

CHAPTER V.

Rivalry between the French and English—Relative Justice of their Claims—How defined by Sir William Johnson—Both Nations make treaties with the Iroquois—Provisions of the treaty of Ryswick—French Encroachments beyond the Treaty line—War Declared in 1774—French Outrages in the Mohawk Country—Treaty of peace at Aix-la-Chapelle—The Situation—The Albany Convention—King Hendrick's Speech—Preparation for War—Expeditions of 1755—Services of General Johnson—Shirley's Conduct—Battle at Lake George—Death of Hendrick—Distinction of Sir William Johnson.

754. [It was during the peace that followed the treaty of Utrecht, that what may be termed the permanent occupation of the upper Mohawk valley was begun by a number of Palatinates, who, in 1711, dissatisfied with their condition on the Hudson, made their way to the Schoharie to occupy lands promised by Queen Anne. To be strictly accurate, however, it should be stated that the Mohawk valley in the neighborhood of Schenectady at least, was settled as early as 1661, under the direction and patronage of Arent Van Corlear, who acquired title from the Mohawks, and whose purchase was confirmed, in 1684, by Governor Dongan. The destruction of this settlement by the French and Canadian Indians on the night of the 8th and 9th of February, 1690, has been described in the preceding chapter, and hence we only make a brief and passing reference while speaking of the rival claims of the English and French to the Mohawk territory. It is evident that the claims of the English were based upon a much broader foundation of justice than those of France, and both should have been, in some degree, subject to the right of the Iroquois as the "original proprietors." These rights were subsequently defined by Sir William Johnson in the following language: "The hereditary domains of the Mohawks extend from near Albany to the Little Falls (Oneida boundary) and all the country from thence eastward, etc., to Rejjohne on Lake Champlain."

While the French were in possession of New France their influence over all the Indians within its limits was paramount, and they even disputed with the English the alliance of the latter with the Iroquois,

but whatever may have been the foundation of French claims to the territory of Canada, or even to a portion of the present territory of New York, they could hardly be recognized as holding any part of the Mohawk region. Even admitting that four of the Iroquois nations, in 1663, concluded a treaty with De Tracy, by which they placed themselves under the protection of the French king, it is evident that the Mohawks were not a party to that treaty, and it is also evident that continued though occasional and always successful hostilities on the part of the French against the Iroquois, followed for years. On the other hand, although England in the cession of New Netherlands, acquired only the territory previously held by the Dutch, yet she secured the firm and lasting allegiance of the Mohawks, a friendship more closely cemented by the influence of Sir William Johnson.

In addition to the foregoing, the original charter of Virginia carried the English possessions to the forty-fifth parallel, and later grants extended her sovereignty to the St. Lawrence river.

The treaty of Ryswick (1697) declared that the belligerents should return to their possessions, as each occupied them at the beginning of the hostilities, and England put forth the unconditional claim that, at the period referred to in the treaty, their Iroquois allies were in the occupation by conquest of Montreal and the shores of the St. Lawrence. The French government at the time seem to have acknowledged that the Iroquois were embraced in the treaty. Thus the two European powers wrangled over the country of the Mohawks, which was but a little time previously the undisputed dominion of the Iroquois. When France disputed the claims of England and appealed to the council at Onondaga, a stern, savage orator exclaimed: "We have ceded our lands to no one; we hold them of heaven alone."¹

Whether so much importance should attach to the treaties in which these untutored savages were pitted against the intelligent Europeans, either French or English, as has often been ascribed to them, is unquestionable; especially when we consider the methods often adopted in later years to induce the Indians to sign away their domain. Be this as it may, it is now generally believed that the intrusion of France upon the possessions of the Mohawks in the valley of Lake Champlain,

¹ Bancroft.

"at the sacrifice of so much blood and treasure, justice and the restraints and faith of the treaties, were subordinate to the lust of power and expediency."¹

The encroachment by the French upon the territory of the English and their allies (the Iroquois), was one of the chief causes of the French and Indian war. As early as the year 1731, the surveyor-general of the Canadas made a complete survey of the entire Champlain valley, including both the New York and Vermont shores and also Ticonderoga, and not content with this geographical aggression, he extended his work so as to include both sides of the St. Lawrence river nearly to Lake Ontario. The territory thus surveyed was divided into vast tracts, and granted as "seigniories" to various proprietors, either as rewards for service to the French crown, or for other considerations. Acting under the assumed authority of ownership a small number of the grantees attempted to actually occupy their lands, but the Canadian government, observing that war between France and England would soon take place, prepared for such an event by possessing themselves of the strongest points in the Champlain Valley, and erecting suitable fortifications. The acknowledged key to the country was Fort St. Frederick, now Crown Point, which the French occupied in 1731.

Ticonderoga was near and to the southward, and here also a fortress was constructed. In the western part of the province of New York other defences were also established; this being done with the consent of the Senecas, whose confidence the wily Frenchman and their Jesuit associates had fully gained. In the interior of the Mohawk country, however, no preparation for war was made other than accomplished through the influence of Sir William Johnson, whose advent to the Mohawk Valley antedated the beginning of hostilities by only ten years.

In March, 1744, war was declared between Great Britain and France, and the former power at once prosecuted measures for the conquest of the French possessions. The colonies of New York and New England united in an expedition to co-operate with the fleet under Commodore Warren in an attack on the fortress of Louisburg, which capitulated in June, 1745. This was followed by the descent upon Hoosic village whose garrison was forced to surrender, leaving the settlements all the

¹ Watson.

way to Albany open to the enemy. More than twenty other minor expeditions were fitted out by the French from Fort St. Frederick, to fall upon the frontier English settlements and burn, pillage and slaughter. It is little wonder, therefore, that the inhabitants of New York viewed this fortress as a standing and constant menace, and the following statements will give an idea of the character of some of the marauding parties and their bloody success:

"May 24, 1746. A party of eight Abenakis has been fitted out who have been in the direction of Corlear (Schenectady), and have returned with some prisoners and scalps."

"May 28, 1746. A party of Abenakis struck a blow near Albany and Corlear, and returned with some scalps."

"August 10. Chevalier de Repentigny arrived at Quebec and reported that he had made an attack near Corlear and took eleven prisoners and twenty-five scalps."

We forbear further addition to this terrible recital. Who can imagine the horrors of a season filled with such scenes? The colonists seemed almost powerless against the enemy—wily, rapid, blood-thirsty, and with a knowledge of every trail and point of vantage. Colonel Johnson sent out two parties against the French and their allies on the 4th of August, which made an attack on Chambly but after a successful beginning they were drawn into an ambush and most of them killed or captured.

The international contest from 1744 to 1748 had an important object in the possession of the Mississippi valley, which the English claimed as an extension of their coast discoveries and settlements, and the French by the right of occupancy, their forts already extending from Canada to Louisiana, and forming "a bow, of which the English colonies were the string." At the last mentioned date the English colonies contained more than a million inhabitants while the French had only about sixty thousand. The Iroquois would not engage in this strife until 1746, when they were disappointed at its sudden termination, having compromised themselves with their old enemies (the allies of the French), now more numerous and dangerous than formerly. The question of Iroquois supremacy was, therefore, renewed in a more intensified manner.

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In April, 1748, was concluded the ineffective, if not actually shameful treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle, and while it was a virtual renewal of the treaties of Ryswick and Utrecht, it left unsettled the questions above alluded to, with others of equal importance to the colonies, and the fortresses of Louisburg and Crown Point were returned to the French without a protest.

Opposed and embarrassed by political factions, Governor Clinton resigned his office in October, 1753, and was succeeded by Sir Danvers Osborne. The same distractions, aggravated by the loss of his wife, threw the latter into a state of melancholia which ended in suicide. He was succeeded by Lieutenant-Governor James De Lancey, who, in his message to the Assembly in the spring of 1754, called attention to recent French encroachments, and to a request from Virginia for aid to resist them. The Assembly voted one thousand pounds to bear its share in erecting forts along the frontier. The French, by reason of victories in Pennsylvania in 1754, were left in undisputed possession of the entire region west of the Alleghanies. The necessity for united action by the English colonies was now too apparent to be overlooked; but the old sectional differences tended to prevent harmony in sentiment or action.

The Iroquois were also to some extent becoming alienated from the English, whose apathy and failures they did not relish.

Under the advice of the British ministry a convention of delegates from all the colonial assemblies was held at Albany in June, 1754. The object of this meeting was to secure a continued alliance with the Six Nations. Governor De Lancey presided, and opened the proceedings with a speech to the Indian chiefs and sachems who were present. A treaty was renewed, and the Indians left apparently satisfied.

Colonel, afterward Sir William Johnson was present at this convention and made many valuable suggestions to the delegates.

He had by this time become well acquainted with the Indian character; had ingratiated himself in their affections, not only among the Mohawks, but as well among the Iroquois. He was made by the former one of their sachems, having authority in their councils and likewise he was created war-chief, and as such frequently assumed the costume and habits of the Indians.

After the Albany convention had been concluded, but before the treaty was finally settled, King Hendrick,¹ then highest in authority among the Mohawks, addressed the delegates and Indians upon the subject of the meeting. His final speech closed as follows:

"Brethren, we put you in mind, from our former speech, of the defenceless state of your frontiers, particularly of this city and Schenectady, and of the country of the Five Nations. You told us yesterday that you were consulting about securing both. We beg that you will resolve upon something speedily. You are not safe from danger one day. The French have their hatchets in their hands both at Ohio and at two places in New England. We don't know but this very night they may attack us. Since Colonel Johnson has been in this city there has been a French Indian at his house (Fort Johnson), who took measure of the wall around it, and made very narrow observations on everything thereabouts. We think Colonel Johnson in very great danger, because the French will take more than ordinary pains to kill him or take him prisoner, both on account of his great interest among us and because he is one of our sachems. Brethren, there is an affair about which our hearts tremble and our minds are deeply concerned. We refer to the selling of rum in our castles. It destroys many, both of our old and young people. We are in great fear about this rum. It may cause murder on both sides. We, the Mohawks of both castles, request that the people who are settled around about us may not be suffered to sell our people rum. It destroys virtue and the progress of religion among us."²

"It was on this occasion," also remarks a contemporary writer of the period, "that the venerable Hendrick, the great Mohawk chieftain, pronounced one of those thrilling and eloquent speeches that marked the nobler times of the Iroquois. It excited the wonder and admiration of

¹ King Hendrick was born about the year 1680 and generally dwelt at the upper castle of the Mohawk nation, although he resided for a time near the present (1845) residence of Nicholas Yost on the north side of the Mohawk, near the Nose. He stood high in the confidence of Sir William Johnson, with whom he was engaged in many perilous enterprises against the Canadian French; and under whose command he fell in the battle of Lake George, September 8, 1755, covered with glory. He was one of the most active and sagacious sachems of his time.—Schoharie County and Border Wars.

² The governor promised satisfaction to this pathetic appeal, of course; gave the Indians thirty wagon-loads of presents, and the civilized inhabitants went on selling their gallons of rum for beaver skins. And the Indians have often been cursed for their intemperance.

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those who listened, and commanded the highest encomiums wherever it was read. In burning words he contrasted the supineness and imbecility of the English with the energies of the French policy. His hoary head and majestic bearing attached dignity and force to his utterances. 'We,' he exclaimed, 'would have gone and taken Crown Point, but you hindered us.' He closed his philippic with this overwhelming rebuke: 'Look at the French, they are men. They are fortifying everywhere. But you, and we are ashamed to say it, you are like women—bare and open without any fortifications.'

Meanwhile, at the suggestion of the Massachusetts delegates to the convention, a plan for the union of the colonies was taken into consideration. The suggestion was favorably received and a committee of one from each colony was appointed to draw plans for the purpose, the fertile mind of Benjamin Franklin having already suggested a plan which was adopted.

It was the forerunner of our federal constitution; but the colonial assemblies rejected it, deeming that it encroached on their liberties, while the home government rejected it, claiming that it granted too much power to the people.

Though England and France were nominally at peace, the frontier was still distressingly harassed by hordes of Indians let loose by the French, and the colonists continued their appeal to the ministry.

While the latter were hesitating, the Duke of Cumberland, then captain-general of the British armies, sent over early in 1755 General Edward Braddock, with a detachment from the army in Ireland.

He soon afterward met the colonial governors at Alexandria and measures were devised for the protection of the colonies.¹

For this purpose four expeditions were planned by General Braddock (1775), the first to effect the reduction of Nova Scotia; the second to recover the Ohio valley; the third to expel the French from Fort Niagara and then form a junction with the Ohio expedition, and the fourth to capture Crown Point. The first of these expeditions was entirely successful; the second, under command of Braddock himself, was

¹ By special request of Braddock, Colonel William Johnson was present at this meeting. He was then appointed superintendant of Indian affairs, "with full power to treat with the confederate nations, and secure them and their allies to the British interest." Braddock also advanced two thousand pounds for the furtherance of the latter object.—Stone's Life of Sir William Johnson.

(chiefly through his folly) disastrous in the extreme. He neglected to send out scouts, as repeatedly counselled by Washington, and when within a few miles of Fort Du Quesne, the army was surprised by the concealed enemy and only saved from destruction by Washington, who, upon the fall of Braddock, assumed command and conducted the retreat. The expedition against Fort Niagara commanded by General Shirley, governor of Massachusetts, was also unsuccessful, and many of his force left him, after hearing of Braddock's defeat.

The army gathered for the capture of Crown Point was assembled at Albany, and its command entrusted to Colonel William Johnson, who, for the purpose of the expedition, had been elevated to the rank of major-general. His force comprised the militia and volunteers from New York and the New England provinces, added to which was a strong body of his faithful Mohawk warriors, headed by their famous chief, King Hendrick. Johnson proceeded northward and occupied positions at Fort Edward and Lake George,¹ expecting reinforcements from the western nations of the Iroquois; but in this he was disappointed. General Shirley,² in marching against Fort Niagara, had spread dissensions among the confederates, telling them that Johnson was his subordinate and subject to his orders; that his office of superintendent of Indian affairs was but nominal, and that the warriors would best serve their own interests by joining his army. These things were related to Johnson by chief Hendrick in explanation of the absence of the promised aid of the western Indians. Their assistance had been assured at a council of the chiefs and sachems held with the Onondagas prior to the organization

¹ The former name of this lake, applied by Champlain, was "Lac St. Sacrament," in honor of the day of his first visit to its shores. General Johnson, on the occasion of camping at the lake with his troops, changed the name to "Lake George," in honor of George III, then the British sovereign.

² The peculiar action of Gov. Shirley on this occasion is best explained by General Johnson in the report sent by him to the Board of Trade, and written from the camp at Lake George. The report is as follows: "Governor Shirley, soon after his arrival at Albany, on his way to Oswego, grew dissatisfied with my proceedings and employed one Lydius, of that place—a man whom he knew, and whom I told him, was extremely obnoxious to me, and the very man whom the Indians had in their public meetings so warmly complained of, to oppose my interest and management with them. Under this man, several others were employed. These persons went to the Indian castles, and by bribes, keeping them constantly feasting and drunk; calumniating my character; depreciating my commission, authority and management: in short, by the most licentious and abandoned proceedings, raised such confusion among the Indians, particularly the two Mohawk castles, that their sachems were under the utmost consternation, etc."

Edward M. Phelps



of the expedition. The total Indian force which accompanied this expedition amounted to two hundred and fifty men, all of whom were under the special charge of General Johnson, who was known among them as "Warraghiyaghey." The militia and volunteers were under command of General Lyman, and amounted, when all assembled in the field, to about 4,000 men.

A detail of the events of the battle that followed cannot be considered an essential part of this narrative, although it took place within the Mohawk country. At the beginning of the conflict King Hendrick was slain, and Johnson severely wounded. He retired from the field after having turned the command over to General Lyman. As a matter of fact it should be stated that General Johnson held supreme command during this expedition, while General Lyman was his faithful aid; but the Indians of the army required careful and discreet attention to make their services available, and as Johnson was their friend, he gave them his special attention throughout the engagement, while the immediate command of the troops devolved upon General Lyman and the other officers of rank.

General Johnson, however, directed the various maneuvers through which success was finally attained.

The French regulars, commanded by Dieskau, fought with great heroism, but the Canadian Indians were of little assistance, and were dispersed by a few shots. The Senecas, who had been induced to join the French standard, on seeing themselves opposed by their own brethren, the Mohawks, discharged their weapons in the air and abandoned the conflict. Dieskau, the French general, was wounded and disabled, but refused to be carried from the field, and ordered his subordinate, Montrueil, to assume command and make the best retreat possible. The French were put to flight in such confusion that all their baggage and ammunition was left behind for the victors. Their loss amounted to about four hundred and fifty, while that of the English and Mohawks was nearly one hundred less.

The French were partially paralyzed by this defeat, but Gen. Johnson was charged with neglect of a grand opportunity. It was said that he might have taken Fort St. Frederick and Ticonderoga, while, on the other hand, he spent the summer in erecting Fort William Henry, at the

head of Lake George. The Mohawks, fearing an invasion of their villages by the Canada Indians, were permitted to return to their homes. The services of General Johnson on this occasion were rewarded with a baronetcy, his office of superintendent of Indian affairs was confirmed, and he was granted the sum of five thousand pounds. From this event was acquired the title by which he was ever afterwards known—"Sir William Johnson."

CHAPTER VI.

French and English War Continued—Results of the Campaigns in 1756—French Successes in that and Succeeding Years—The Iroquois Divided—Johnson's Efforts to Unite Them—Webb's Disgraceful Conduct—The Mohawk Valley Invaded—Palatine Village Destroyed—Abercrombie's Neglect and Inefficiency—Campaigns of 1757-58—English Successes—French Reverses—Johnson's Achievements—Extinction of the French Power in America.

STRANGE as it may appear, after the hostilities described in the preceding chapter, it was not until the following summer that war was formally proclaimed between Great Britain and France.

Three principal campaigns were organized in 1756; one against Fort Niagara with six thousand men, the second against Fort Du Quesne with three thousand men, and the third, by far the largest army yet assembled in the country, a force of ten thousand troops designed for the reduction of Crown Point, the occupation of the Champlain valley, and, if necessary, the invasion of Canada.

General John Winslow was in command of the latter, but was soon joined by General Abercrombie with reinforcements from Lord Loudon, governor of Virginia. Abercrombie at once removed the provincial officers and placed men in their stead men from the regular army, who, though versed in tactics, were wholly destitute of a knowledge of the methods of conducting military operations in such a region. Through the inactivity of the commanding officers nothing was accomplished in the way of taking the French strongholds, while at other points the results were equally unsatisfactory, and the campaigns ended with much greater advantage to the French than to the English.

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