representatives' Hall, on Friday evening last."

In pursuance of this direction, the following letter was addressed to each of the gentlemen named :

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE SENATE, }
Montpelier, Vt., Oct. 23, 1848. }

DEAR SIR:—By a Joint Resolution of the two Houses, this day adopted, we are directed to request you to furnish us with a copy for publication, of "the able and interesting Address prepared by you for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society," and, in compliance with a previous Joint Resolution, pronounced before the Members of the Legislature in the Representatives' Hall on Friday evening, the 20th inst.

Trusting that you will find no objection to the course indicated by the Resolution alluded to,

We are very respectfully, Your obt' serv'ts,

D. W. C. CLARKE, Secretary of the Senate,

F. F. MERRILL, Clerk of the House of Representatives.

To which the following replies were received:—

From Mr. BUTLER.

WELLS RIVER, Vt., October 24th 1848.

GENTLEMEN :

Your letter, by direction of the Legislature of Vermont, requesting for publication a copy of the Historical Address which I recently delivered before that honorable body, has just been received. I am truly thankful for the sympathy thus shown with my humble endeavors to revive the memory of half forgotten incidents in our pioneer history, and shall, therefore, gladly comply with the request to commit my manuscript for safe keeping to the "art preservative of all arts."

With respectful regard, Your obedient servant,

JAMES D. BUTLER.

To Messrs. D. W. C. CLARKE and F. F. MERRILL,
Committee in behalf of the Legislature of Vermont.

From Mr. HOUGHTON.

MONTPELIER, Vt., 24th October, 1848.

GENTLEMEN :

I hasten to acknowledge the receipt of your complimentary joint-letter of yesterday's date requesting for the press, on behalf of the two Houses of the

General Assembly, a copy of the Address pronounced by me before the Members of the Legislature, at their request, on the evening of the 20th inst.

The address was prepared for delivery before the "Vermont Historical and Antiquarian Society," and with no idea that, under any combination of circumstances, would its publication be invited.

If it be thought, however, that any beneficial influence can be anticipated from its publication, it is cheerfully placed at your disposal.

I am, Gentlemen, Very respectfully,

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE F. HOUGHTON.

Messrs. D. W. C. CLARKS, Secretary of the Senate,

F. F. MERRILL, Clerk of the House of Representatives,

MR. BUTLER'S ADDRESS.

MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :—

The eye affecteth the heart. Hence all popular departments of knowledge appeal to our senses. Geography avails itself of maps; chemistry of experiments; mathematics of diagrams, and eloquence of gestures. No arguments are so convincing as those which address the senses of the people, except, perhaps, those which are addressed to their nonsense.

I think myself happy, therefore, in that I am to speak in the real presence of Eschol clusters, plucked for us and brought hither by spies who have traversed the promised land of antiquarian research from Dan to Beersheba. I trust these trophies of the proudest day in our annals, though they have no tongues, will speak to you of olden times with most miraculous organ, even as the shell you hold to your ear whispers to you of the distant ocean, so that you will bear with me while I discourse touching shreds and patches,

"Picked from the worm-holes of long vanished days,
"And from the dust of old oblivion raked."

Among the *sources* of information to which I have had recourse are the following:—Files of the Connecticut Courant; Vermont State Papers, especially the third volume of the manuscript collections by Stevens; Journal of Captain Stevens' journey to Canada in 1752; Lives of Stark, by his Son, by Headley and Everett; Sparks' edition of the Washington papers; Travels by Anbury, a Captain under Burgoyne; Burgoyne's Narrative; Madam Riedesel's Letters; the Hessian account of the battle by Glich; the History of Coos Country by Grant Powers. I have also enjoyed a personal conference with several veterans who saw all and shared a part of the conflict.

My cardinal object will be to describe THE BATTLE OF BEN-

XINGTON; but I must not fail to sketch, first, the train of events which led to that battle.

The evacuation of Ticonderoga, on the sixth of July, 1777, took place forty days before the battle of Bennington. That evacuation struck more terror through the Northern States than any event during the Revolution. Burgoyne's invasion through the Lakes astonished Washington, who had expected Burgoyne at Boston if any where. As early as the 27th of May, General Poor had written to Gates, and on the 30th of the same month Gates had written Washington, that the enemy were in force on Lake Champlain, and that Ticonderoga was untenable against a vigorous attack.* Yet it was a favorite idea with Washington, that the British would not operate in force from Canada during that campaign. Therefore, three weeks after Gates' letter, Washington wrote: "The garrison at Ticonderoga is sufficient to hold it against any attack." Officers from Canada, and Canadian spies, gave accounts of Burgoyne which proved accurate, but were received as incredulously as the prophecies of Cassandra.† Nine days before the taking of Ticonderoga, Schuyler thought that no serious attack on that post was threatened, but an attempt on New Hampshire, or the Mohawk.‡ I have seen no evidence that Washington had any faith in Burgoyne's invasion as a reality more than four days before the fall of Ticonderoga, and when on the tenth of July, nine days afterwards, he received intelligence that that fortress was taken, he refused to believe it. "I should rather suppose" he writes, "that if any accident has befallen us, it must have happened to the detachment of men from the New Hampshire grants under Colonel Warner, for we find from St. Clair's letters that he expected something from him."§ Nay, on the seventh, two days after Burgoyne had taken Ticonderoga Washington writes, "We are left to conjecture whether his appearance on the Lake was with a view to a real and serious attack or whether to amuse and draw our attention."||

As soon as Schuyler heard of the fall of Ticonderoga he wrote, "An event so alarming has not yet happened since the contest

*Stevens Papers, 153. I do not mention the volume, for as already intimated my quotations are solely from the third. †Washington Papers, IV. 467, 463, 466-1 Stevens, 139. ‡Washington Papers, IV. 475, 486. §Washington Papers, IV. 484.

began." In the letters of private men it was often said, "There are many long faces, for the key of North America is lost and gone; a very dark shadow is cast over a very bright prospect." In some States it led to a public fast. The New England troops in great part deserted St. Clair on his retreat from Ticonderoga, and ever afterwards viewed him and Schuyler as treacherous or incapable and imbecile.* For forty days after mastering Ticonderoga, the British seemed to be pushing their success in every quarter when the battle of Bennington broke their left wing, and forty days of reverses whelmed the strongest army ever sent to the Canadas in ruin. It is natural to ask, whence came these reverses? How shall we account for them? What turned victory into defeat? We shall find answers to these questions if we survey the *measures* of the British and Americans previous to the battle of Bennington.

Onward from the day that Ticonderoga yielded to his arms, Burgoyne's forces were divided and subdivided. Unvaried success tempted him to act by *detachments*. He could not but say to himself, "Those who have not dared abide my coming in the fortifications of Ticonderoga and Crown Point,—who vainly strove to conflict with my advanced guard at Hubbardton,—who would not risk a battle at Fort George, Skensborough, Fort Ann, Fort Edward, and Stillwater—*where* shall they make a stand?—For me to pursue is to overtake, to overtake is to conquer, to conquer is to crush." Accordingly, besides the garrisons at Ticonderoga, Fort George and Fort Edward, six battalions were posted for three weeks in Castleton,† and a large force was sent to besiege Fort Stanwix,—scouts ranged the valley of Otter Creek, —Sherwood was dispatched to ravage the debatable ground between New York and Massachusetts, and finally Baum was ordered to Bennington.

Doubtless Burgoyne was familiar with the war maxim that an army must be like a man's hand—outposts and detachments resembling the fingers which are never so far separated and removed that they cannot, at any moment of need reinforce each other and concentrate into one fist. But that General was persuaded he

*Stevens Papers, 217, 522, 268. †Riedesel, 139.