

Baron Riedesel in Lancaster

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

BARON Friederich Adolphus Riedesel (the cockneys in the British army pronounced it Red-hazel) was born in Lauterbach, in Rhinehesse, June 3rd, 1738. At an early age he was sent to Frischborn, a village near Lauterbach, and placed under the care of a clergyman, with a view of giving him a preparatory education that would prepare him for the study of the law, which profession had been selected for him by his father. At the age of fifteen, he left the quiet parsonage to attend a law school in Marburg. A Hessian battalion of infantry, stationed in the town, was specially noted for its fine military appearance and tactics. The sight of the troops thrilled the youth with an eager desire to be a soldier; and it was not long before, throwing aside gown and wig for musket and sword, he joined the regiment.

Upon the breaking out, in 1756, of the Seven Years War, he was attached to the personal staff of Duke Ferdinand of Brunswick. He was engaged in active service throughout the war; and upon peace being declared, retired into winter quarters. He was married in December, 1762, to Frederica Von Massow, at Wulfenbittel, in the Duchy of Brunswick.

In 1767, Riedesel was appointed adjutant general of the Brunswick army; and in 1772, became colonel of carbineers,—a body of troops which was subsequently formed into a regiment of dragoons. Shortly after the American Revolution broke out, England, in order to subdue her revolting colonies, entered, early in 1776, into agreement with petty sovereigns of Germany to take into her service upwards of twenty thousand German troops, of which nearly four thousand were from Brunswick. Colonel Riedesel was advanced to the rank of major-general and given command of the Brunswickers. Sailing for Quebec, he arrived there on June 1st, 1776. One year later, Madame Riedesel, accompanied by her three daughters, joined her husband, whom she had not seen since February 22nd, 1776.

After spending a year in Canada, he accompanied General Burgoyne on the ill-fated expedition which resulted so disastrously for the British arms. After the surrender of Burgoyne to General Gates at Saratoga, he accompanied his commander-in-chief to Albany, where he and his noble wife, who shared his captivity, were entertained with lavish hospitality by General and Mrs. Schuyler. Leaving that city on October 22nd, 1777, he went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, arriving there, with other German prisoners, on November 7th. Here he remained for one year. In

November, 1778, the German troops having been transferred, by order of Congress, to Virginia, General Riedesel and his family went with them.

After Congress decided not to accept the conditions of the surrender at Saratoga, Sir Henry Clinton, in New York, declared that if the convention troops (the name by which the prisoners were known) were to be treated like other prisoners they must be supported by their captors. General William Heath, in command at Boston, received orders from Congress that the British and German prisoners should be removed to Charlottesville, Virginia, a long distance from the theatre of war, and where provisions could be more readily obtained.

The prisoners were marched from Rutland and Cambridge, by the American guard, in the following order, starting on November 9th:

The prisoners were attended by an American escort. The first English division (consisting of the artillery, grenadiers, light infantry and the 9th regiment, under Lieutenant Colonel Hill; and the first German division, consisting of the dragoons, grenadiers, and the regiment Von Rhetz, under Major Von Mengen) were to start on the 5th of November. The second English division (consisting of the 20th and 21st regiments, under command of Major Forster; and the two German divisions, consisting of the regiments Von Riedesel and Von Specht, and led by Brigadier General Specht) were to follow on the 6th. Brigadier Specht was to command the entire German divisions. On the 7th, the third English division (composed of the 24th, 47th and 62nd regiments, under the command of Brigadier Hamilton) was to follow. General Hamilton also had charge of the other two English divisions. The third German division (which was made up of the battalion Barner, the regiment Hesse Hanau, and the Hanau artillery, under Brigadier Gall) were also to march on the same day. Fortunately for Riedesel, the march was postponed for a few days. He writes in his journal:

“The want of money was one of critical importance to our position at that time. All the officers who had money, were obliged to lend it for the use of the troops, who in this manner received their pay in hard cash. Those officers that were in need of money had as much furnished them as was necessary to procure horses, etc., for their long journey. Nor was this any more than fair, as several months' pay was already due them. This arrangement was somewhat of a help, it is true, but not nearly enough to satisfy the demands of all.”

On the 9th of November, 1778, the first two divisions began to march. The next day the second division followed. The third division followed on the 11th. Riedesel accompanied the last two

divisions as far as Watertown. He and his family remained in Cambridge until November 28th when they started, in two carriages, for Charlottesville, Virginia. The General and family rode in one; and his servants in the other, which also served for a baggage wagon.

On the 13th of December, 1778, the first of the German troops crossed the Tohickon creek and halted at Plumstead, in Bucks county, Pa. "On the 14th, they reached Montgomery, in Philadelphia county; and on the 15th, New Providence. On the 16th, they crossed the Schuylkill, near Downingtown, to Valley Forge." Riedesel, in making this entry in his journal, was mistaken in his geography. His troops did not cross "the Schuylkill, near Downingtown, to Valley Forge," instead they probably crossed the river near Valley Forge. At the latter place a few days of rest were given them.

William L. Stone, who translated the journal of Riedesel into English, states:

"On the 17th, the march was continued to Salisbury: thence, on the 19th, across Brandywine to Leekok [Leacock] township; thence across the Conestoga river to Lancaster, where, on the 20th, they had another day of rest."

Christopher Marshall, who lived in Lancaster during the Revolutionary war, in the house still standing at 215 East Orange street, kept a diary in which he entered items of importance. Under date of December 14th, 1778, he wrote:

"Went to the barracks [located at North Duke and East Walnut streets]. One division of Burgoyne's troops, said to be seven hundred and eighty-one, came to town."

On the following day he wrote:

"The division of the artillery, grenadiers and light infantry, including Lieut. Col. Nulling's detachment and the Ninth Regiment, all British prisoners, amounting to seven hundred and eighty-one, came to town yesterday, marched out this morning. In the afternoon, came to town the Second Division of British, consisting of the Twentieth and twenty-First Regiments, amounting to Eight hundred and seventy-three, with their women and children. Came home to dinner; then walked to barracks to see the troops come in."

On December 17th, Marshall entered in his diary:

"Yesterday came to town the Third Division of the British, consisting of the Twenty-fourth, Forty-seventh, and Sixty-second Regiments, amounting to Nine hundred and twenty-three prisoners."

On the 19th, he states:

"The three divisions of English prisoners left the barracks this morning, to proceed on their journey. In the afternoon came

to the barracks the First Division of Germans, consisting of the Dragoons, Battalion of the Grenadiers, Regiment of Rhite and Regiment of Rushrs, amounting to Nine hundred and forty-seven, besides women and children. A great many of the Dutch round Lancaster came in to-day, I presume to wait upon the German prisoners."

On December 20th, he wrote:

"The Second Division of Germans consists of the Regiment of Spechts, Battalion of Hanoverians and Hessian Artillery, amounting to Nine Hundred and thirty-five, besides women and children."

On the following day, Marshall made this entry in his diary:

"This morning the First Division of Germans here marched away."

On December 22nd, he recorded:

"The divisions of Hessians or Germans set off from our borough."

It seems that a number of the German prisoners were obliged to return to Lancaster, as they could not cross the Susquehanna on account of the floating ice. They remained in the barracks until the 29th of December, when again they proceeded on their journey, as the river was frozen hard by that time.

Stone, in his work Vol. II, page 60, states:

"On the 21st, the march was continued to Hampton, (?) and on the 22d, the Susquehanna was crossed near Wright's Ferry, and quarters taken for the night at Yorktown."

In Vol. II, page 63, of the Memoirs of Major General Riedesel, Stone states:

"The fact that General Riedesel did not arrive at Lancaster on the 19th of December, with the troops, was, perhaps, a most fortunate circumstance; for the inhabitants were so enraged against him that extreme measures might have been provoked by his presence. Among the many silly reports which were circulated and believed in these excitable times by the people of Lancaster, was one to the effect that the city of Lancaster, and the surrounding country, had been presented to the German general by the king of England, and that the general would soon arrive with his troops to take possession. The excitement was, therefore, great when the German troops arrived; but as soon as the American officers on the escort explained the true position of affairs, and the pitiable condition of the troops was seen, many a good citizen of Lancaster wondered how he could have given credence to such a ridiculous rumor."

Despite the fact that this story appears in Riedesel's journal, little importance should be attached to it. Christopher Marshall, local chronicler and "town gossip," makes no mention of it what-

ever. If there had been so much excitement in Lancaster, and if the Germans believed that the borough and county of Lancaster were to be presented to General Riedesel, surely Marshall, with his intimate knowledge of conditions, would have heard of it and noted the fact in his diary. To believe such a report would have been a reflection upon the intelligence of the good people of this community in Revolutionary times, as there seems to have been no reasonable foundation for the story. It was probably started by the convention troops during their stay in Lancaster, and told to Riedesel later, as a joke.

On New Year's eve, 1778, the German troops first stepped on the soil of Virginia, and on the 15th of January, 1779, arrived at their destination, near Charlottesville, where they were quartered as prisoners of war.

Riedesel and his family remained in Virginia until November, 1779, when he was permitted to remove to New York city, where, in the autumn of 1780, he was exchanged, and given command of the British forces on Long Island. He returned to Germany in 1783.

Petition for a School in Lancaster County in 1785

By WILLIAM FREDERIC WORNER

AMONG the treasures preserved in the library of the Lancaster County Historical Society is an old paper, yellow with age, measuring 8 by 13½ inches. It was presented to our Society, about thirty years ago, by the late William Henry Egle, librarian of the Pennsylvania State Library from 1887 to 1899. The paper is of heavy, durable quality, and bears a water mark, "J. Honig Zoonen." The document consists of eight pages, and the writing is clear and legible, despite the fact that it was written, with a quill pen, one hundred and forty-four years ago. The paper has been folded twice and is badly torn where it was creased. Evidently, it has been subjected to much handling. With but very few exceptions, the spelling and the grammatical construction of the petition are as good as one could reasonably expect even to-day; and where faults do occur, they are, doubtless, largely the results of carelessness. The tendency to undue capitalization is, of course, the most serious criticism to be made of what is otherwise a well-written paper.

When folded, the outer page bears the following inscription:

"The petition of divers Inhabitants of the lower part and Fourth district of Lancaster County, praying for leave to bring in a Bill to be enacted into a Law to Incorporate such a Number of