

CHAPTER XI.

DECLINE OF THE INDIAN AS A POLITICAL FACTOR.

WITH the change of dominion in North America came a change in the ruler of Great Britain. King George II. died October, 1760; but this made no alteration in the relations of Sir William Johnson to the Crown. On the contrary, his sphere of influence was enlarged by his having charge of Indian affairs in Canada, and indeed in all the regions north of the St. Lawrence, in what is now called British America. In October, 1760, a new commission as Superintendent of Indian Affairs, valid during the king's pleasure, was issued and duly received. At the request of General Amherst, Johnson now made a journey to Detroit to regulate matters, and settle various questions which had arisen in consequence of a change of masters.

Now that the contest so long, equally or unequally, waged by the two forces was over, and but one people were masters of the situation, there was no more balance of power. The Indian had lost his place at the fulcrum. As a political factor, he was suddenly reduced to an ally only, with the strong probability of soon becoming first a vassal and then a cipher. No son of the forest saw this more clearly than Pontiac,

who, in the long line of red men who have vainly fought against destiny, from King Philip to Tecumseh and from Black Hawk to Sitting Bull, stands pre-eminent in genius and power as well as in the tragedy of failure.

Johnson made the western journey accompanied by Capt. John Butler, his secretary and prospective son-in-law Lieut. Guy Johnson, and a body-guard of Oneida Indians. A long line of boats carried the provisions and the Indian goods intended for gifts. Johnson's object was to learn everything possible about the country recently held under French dominion, and about the Indians living in it. At Fort Stanwix, where the portage required several days to be spent in unloading and reloading on account of land transit, Colonel Eyre reached him with a letter from General Amherst communicating startling news. Apparently under the instigation of the Senecas, behind whom was Pontiac, all the tribes from Nova Scotia to the Illinois were being plied by wampum-belts and messages, and a plot to murder the English garrisons was being hatched. Owing to the warnings given to the garrisons by Captain Campbell, the plot was, for the time at least, postponed. Johnson accordingly called a council at Onondaga, and directly charged the Senecas with dissimulation. He gave them to understand that only by their appearance in friendly council at Detroit would his suspicions be allayed and their own safety secured.

A change in Johnson's domestic arrangements made about this time probably still further increased the

prestige which he had so long enjoyed among the red men. His wife Catharine died in 1759, and for a while he illustrated in his own life the injury to morals which war, especially when successful, usually causes. He lived with various mistresses, as tradition avers, but after a year or two of such life dismissed them for a permanent housekeeper,— Mary Brant, the sister of Joseph Brant. According to the local traditions of the Valley, Johnson first met the pretty squaw, when about sixteen years old, at a militia muster. In jest, she asked an officer to let her ride behind him. He assented, returning fun for fun. To his surprise she leaped like a wild-cat upon the space behind the saddle, holding on tightly, with hair flying and garments flapping, while the excited horse dashed over the parade-ground. The crowd enjoyed the sight ; but the most interested spectator was Johnson, who, admiring her spirit, resolved to make her his paramour.

From this time forth Mollie Brant, the handsome squaw, was Johnson's companion. Her Indian name was Deyonwadonti, which means "many opposed to one." She was a granddaughter of one of the Mohawk chiefs who had visited London a generation or two before, when "Quider," or Peter Schuyler, had shown the King of Great Britain some of his American allies. Mary Brant was undoubtedly a woman of ability, and with her Johnson lived happily. She presided over Fort Johnson, and later at Johnson Hall. She became the mother of a large brood of Johnson's "natural" children ; and as "the brown Lady Johnson," white

guests and visitors always treated her with respect. With this new link to bind the Iroquois to him, the colonel's influence was deepened far and wide throughout the Indian Confederacy. To strengthen his ascendancy over the minds of the Indians, Johnson seemed to hesitate at nothing.

The dangerous journey to Detroit was duly made, and after being waited on by friendly deputies of the Ottawa Confederacy, the great council was held on the 19th of September. Here, before the representatives of many Indian nations from the four points of the compass, he made a great speech, smoked the pipe of peace in the name of their Great Father the King, and distributed the presents. The ceremonies wound up with a grand dinner and ball to the people of Detroit. The return was safely made, and home was reached October 30.

During the winter of 1761, spent by Johnson in New York in pursuance of his civil duties, Dr. Cadwallader Colden, the incorrigible Tory, who was now lieutenant-governor, distinguished himself in further encroaching upon the liberties of the people, by trying to make the judiciary dependent on the Crown. Instead of the judges being appointed to hold office during good behaviour, Colden wanted them to serve at the pleasure of the king. In other words, he would, by making the king's will the term of office, reduce the bench of judges to be the instrument of the royal prerogative. A lively discussion in the press was carried on by William Livingston, John Scott, and William Smith, as champions of the people, who contended

vigourously for the principle so long regnant in the Dutch, and now prominent in the American republic, — the supremacy of the judiciary. Remembering too well how servile were the English judges who held office at the pleasure of the Plantagenets, the Stuar^ts, and even of Cromwell, the people of New York fought stoutly for their rights and the republican principle. When Colden desired an increase of salary for the Boston lawyer who acted as chief-justice, the Assembly flatly refused to grant it. The salary of the obnoxious Chief Justice Benjamin Pratt was finally paid out of the royal quit-rents of the province. Colden wrote to the Board of Trade prophesying the dire results of the doctrine — embodied in the preamble to the Constitution of the United States only twenty-six years later — that all authority is derived from the people. This is the doctrine on which republics are founded.

Largely due to Johnson's influence was the passing by the Assembly of an act for the better survey and allotment of lands in the province. At the English conquest of 1664 the excellent Dutch customs of land survey, measurement, registry, and allotment had been changed for the tedious forms of English common law. In consequence, there was much confusion in regard to claims and boundaries. Large tracts of land had been granted by the British Government, under letters patent, in which the exact quantity of land given away was not stated, nor the correct boundaries named. Further, the popular methods of measurement in vogue — such as by counting off the

steps made by a grown man, or by using horse-reins or bridles in lieu of a surveyor's chain — were not calculated to insure accuracy. Not only were constant trespassings made, both with honest and dishonest intent, upon the king's domain, — that is, the lands of the Indians, — but there were frequent troubles about the division of the great patents. The lawyers held that when the boundaries were uncertain, the title was void. The only way to settle the many disputes was to have all the patents and tracts accurately surveyed by the king's surveyor-general, and done in 'so scientific a manner that his lines should be final; while the names of the patentees, the size of the patent, and the year when patented, should be matter of public knowledge. The good fruits of this piece of legislation were the removal of much of the irritation felt by the Indians, and the prevention of further encroachments on the royal lands.

In a word, close approximation was made to the methods followed in the Republic of Holland for centuries, and established in the New Netherlands by the first settlers from the Fatherland. After the Revolution, under the Surveyor-General of the United States, Simeon De Witt, a Hollander by descent, and familiar with the Dutch methods, this system, enlarged and improved, became that of the whole nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific. It is this system, lying at the basis of the land laws of the United States, which so won the encomium of Daniel Webster in his great address at Plymouth, when he said that our laws relating to land had made the American Republic.

Some time afterward, the Mohawks, who had forgotten the covenants of the past, thereby showing the worthlessness of mere tradition or unsupported assertions freshly fabricated, claimed that "the great flat," or large tract of fertile land near Schenectady, had not been purchased of them, but had been lent to the Dutch settlers simply as pasture-land. On their making complaint to Johnson, the documents were called for, and duly produced by the magistrates of Schenectady. The deed of sale to Van Curler and his fellow-settlers, made in Fort Orange, July 27, 1661 ("Actum in de fort^{ss} Orangie den 27^o July A. 1661"), was first produced. On it were the signatures or marks of the sachems Cantuquo, Aiadne, and Sona-reetsie, with the totem-signs of the Bear, Tortoise, and Wolf. Other papers of later date were shown, which set more definite boundaries to the patent of eighty thousand acres. Johnson declared the Schenectady men in the right. The Indians, with perfect confidence in Johnson as arbitrator, went to their bark houses satisfied.

From this time forth until the end of his life, a large part of Johnson's time was occupied in the settlement of land disputes between whites and Indians. Ceasing to be any longer a political factor in the future development of the continent, the Indian's course was steadily downward. Having exhausted the benefit of his service, the British and colonial governments were both only too ready to ignore the red man's real or supposed rights. Steadily the frontiers of civilization were pushed forward upon the broad and ancient hunting-

grounds of the West. In the old and thickly settled domain of the Iroquois, it was now scarcely possible for an Indian to chase deer without running into a fence or coming unexpectedly upon a clearing where the white man stood, gun in hand, to warn off intruders. The saw-mills of the pale-face spoiled the primeval forests, choked the trout-streams with sawdust, and killed the fish, even as his traps and ploughed land drove off the game. Henceforth, though Johnson's business with the Indians was greater than ever before, it was largely matter of laborious detail and settled routine. Important as was his work to the perfecting of the results attained by the annulling of French pretensions, it would be monotonous to tell the whole story. His toil was necessary to the uniformity desirable in all the king's dominions, yet it lacked the picturesque element dominant in his early life, and need not here be set forth. We may take notice only of the most important of his labours as examiner of claims, as advocate for the right, and as judge and decider.

After inviting the sachems of the Six Nations to assemble at his house to hear his report of the Detroit Council, he examined into the famous Kayaderosseras or Queensborough patent of several hundred thousand acres granted in 1708. This patent was one of several which the Mohawks claimed were fraudulently obtained. Johnson heard both sides fully, and decided that the Indian claim was the correct one, and that the white man was in the wrong. The result was that the alleged owner gave full release. In the mat-

ter of the lands on the Susquehanna, in Pennsylvania, but claimed by Connecticut, the Iroquois were so excited that they sent a delegation of five chiefs to Hartford. These were led by Guy Johnson, and bore a letter from Sir William. The Connecticut people held tenaciously to their claim, and were about to settle, to the number of three hundred families, in the Wyoming Valley. In the speech of the Onondaga orator at Hartford, after rehearsing the story of the covenant with Corlaer, and denouncing men like Lydius and Kloch, who fraudulently obtained the Indians' land, he declared the Six Nations would resist, even unto blood, the loss of their Susquehanna lands. Governor Fitch heartily agreed with the Iroquois, and so actively seconded the royal order that the proposed settlement was, at least, postponed.

Johnson predicted in a letter to Amherst, March 30, 1763, "the dangerous consequences which must inevitably attend the settlement of these people in the Wyoming Valley." The Susquehanna Company persevered, however, and at the council held at Fort Stanwix succeeded in getting from some of the chiefs — after Johnson had been warily approached with bribes to take the vice-presidency of the company — a title-deed to the lands. Into this beautiful valley, twenty-one miles long, and now one of the richest and most lovely in all Pennsylvania, forty families from Connecticut settled in 1769. The unsleeping vengeance of the Senecas did not find its opportunity until 1778. Then, led by Butler and his Tories, the awful massacre was perpetrated which has furnished the poet Campbell with his mournful theme.

During the great conspiracy and war of Pontiac, Johnson was ceaselessly active in measures tending to holding the loyalty of the Indians. The Senecas, always the most wayward, because most easily influenced by the French, and more susceptible to Indian arguments, at first espoused the cause of Pontiac. The baronet had no sooner heard of this than he called a council of all the Six Nations at German Flats, and secured a tremendous advantage to the cause of civilization, by winning them over to neutrality. He sent Captain Claus with the same end in view to Caughnawaga, or the Sault St. Louis. At this place, formerly called La Prairie, whence had so often issued in the old days, from 1690 and onward, scalping-parties on the English and Dutch settlements, Claus met the Caughnawaga, St. Francis, and other tribes of Indians, thus cutting off another possible contingent for Pontiac. So successful was Claus, that these Canadian tribes not only sent deputies to dissuade the Western braves, but also warned them that in case of hostilities they would fight for the king with their English brethren.

Not knowing what roving bands of Western savages might make sudden raids, Johnson ordered out the Valley militia, despatched Indian scouts to Crown Point, built a stockade of palisades around Johnson Hall, and armed his own tenants and the people of Johnstown. The two stone towers or block-houses flanking the Hall were mounted with cannon,— the weapons most objectionable to savages, one of them being a piece captured at Louisburg, and presented

by Admiral Warren. Seeing that the Mohawk Valley was thus so guarded, the Western braves, though harrying the frontiers of Pennsylvania and Virginia, kept out of New York. Indeed it seems not too much to assert that the influence of Johnson over the Indians east of Detroit was the chief cause of the failure of Pontiac's great plot. Angry with this one man because of his power to thwart their designs, the followers of Pontiac intended to penetrate to Johnstown and take his life. Hearing of their purpose, the Mohawks, coming in a great delegation to their Great Brother, offered to serve as his body-guard.

Pontiac's attempt to recover this continent to barbarism failed, but the scattered war continued for years. Half of the warriors of the Seneca castles were out on the war-path with the Delawares and Shawanese ; and against these Johnson sent out many a war-party from Johnson Hall, selecting his men from among the most loyal of the Iroquois. These three tribes were already in possession of a large number of rifles which Swiss hunters of the chamois and German skilled artisans made at Lancaster and other places in Pennsylvania. Being thus more effectively armed and able to move with less ammunition, they were also less dependent on the white man, — a condition of things which Johnson viewed with alarm. We find him writing to the Lords of Trade, requesting that traffic in such deadly weapons should be prohibited. Colonel Bouquet, the gallant Swiss officer, avenged Braddock's defeat by his brilliant victory at Bushy Run ; and the Moravian Indians in Pennsylvania were ruthlessly

slaughtered by wild beasts in white skins who wore the clothes of civilization. All this was part of "Pontiac's War."

"War is hell," as Gen. William Tecumseh Sherman insisted in our own days; and the barbarities in Johnson's times seemed to have made devils of both white and red men. We find Johnson again making himself a trader in scalps by offering out of his own private pocket fifty dollars apiece for the heads of the Delaware chieftains. In a word, he continued a policy becoming obsolete in other colonies. He thus encouraged the retention by the British Government, long after the Revolution had broken out, of a custom worthy of Joshua and his Hebrews in Canaan, or of the pagan Anglo-Saxons in Celtic Britain, but not of Christian England or of modern America. Was he encouraged to do this by his squaw wife, Mollie Brant?

Teedyuscung was no more; but his son, Captain Bull, was an active warrior. The famous Delaware chief had perished in the flames of a house in which he was lying in a drunken stupor. An incendiary and hostile savage had been bribed by enemies to do the vile deed. Captain Bull, while on his way to surprise a white settlement, was himself surprised, July 26, 1764, by the interpreter, Montour, now become a captain, who led a band of two hundred Oneidas and Tuscaroras. The Delawares were all captured and taken by way of Fort Stanwix to Johnson Hall. Those who were not adopted into the Confederacy found their way into the jails of New York. Joseph Brant,

leading another party of Iroquois into the country of the head-waters of the Susquehanna, surprised other Delaware braves, killed their chief, and burned seven villages.

The result of these successes was to cow and terrify the Senecas, who came to Johnson Hall and made peace. General Gage vigorously pressed operations against the hostile tribes, and sent Bradstreet westward. As a reinforcement, Johnson persuaded over five hundred of the Confederate Iroquois to join Bradstreet. He then went himself to Niagara, arriving July 8, 1764, to hold a grand council with all the Indians favourable to the English cause, from Dakota to Hudson Bay, and from Maine to Kentucky. Besides a treaty of peace with the Hurons, the earth-hunger of the pale-faces was temporarily satisfied by a cession of land along the lakes, accompanied with the promise of protection to navigation. The Senecas also ceded, not for private use, but to the Crown, a strip of land eight miles wide between Lakes Erie and Ontario, bisected by the Niagara River. They made a promise of the islands in the river to Johnson himself, who immediately transferred them to the British Government. A considerable number of white prisoners were delivered up. In this policy of possibly mistaken kindness, in which the change of life to those who had forgotten their old home and friends and had become habituated to Indian life, was like a resurrection, there were many incidents like those upon which Cooper has founded his romance of "The Wept of the Wish-ton-wish." Johnson's advertisement to

friends of the captives is one of the pathetic curiosities in the American journalism of the eighteenth century.

After interviews between Johnson's agent, Croghan, and Pontiac, arrangements were made for the amicable dwelling together of the two races. Johnson had proposed to the Lords of Trade in London that the territory west of the Ohio River should be forever reserved to the Six Nations as a hunting-ground. Another great council was held at his house April 27, at which over nine hundred Indians, including one hundred and twenty Senecas, the Delaware chiefs Squash-Cutter and Long-Coat, were present. The various conferences lasted nearly a month, resulting in a fresh treaty of peace with the Western Indians. They covenanted to allow the boundary to be made, protect traders, allow the passage of troops, deliver up murderers to the nearest garrison, and endeavour to win over the Illinois tribes. Later, Croghan, the agent of Johnson, visited Detroit, on the way collecting the white captives delivered up, and meeting the penitent Pontiac, who of his own accord made overtures of peace and accompanied Croghan. On the 17th of August, at Detroit, he met the Ottawas, Potawatamies, and Chippewas, and in one of several conferences presented Johnson's road-belt to "open the path of the English from the rising to the setting sun." Ten days later, on the 27th, with Pontiac and the tribes of the great Ottawa Confederacy, the war-hatchet was buried, the tree of peace planted, and the calumet of peace smoked. Pontiac even gave a prom-

ise to visit Johnson at Oswego to ratify the peace thus made. The road being cleared for the passage of the troops, Captain Sterling, with one hundred Highlanders from Fort Pitt, received possession, October 10, of Fort Chartres, and the French flag was hauled down.

True to his promise, Pontiac met Johnson at Oswego July 23. Amid every possible accessory of impressive display and ceremony, the sacramental wampum, the sacred promises of peace and tokens of friendship were exchanged. Then Pontiac and his braves moved out in their canoes over Lake Ontario to the west and to obscurity. Henceforth the way of Teutonic civilization was cleared, and the march to the Pacific began. As we write in 1891, the centre of population is near Chicago.

In October, 1768, the great council called for the purpose of making a scientific frontier met at Fort Stanwix. This great concourse, not only of Indians, but of the governors and other distinguished men of Pennsylvania and New Jersey, makes one of the historical pictures in the story of America well worth the artist's interpretation on canvas. Johnson, being at this time heartily interested in the welfare of St. George's Episcopal Church, built next to the British barracks in Schenectady, in which he was a frequent worshipper, profited by the presence and happy mood of so many prominent men. He took up a collection, and secured sixty-one pounds and ten shillings for the little stone church on whose spire in Ferry Street still veers the gilded cock of St. Nicholas, the symbol of vigilance and of the resurrection.

Of the Six Nations and other tribes, thirty-two hundred individuals were present to witness the bartering away of their birthright for such pottage as the pale-faces had to tempt these Esaus of the wilderness. For ten thousand pounds, unlimited rum, and after due exchange of eloquence and wampum, they sold to the king the ground now occupied by Kentucky, Western Virginia, and Western Pennsylvania. Fort Stanwix was dismantled. The Indians moved out of Eastern New York, and the next year Daniel Boone led that great emigration of white men from the Southern Atlantic coast which resulted in the winning of the West. Boone's was a movement for the annihilation of savagery, the extinction of Latin, and the supremacy of Teutonic civilization in North America, parallel to that rolling westward from New England, New York, and Pennsylvania.

This was the last of the most important meetings and negotiations of Johnson with the men who claimed by hereditary right to occupy the continent. Though afterward full of toilsome detail, and busy in conference, in hearing complaints, and securing the performance of stipulations, Johnson's constructive career as Superintendent of Indian Affairs virtually closed at Fort Stanwix.